Tipping the Balance

Report of the National Committee on Volunteering

OCTOBER 2002

RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION REPORTS

The Committee in the course of its work commissioned the following research and consultation reports. Copies are available from the secretariat of the National Committee on Volunteering (NCV).

RESEARCH REPORTS:
- *Volunteering in Ireland - 1990s and Beyond,*
  Policy Research Centre, National College of Ireland

- *Volunteering and the Organisation,*
  Ralaheen Research and Design Ltd.

- *Young People and Volunteering,*
  National Youth Council of Ireland

- *International Approaches to Volunteering,*
  Joe Larragy, Centre for Applied Social Studies, NUI, Maynooth

- *Case Studies of the Experiences of Voluntary Groups of Developing Accredited Training for Volunteers,*
  Unique Perspectives, Research, Evaluation and Strategy Consultants

CONSULTATION REPORT:
- National Committee on Volunteering Secretariat

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Part Two

Chairperson's Introduction

In November 1997, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2001 the International Year of Volunteers. Aimed at increased recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteering, the International Year of Volunteers provided a unique opportunity to highlight the achievements of the millions of volunteers worldwide, who devote some time of their lives to serving others and to encourage more people globally to engage in volunteer activity.

The decision taken by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 52/17 to proclaim 2001 the International Year of Volunteers, has done much to focus the attention of the international community on volunteering. The responsibility of governments to develop comprehensive strategies and programmes to support volunteering is explicitly recognised for the first time in the outcome document of the twenty fourth special session of the General Assembly, entitled 'World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalising world' (General Assembly resolution S–24/2, annex).

More importantly, the Report of the Commission for Social Development (E/2001/26, resolution 39/2) states that; '*Volunteerism is an important component of any strategy aimed at poverty reduction, sustainable development and social integration, in particular overcoming social exclusion and discrimination.*'

Ireland signed up to the United Nations Year of Volunteers 2001 and the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness provided for the establishment of a National Committee on Volunteering. The National Committee has 38 members drawn from a broad cross-section of organisations and individuals with an interest in volunteering nationwide. It was launched on December 5th 2000, International Volunteers Day, by the then Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Mr Dermot Ahern TD.

In becoming involved in the United Nations International Year of Volunteers, the State made the decision to take this vital opportunity to celebrate the enormous contribution which volunteering has made to Irish life, to ask the hard questions about where volunteering is going, and to strengthen, support and recognise volunteering in Ireland for the future.

Ireland had already made a commitment to develop supports for volunteering when, in September 2000, the government launched. A White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity, Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector.

In the foreword to the White Paper, the Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern TD stated, '*Voluntary activity forms the very core of all vibrant and inclusive societies... In a time of great change in our country, we must work hard to protect and enhance the spirit of voluntary participation and we must see this as a key social goal. The strength of voluntary activity is that it emerges organically from communities. It would be wrong for Government to seek control and be involved in every aspect of voluntary activity, but there is no doubt that it can provide an enabling framework to help this activity.*'

The White Paper was careful to spell out the importance of government enabling the voluntary sector to work more effectively, not controlling, shaping or managing the sector.

The National Committee on Volunteering (NCV) held its first meeting in December 2000 and over the following months drew up a plan to fulfil its remit.

The National Committee on Volunteering (NCV) organised a range of celebratory events during 2001.

£350,000 was set aside for a grants scheme in which 95 groups were supported to develop projects, focusing on volunteering in their organisation. Grants from as little as a few hundred

pounds up to ten thousand pounds were allocated. There was a phenomenal response with one thousand queries resulting in five hundred applications giving the National Committee a difficult task and an indication of the amount of work being carried out by volunteers in all corners of the country. Projects were funded through a range of small local to large national organisations undertaking a wide range of work, from volunteer Samaritans on the streets of Temple Bar to volunteer visitors on the roads of Malin Head, from students giving a listening ear to volunteers patrolling the Wicklow uplands and from transition year students bearing flowers to older people learning to produce radio programmes. A report was published in September 2002, outlining the work undertaken by these grant-aided organisations during 2001 entitled, 'Volunteering, a Different View on Life'.

A website was developed at www.ncvireland.ie

A commemorative postage frank appeared on all letters during June and July 2001.

30,000 'I Volunteer' Celebration Packs were published and sent to volunteer-involving organisations, for use in celebrating International Year of Volunteers. The honourable Christine Campbell MP who had responsibility for IYV 2001 in Victoria Australia helped us to launch the 'I Volunteer' Pack in Dublin and featured prominently with Irish and visiting volunteers in the national media.

The National Committee on Volunteering commissioned five Irish poets to write a poem on the theme of volunteering and published these in card form with an original illustration by Brian Cronin, a well-known Irish illustration artist, now living in New York. The poems were humorous and serious, told stories and expressed ideas and remain as a legacy to IYV 2001. These are reproduced throughout the report.

A sculpture, which was commissioned through competition and presented by an Taoiseach to each local authority in the country at a major ceremony at the end of 2001, was designed by Alan Ardiff. He called it 'Taking a Step Forward'. The finely crafted gold and silver feathers on a balance, he described as the volunteer 'tipping the balance of individual lives and society as a whole'. Local authorities around the country held local ceremonies to hang the sculpture in a prominent place and recognise the work of their local volunteers.

From this the title 'Tipping the Balance' was chosen for this publication and also as the name for the conference which was organised jointly with the International Year of Volunteers Committee, Northern Ireland, in Cavan in November 2001. Some of the best known names in volunteering world-wide came to speak. These included Kumi Nidoo, Secretary General of CIVICUS, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Sharon Capeling Alakija, United Nations Executive Co-ordinator and Liz Burns, President of the European Volunteer Centre. Our local volunteers, North and South, also contributed inspirational speeches. Delegate contributions at workshops provided stimulating debate. A conference report entitled Tipping the Balance – Celebrating Volunteer Involvement, Past, Present and Future, was published in June 2002 and disseminated widely. The conference agreed a declaration on volunteering jointly between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and we hope that it will facilitate close working between volunteers North and South into the future.

As the year drew to a close another arts project commissioned by competition, used the space and medium of television advertising to present a piece of artwork to the public. Photographer Liam O Callaghan's theory that advertising, while still a powerful force, has lost its ability to stimulate the senses, was the basis for his use of still photography to present silent volunteering images on television amidst the bombardment of Christmas advertising.

Both artists, Alan Ardiff and Liam O Callaghan, were selected through a competitive process. The jury included the internationally renowned artist Frances Hegarty. Short listed artists included Orla de Bri, Lorraine Bowen, Felicity Clear, Tom Molloy, Laurent Mellett and John Byrne.

During 2001 all of these events celebrated volunteering and its long tradition in Ireland and aimed to have a lasting effect beyond the year. However we also planned to leave structures in place after the International Year of Volunteers, which would support volunteering in Ireland long-term.
While the celebratory activity was happening, members of the National Committee on Volunteering were working away in the background on a number of policy issues. The National Committee was asked to examine and make recommendations on, the possibilities for recognition and accreditation for voluntary work and for training undertaken as a volunteer, measures to widen the pool of volunteers and the range of supports needed in order to promote, sustain and develop volunteering.

It is on this basis that the National Committee on Volunteering is making recommendations to government on the future of volunteering in Ireland.

The report presented here is informed by five pieces of commissioned research on Volunteering in Ireland, Young People and Volunteering, The Volunteer and the Organisation, International Approaches to Volunteering and Case Studies of the Experiences of Voluntary Groups of Developing Accredited Training for Volunteers. The report is also based on a public consultation process, which received 67 submissions from organisations and individuals with an interest in volunteering and on discussions within the National Committee itself.

In presenting this report to government I would like to thank sincerely all the members of the National Committee on Volunteering. They gave of their time and commitment during 2001 and 2002 in a spirit of partnership and with a passion and belief in the power of volunteering to contribute to social capital, to create a more inclusive society, a better functioning democracy, more active citizens and a greater sense of community.

It is also true to say that the work could not have been completed without the dedication and commitment of the small hard-working team in the secretariat, Helen Lahert, John Ryan and Marguerite Bourke.

Chris Flood
Chairperson
National Committee on Volunteering
2001 − 2002

Tipping the Balance

Report of the National Committee on Volunteering

Executive Summary

October 2002

Part One:
Findings from Research and Consultation

Part Two:
Recommendations on Policy and Infrastructure

INTRODUCTION

Voluntary activity forms the very core of all vibrant and inclusive societies
– An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD

1. The National Committee on Volunteering (NCV) was established in December 2000, following proposals in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and the White Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity. This was both in anticipation of the UN International Year of Volunteers (IYV), and with a view to developing a long term strategy to promote and extend volunteering. Its work was to include examining and making recommendations on:

- The possibilities for recognition and accreditation of voluntary work and for training undertaken as a volunteer;
- Measures to widen the pool of volunteers, and
- The range of supports needed to promote, sustain and develop volunteering.

2. In this report the Committee presents the results of its deliberations. The main report is in two parts. The first part contains the findings and reflections, informed by five pieces of commissioned research and a public consultation process and comprises eight chapters. The second part comprises the recommendations adopted by the National Committee on Volunteering. This executive summary covers both the findings and the recommendations of the National Committee on Volunteering.

PERSPECTIVES ON VOLUNTEERING

3. Volunteering is defined differently in different countries, but there are common elements to most definitions. The White Paper **Supporting Voluntary Activity** defined it as: *'the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person's own free will, without payment (except for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses).'* (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs 2000: 83).

4. Volunteering may be undertaken in formal or informal settings, and increasingly the interest is in formal volunteering. This Formal volunteering takes place in organisational settings, particularly through voluntary organisations, non-profit organisations or the social economy, but also under the aegis of employers or in conjunction with statutory schemes.

5. Volunteering is viewed as a vital dimension of democratic and social life, not merely to be valued for its resource input in limited service fields. In particular it is viewed as essential to the development of civic participation, social solidarity and individual development. Volunteering constitutes a key source of 'social capital'.

6. Ireland has rich and varied traditions of voluntary action, deriving from medieval times, and later from Protestant philanthropy in the 18th century and the rise of Catholic religious philanthropy in the 19th century. Apart from philanthropy, volunteering has been fostered through the Gaelic revival of the later 19th century, the ethos of self-help embodied in the Co-operative Movement, and through informal local customs of 'cooring' and the Meitheal. In the 20th century, volunteering has been a key aspect of community development in its earlier forms (e.g. Muintir na Tíre, from the 1930s) and more recent manifestations in the context of anti-poverty and other social inclusion policies.

7. Today volunteering remains very important, and faces numerous challenges and opportunities. These arise in the context of demographic changes, new employment participation patterns, and new developments at regional and local level. Ireland is a society of increasing heterogeneity and changing values. Linked the to growth of individualism and consumerism and the perceived decline of communities is the need to rethink what is required for genuine democratic and civic participation. However, the most immediate problem is the absence of a stated policy and strategy for developing and supporting volunteering.

TRENDS AND PATTERNS OF VOLUNTEERING IN IRELAND

8. Chapter Three of the report presents data drawn from three surveys of volunteering in Ireland conducted during the 1990s. A profile of volunteering is given in order to highlight gaps and indicate areas that require attention for future policy making.

Profile of Volunteers

9. The rate of volunteering declined from 39 per cent of the population in 1992 to 33 per cent in 1997-1998. The level of volunteering among men declined by nine percentage points while the rate of volunteering among women declined by only one percentage point.

10. The profile of volunteering rates by age indicates that young people have always been under-represented in the volunteer pool. Furthermore, although volunteers in their 40s showed one of the highest rates of volunteering they also demonstrated the greatest decline over the 1990s possibly indicating greater demands on this age cohort. Young men and older women and men were the least likely to volunteer.

11. Those with lower educational qualifications were the least likely to volunteer and also showed the highest rate of decline in participation over the 1990s.

12. Socio-economic class is also a predictor of volunteering. Those in socio-economic groups DE (unskilled and unemployed) showed the greatest rates of decline in tendency to participate over the decade, and lower household income was also indicative of a lessened propensity to volunteer.

13. A regional profile of volunteers shows that volunteering rates were highest in the south-eastern counties and this holds for both women and men. By contrast women and men in the north-eastern counties and men in the north-western counties demonstrated the lowest rates of volunteering.

14. Part-time workers were the most likely to volunteer and their involvement increased during the 1990s. The unemployed and those in full-time paid employment showed the largest rates of decline over the decade.

Reasons for Volunteering

15. The most important reasons for engaging in volunteering in the late 1990s were 'belief in the cause', 'being asked to help' and 'wanting to help' or 'being neighbourly'. Over the 1990s, however, wanting to help declined from being the most important reason, and fell by 17 percentage points.

16. Both women and men volunteered because of believing in the cause, and for men this was slightly more important than for women. Being asked to help was also more important for men than for women, whereas wanting to help and being neighbourly were more important for women.

17. Belief in the cause increased in importance as women became older and was most significant for the group of women most likely to volunteer, that is those in their 40s and 50s. By contrast belief in the cause was most important for men aged under 30 who were among those least likely to volunteer.

18. Belief in the cause was not as important for those with the lowest educational attainment and those in socio-economic group DE. Wanting to help and being neighbourly were the most important motivating factors for these groups.

19. The most important benefits of volunteering were cited as 'seeing results, doing good, meeting' people and 'enjoyment.' Meeting people increased in importance during the 1990s by 11 percentage points.

20. For women, doing good was the most important benefit followed closely by seeing results. For men, seeing a result was most important followed by meeting people.

21. Examining the cited benefits of volunteering by gender and age, doing good emerged as most important for women under 30, while seeing results was the most important benefit for women aged between 30 and 40.

22. Seeing results was most important for men aged between 30 and 50, while meeting people was most important for men aged over 60. The enjoyment factor was highest amongst men aged less than 40.

23. Seeing results as a cited benefit of volunteering rose with educational attainment, while doing good fell among those with higher educational qualifications.

Routes into Volunteering

24. Social networks remained the most important route to becoming involved in volunteering during the 1990s. Getting involved through an organisation (whether through membership, its literature or attending a meeting) rose by 13 percentage points to become the second most important route to volunteering by the end of the 1990s.

25. Women used social networks more than men, while men used the organisational route more than women. Those with lower educational qualifications used social networks while those with higher educational qualifications used the organisational route.

Barriers to Volunteering

26. The lack of time was cited as the most important barrier to volunteering but that factor declined in importance from the mid-1990s by 13 percentage points. Never having thought about volunteering and never having been asked became more important constraints to getting involved during the late 1990s.

27. The lack of time was equally important for women and men. For men, however, never having thought about volunteering was more important than for women, particularly among men under 40 years of age.

28. The lack of time as a reason for not volunteering rose by educational attainment and socio-economic status. Never having been asked was higher among the lower socio-economic groups than among the highest group.

29. Time emerged as a factor in both giving up volunteering and in the drawbacks associated with volunteering. However as a reason for giving up volunteering, it was as important in 1992 as in 1997-1998.

30. Losing interest in volunteering increased as a reason to give up during the late 1990s.

31. Furthermore in the late 1990s, too much being expected of a volunteer increased significantly as a drawback of volunteering.

The Volunteer in the Organisation

32. Volunteering and volunteers represent a very substantial resource for the non-profit sector in Ireland. This resource may be identified as occurring at four basic levels:
(a) a human resource for the organisation
(b) a key factor in the capacity for sector renewal
(c) the location of the governance of the organisation
(d) a central element in the legitimisation of the organisation

33. Researchers provided case studies of the experience of volunteers in various organisational settings. These are combined in the report with the committee's considerations on organisational issues including employer supported volunteering. It is difficult to generalise about the dynamics of volunteer management. However, some preliminary conclusions are be set out:

34. The size, length established, and resources of the volunteer-involving organisation are potentially important factors. In particular, the ratio of paid staff to volunteers, and the extent to which tasks of paid staff and volunteers are important to the internal dynamics of volunteer management.

35. Processes which take place over time, such as the professionalisation of activities undertaken will have implications for the role of volunteers. It will possibly tend to marginalise them from the more skilled areas or concentrating them in new or ancillary activities. There may be some who will remain involved in key roles in boards of management.

36. The use of state schemes, such as Community Employment (CE), which create paid positions that may previously have relied on volunteer labour, may imply various policy challenges, for instance in the case of more buoyant labour market conditions, or as this affects relations between volunteers and CE employees.

37. The level of training and briefing of volunteers, whether they are involved in day-to-day activities or are on boards of management, can be critical to effective relations with management and staff, and affect the public profile and achievements of the organisation. In particular, it is necessary that the core values be properly communicated to volunteers.

38. While various styles of management are possible, and appropriate to different types of setting, it is necessary to provide clear guidelines on issues such as confidentiality, for the benefit and safety of the public and the volunteers and to protect the interests of the organisation.

39. Organisations need to achieve a balance between pursuing 'output' objectives on the one hand and their duty to recognise the value of volunteering as an experience, on the other. Given the absence, by definition, of a contract of employment governing the volunteer, it is necessary to establish codes of best practice, particularly where the volunteer begins to approximate an employee in terms of the organisation's expectations. Furthermore, there is a need to recognise the wider social benefits, such as strengthening citizenship, that volunteering brings.

40. In the case of employer-supported volunteering, there is scope for development. Increasing numbers of working-age people – particularly women – are in the labour force. As noted in Chapter Three, part-time employees have a very high propensity to volunteer. Schemes organised through the workplace may take many forms and the potential exists for more structured forms.

41. The issue of local volunteer centres and a national centre, and the limited provision of these in Ireland emerged in the context of the volunteer and the organisation. It relates to the promotion of volunteering and of good practice, and is pertinent to employer supported volunteering schemes, volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers. This issue is further explored in Chapter Seven on international approaches to volunteering.

Young People and Volunteering

42. To develop an understanding of the views of young people on volunteering a piece of qualitative research was commissioned from the National Youth Council of Ireland by the National Committee on Volunteering. Data was collected through the use of focus group discussions, which were held in different locations throughout the State. Two different age groups were consulted: 15–17 and 18–21 year-olds.

43. Three primary areas were examined; (a) young people's perceptions of volunteering, (b) interpretations of why young people volunteer, and (c) the factors that influence young people to volunteer.

44. Perceptions of what constituted volunteering were disparate, ranging from narrow ideas of helping to wider conceptions of participating in community activities. While few described themselves as 'volunteers', many identified with roles that they knew to be voluntary such as youth club leader.

45. Reasons for volunteering were multi-faceted, including altruistic motives, personal development, making friends, the satisfaction of helping people etc.

46. The principal influences on the likelihood of young people volunteering include the social environment, information on opportunities to volunteer, and education.
The social environment was influential in that, if family or friends were volunteers, it increased the probability of volunteering. If the social environment was fraught, or fragmented, volunteering was less likely.

47. Information was important in relation to knowing how to get started. Lack of information may be related to lack of involvement in organisations, and to the organisation of local youth services, which act as an information conduit. Information on costs and expenses was also a factor, since young people express concern about such costs.

48. The focus groups noted that the education system could be more imaginative in how it influences participation. Some felt that it tended to involve young people in a limited way, restricted to activities such as fund-raising. Schools are also in a special position through the 'transition year' programme. Some participants in the focus groups felt that this could be more sensitive to young people by adopting a more participative approach, emphasising ongoing activities rather more than lectures on civic involvement.

49. The conclusions of the Committee were that many issues arise in relation to youth volunteering. Young people express a willingness to be involved but this is not always realised. The image of volunteering plays a part and needs to be addressed to attract an increased number of younger people. Altruism is of central importance but not enough to motivate young volunteers. Personal or career development opportunities, friendship and fun are vital ingredients in the motivation of young volunteers.

Accreditation

50. Over recent years accreditation issues have emerged in relation to the training of volunteers. The need for accreditation mechanisms has expanded in tandem with the interrelated development of voluntary and community sector activity and the growth of adult education. The report reviews key developments in the policy thinking in this area, which draws on the experience of voluntary and community sector, as well as statutory sources.

51. Because of the diversity of volunteering, the need for flexible accreditation arrangements should be recognised. The challenge to official bodies is to give accreditation that is both appropriate to this requirements and is based on adequate quality control criteria and mechanisms.

Recognition

52. Apart from the issue of accreditation of training and learning gained through volunteering, there is the wider issue of recognition due to volunteers. There is considerable scope for developing a range of forms of recognition, whether focused on individuals, organisations, fields of work or target groups – such as young people or employees – whose involvement in volunteering could be developed. The report reviews a number of possibilities, drawing from existing examples in Ireland and elsewhere.

The Consultation Process

53. A total of 67 submissions were received as part of a consultation process initiated by the Committee. The submissions covered general issues, policy issues, measures to widen the base of volunteering, regulation, infrastructure, volunteer management, and voluntary sector management boards.

54. Among the general issues was a widespread welcome for the UN International Year on Volunteers 2001, which is viewed as a springboard for developing policy in Ireland. Submissions were also concerned with the themes of changing trends in volunteering, motivation of volunteers and the need to value volunteering. Submissions acknowledged the importance of diversity, and identified the importance of volunteering to democratic life.

55. On policy issues, submissions welcomed the recent White Paper as a beginning, and called for more research, a sensitive approach by statutory bodies in partnership with the voluntary sector, and appropriate recognition and promotion of volunteering. To widen the base of volunteering, submissions suggested tackling recruitment in a more targeted way, using more imaginative approaches and by identifying and addressing the barriers to volunteering. Special emphasis should be put on marginalised groups, including the provision of ancillary supports such as local crèche and other facilities. Some proposed developing employer supported volunteering schemes, targeting young people, men, and older people. Others focused on sport, developing the school curriculum, promoting volunteering at third level, increasing international volunteering opportunities and exchange.

56. Regulation was an important issue for many. Best practice in the exercise and supervision of volunteer activity, expenses for volunteers, Garda clearance where appropriate, insurance and set-up costs, subsidies for volunteer-involving organisations, and schemes for people in receipt of unemployed or disability disability payments all came up under this heading.

57. Many submissions noted the lack of infrastructure to support volunteering. Information and information technology were seen as critical ingredients in the success of local and national support centres. Volunteer management also places an onus on volunteer-involving organisations for training of managers and volunteers, for accreditation for volunteers, and raises funding issues. Finally, the consultation process emphasised the importance of equipping volunteers who participate on boards of management through training.

Case Studies

58. The recognition of the social and economic value of aspects of volunteering has prompted the development of government policies and programmes in many countries aimed at encouraging and supporting volunteering. In this chapter a number of these national examples are examined with a view to their potential relevance to the Irish context.

59. The report presents a summary based on a more elaborated account of government approaches to volunteering in the cases of Northern Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Denmark and Germany. The approach of the European Commission to the development and support of volunteering is also discussed in the research report.

60. Each of the country case studies contains detailed information on the cultural and political context of current policy, current issues of labour market and social security reform, a profile of volunteering patterns, the regulation of volunteering, the extent of volunteering infrastructure at central and local level, and the impact of policy.

61. Across the case studies the similarity of the approaches to volunteer development is striking. Countries mainly differ in the extent of overall progress with policy development, and in relation to the aspects of policy on which they have made most headway. Despite differences in welfare regime, which have unclear effects, there is little evidence of radical divergences in relation to the importance of promoting volunteering.

Research

62. The case studies reveal that volunteering requires specific policy approaches that recognise its multi-faceted potential, not only in service provision but also more particularly in relation to the development of civil society, community engagement and social capital. However, there is frequently only limited recognition that volunteering is a matter that deserves specific attention from policy makers.

63. Moreover, the development of policies dealing with volunteering is of relatively recent origin. The case studies show that there is a growing recognition that volunteering differs from the voluntary sector and requires specific policy approaches. In the past, it has been left to the voluntary, non-

profit, or mutual organisations, to recruit volunteers. For a variety of reasons this approach needs supplementation.

64. The case studies show that research is important and there has been a surge of interest in voluntary sector studies, studies of voluntary giving and volunteering in all of the countries reviewed.

65. In addition to research on patterns and trends at the macro level there is a need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation and demonstration programmes in various sectors. The case study countries, for example, engage in evaluations of employer supported volunteering, programmes to recruit older volunteers and policies to encourage young people to volunteer.

66. Research is also central to the development of quality control and is part of the basis for accreditation of training courses for volunteer managers and volunteers. In Northern Ireland, for example, extensive work has been undertaken on identifying accredited educational programmes appropriate to the training of volunteer managers and volunteers.

Regulation

67. In each of the countries much volunteering policy is about satisfactory regulation and achieving good practice in the involvement and management of volunteers by organisations.

68. Policies seek to define clear rules and practical guidelines on the boundaries between being a volunteer and an employee, and on volunteering activity on the part of people in receipt of social welfare benefits or allowances.

69. They define codes of practice in relation to the fair treatment of volunteers, such as preventing discrimination, bullying etc., often analogous to what applies in employment legislation.

70. They set standards both for good quality service outcomes through volunteer involvement, and for good practice in relation to the volunteering experience.

71. They promote good practice in the relationship between paid staff and volunteers in voluntary organisations, both in the context of staff supervising or working alongside volunteers and relations between staff and volunteers on governance boards.

72. They promote good practice in relation to the screening of volunteers for work in sensitive fields, such as childcare and youth work. This has been a key area of expertise developed in Northern Ireland by the Volunteer Development Agency

Primary Infrastructure: National Centres

73. It is usual to distinguish between primary and secondary infrastructure. Primary volunteering infrastructure refers to a national centre for volunteering and a network of local volunteering centres. These centres are specifically about the promotion, regulation and quality control of volunteering. Secondary volunteering infrastructure comprises volunteer-involving organisations, which draw volunteers in as part of a more specific mission, such as a social service or sporting activity. Thus the voluntary sector is a key provider of secondary infrastructure.

74. The case studies reveal that Canada, Northern Ireland and Scotland have been developing primary volunteering infrastructure at national level over the past two decades, with Denmark and Germany at earlier stages of development. The functions of national centres are various, including research, promotional activities, programme development, expertise on best practice, support for local centres, and advice to government.

75. In most of the case studies, central government has a role in the funding of national volunteer centres. The pattern of funding varies from one country to another and government funding may take the form of both core and programme funding. In this way, national centres have evolved into the keystone between top-down government policies and bottom-up endeavours by local volunteer centres, voluntary organisations and volunteers and indeed by companies supporting volunteering among employees.

Local Volunteer Centres

76. At a local level the case studies reveal considerable variation among volunteer centres. Whatever the variation among the many important functions of volunteer centres, key roles are promoting awareness of the potential to volunteer, fostering enthusiasm, and matching people wishing to volunteer with volunteering opportunities.

77. The brokerage function is very important at local level. Volunteer centres operate on the basis of good local knowledge, accessibility to potential volunteers and organisations within a small geographic area.

78. The work of promoting volunteering and increasing the volunteer pool requires local and central co-ordination, for example through brand-image promotions. This is exemplified in programmes in the case studies, such as Generation V in Canada and Millennium Volunteers in Scotland and Northern Ireland, which are brand-image campaigns aimed at young people.

79. Funding mechanisms for local volunteering centres vary, depending on the origins of the centre. However, support through central government grant aid either towards core functions or related to specific programmes is a typical feature. Other funding is drawn from the voluntary sector, private donations and local government.

PART TWO:
RECOMMENDATIONS ON
POLICY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

A POLICY ON VOLUNTEERING

1. We recommend that a national policy on volunteering be developed by, be housed within and be the responsibility of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in co-operation with other relevant government departments and agencies and the social partners.

2. We recommend that the national policy on volunteering be integrated with other social policies.

3. We recommend the adoption of an integrated approach to the implementation of the national policy on volunteering

4. We recommend that the national policy on volunteering contain specific strategies concerned with supporting volunteering, the image of volunteering, regulating and protecting volunteering, developing and promoting volunteering, addressing barriers to volunteering and targeting volunteers.

5. We recommend that volunteering be supported financially by the State through dedicated funding programmes.

6. We recommend that the protection of volunteers and those with whom they work, children, young people and vulnerable groups within organisations, be enhanced through regulation and/or best practice. This protection might occur through changes in regulation or the development of best practice and must happen with the involvement of interested stakeholders.

7. We recommend that a policy on volunteering specifically include measures to develop, promote and support volunteering throughout the State.

8. We recommend that a national volunteering policy should specifically address and seek to remove barriers to volunteering where they exist. The policy on volunteering therefore should support equality of access to volunteering opportunities.

9. We recommend that the volunteering policy contain strategies that target participation, and differences in participation, according to age, educational attainment, socio-economic status, regional variation and cultural diversity. Such strategies, therefore, must, actively promote social inclusion.

10. We also recommend that volunteering opportunities be made available to people who are socially excluded or marginalised and that these opportunities and any supports required to enable them to be taken up are provided in an appropriate manner and in a format which is affordable and accessible.

11. We recommend that the national policy on volunteering promote and support strategies to raise awareness about the positive and diverse images of volunteering and emphasise its contribution to social capital.

12. We recommend that the State continue to develop its commitment to voluntary participation, which accords equal status to volunteers irrespective of whether they are in dependent, critical or partnership relationships with the State.

13. We recommend that the State continue to improve its commitment to facilitating voluntary participation in national and local partnership structures and city and county development boards through developmental support and the dedication of resources.

14. We recommend that the State's commitment to volunteering be evidenced in clear funding incentives to voluntary organisations.

15. We recommend that volunteer-involving organisations explicitly recognise 'volunteering' as a valued and legitimate organisational output. Furthermore, we recommend that such explicit recognition be evidenced in the provision of volunteer development programmes and in the measurement of 'volunteering' as an organisational output.

16. We recommend that the value of volunteering as an activity and of volunteers as people should be recognised by the voluntary sector via a Charter for Volunteers.

17. We recommend that the relationship between the voluntary sector and corporate and public bodies be facilitated and supported by the State in a proactive and sustainable manner which supports the development of volunteering.

18. We recommend that the volunteering experience within voluntary organisations be supported through better management, recruitment and retention policies. We recommend that the volunteering support and development infrastructure provide real and ongoing support to volunteer-involving organisations through training, management programmes, accreditation and recognition.

19. We recommend that a programme of research on volunteering and voluntary activity be established. In addition we recommend the ongoing collection of data on volunteering through the Census and Quarterly National Household Surveys.

20. We recommend that the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, through its links with EU institutions, encourage EU support for volunteering, including the exchange of best practice, the development of volunteer exchange programmes, and the networking of national centres for volunteering.

Volunteering Infrastructure

21. We recommend that a volunteer development infrastructure be established.
22. We recommend that this infrastructure include the following two key components: (a) a National Centre for Volunteering and (b) local volunteer centres.

23. We recommend the development of a programme of support for volunteers which would include all the key programme areas; support and development, training and accreditation, recognition, best practice and regulation, volunteering and the education community, volunteering and the business community, volunteering and the public sector and volunteering and information technology.

Support and Development

24. We recommend that an annual conference or forum, drawing in a wide range of interests and expertise, be organised by the National Centre for Volunteering. This conference would facilitate national and international input, debate, generate new ideas, consult, consider of research and input to policy at a national level.

25. We recommend that the pool of volunteers be widened by support for the further development of social mentoring schemes to assist volunteer-involving organisations to build capacity in a number of areas including engaging in local development processes.

26. We recommend that pilot projects be supported to encourage the involvement of volunteers from under-represented groups.

Training

27. We recommend that a programme of best practice volunteer management education be made available to volunteer-involving organisations through the National Centre for Volunteering and local volunteer centres

28. We recommend that a volunteer training programme be set up at local and national level with links to education and training institutions.

29. We recommend that training for volunteer management board members be substantially increased in a volunteer training programme run in addition to current programmes.

30. We recommend a volunteer training programme to address the area of confidence building and negotiation skills for volunteers on local development boards and other similar agencies.

31. We recommend that staff of State bodies working in partnership with volunteers, receive training in partnership and community development principles to encourage mutual respect and involvement of volunteers on an equal basis

Accreditation

32. We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering develop a support system enabling volunteers to access appropriate training and qualifications for the skills developed as a volunteer. This support system could provide information and advice and act as a link to accrediting bodies to help them negotiate the accreditation path for their volunteer training.

33. We recommend that accreditation systems developed recognise prior learning and experience to date.

34. We recommend that resources be provided within the National Centre for Volunteering to set up, publish and annually update a Directory of Accredited Training and Progression in Ireland.

35. We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering set up an expert body for volunteers in partnership with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), to work with the authority to establish standards for training and accreditation. This body will incorporate into these standards the core values of volunteering, where appropriate, as well as specific skills and knowledge. It will have links through the

NQAI with relevant technical bodies and to the Awarding Councils of Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and Higher and Education Training Awards Council (HETAC). The make up of this body should be flexible to allow for new developments in the sector.

Recognition

36. We recommend that a key programme area within the National Centre for Volunteering put in place the structures and resources necessary to enable volunteer-involving organisations to nominate individuals or teams to be formally recognised by the State for their voluntary work

37. We recommend the development of a non-competitive national recognition system open to volunteers working in all sectors

Regulation and Best Practice

38. We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering support local and national volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers to develop best practice procedures and quality assurance systems.

39. We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering liaise with the relevant government departments and lobby for necessary changes in regulation which would support local and national volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers to develop quality assurance systems.

40. We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering develop proposals and projects and support current initiatives on engaging, primary, second and third levels of the education system and the non-formal education sector in volunteering and civic engagement.

Employer Supported Volunteering

41. We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering develop proposals and projects and support current initiatives in employer supported volunteering in association with all the social partners.

42. We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering develop proposals and projects and support current initiatives in employer supported volunteering within State agencies and the public sector in general.

Information Technology

43. We recommend that research should be commissioned into the possible uses of ICT initiatives to target specific groups for increased volunteering rates.

44. We recommend and support the establishment of a central ICT resource for the community and voluntary sector.

National Centre for Volunteering

45. We recommend that a National Centre for Volunteering be set up by government, as a statutory body with specific functions transferred to it by the Minister. The proposed National Centre for Volunteering should be independent, have a clear mandate, a substantial representation of volunteers, and appropriate representation of volunteer-involving organisations and statutory bodies.

46. In view of the time needed to develop legislation we recommend that an interim body, comprising the expertise developed by the National Committee on Volunteering and other volunteer support organisations be set up.

Local Volunteer Centres

47. We recommend that local volunteer centres be set up on a nation-wide basis in association with existing local structures to provide support and placement services for volunteers.

48. We recommend that adequate core funding provided from national budgets be made available for the development of local volunteer centres.

49. We recommend that the national funding line for local volunteer centres come under administration by the National Centre for Volunteering.

50. We recommend that local volunteer centres maintain independence at local level to enable them to source other funding support from their local authorities, local communities and other funding lines. local authorities, while respecting the importance of autonomy in volunteer centres, have a key role to play and responsibility for supporting volunteering, particularly through the directorates of community and enterprise. We recommend that local volunteer centres be represented in the governance of the National Centre for Volunteering.

Part One

1 Introduction to the Report

1.1 The National Committee on Volunteering

1.1.1.1 The National Committee on Volunteering (NCV) was established in December 2000. It was first mooted in April 2000, in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, in anticipation of UN International Year of Volunteers (IYV).[1] The White Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity (September 2000) specifically provided for the establishment of the NCV and set out its task, which was, broadly, to 'devise strategies and actions for supporting and developing volunteering, not just during the International Year, but for the longer term'.[2]

1.1.1.2 Although 2001 is the UN Year of Volunteers, and the establishment of the NCV is clearly part of the State's response to that year, we should view its role in the context of wider and ongoing policy development. It is intrinsic to the rethinking by the State of the purpose and direction of its relationship with the community and voluntary sector. This is not only a concern with the good and efficient management of those State resources that flow through and support important service delivery in the sector. It is also a concern with the nature of the relationship between the individual and the State in a well-functioning democracy and with voluntary organisations as constituting one key domain in which this relationship is operationalised.

1.2 The significance of volunteering policy

1.2.1.1 In his foreword to the White Paper, the Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D. noted that: "*Voluntary activity forms the very core of all vibrant and inclusive societies. It involves an incredible diversity of types of activity, ranging from the very informal to the highly structured. It can mean anything from occasionally helping out in a local sports club to participation in major national organisations. Particularly in a time of great change in our country, we must work hard to protect and enhance the spirit of voluntary participation and we must see this as a key social goal.*" He also acknowledged that although voluntary activity of its nature is spontaneous, the government has a role and responsibility in facilitating and promoting it. "*The great strength of voluntary activity*", he commented, "*is that it emerges organically from communities. It would be wrong for Government to seek to control and be involved in every aspect of voluntary activity, but there is no doubt that it can provide an enabling framework to help this activity. Where this involves direct supports, a delicate balance must be struck between having a relatively light official involvement and maintaining proper accountability.*"

1.2.1.2 Similarly, the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Mr. Dermot Ahern T.D, was emphatic in his foreword. "*In my personal view*", he stated, "*the most significant impact the White Paper will have over the long-term will be that it is based on a strong philosophy of support for the community and voluntary sector as an essential requirement to the health of our society and our democracy*". He also defined a policy perspective that was not driven by expediency in the delivery of services but by a concern for greater civic involvement and a healthy democratic society. '*This Government is making it clear by publication of the White paper that we have moved far beyond the attitude that statutory agencies fund voluntary organisations for merely utilitarian reasons, i.e. to provide services that the State cannot or will not deliver directly itself because of resource constraints. We see the community and voluntary sector as essential partners in economic and social development. Democracy is not just about getting a day out to vote at elections every few years. It is also about participating in society and making one's own personal contribution to social life, to the development of local communities, or to the welfare of society as a whole or particular disadvantaged groups within it.*'

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[1] See Government of Ireland, 2000, Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, Framework III, section 3.9, on supporting voluntary effort and participation.

[2] Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000, Supporting Voluntary Activity: A White Paper for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector, paragraph 6.4. More detailed aims were set out at paragraphs 4.31-4.38 of the report.

1.3 The purpose of this report

1.3.1.1 The brief given to the National Committee on Volunteering was to examine and make recommendations on:
(a) The possibilities for recognition and accreditation of voluntary work and for training undertaken as a volunteer;
(b) Measures to widen the pool of volunteers, and
(c) The range of supports needed in order to promote, sustain and develop volunteering.
(c) Mindful of the political, social and economic context in which we were set this task, our approach has been to take as wide a perspective as possible on the issue, drawing on a range of research findings and wide consultation.

1.3.1.2 The Committee sought to gather the type of information that was relevant to thinking about the issue of volunteering at the level of society, the organisation, and the individual, and to draw on historical, comparative and contemporary Irish survey data. The objective was that the recommendations and proposals to the government would be adequately underpinned and would provide a substantial basis for the development of a government supported volunteer development policy.

1.3.1.3 In this report the Committee presents the results of its deliberations.

1.3.1.4 The report is divided into two parts. Part One sets out the background information and research findings required for the proper development of policy recommendations. Part Two presents recommendations for policy and for the infrastructure required in order to implement policies effectively.

1.3.1.5 Part One of the report comprises ten chapters. Chapter Two reviews some general ideas and perspectives on volunteering, some definitions and concepts, the historical pattern of volunteering in Ireland and the present context and challenges. Chapter Three examines macro-level data on patterns of volunteering in Ireland, exploring regional, age, and gender-related variations and expressed motivations for volunteering. Chapter Four takes a closer look at volunteering in the context of organisations. There is considerable diversity in the organisational domain, and the chapter explores the dynamics arising from various actors including volunteers, volunteer managers, and the emergence of corporate

and associated types of volunteering. In view of the importance of establishing the practice of volunteering early in life, and the potential in a country with a relatively youthful profile, Chapter Five focuses on young people and volunteering. It deals with the complexity of being young today, and reviews research on the motivations, experience and barriers perceived by young people as potential volunteers, as well as specific areas where potential for volunteer programmes exist, such as in the education system. Chapters Six and Seven deal, respectively, with accreditation of training received by volunteers and other forms of recognition of volunteering. The Committee undertook a consultation process, the results of which are given in Chapter Eight. It provides a rich source of information and ideas on current issues and potential for policy. Volunteering policy in Ireland can benefit much from the experience of other countries that have developed policy and support structures and in Chapter Nine the results of a study of international approaches to volunteering are summarised. Case studies include Northern Ireland, Scotland, Denmark, Germany and Canada, as well as a review of European Union level policy. In Chapter Ten, we recapitulate some key themes from the research and consultation findings around policy requirements, research support, implementing policy, volunteering infrastructure, the impact of the educational system and issues in relation to the volunteer experience and management of volunteers.

1.3.1.6 Part Two (Chapter Eleven) of the report outlines the Committee's recommendations on policy, the responsibilities of specific government departments for policy, the components of policy and the implications of policy development for other stakeholders. Second, it also outlines recommendations on volunteering infra-structure, including a national centre, local volunteer centres and the range of activities carried out under the remit of these, including support and training, recognition and accreditation, implementing best practice and working in conjunction with other organisations.

The Liberator
Rita Ann Higgins

'When our feet hurt, we hurt all over'
    – *Socrates*

When Grettie from Grealish Town
soaked and clipped –
you talked.
You'd tell her things
you kept from the priest.

At first there were doubts
about this whippersnapper
who worked in the hat factory.
What would she know
about stubborn old nails?

But the toenail gang knew her unflappable touch.
She would tuck cotton wool soaked in antiseptic
under an untameable bucko and deliver him.

You'd feel nothing more than her coaxing gaze
calling for more story more story.

2 Perspectives on Volunteering

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1.1 This chapter is laid out in three sections. The first examines definitions of volunteering and different distinctions within these definitions. The second part looks at the historical antecedents to present-day volunteering in Ireland. The third focuses on the challenges faced by Irish society today and their implications for volunteering.

2.2 Concepts and definitions

2.2.1 Defining volunteering

2.2.1.1 Volunteering is defined differently in different countries, but there are common elements to most definitions. The Latin root '*voluntas*' refers to the individual will and the German and Danish words for volunteering explicitly contain '*free will*' as their semantic root. A recent publication which examines volunteering worldwide states that volunteering is unpaid and '*without obligation for the benefit of each other or society*' (Govaart, Van Daal, Munz and Keesom 2001: 260). While volunteering is typically defined as unpaid allowance is usually made for the remuneration of expenses. The UN defines volunteering as activities that individuals or groups offer to society '*in ways that often require a degree of sacrifice*' but also involve satisfaction as well as motivation.

2.2.1.2 Most definitions of volunteering exclude informal care and service given to relatives. The recent White Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity,* adopted a definition proposed by the Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups, and used by the Volunteer Development Agency in Northern Ireland. It states that 'volunteering can be defined as the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person's own free will, without payment (except for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses).' (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs 2000: 83).

2.2.1.3 Similarly, Irish-based surveys on volunteering have used a typical definition that emphasises the unpaid nature of the activity, which is carried out by free choice, 'for the benefit of people, other than or in addition to yourself or your own immediate family, or for the benefit of animals or the environment. These activities may be carried out through or with an organisation or group, church group, society or association, sports club, self-help group, voluntary group.' (Riddle and Mulvihill 1999: 117).

2.2.2 Formal and informal volunteering

The different definitions of volunteering referred to above also make distinctions between different types of volunteering (Govaart, Van Daal, Munz and Keesom 2001). A key distinction is between what are usually referred to as formal and informal volunteering. Formal volunteering relates to voluntary work done with or through an organisation. Formal settings include not only voluntary organisations but workplace settings, the public sector, school or other educational establishments or, in more recent times, virtual networks established over the Internet. Such organisations are referred to as volunteer-involving organisations. Informal volunteering, on the other hand, refers to voluntary work done by the individual at her or his own behest and not through an organisational setting, but not for a relative and unpaid. Although recognising the value and contribution of informal volunteering to our community life, for practical reasons this report deals mainly with formal rather than with informal volunteering.

2.2.3 Classification of volunteer involving organisations

2.2.3.1 While there are many settings for formal volunteering, in the majority of cases formal volunteering occurs in voluntary and community organisations, which in turn make up the voluntary sector.[5] According to the European Commission, voluntary organisations are formal, non-profit-distributing and independent of

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5   Terminology to describe the non-profit-distributing non-state sector can vary according to different disciplinary perspectives and can also be dependent upon the cultural or country-specific context. In this report, the term the voluntary and community sector will be most commonly used, in line with its use in the White Paper, but the sector may also be referred to as the third sector or the non-profit sector. This can be understood to include the NGO sector, the not-for-profit sector and the charity sector.

government (European Commission 1997). Voluntary organisations contribute to the public good and contain some element of voluntary participation. Similarly, the Johns Hopkins structural/operational Definition of non-profit organisations states that voluntary participation is a key defining characteristic and one of five central criteria (Salamon and Anheier 1996). Without volunteering, therefore, the voluntary organisation, according to both of these definitions is not voluntary, though it must be stressed that voluntary organisations typically have paid employees. Both definitions allow for different scales of voluntary activity within the voluntary organisation. Research on the size and scale of the sector in Ireland as part of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project indicates that for some types of voluntary and community organisations volunteers play a very significant role (Donoghue, Anheier and Salamon 1999). In social services, cultural and recreational organisations, for example, volunteers are far more important in terms of their input as 'in-kind' employees than they are in other types of organisations. Furthermore, all voluntary and community organisations use volunteers at board level.

2.2.3.2 The development of the social economy also introduces another perspective on volunteering in Ireland. Such social economy schemes and initiatives are voluntarily managed and may also be non-profit-distributing. In European countries the concept of the social economy is somewhat wider and different from the voluntary sector, since it takes into account co-operatives, which may distribute dividends as well as other benefits to members. Nevertheless, co-operatives have relied heavily on volunteers at many levels. They are particularly important due to the ethos of democratic control and mutual support, in generating civic participation and solidarity (Borzaga and Defourney, forthcoming).

2.2.4 Volunteering as a relational activity

2.2.4.1 Although this report is concerned primarily with formal volunteering (i.e. volunteering within the context of organisations) it is important to emphasise that volunteering is based on individual choice and action. The act of volunteering is always relational as it creates and sustains a relationship between the volunteer and an 'other'. At the human level this 'other' may be an individual, a group, an organisation, a community, or a society. Alternatively, it may be a cause or an ideal

(e.g. the environment, animal welfare etc).

2.2.4.1 The motivation to volunteer is grounded in the individual and the common human need to relate. Two ideas can be seen to follow from this. Firstly, while we define the act of volunteering as being distinctive, we may also view it as being one of many forms of relational activity in which humans have a need to engage. This allows us to consider the parallels and similarities between formal volunteering in a contemporary setting and informal volunteering in an historical one. Secondly, at the level of the individual the motivation to volunteer is grounded in that individual's concept of the world and of her or his relationship to it. Hence, volunteering may spring from a variety of motivational wells, such as religious beliefs, concepts such as citizenship or community involvement, the valuing of altruism or social and personal needs for social engagement. The expression of the self, the civic self is, therefore, an elemental part of volunteering (Donoghue 2002).

2.2.4.2 **Pro-social and other motivations for volunteering**

2.2.4.3 Whose benefit motivates volunteering? The 2001 all-Ireland conference on volunteering organised by the National Committee on Volunteering and the Volunteer Development Agency produced a Conference Declaration that emphasised the mutual benefit – to the individual and society – of voluntary activity. The Declaration stressed that volunteering is vital to democracy in that it is the expression of active citizenship and has a positive influence on economic, social, cultural and environmental life. The question of the motivation to individual action is commonly addressed via an examination of the motivations and behaviours of volunteers. Although the term volunteer is used generally to denote an individual performing or offering an unpaid service, the multiple and varied personal benefits, which may be derived from volunteering, add complexity to the issue. International comparative research has found that consideration of the net cost of volunteering to an individual is central to the public perception of who is acting, to a greater or lesser degree, as a volunteer and that differences in that perception are also culturally specific (Handy et al. 2000). Despite this, however, research in Ireland has found that voluntary activity is undertaken for a variety of altruistic, personal, and ideological reasons (Ruddle and Mulvihill 1999).

2.2.4.4 In psychological discourse, volunteering may be categorised under an area of behaviour termed 'pro-social' (meaning behaviour that supports or promotes social interaction or society). This includes helping behaviour generally as well as concepts such as altruism. What is of interest here are the motivations underlying such helping behaviour, explanations for which have ranged from altruism, maximising self interest, the importance of childhood socialisation and whether or not such behaviour has been determined by evolution (Clark 1991). Eisenberg (1986) defines altruistic behaviour as those pro-social behaviours that are focused on the 'other' and have a moral concern.

2.2.4.5 In the fields of sociology or anthropology, the emphasis is on the social rather than the individual. Fiske (1991), for example, notes how we are inherently motivated to establish and sustain basic types of social relationships. Volunteering, therefore, could be seen as one type of social behaviour which sustains social interaction. It is also necessary to keep in mind, however, that particular kinds of behaviour are also culturally bound. In other words, a particular societal culture will give its own meanings to behaviour. Volunteering therefore can have different meanings in different cultures, and, moreover, different meanings at different historical times. For example, 'contributing to the common good' has had a long history in Ireland and has changed in form over the centuries and in particular during the past 50 years.

2.2.4.6 Contemporary thinking on citizenship (Barbulet 1989, Bevir 1996, Koopmans 1996, Kymlika and Norman 1994, Raadscheldons 1995) holds that citizens have a duty to promote the common good. Members of modern political democracies are responsible for safeguarding their own rights and entitlements as well as those of other (more vulnerable) citizens. Participation in a common community includes the right of electoral participation in the democratic process and responsibility for enhancing the quality of life for all. Voluntary participation in activities that promote the common good enhances civil society and enables citizens to express their sense of citizenship. There is a growing recognition in the EU of the importance of civil society in developing a more cohesive community. An understanding of citizenship that enhances civil life includes the concepts of rights, responsibilities, democratic participation and civil or social involvement.

2.2.5 **Values, norms, networks and solidarity**

2.2.5.1 Volunteering can result from value systems that are related to our common humanity, such as compassion, justice, respect for human dignity, and belief in the human potential to be creative, innovative, and practical, and to sustain effort. Human solidarity and concern for the common good are created, articulated and sustained by volunteering. Furthermore, human or social experiences that are challenging or disturbing can motivate volunteering. When volunteering invites those who were previously uninvolved, it can 'set in motion chains of concerns that eventually alter history' (Rogat Loeb 1999: 101).

2.2.5.2 The experience of volunteering can lead to new ways of perceiving social reality and the need for social change. Rogat Loeb, for example, notes that volunteering leads to individuals viewing the world differently and contributing to the generation of social norms and the creation of social change: '[Volunteers]...come to trust that the fruits of their efforts will ripple outward, in ways they can rarely anticipate' (Rogat Loeb 1999: 8).

2.2.5.3 The term 'social capital' has been defined in various ways but has been used to capture the complex effects that norms and social networks contribute both directly to social solidarity and indirectly to enhancing democracy and strengthening economic effectiveness. Volunteering is one way in which social capital and solidarity is strengthened (Putnam 2000). The involvement of the individual in volunteering, whether for idealistic, altruistic or functional reasons, leads to a relational engagement and thereby to the building of social units, social cohesion and societal sustainability (Donoghue 2001). Volunteering makes an input to social capital, thereby, which as Healy and Cote note 'places social relations, values and norms at the centre of the debate about economic and social development' (Healy and Cote, 2001).

2.2.5.4 Volunteering, therefore, is a type of social engagement by the individual that is unpaid and may be undertaken in a formal or informal context, although it excludes services to a relative. It contributes to society building, is a resource used by organisations and yet, is also an individual activity. As we will now see, this activity has long been expressed in Ireland although its form has changed over time.

2.3.1 Pre-twentieth century charity and philanthropy

2.3.1.1 **Caritas within the Christian tradition in medieval Ireland**: There is a long-standing tradition of caritas in Ireland dating back to mediaeval times. This concept, which is broader than the modern notion of charity, incorporates doing good unto one's neighbour and involves the idea of doing service for the benefit of others. The gospels contain many references to the obligation to respond to people who are hungry, homeless, imprisoned and heavily burdened. An answer to the command to love one's neighbour as one's self was expressed in a willingness to give freely of one's time and goods. As can be seen, therefore, volunteering is implicit in the concept of caritas and has long been a part of the Christian tradition and practice in Ireland. Early Christians were recognised for their caring actions, which, with the development of monasteries led to the increased institutionalisation of care; monasteries were known for providing shelter for the homeless, medical care for the sick and sanctuary for those in trouble with the law.

2.3.1.2 **18th century ascendancy philanthropy**: While we do not have much documented historical evidence of volunteering prior to several hundred years ago, a strong tradition of Protestant philanthropy has been shown to exist from the late 1700s. Most visible among the Protestant ascendancy classes, this philanthropy was based on an attempt to address the poor physical, social and medical conditions of those who were economically deprived.

2.3.1.3 **19th century Roman Catholic institutional development**: With the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, Catholic clergy and more particularly members of religious orders entered the voluntary arena in greater numbers. Their predominance in health, education and social services through to the late 20th century dates from this time and was given further impetus from the 1830s when the Poor Laws introduced statutory welfare provision but in such a rigidly enforced manner that many in the population were excluded from entitlement. Many voluntary hospitals, primarily Catholic but also Protestant, established at that time still exist today, and such hospitals were very dependent upon voluntary involvement. The religious orders were also instrumental in the field of education,

a legacy that can still be seen today. Again, voluntary involvement was an inherent and strong part of educational provision and only began to wane in the later years of the 20th century. In the field of social services, the Society of St Vincent de Paul began operating in Ireland during the 19th century. The strong association of voluntary organisations with social services (Donnelly-Cox and Jaffro 1999) can be seen to date from this time.

2.3.1.4 **Gaelic revival**: Apart from the social welfare fields, there was also a strong surge of voluntary activity in the latter part of the 19th century in the shape of cultural nationalism and Gaelic revival movements. These movements made a significant contribution to a set of notions of 'Irishness'. Voluntary organisations like Conradh na Gaeilge (the Gaelic League) and the Gaelic Athletic Association were instrumental in developing solidarity based on what it meant to be Irish, generating a shared meaning that carried through to the foundation of the present state in 1922 and which is still prevalent today. The activity of volunteers in these arenas not only led to the development of a consciousness of an Irish identity but also placed a value on those cultural meanings and thereby created a sense of social solidarity and community, or a form of social capital.

2.3.2 Twentieth Century Developments

2.3.2.1 **Cooring, meitheal and social solidarity**: In rural areas, and Ireland was a predominantly rural society until the 1960s, volunteering occurred in another important form, also contributing to the social 'glue' through the early years of the modern State. A tradition of cooring (from the verb comhair meaning 'to co-operate') and the organisation of a meitheal in order to get farm work done were important cornerstones in peasant Ireland. A sense of social solidarity, or belonging, as well as self-sufficiency and reliance were generated when a community 'helped' its own to save the hay, foot turf and bring in the harvest. Volunteering, at an informal, non-organisational level was the key to maintaining and sustaining rural communities while also providing the encouragement to individual farmers to 'keep going' in difficult times.

2.3.2.2 **The co-operative movement in agriculture**: The notion of self-sufficiency at community level was adopted by Sir Horace Plunkett when he formed the co-operative movement in the 1890s. In yet another

form of Protestant philanthropic action, Sir Horace believed that rural regeneration was possible through the community coming together to form co-operatives based on the joint production of an agricultural commodity. The Irish co-operative movement also drew its initial inspiration from the experience of the co-operative movement in Britain, where it took the form of urban, working class co-operatives. In Ireland, production and marketing of farm produce became the basis of an expanding co-operative movement (Cole 1945). The roots of large multi-sited agri-business quoted on the Irish stock market today reside in the co-operative movement, and the efforts of many local volunteers to keep their communities self-sufficient. Again, this is a sign of the growth of formal volunteering, or volunteering through an organisation. The co-operative movement in Ireland is sometimes regarded as the real initiation of the self-help tradition in an organisational form. As discussed above, however, it built on firm community traditions and on a wide variety of self-help groups established in the 19th century.

2.3.2.3 **Rural regeneration from the 1930s**: The concept of self-sufficiency and its application at local level was taken up in the 1930s with the establishment of organisations such as Muintir na Tíre and the Young Farmers Association among others. Believing in the need to maintain, sustain and regenerate rural communities, Muintir na Tíre proposed the foundation of voluntary organisations based on the unit of the parish, which would foster cultural and social activity in a particular area. Muintir na Tíre became very important and soon spread to many parts of Ireland. Again, it can be seen as an example of the increasing institutionalisation of volunteering – even if that was not recognised as such at the time – and the importance of it in the face of rural or community decline.

2.3.3 Developments since the sixties

2.3.3.1 **Contemporary community development**: The 1960s saw the beginnings of a community development movement, grounded in a very specific social analysis, primarily in the growing urban areas.
By the 1990s the community development movement, strongly supported by State and European Commission funding programmes, and strengthened by the political edge of its grounding in social analysis, had spread to rural areas and achieved an increasing role in

Partnership Programme Development.

2.3.3.2 **Addressing social needs and reflecting changing norms**: The latter part of the 20th century saw a huge change in the shape of volunteering in Ireland. Increasing urbanisation and associated social problems saw the rise of many community groups coalescing around issues such as unemployment and drug abuse and, in many cases, based on 'pure' voluntary activity, and delivering social services. At the same time, other voluntary organisations, again based on mainly voluntary effort, sprang up around the rights of women, people with disabilities, lesbians and gay men, and Travellers. Many of these organisations are self-help or mutual support organisations. Another significant development in voluntary activity has been that associated with environmental concerns. Voluntary action in Ireland, therefore, continues to grow and diversify according to the identification of needs and shifts in social norms.

2.3.3.3 **Rights based organisations**: Generally referred to as communities of interest, these community and voluntary organisations are symptomatic of a new kind of volunteering and voluntary activity that developed in the late 20th century. While the clarity of rights-based analysis may be greater within such organisations than outside of them, rights-based arguments are increasingly being used in the sector as a whole. This approach has the capacity to significantly change the nature of the relationship between the sector and the State in that it creates the possibility for a voluntary organisation to have the State compelled to act in a specific manner. It thereby gives real edge to the sector's capacity to provide a rigorous critique of the State.

2.3.3.4 **Social entrepreneurship**: The ability of volunteering to address social needs and reflect changing norms is also a sign of its role in 'social entrepreneurship'. Volunteers who identify a pressing social need and are motivated enough by that to generate activity in order to provide a solution are sometimes described as social entrepreneurs because they are engaging in entrepreneurial activity which has a social end. Volunteering, therefore, is an important locus for this kind of activity.

2.3.3.5 **Ireland's international voluntary involvement**: In the area of international development, Ireland has a long tradition of voluntary endeavour. Originally and

for a long time this effort was strongly denominationally based, particularly via Catholic religious orders, but this has latterly given way to development organisations with varying degrees of emphasis on lay volunteering. As elsewhere in the sector, the underlying social analysis is reflected in the operational approach of individual organisations and the focus varies between emergency relief, and more long-term development and justice issues. This has given rise to a new kind of 'missionary' – the secular volunteer who wishes to transfer skills.

2.3.3.6 In summary, the non-profit sector has a, long, rich and diverse tradition in Ireland and forms a substantial element of national economic and social life. There are several historical strands, in addition to the principal influences arising from church and charitable traditions, and self-help and community tradition with strong roots in an agricultural society (Donoghue 1998). More recently, political concepts of community empowerment have driven much innovative work in the growing community sector, particularly, but not exclusively, in urban areas and focused on the issues of marginalisation.

2.3.3.7 While the tradition in Ireland has been for a strong denominational presence in education, health and social service provision, this is lessening as the State assumes increased responsibility for service provision and funding in these areas and as the denominational vocational labour force declines in number. More recently other voluntary social service providers, with or without a religious dimension, have been established to cater for specific needs.

2.3.3.8 Within the sector, in addition, networks have developed which act as voices for particular areas such as youth, overseas development, community development and disabilities. There is a focus on contemporary social problems, and changing social needs have led to the emergence of different organisations; this can be seen in the recent growth of anti-racist refugee groups. At policy-making level, the voluntary and community pillar represents a part of the sector in negotiating national programmes as part of the social partnership process.

2.4 The present context for volunteering in Ireland

2.4.1.1 The diversity of organisational forms, guiding principles, social analysis, linkages with the State and degrees of institutionalisation reflect well on the health of the Irish voluntary sector and its capacity for enterprise and renewal. This diversity also adds considerable complexity to the tasks of sector definition and the development of a comprehensive and coherent policy on the part of the State with regard to the sector-State relationship, and the potential for volunteering. In addition however, the wider context, including rapid and substantial economic, structural, demographic, cultural and value change, imply new challenges for the voluntary sector and the prospects for volunteering. The voluntary and non-profit sector not only faces new tests of organisational and management capacity but also a profound challenge to its ability to define a role and a voice for itself in a newly emerging social context. A number of factors need to be considered.

2.4.1.2 **Underdevelopment of policy and infrastructure to promote volunteering**: The importance of fostering and supporting volunteering is noted in the White Paper, Supporting Voluntary Activity, which states, for example, that volunteer bureaux have a key part to play. At present, however, this infrastructure is, by international standards, very underdeveloped in Ireland and consists of a mere handful of volunteer bureaux and centres. The White Paper also acknowledges the role of a national volunteer initiative, despite the under-development of this infrastructure in Ireland. At the level of voluntary organisations, too, there is a strong volunteering ethos although legislative protection or support does not match the need. As will be seen in Chapter Nine, the extent of volunteer development agencies, programmes and initiatives in other countries reflects a more longstanding governmental concern with volunteering. Moreover, the presence of a strong tradition of voluntary sector activity is not a guarantee that the infrastructure required for the future will emerge spontaneously. (See Appendix 3 for an overview of the current infrastructure in Ireland which supports volunteering.)

2.4.1.3 **Demographic Change**: As will be seen in Chapter Three, volunteer activity in Ireland differs by age cohort. Concern was expressed in the White Paper

about the lower levels of volunteering among young people, particularly in the context of the specific demographics of Irish society. Ireland has one of the youngest populations in Europe and is also experiencing rapid population growth. Some of that is attributable to returned emigrants but it is partly attributable to new immigrants. Population projections indicate that the population will start to mirror that of the rest of the EU and will start to age (Fahey 1997). Nevertheless, returning emigrants and newly-arrived immigrants, primarily of child-bearing age, coupled with the trend in women postponing the birth of their first child (Whitaker 2001) may mean, however, that our population will most likely retain a younger profile for some time to come. A growing young population, and increased population growth in the working age bracket provides a potential basis for increased volunteering. However, policy will be required to reach younger people in order to realise this potential. Moreover, comparative research shows that if young people 'miss the boat' they are more difficult to motivate as volunteers throughout later life (see below, Chapter Nine).

2.4.1.4 **Economic change**: Ireland has experienced massive economic change in the past decade. Formerly one of the poorest countries in the EU in the 1980s, Ireland became one of the fastest-growing economies in the 1990s, with enormous growth in average income. A concomitant of this growth has been dramatic increase in total employment, and a major decline in unemployment. Many problems remain, as the increased wealth has not been distributed equitably, and the 'Celtic Tiger' years have also bequeathed a widening income gap with relative poverty levels increasing (Nolan et al. 2000). There have also been other changes in Irish lifestyles such as the growth of double-income families and households, more time spent commuting, busier lives in general and less time for other activities. Clearly this presents a complex situation for volunteer-involving organisations and for the development of policies. While rising labour force participation can impede the flow of new volunteers, it is not necessarily those in employment who are the most difficult to recruit. Nevertheless, specifically targeted initiatives and nuance in the policy approach will be essential.

2.4.1.5 **Regionalisation**: In addition to demographic changes in structure and spread, economic growth and disparity of distribution, there has also been increasing regionalisation in Ireland. The eastern region, in particular the area around Dublin, has seen substantial growth and a corresponding strain on infrastructure which is not developed enough to cope with this increase in size and scale. The recent administrative division of the country into the Border, Midland and Western Region (BMW) and Southern and Eastern Region (SER) for EU funding purposes is a reflection of this regional disparity, which raises new problems, in itself, for future development and representation. It also poses problems for the development of volunteering. Less developed areas with dispersed populations may be lacking in reserves of potential volunteers, and in volunteer-involving organisations. Therefore, regional, and indeed local variations and, moreover, the changing patterns at sub-national level, need to be taken into account in developing a policy response.

2.4.1.6 **Changing values**: Alongside all of these changes and inherent in them is a change in values. Studies and commentary have focused on growing consumerism, individualism and declining religiosity (MacGreil 2000). This change in values represents a challenge for the Ireland of the future. It would be wrong to be fatalistic in response to this, however, because there are many potential motivations for volunteering, not all incompatible with a more individualistic culture. Moreover, we should not overstate the extent of communal values in the past. It will be important to identify and utilise opportunities by tapping into the potential for enlightened individuality and new forms of communitarian living.

2.4.1.7 **Increasing heterogeneity in Irish society**: Over the past decade Ireland has become much less homogenous. There is greater ethnic and cultural diversity than in previous decades, not only as a result of immigration but also due to growing interaction with other cultures via the explosion in communications and media, and greater respect for diversity on the basis of other differences. While racism, homophobia and ethnocentricity are apparent, the opening up of Ireland is very welcome. Indeed, from the perspective of voluntary activity, increased diversity is a positive factor and is usually associated with active civic participation and a stimulus to establishing voluntary organisations.

2.4.1.8 **Partnerships and social partnership**: 'Partnership' processes have become very significant at every level in Ireland, and partnership is now an intrinsic institutional

dimension of governance at central level in social and economic policy. Government, business interests, unionised labour, farming interests and latterly the community and voluntary sector have worked together to achieve a consensus on strategic issues. The partnership process has been significantly supported by the state, and complemented by area-based partnership companies for local development. Indeed the concept of partnership informs a growing range of policy fields including sports and local government. Policy in relation to the voluntary sector has also been developed and informed by partnership concepts, and this should provide a positive context in which to address the issues of volunteering policy and infrastructure.

2.4.1.9 **Changing ideas on citizenship**: The relationship between individual and state are an important focus of attention in contemporary Ireland. Partnership implies consensus and negotiation at the level of organisations and collective interests. To be properly grounded, however, it needs to be underpinned by a shift in the relationship between citizens and wider society, whether through communities, organisations or the State itself. This is interesting and particularly important, because it arises within the context of increasing individualism as a value change in Ireland. The re-working of the individual's relationship with the State as a citizen, therefore, could be seen as one challenge arising from this. As Ireland becomes more diverse, too, the concept of citizenship deserves a rethink. This will have implications for how volunteering is viewed, since it is very closely intertwined with concepts of citizenship.

2.4.1.10 **Active citizenship and social capital**: The White Paper notes that volunteering is a key factor in societal health and well-being. As such, the Government's stated interest in social capital and active citizenship is linked to its encouragement of voluntarism. The National Committee on Volunteering was established in order to fulfil that rationale.

2.4.1.11 **The Voluntary Sector and Active Democracy**: Central to all of the developments in Ireland over the past few decades has been the voluntary sector. It acts as a barometer of change in our society but also as a voice that constantly notes what has to be done to represent the varying, and sometimes conflicting voices as shown in the section above. In this way, voluntary organisations play a vital role as democracy in action. The needs of different citizens find expression in a vibrant voluntary sector, which provides an important element of participatory democracy.

2.4.1.12 The strategic importance of voluntary activity in maintaining social stability and in generating social renewal is being specifically recognised in the context of the EU. This is evident in several ways. For example, political engagement in the construction of society is seen as crucial to avoiding a 'democratic deficit' and the growth of alienation from the State. In addition, voluntary organisations are seen as key partners in the development and delivery of responsive and innovative welfare systems. The voluntary sector as the so-called third sector is vital to democracy because it can express the needs of different citizens and provide a critical voice. Such a critique of the State is essential to the workings and survival of democracy and helps prevent stagnation in the political and social systems.

2.4.1.13 **EU recognition of the role of civil society**: In the political sphere, the European Commission has identified the voluntary sector's contribution to the promotion of citizenship and the promotion of democracy. For many people, involvement with voluntary organisations 'provides a vital means through which they can express their sense of citizenship, and demonstrate an active concern for their fellows and for society at large' (European Commission 1997: Section 8). With respect to the promotion of democracy, voluntary sector organisations are seen to provide 'the essential underpinnings of our democracy' (European Commission 1997: Section 9). In particular, voluntary organisations are seen as essential 'intermediaries in the exchange of information and opinion between governments and citizens' (European Commission 1997: Section 9.2).

2.4.1.14 The European Commission recognises the economic significance of voluntary organisations not only because they can create employment through training and volunteering but also because they provide opportunities for individuals to gain social and economic abilities. '(The) sector has shown itself capable of opening up new opportunities not just to improving the quality of life but also employment and economic growth. It is for this reason that the sector should be encouraged to play a bigger part in the quest for job creation' (European Commission 1997: Section 6.7).

2.5 Conclusion

2.5.1.1 Together, these developments mean not only that
Ireland is changing, but that it is vital to plan for such
change and to chart the future. The volunteer is central
to voluntary organisations, as already noted, and therefore
central to the future of the voluntary sector in Ireland.
Not only do volunteers provide a very important resource
to organisations but also they are in many respects the
defining characteristic of voluntary organisations.
They provide legitimacy for the organisations as
voluntary organisations and where the motivations of
a volunteer are the same as those of the organisation
they thereby provide a boost and support to the
organisation's values.

2.5.1.2 This has also been recognised by the Irish government.
According to the White Paper, '(an) active voluntary and
community sector contributes to a democratic, pluralist
society, provides opportunities for the development
of decentralised institutional administrative structures
and fosters a climate in which innovative solutions to
complex social problems and enhancement of quality
of life can be enhanced for all' (Department of Social,
Community and Family Affairs 2000: 41).

Offerings
Máighréad Medbh

When my hand meets yours, we might end up confused,
in the touching forget who moved first, whose need
brought us to this side-by-side seat, this roused
state where the air has begun to scatter seed.
I came to teach you reading. You taught me what
you knew of birds nestling in the hills where
you escaped from a vicious school and a hot-
headed father. You found gems in the hushed lairs.
We drop pennies into the well of answers,
knowing all our actions give thanks or deny.
We may be the butterfly clapper that stirs
our own healing wind, a balm we'd never buy.
Adam and God perform their dance in the round,
each by times in the cloud, by times on the ground.

Part One

3 Trends and Patterns of Volunteering in Ireland

3.1.1.1 The purpose of this chapter is to give a profile of volunteering in Ireland in order to highlight current trends and thereby to indicate areas that require attention for future policy making in the area. The chapter presents findings drawn from three surveys of volunteering in Ireland conducted during the 1990s. In the following section, the main sources, methodology and approach to presentation here are summarised. The third section presents a socio-demographic profile of volunteers. In the fourth section, the reasons given for volunteering are presented and section five presents data on barriers to volunteering as reported by survey respondents. The final section draws together the main findings and the implications for policy.

Data sources, methodology and presentation

3.1.1.2 The principal data sources from which we draw below are three surveys conducted in 1992, 1994 and 1997-98 (The results of each survey have been previously published as separate reports, in Ruddle and O'Connor 1993; Ruddle and Mulvihill 1995; Ruddle and Mulvihill 1999). Secondary analysis was conducted on the data collected for the most recent of these surveys, while the published reports alone were used, in the absence of an accessible available data set for the earlier survey years of 1992 and 1994, the published findings. These sources provided an overview of patterns and trends in volunteering through much of the 1990s.

3.1.1.3 The data were collected by random stratified sampling of the population aged 18 and over, based on polling sampling units. In the 1992 and 1994 surveys, 1,000 individuals were surveyed on their giving and volunteering behaviour. These surveys were conducted at one stage in the year and respondents were asked to give an account of their behaviour in the month prior to the survey. In the 1997–1998 study, there were 1,187 respondents. This survey was conducted over the course of a year, with groups of 100 respondents who were asked each month to answer questions on their behaviour during the previous month. Full details of methodology used can be obtained in Ruddle and O'Connor (1993) and Ruddle and Mulvihill (1995, 1999). These are the most up-to-date national data available in Ireland.

3.2.1 Rate of volunteering by age and sex

3.2.1.1 Since the first survey was carried out in 1992, the rate of volunteering in Ireland has declined from 39 per cent to 33 per cent of the population, as can be seen in TABLE 1 below. The decline in volunteering was far more evident amongst men than amongst women. Whereas women only demonstrated a decline of one percentage point over the survey periods, men showed a nine percentage point decrease. Moreover, the rate of volunteering among women was higher in the early 1990s so that the effect over time was a substantial widening of the existing gap.

TABLE 1: *Percentages volunteering by sex in the 1990s*				
Volunteers	**1992**	**1994**	**1997–8**	**Change (%)**
Female	41.0	38.9	40.0	(1)
Male	37.0	30.9	28.0	(9)
Total	38.9	35.1	33.3	(5.6)

3.2.2 Rates of volunteering by age group

3.2.2.1 In TABLE 2, which presents data for different age groups of volunteers across the survey years, it can be seen that the overall decline in rates of volunteering is not uniform in all age groups. Interestingly, despite the fact that young people are among the group least likely to volunteer, the decline in this group becoming involved in voluntary work is not as great as for other groups.

3.2.2.2 The largest decrease is among those aged between 40 and 49. This is the group that showed the highest rate of volunteering in 1992, with over half of that age cohort reporting having volunteered in the month prior to the survey being conducted. By 1997–1998 this group showed a decline of 10 percentage points. Although still a very important source of volunteers, those in their forties had, by this time, been superseded by individuals aged 50–59. This could be attributed to the ageing process and it could be conjectured that a proportion of those in their forties in 1992 were aged in their fifties and still active as volunteers by the time

of the most recent survey. Yet, this greying of volunteers does not hold amongst those aged over 60 and there was a decline of five percentage points in the rate of their participation over the survey periods.

TABLE 2: *Percentages volunteering by age*				
Age Groups	1992	1994	1997–8	Change (%)
18–29	31.4	27.9	31.1	(0.3)
30–39	39.6	39.0	32.8	(6.8)
40–49	50.8	39.1	40.8	(10.0)
50–59	50.4	46.5	47.8	(2.6)
60+	30.5	27.8	25.4	(5.1)
Total	38.9	35.1	33.3	(5.6)

3.2.2.3 TABLE 3 possibly sheds further light on these emerging trends. A breakdown of the age of volunteers by sex was not available for all of the survey years but the data for 1997–98 indicate that men in the 18–29 and 60-plus categories were the least likely to volunteer. Older women, that is, those aged over 60, also exhibit a somewhat lower volunteering rate, along with men aged in their thirties. In contrast to young men aged 18–29, women of the same age demonstrate a much higher volunteering rate and it is when women get into their thirties that the rate falls only to rise again when women get to 40. Almost 60 per cent of women in their fifties volunteer.

TABLE 3: *Percentages volunteering by age and sex in 1997-98*			
Age Groups	All Volunteers	Women	Men
18-29	31.1	39.4	22.1
30-39	32.8	35.9	29.3*
40-49	40.8	44.8	35.1*
50-59	47.8	58.3	33.8
60+	25.4	28.3	21.2*

*The differences between men and women in these age groups were not statistically significant.

3.2.3 **Educational status of volunteers**

3.2.3.1 TABLE 4 compares the educational qualifications of volunteers between the mid and late 1990s. The data indicate that there is positive association between educational attainment level and the rate of volunteering. Moreover, those with primary certificates are not only the least likely to volunteer, but have shown the largest decrease in volunteering over the survey years. Individuals with other higher qualifications showed a very small decline between the two survey years, by comparison.

TABLE 4: *Percentages volunteering by educational attainment*			
Education	1994	1997–98	% change
Primary Certificate	29.9	23.2	(6.7)
Group/Intermediate Certificate	32.5	32.4	(0.1)
Leaving Certificate	40.4	39.2	(1.2)
Third Level Qualification	49.6	48.6	(1.0)
All levels	**35.1**	**33.3**	**(1.8)**

3.2.3.2 TABLE 5 provides a breakdown of volunteers by educational qualifications and sex in 1997–1998. From this, as in the age data, it emerges that differences among women (though not among men) are statistically significant. Women with a third level qualification are almost twice as likely to volunteer as those holding a Primary Certificate . So far, therefore, the data suggest that women have a greater tendency to volunteer and this tendency increases with both age and educational attainment.

TABLE 5: *Percentages volunteering by education and sex*		
Educational Attainment	**Persons**	**Women**
Primary Certificate	23.2	24.4
Group Certificate	30.4	39.0
Intermediate Certificate	33.5	39.1
Leaving Certificate	39.2	44.4
Third Level Qualification	48.6	56.8

3.2.4 Socio-economic status of volunteers

3.2.4.1 As with educational attainment, a positive association was found between volunteering and socio-economic status. Individuals most likely to volunteer were drawn from the higher socio-economic groups, particularly the professions and higher managerial class, and from farmers with more than 50 acres. The data also show, however, that the differences between the AB and C2 socio-economic groups have decreased over time and that all socio-economic groups, apart from C2, showed a decline in their tendency to participate. While DE was the socio-economic group that showed the greatest decline, the volunteering rate of AB also decreased by six percentage points. (It should be noted that there were no data available for farming groups in 1992).

TABLE 6: *Percentages volunteering by socio-economic status in the 1990s*			
Socio-economic group	**1992**	**1997–98**	**Change (%)**
AB (Professional and managerial)	50.4	44.3	(6.1)
C1 (Non-manual and administrative)	44.7	40.6	(4.1)
C2 (Skilled manual)	34.5	35.5	(1.0)
DE (Unskilled, unemployed)	34.0	25.9	(8.1)
All groups	**38.9**	**33.3**	**(5.6)**

3.2.4.2 TABLE 7 provides a closer look at the socio-economic status data for 1997–98 only. Again, in each socio-economic grouping, women were more likely to volunteer than men. However, the differences between women and men were greatest among farmers with more than 50 acres and in the C1 and C2 classes. Both women and men in class DE were the least likely to volunteer, as were women on farms of less than 50 acres.

TABLE 7: *Percentage volunteering by socio-economic status and sex in 1997-98*			
Socio-economic group	All	Women	Men
AB (Professional and managerial)	44.3	48.3	40.2
C1 (Non-manual and administrative)	40.6	46.2	29.5
C2 (Skilled manual)	35.5	42.4	27.5
DE (Unskilled, unemployed)	25.9	30.0	20.5
F50+ (Farmers 50+ acres)	49.3	68.0	38.6
F50- (Farmers <50 acres)	10.7	20.0	-

3.2.4.3 Table 8 presents the employment status of volunteers during the 1990s. In 1992, those most likely to volunteer were involved in part-time work. This proportion dropped significantly in the 1994 survey but rose again in 1997–1998. In fact, part-time workers along with students were the only groups to record an increase in their volunteering rates over the survey years. All the other groups showed a decline in their rate of volunteering, the most significant being the unemployed (seven per cent) and those in full-time paid employment (six per cent).

TABLE 8: *Percentages volunteering by employment status*			
Employment status	1992	1994	1997–8	Change (%)
Full-time	40.3	38.0	34.3	(6.0)
Part-time	47.0	25.4	52.2	5.2
Unemployed	24.7	31.1	17.8	(6.9)
Retired	33.3	27.4	28.6	(4.7)
Working inside home	41.5	47.1	37.7	(3.8)
Student	39.5	23.5	45.7	(6.2)
Total	38.9	35.1	33.3	(5.6)

3.2.5 Household income and volunteers

3.2.5.1 Unsurprisingly, given the association already noted between socio-economic status and volunteering, TABLE 9 indicates that volunteering shows some correspondence with gross household income. In other words, in 1997–1998, respondents in households with a gross annual income of more than £15,652 were more likely to volunteer than those with a lower income, while those living in a household with a gross annual income of £26,000 were the most likely of all to engage in voluntary activity.

TABLE 9: *Household income and volunteering in Ireland (%)*		
Gross Household Income	Volunteers	Non volunteers
<£100	5.3	13.0
£101-150	13.7	17.6
£151-200	11.1	16.1
£201-300	18.7	19.7
£301-500	24.9	18.4
£500	26.3	15.3

3.2.6 Volunteering by geographic location in Ireland

3.2.6.1 As shown in TABLE 10, those living in towns were more likely to volunteer than those living in either rural or urban areas in 1997–1998. This was especially evident amongst female volunteers (but the difference was not statistically significant for male respondents). Data were not available for either 1992 or 1994 survey years.

TABLE 10: **Percentages volunteering by location in 1997–98**		
Location	All	Women
Urban	32.7	37.2
Town	42.9	50.8
Rural	33.2	38.2

3.2.6.2 TABLE 11 presents data on the regional spread of volunteers in 1997–1998. As can be seen, the participation rate of the population in volunteering in the south-eastern counties (Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford) was by far the highest at 56 per cent. These counties stand in contrast to the north-eastern counties (Cavan, Louth, Meath and Monaghan) where only 19 per cent of the population was engaged in voluntary activity. The north-western counties (Donegal, Leitrim and Sligo) also had lower rates of volunteering (at 27 per cent). As further evidence of the greater participation rate in volunteering in the south-east, 12 per cent of respondents were based in those counties, compared to 20 per cent of volunteers. Seven per cent of respondents lived in the north-east and also in the north-west, while four and five per cent of all volunteers were from these regions, respectively.

3.2.6.3 The breakdown of volunteers among the sexes is interesting when viewed in the regional context. As already indicated above, we know that there is a difference nationally in the rate of participation in volunteering between the sexes. When viewed regionally, it can be seen that both women and men in the south-east participate in volunteering in very similar proportions. This is the only region in the country where the difference between the sexes is not significant. In all other regions, there is a difference of at least seven percentage points (the midlands) which rises to 25 percentage points in the mid-west, 22 percentage points in the north-west and almost 20 percentage points in the west, (the difference between men and women nationally is 12 percentage points). In the north-east, the region with lowest participation rates in volunteering, there is a ten percentage point difference between men and women, and both sexes demonstrate a lower than average rate of participation.

TABLE 11: *Percentages volunteering by region in 1997–98*			
Region	All	Women	Men
East	32.8	36.6	27.5
Midlands	35.0	38.0	31.3
Mid-West	36.4	47.6	22.9
North-East	19.1	23.1	13.5
North-West	27.5	37.0	14.7
South	33.9	40.6	23.4
South-East	55.9	56.3	55.2
West	32.8	43.1	24.7
State	**33.3**	**40.0**	**28.0**

3.2.7 **Summary of profile**

3.2.7.1 The profile presented in this section indicates first that women are more likely to volunteer than men. Secondly, those with higher educational qualifications, among the higher socio-economic groups and with higher earnings are also more likely to volunteer. The data indicate that the groups showing low volunteering rates over the survey years are those holding Primary Certificates in education, belonging to class DE and the unemployed. Furthermore, one of the groups with the highest rate of volunteering, that is those aged in their forties, showed the sharpest decline in volunteering rates over the survey periods.

3.2.7.2 Regionally, the data indicate that volunteering is highest in the south-east and lowest in the north-east, followed by the north-west. Analysis of the data by sex indicates further that both women and men participate in equal proportions in the south-east. In the north-east, however, both women and men demonstrate a lower than average participation rate in volunteering. Furthermore, the proportion of men volunteering in the north-west is almost as low as men volunteering in the north-east.

3.2.7.3 The data indicate, therefore, that the 'message' of volunteering may not be reaching those who are unemployed and in lower socio-economic groups. Given the contribution of volunteering to social capital, and that those who are less likely to be marginalised are more likely to participate, the data suggest that differences in the level of volunteering need to be addressed. Declining rates of volunteering for other groups, such as those in full-time paid employment and in the highest socio-economic group (AB), while not as great as in the lowest socio-economic group, also indicate that there may be an overall decline in participation rates in the future.

3.2.7.4 Young men, particularly those aged under 30 are least likely to volunteer. There is also the possibility that the potential pool of volunteers amongst those who are retired is not being sufficiently tapped at present. This group has always been under-represented among volunteers and, like those who are in lower socio-economic groupings, may need to have special measures and supports targeted at them so that they are enabled to 'hear' the message.

3.3 MOTIVATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERING

3.3.1 Reasons for volunteering

3.3.1.1 TABLE 12 presents reasons for engaging in volunteering across all survey years. The key reasons emerging in all of the surveys were identified and compared. The most significant finding to emerge is the decrease in the proportion of individuals participating in volunteering because they 'wanted to help'. Almost 30 per cent of volunteering in 1992 stated that was their primary motivation; a proportion which fell slightly in 1994 to just over one-quarter. By 1997–1998, however, just under one-eight of all respondents stated this as a reason for getting involved. Therefore a decrease of 17 percentage points occurred over the survey years.

3.3.1.2 Furthermore, this reason ('wanting to help') slipped from first place to third place between 1992 and 1997–1998. In addition, the second most important reason in 1992, 'belief in the cause', had become the top reason for volunteering in 1997–1998, and it showed a seven percentage point increase over this period. Other reasons that were less important in 1992 also increased in significance: neighbourliness, knowing or liking those involved and having time to spare. The enjoyment factor of volunteering, meanwhile, has consistently hovered around the seven per cent mark since 1992.

3.3.2 Reasons for volunteering by gender

3.3.2.1 TABLE 13 presents a breakdown of the reasons given above for female and male respondents in the 1997–1998 survey. It should be noted here that the proportions opting for each reason are higher than those given in TABLE 12. As the data for 1992 and 1994 were presented as proportions of 100, the findings for 1997–1998 were weighted for comparison purposes. In TABLE 13 the unadjusted proportions are given as respondents were able to opt for more than one reason. It should be noted that in 1992 and 1994 respondents were also able to opt for more reason – and did – but for presentation purposes those data were adjusted in the reports (Ruddle and O'Connor 1993, Ruddle and Mulvihill 1995) to appear as proportions of 100 per cent.

3.3.2.2 While both women and men show an ideological bias, that is 'belief in the cause', the shift towards which was evident during the 1990s, as seen in TABLE 12 above, there is a difference between the respondents. Men are more likely than women to cite this as a reason and are less likely than women to either state that they were asked to help or that they wanted to help. Women were more likely to state that they had time to spare and to cite religious duty as an influence in their participation.

Reason	1992	1994	1997–98*	% change
Belief in cause	8.4	2.5	15.4	7.0
Was asked to help	n/a	n/a	12.5	n/a
Wanted to help	28.8	25.5	11.5	(17.3)
Wanted to be neighbourly	6.6	12.3	10.7	4.1
Knew/liked	6.1	8.4	10.3	4.2
Spare time	3.4	4.2	7.9	4.5
Enjoyment	7.1	6.9	7.1	-

TABLE 12: *Reasons for volunteering 1992 to 1997-8*

*All other years were originally presented as proportions of 100%; 1997–98 figures weighted (by .359324) to reflect a similar proportion as originals were based on figures greater than 100% because individuals could answer more than one reason.

TABLE 13: *Reasons for volunteering by sex in 1997–98 (%)*			
Reasons	All	Women	Men
Belief in cause	42.9	41.5	45.3
Was asked to help	34.7	32.0	39.6
Wanted to help	32.1	34.8	27.3
Wanted to be neighbourly	29.8	32.8	24.5
Knew people involved	28.8	28.9	28.8
Time to spare	22.2	24.1	18.7
Enjoyment	19.6	19.4	20.1
Religious duty	12.8	14.2	10.1
Interest outside home	11.7	11.1	12.9

TABLE 14: *Reasons for volunteering among women by age*					
Reason	18–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+
Belief in cause	35.3	28.1	50.7	50.0	30.2
Asked to help	45.2	34.4	29.6	30.4	30.2
Wanted to help	35.5	37.5	32.4	32.1	35.8
To be neighbourly	14.7	43.8	23.9	35.7	45.3
Knew or liked people involved	29.4	18.8	33.8	26.8	34.0
Spare time	20.6	25.0	16.9	25.0	35.8
Enjoyment	17.6	28.1	29.6	10.7	13.2

3.3.3 Reasons for volunteering by age

3.3.3.1 A breakdown by age within the female and male groups of respondents, as given in Tables 14 and 15, is a little more illuminating. Here, young men (who are amongst the least likely to volunteer) are most likely to become involved because of believing in a cause. Those not expressing as strong a preference but still believing that this is of prime importance, are women in their forties and both women and men in their fifties. It is interesting to note too that (in comparison with young men) these are the age groups demonstrating the highest participation rates in volunteering.

3.3.3.2 While young men under the age of 30 are more ideologically attracted, young women of the same age tend to have a different reason for becoming involved in voluntary activity. Being asked to help is more important for young women in their teens and twenties and more important not only in comparison with all other women but also most men, except those in their thirties and forties.

TABLE 15: *Reasons for volunteering among men by age*					
Reason	18–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+
Belief in cause	57.9	32.0	41.0	52.0	42.9
Asked to help	36.8	48.0	43.6	40.0	28.6
Wanted to help	26.3	24.0	35.9	40.0	10.7
To be neighbourly	15.8	24.0	28.2	28.0	25.0
Knew or liked people involved	15.8	32.0	38.5	24.0	25.0
Spare time	10.5	20.0	12.8	20.0	32.1
Enjoyment	36.8	28.0	17.9	12.0	10.7

3.3.4 Reasons for volunteering by education and socio-economic status

3.3.4.1 As shown in Table 16 below, 'belief in a cause' was the main reason for volunteering among those holding the Group or Intermediate Certificate or higher. It was only amongst those respondents with a Primary Certificate that other factors, particularly wanting to be neighbourly, were important.

3.3.4.2 Volunteering because of a belief in a cause was most important for respondents in the higher professional and managerial classes. It was also most important, although smaller proportions of respondents in these groups were in support, among the non-manual, administrative and skilled manual classes. Amongst the lower socio-economic groups, those in semi- and unskilled occupations and those who were unemployed, wanting to help and wanting to be neighbourly were the primary motivations in getting involved in voluntary activity.

TABLE 16: *Reasons for volunteering by educational qualifications 1997-1998*				
Reason	**Primary Cert**	**Group/Inter Cert**	**Leaving Cert**	**Third Level**
Belief in cause	31.4	52.5	46.7	46.3
Was asked to help	25.7	39.6	31.8	38.9
Wanted to help	40.0	28.3	29.0	34.3
Wanted to be neighbourly	47.1	34.9	22.2	21.3
Knew/liked	31.4	32.1	28.0	25.0
Spare time	22.9	19.8	29.0	17.6
Enjoyment	8.6	18.9	23.4	24.1

TABLE 17: *Reasons for volunteering by socio-economic status 1997–98*					
Reason	**AB**	**C1**	**C2**	**DE**	**F50+**
Belief in cause	55.4	38.5	43.0	39.0	39.4
Was asked to help	36.9	37.6	36.7	26.0	48.5
Wanted to help	27.7	31.2	32.9	42.0	15.2
Wanted to be neighbourly	23.1	25.7	31.6	40.0	21.2
Knew/liked	26.2	29.4	19.0	38.0	27.3
Spare time	27.7	19.3	26.6	21.0	12.1
Enjoyment	20.0	23.9	19.0	12.0	33.3

*Please note that this run did not compute for respondents on farms of less than 50 acres because thenumber of respondents was too low

3.3.5 Benefits of volunteering

TABLE 18: *Benefits of volunteering in the 1990s*			
Benefits	**1992**	**1994**	**1997–98***	**% Change**
Seeing results	18.4	32.7	20.6	2.2
Doing good	15.0	36.6	18.5	3.5
Meeting people	n/a	4.2	15.6	11.4
Enjoyment	8.7	6.8	13.1	4.4
Being appreciated	2.8	1.0	7.9	5.1
Gaining experience, skills	n/a	2.2	6.9	4.7
Forget own problems	N/A	0.8	6.6	5.8
Reward in heaven	1.2	1.0	5.2	4.0

* All other years were originally presented as proportions of 100%;
1997–98 figures weighted (by .379939) to reflect a similar proportion as
originals were based on figures greater than 100% because individuals
could answer more than one reason.

3.3.5.1 TABLE 18 lists the benefits of volunteering as identified by respondents across the three survey years. While the table shows an increase over the years, the 1992 data were coded differently from those collected in 1994 and 1997–1998 making direct comparisons more difficult. Comparing the two later survey periods, therefore, the benefits of 'seeing results' and 'doing good' are less important in the late 1990s than in the mid-1990s. Meeting people, the enjoyment of volunteering and being appreciated for getting involved in voluntary activity are significantly higher in importance.

3.3.5.2 TABLE 19 shows the breakdown between men and women with regard to the benefits of volunteering that they cited in the 1997–98 survey. For men, seeing results was the most important benefit, while for women doing good was most important. Among women, there was not a great or significant difference between doing good and seeing results (2.8 percentage points). Among men, seeing results was followed in importance by meeting people and enjoyment. Female respondents appear to be highlighting altruism and the instrumental factor of achievement. Men, meanwhile, prefer achievement and the self-benefiting factors of volunteering.

TABLE 19: *Benefits of volunteering in 1997–1998*			
Benefits	All	Women	Men
Seeing results	54.1	52.4	57.1
Doing good	48.7	55.2	37.1
Meeting people	41.1	39.3	44.3
Enjoyment	34.4	30.6	41.4
Being appreciated	20.9	21.0	20.7
Gaining experience, skills	18.1	17.1	20.0
Forget own problems	17.3	20.6	11.4
Reward in heaven	13.8	15.5	10.7

3.3.7 Benefits of Volunteering by Age

3.3.7.1 TABLES 20 and 21 analyse the benefits of volunteering by different age and gender. Amongst women, seeing results is most important for women in their thirties. Men in their forties and fifties also think this is the most important benefit.

TABLE 20: *Benefits of volunteering for women of different ages 1997–98*					
Benefits	18–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+
Seeing results	57.9	65.6	59.7	60.0	35.8
Doing good	70.6	43.8	50.0	58.2	54.7
Meeting people	20.6	34.4	41.7	41.8	49.1
Enjoyment	35.3	37.5	30.6	21.8	35.8
Being appreciated	50.0	15.6	11.1	21.8	18.9
Experience, skills, to be active	23.5	25.0	22.2	12.7	7.5
Forget own problems	14.7	15.6	25.0	18.2	20.8
Reward in heaven	17.6	6.3	11.1	18.2	20.8

3.3.7.2 Younger women, those aged between 18 and 29, voted overwhelmingly for altruistic benefits. Of all age groups, they stand out for their preference for the benefit of 'doing good'. Not only are they different from the majority of their sisters, but they are also very different from their male cohorts, who are more likely to cite enjoyment (53%). Men of this age (18–29) are also noticeable for another reason; along with older men they are the least likely to indicate very strong preferences for any benefit. For example 60 per cent or more of women of different ages, apart from the oldest women, cite one reward of volunteering. Over 60 per cent of men in their thirties and forties also indicate a preference for one or more benefits.

3.3.7.3 If there is a lower rate of volunteering amongst men than women, perhaps they are not being appealed to as strongly. Believing in the cause is important for men, and particularly so for young men, but perhaps the benefits of volunteering are not as evident to this group. Yet, greater proportions of men than women up to the age of 60 cite the enjoyment factor of volunteering. Indeed, a comparison of women and men under 40 shows this difference between the sexes most starkly. Half of men aged 18–29 cite the enjoyment of volunteering compared with just over one-third of women of the same age. Almost two-thirds of men in their thirties note this benefit compared with 38 per cent of their female counterparts.

TABLE 21: *Benefits of volunteering for men of different ages 1997–98*					
Benefits	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Seeing results	41.2	64.0	64.1	40.0	50.0
Doing good	47.4	24.0	38.5	48.0	28.6
Meeting people	31.6	48.0	41.0	44.0	50.0
Enjoyment	52.6	64.0	35.9	36.0	25.0
Being appreciated	36.8	24.0	20.5	24.0	7.1
Experience, skills, to be active	21.1	8.0	25.6	20.0	25.0
Forget own problems	10.5	12.0	5.1	16.0	17.9
Reward in heaven	5.3	4.0	12.8	8.0	21.4

3.3.8 Benefits of volunteering by education and socio-economic status

3.3.8.1 'Seeing results' emerges as the most important benefit for those with a Group or Intermediate certificate in education and higher, and particularly so for those holding the Leaving certificate. Doing good is a more important benefit for those holding primary certificates. Meanwhile, the citing of enjoyment of volunteering as a benefit increases with educational attainment, while meeting people declines in importance.

TABLE 22: *Benefits of volunteering by educational qualifications 1997–98*				
Benefits	**Primary**	**Group/Inter**	**Leaving**	**Third Level**
Seeing results	41.4	52.9	60.2	56.9
Doing good	58.6	45.2	47.2	47.7
Meeting people	44.3	42.3	41.7	36.7
Enjoyment	22.9	36.5	33.3	40.4
Being appreciated	22.9	19.2	17.6	24.8
Experience, skills, be active	10.0	15.4	19.4	24.8
Forget own problems	18.6	22.1	15.7	13.8
Reward in heaven	17.1	18.3	10.2	11.0

3.3.8.2 While seeing results is a very important benefit for most socio-economic groups, it is most important, by far, for respondents from farms with more than 50 acres. Doing good emerges as the most important benefit for those respondents from routine non-manual classes and those in the lower socio-economic groups. Those most likely to benefit from enjoying volunteering are respondents from the higher professional and managerial groups and those farming more than 50 acres.

3.3.8.3 In summary, while believing in the cause is the main reason for getting involved in volunteering, it emerges as most important for young men, women in their forties and fifties and men in their fifties. It is also the most important motivating factor for those in higher socio-economic groups. Throughout the 1990s, wanting to help declined in importance overall but remained a more important motivating factor for women than for men. Of all the benefits cited, seeing results was the most important, particularly for men in their thirties and forties and women in their thirties and fifties. It was also important for the higher socio-economic groups and for those with higher educational qualifications. Doing good emerged as most important for women overall, and most especially for young women. Men cited the enjoyment factor in greater proportions than women, and this was the most important benefit, along with seeing results, for men in their thirties.

TABLE 23: *Benefits of volunteering by socio-economic status 1997–98*					
Benefits	AB	C1	C2	DE	F50+
Seeing results	57.2	52.3	59.5	45.9	75.8
Doing good	40.3	55.0	41.8	53.1	48.5
Meeting people	37.3	35.8	45.6	40.8	48.5
Enjoyment	40.3	31.2	34.2	32.7	39.4
Being appreciated	11.9	29.4	15.2	24.5	15.2
Experience, skills, to be active	17.9	22.0	21.5	10.2	24.2
Forget own problems	20.9	17.4	13.9	21.4	9.1
Reward in heaven	14.9	11.0	11.4	18.4	12.1

* Please note that this run did not compute for respondents on farms of less than 50 acres because the number of respondents was too low

3.4 ROUTES INTO VOLUNTEERING

3.4.1 Routes to volunteering during the 1990s

3.4.1.1 TABLE 26 compares the different routes taken by volunteers in two different survey periods, 1994 and 1997–98. These data have been grouped from data presented elsewhere (Ruddle and Mulvihill 1994, 1999) as follows: social networks (family, friends, neighbours); organisational route (membership of organisation, meetings of organisation, literature of organisation). As can be seen, social networks emerge as the most popular way of finding out about volunteering. What is also interesting, however, is the large increase in the use of the organisational route, which rose by almost 14 per cent between the mid- to late 1990s.

TABLE 26: *Routes to becoming involved in volunteering in the 1990s*			
Routes	**1994**	**1997–8**	**% Change**
Social networks	38.5	38.9	0.4
Organisational	16.6	30.1	13.5
Church or school	18.3	16.6	1.7
Mass media	3.1	3.5	0.4
Paid employment	4.7	3.5	1.2

3.4.2 Routes to volunteering by gender

3.4.2.1 TABLE 27 shows that men were far more likely to use the organisational route than women were and it was men's most popular avenue (although fairly evenly weighted with social networks). For women, social networks were by far the most important and there was also not a great difference between women's use of the organisational and church/school routes. Far less important, overall, were the mass media and paid employment. Women were slightly more likely to have used the mass media route, while men were more likely to have become involved through paid employment.

TABLE 27: *Routes to volunteering in 1997–98*			
Routes	**All**	**Women**	**Men**
Social networks	38.9	41.2	35.5
Organisational	30.1	25.7	36.6
Church or school	16.6	21.3	9.7
Mass media	3.5	5.1	1.1
Paid employment	3.5	2.2	5.4

3.4.3 Routes to volunteering by education

3.4.3.1 Analysis of these routes by educational level (the data showed no statistically significant difference for socio-economic status, location or age) sheds further light. As can be seen, the importance of the organisational route rises with educational attainment. Concomitantly, social networks decline in importance. Ten percentage points of a difference lie between Primary Certificate holders and those either engaged in third level education or with a third level qualification with regard to those two preferred routes.

TABLE 28: *Routes to volunteering in 1997–98 by educational qualifications*				
Routes	Primary	Group/Inter	Leaving	Third Level
Social networks	45.8	44.4	35.1	35.8
Organisational	25.0	22.2	32.4	35.8
Church or school	16.7	22.2	16.2	11.9
Mass media	-	3.2	5.4	3.0
Paid employment	-	-	1.4	10.4

3.4.4 Summary of findings on routes into volunteering

3.4.4.1 This section has shown that although social networks are still the most important way in which to find out about volunteering in Ireland, the use of the organisational route is increasing. Furthermore, there are differences between different social groups and the routes that they use. Women used social networks more than men but social networks decline in importance with educational qualifications and the organisational route increases in significance.

3.5 Barriers to volunteering

3.5.1 Reasons for not volunteering

3.5.1.1 TABLE 29 gives the main reasons cited by non-volunteers for 1994 and 1997–98. While non-volunteers cite 'lack of time' as the main reason in both years, it is of note that this reason declined in importance by 13 percentage points between the two survey periods. There were significant increases in two other reasons, 'never having thought about it' (up by nine percentage points), and 'not having been asked' (up by eight percentage points), although combined they were only as important as 'lack of time' in 1997–1998.

3.5.2 Reasons for not volunteering by gender and age

3.5.2.1 TABLES 30, 31 and 32 explore these data in more detail. As with the reasons for volunteering, given above, these data are left in their unadjusted state (rather than in TABLE 29 where they were weighted to reflect their relative positions as proportions of 100, for comparison purposes). Women were marginally more likely to cite the lack of time as a fact. Among men, however, a greater proportion, almost one-third, cited never having thought about volunteering. For women this was only noted by just over one-fifth.

3.5.2.2 Amongst women, those most likely to cite 'lack of time' were women in their forties (i.e. the group with the highest volunteering rates – TABLE 31). Never having thought about volunteering decreases as a reason with age, while never having been asked to volunteer is more important for women up to the age of 40.

TABLE 29: *Reasons for not volunteering in Ireland 1994 and 1997–98*			
Reasons	1994	1997–98*	% change
No time	45.7	32.5	(13.2)
Never thought about it	7.3	16.7	9.4
Was never asked	5.7	13.7	8.0
Too old	9.1	11.4	2.3
No transport	3.2	8.2	5.0

*All other years were originally presented as proportions of 100%; 1997-98 figures weighted (by .62665664) to reflect a similar proportion as originals were based on figures greater than 100% because individuals could answer more than one reason.

TABLE 30: *Reasons for not volunteering in 1997–98*			
Reasons	All	Women	Men
No time	51.9	52.5	51.3
Never thought about it	26.7	21.3	32.5
Was never asked	21.9	20.6	23.4
Too old	18.3	19.4	17.2
No transport	13.1	13.7	12.4
Don't think would like it	11.3	9.6	13.2

TABLE 31: *Reasons cited by women for not volunteering in 1997-98*					
Reasons	18–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+
No time	66.1	66.2	71.4	61.7	20.8
Never thought about it	30.5	25.4	25.3	10.6	16.9
Was never asked	28.8	30.1	19.8	21.3	12.3
Too old	-	1.4	-	4.3	56.2
No transport	11.9	18.3	4.4	31.9	12.3
Don't think would like it	10.2	8.5	9.9	10.6	10.0

3.5.2.3 Amongst men, lack of time and never having thought about volunteering are most important up to age 40. In fact, never having thought about volunteering is cited by a plurality in those two age groups (18-29 and 30-39). A higher proportion of these respondents cites this than any of the other age groups. If young men are less likely to volunteer, more may need to be done to get them aware and involved.

3.5.3 Reasons for not volunteering by education and socio-economic status

3.5.3.1 Both lack of time and never having thought about volunteering increase with educational qualifications, as can be seen in TABLE 33. As the rates of participation in volunteering also increase with educational attainment, the data presented in the table below indicate the potential for growth that exists among these groups, particularly with regard to those who have 'never though about' volunteering.

3.5.3.2 As shown in TABLE 34, lack of time, as a reason for not getting involved in voluntary activity, rises with socio-economic status. The data also demonstrate a lack of awareness among all socio-economic groups of volunteering. Again, as noted above, these data indicate the potential for improvement in the rates of participation of volunteering.

TABLE 32: *Reasons cited by men for not volunteering in 1997–98*

Reasons	18–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+
No time	69.7	64.2	61.3	55.8	22.3
Never thought about it	39.4	41.8	30.7	34.6	21.4
Was never asked	24.2	22.4	21.3	30.8	21.4
Too old	-	-	1.3	7.7	57.3
No transport	16.7	13.4	13.3	15.4	7.8
Don't think would like it	13.6	13.4	16.0	11.5	11.7

TABLE 33: *Reasons cited for not volunteering by educational level in 1997–98*

Reasons	Primary	Group/Inter	Leaving	Third Level
No time	31.3	52.0	65.9	70.9
Never thought about it	12.8	27.1	27.3	30.6
Was never asked	20.4	22.2	23.3	21.6
Too old	40.4	13.3	5.7	3.7
No transport	11.7	13.3	12.5	16.4
Don't think would like it	10.4	16.9	10.8	3.7

TABLE 34: *Reasons cited for not volunteering by socio-economic status in 1997–98*

Reasons	AB	C1	C2	DE	F50+
No time	72.4	61.2	61.4	33.2	56.8
Never thought about it	24.8	29.4	28.6	25.7	27.0
Was never asked	15.2	22.4	23.6	24.0	10.8
Too old	6.7	11.8	8.6	30.8	24.3
No transport	15.2	15.3	14.3	10.6	8.1
Don't think would like it	7.6	6.5	12.1	14.7	13.5

3.5.4 Reasons for giving up volunteering

3.5.4.1 In 1992, 19 per cent of the sample had given up volunteering. In 1994, this proportion fell to 16 per cent, while in 1997–1998 that proportion rose again to 21 per cent. Of that 21 per cent, more women than men had ceased voluntary activity (23% compared to 19%). TABLE 35 gives the reasons for giving up volunteering as cited by ex-volunteers over the three survey periods. As indicated already, although the time factor is the most important reason stated in all surveys, there is little change in the significance of this reason during the 1990s. Probably the finding of most interest is the increase between 1994 and 1997-98 in those who said that they gave up volunteering because they had 'lost interest' (6%).

TABLE 35: *Reasons for giving up volunteering in the 1990s*				
Reasons	1992	1994	1997–98	% change
New demands on time	34.0	30.6	34.7	0.7
Got older	16.5	10.8	10.2	6.3
Change in personal circumstances	6.2	11.5	10.2	4.0
Lost interest	n/a	3.8	10.2	6.4
Got sick	11.3	8.9	9.0	2.3
Moved away from area	13.9	10.2	9.0	4.9
No longer needed	1.5	1.9	4.9	3.4
Stopped when left school	2.1	5.7	4.1	2.0

3.5.5 Drawbacks of volunteering

3.5.5.1 To add to the data above, TABLE 36 examines the so-called 'drawbacks' of volunteering, as cited by volunteers in all survey years. Again, the time factor decreases in importance over the 1990s, as does the "negative outlook of others in the organisation". The only drawback that increases significantly is that 'too much is expected of the volunteer'. While comparison can only be made between the two later survey periods for that drawback it is notable that this increases by more percentage points than other drawbacks for those two survey years. An important finding for policy and practice in all surveys is the proportion who feel taken for granted.

TABLE 36: *Drawbacks of volunteering in the 1990s*			
Drawbacks of volunteering	1992	1994	1997–98	% change
Negative outlook of others in organisation	27.0	10.8	15.8	(11.2)
Takes up too much time	n/a	24.3	7.9	(16.4)
Too much expected of volunteers	n/a	16.2	26.3	10.1
Being taken for granted	21.6	16.2	21.1	(0.5)
Insufficient numbers of volunteers	16.2	8.1	15.8	(0.4)
Lack of government support	10.8	8.1	2.6	(8.2)

3.5.5.2 In summary, this section indicates the potential that lies in improving the future rate of volunteering in Ireland. First, while the lack of time emerges as by far the most important factor in not getting involved in voluntary activity, there is a lack of awareness of volunteering apparent among most social groups. Secondly when the reasons for not getting involved are coupled with the drawbacks identified by volunteers a picture emerges of the need to support volunteers for the most significant drawback cited was that too much was expected of volunteers. Furthermore, this constraint increased in importance from the mid-1990s.

3.6 Conclusions from trends and patterns

3.6.1.1 The data presented in this chapter raise a number of issues with regard to the future of volunteering in Ireland. As shown, the profile of volunteers that emerges is one that is ageing, although, when different age groups were examined by sex, the profile of uniform 'greying' of volunteers was a little more complex. As indicated, for example, young men were less likely than young women to become involved. The profile also indicated that the tendency to volunteer rises with socio-economic status, educational attainment and household income.

3.6.1.2 The data show that volunteering is highest in the south-east and lowest in the north-east, followed by the north-west. When broken down by sex, the data indicate that volunteering is lowest amongst men in the north-east and north-west and women in the north-east. These stand in stark contrast to both women and men in the south-east who demonstrate little difference in their tendency to volunteer.

3.6.1.3 The data on the motivations for getting involved and the benefits derived from volunteering begin to add some flesh to the profile. Belief in a cause and altruistic factors emerge as the most important reasons for getting involved. For men, believing in the cause is more important than for women, while the latter appear to be more motivated for altruistic reasons. This appears to the case, in particular, for young women, while middle-aged women, whose participation rate is already quite high, were far more likely to cite the need to believe in a cause. In terms of the benefits of volunteering, 'seeing results' was the most important benefit cited, followed closely by 'doing good'. Again a difference emerged between the sexes in relation to benefits but, as the breakdown by age suggested, younger women stressed altruism. This was not as evident among other groups of women who were far more likely to adopt an instrumental view and cite the benefit of seeing results. More men than women cited the enjoyment factor, while this also rose, as a perceived benefit, with both educational attainment and socio-economic status.

3.6.1.4 The findings presented above show that although lack of a time is the major factor cited for not getting involved in voluntary activity, this has always been the most important factor and its significance declined from the mid-1990s. This reason for not volunteering was also a major reason for giving up volunteering, while the main reason cited, 'new demands on time', did not change over the decade. Of interest, however, is the finding that never having thought about volunteering increased by almost ten percentage points in its significance from the mid-1990s.

While social networks were the most common means of finding out about volunteering, the organisational route became more popular throughout the 1990s. Furthermore, the use of this route rose with educational attainment.

3.6.2 Lessons

3.6.2.1 What lessons can be drawn from the data presented above that could inform future policy on supporting volunteering? A major challenge may be how to get more volunteers involved in future while recognising that the benefits are not 'just' about doing good.

3.6.2.2 Infrastructure

- There is the need to support social networks as a route into volunteering as well as the organisational route, if those are the routes most used, as the data suggest. This may be one area in which volunteer bureaux have a role to play because of their sitting within the community and their appeal at local level (Tallaght Volunteer Bureau 2000).

- There is a need to address gender differences, the diversity in volunteering participation by social indicators such as education attainment, socio-economic status and regional location. Volunteer bureaux, both at national and local level, could play a significant role in addressing these differences.

3.6.2.3 **Targeting**

- Lower socio-economic groups and those more socially disadvantaged may need to be targeted or be kept under consideration in order to improve the representation of all social groups in Ireland in the volunteering pool.

- Given that young men as a group cite the need to believe in a cause as a reason for getting involved, yet also demonstrate relatively low levels of volunteering, there may be some potential for appealing to young men in a manner which will improve their participation rate.

3.6.2.4 **Education and Awareness**

- There is a need for greater education to appeal to the groups who volunteer least, as identified in the findings, viz. those with fewer educational qualifications and in lower socio-economic groups.

- As the data show, lack of awareness of volunteering was evident among most social groups and would, therefore, indicate a challenge that would need to be addressed in the future.

3.6.2.5 **Fostering Volunteering**

- It would be beneficial if voluntary organisations were proactive in addressing the reasons why volunteers get involved such as 'believing in the cause' and the need for social involvement.

- Addressing barriers to volunteers, such as never having been asked to volunteer, might be achieved through promoting the cited benefits of volunteering such as meeting people and seeing results.

- The routes to volunteering cited by respondents indicate the importance of social solidarity. This, together with the benefits cited by volunteers, indicate that there is a need to recognise the societal benefits of voluntary activity. In the context of lesser involvement by those who are either socially isolated (whether through lower socio-economic status or lower educational attainment) or those who are not aware of volunteering (never having been asked), this recognition becomes more acute.

- The role of 'incubators' is worth examining; these would include the family, other social networks, peer groups and schools.

3.6.2.6 **Research**

- The data indicate that further research on volunteering is important so that present as well as future gaps can be addressed. The regional disparities deserve further examination for example.
  Another important area to explore in greater detail is the motivations for volunteering. In addressing the wider issue of fostering volunteering in the future, more research is needed on the barriers experienced.

- These data provide mere snapshots of volunteering at different times throughout the 1990s. The data is the most up to date available at national level and the analysis and interpretation presented here are new. There is a need for the rigorous collection of time series data on volunteering. This will enable voluntary organisations, the volunteer support infrastructure and, it could be argued, wider society, to gain the full benefit of voluntary activity and ensure that any future measures are not adopted ad hoc but in a context which is well informed.

Voluntary Lights
Dennis O'Driscoll

An inviting light spills from the Community Centre
as I pass: a literacy class is spelling out its tasks
or an Active Retirement concert is in full swing.

An anglepoise lamp marks the spot
where a counsellor waits at the end of the line,
each telephone ring a distress-signal.

Overseen by a peach-ripe summer sun,
a youth group grooms and combs a beach
that was stranded under cans and plastic.

Seeking fair-play for needy children, e-mail appeals
- emergency flares - are launched from a computer screen.
A Tidy Towns committee comes clean

about its bright hopes for this year's competition.
As long as lights like these stay beaming,
the world will seem less dark.

4 The Volunteer and the Organisation

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1.1 In this chapter we review in a preliminary way the organisational context of volunteering (section 4.2) and the experience of volunteers in formal settings (section 4.3). Section 4.3 draws on the findings of recent research into the experience of volunteers in organisations in Ireland. In Section 4.4 a number of themes relating to the organisational context of volunteering are discussed, including employer-supported volunteering, regulatory and practice issues. Finally, in section 4.5 a number of conclusions are presented.

4.2 The organisational status of volunteers

4.2.1 An organisational resource

4.2.1.1 Volunteering and volunteers represent a very substantial resource for the non-profit sector in Ireland.
This resource may be identified as occurring at four basic levels:
(a) as a human resource for the organisation,
(b) as a key factor in the capacity for sector renewal,
(c) as the location of the governance of the organisation,
(d) as a central element in the legitimisation of the organisation.

4.2.1.2 In terms of being an economic resource, the value of volunteering in 1995 has been estimated as being equivalent to 33,690 full-time workers [7].
However, such a measure falls far short of the true and full qualitative value of volunteering to the sector, for volunteers are central to the development of voluntary organisations. Insofar as the origination and development of new initiatives and organisations in the sector results from voluntary activity, the source of sector renewal may be understood as lying primarily, if not exclusively, with the volunteer.

[7] Donoghue et al. (1999)
Uncovering the Nonprofit Sector in Ireland, p.19

4.2.1.3 In Ireland organisations in the non-profit sector are headed by volunteer boards. Thus, volunteers provide the vital governance function of the sector.
The importance and challenge of this characteristic of non-profit organisations in general and the sector as a whole should not be underestimated. The involvement of, and at times complete dependence on, volunteer effort for the provision of the 'public benefit' services of non-profit organisations, is a central pillar of the legitimacy which such organisations hold in society. Furthermore, such volunteer effort is often distinguished by the force of energy, passion and commitment that it brings to the activity of the organisation.

4.2.2 Organisational settings

4.2.2.1 The domain of volunteering is not constrained by the boundaries of the voluntary sector. Volunteering and voluntary organisations are not co-terminus. Volunteering may be associated with organisations that are part of the voluntary and community sector, the public sector or the private sector. Indeed, as noted in Chapter Two, volunteering may be classified into informal and formal sub groups. In the former, volunteering does not imply an organisational context. However, in this discussion we are concerned directly with formal volunteering, that is, volunteering which is predicated on a relationship between the volunteer and one or more organisations. Our immediate concern is with aspects of that relationship and their influence on the volunteering experience. As noted in Chapter Three (TABLES 26 and 27), organisations play an important role in recruitment paths for volunteers, a trend that is possibly increasing and a route that may be more important for men than women, for whom informal social networks have been important. With changing labour force participation rates, however, there might be a tendency towards convergence.

4.2.2.2 The voluntary sector is large and varied. In Ireland there are some 5,000 organisations with charitable recognition (CHY numbers) granted by the Revenue Commissioners. Such organisations are very diverse in terms of size, age, mission, style, culture and resource requirements. This diversity serves to present potential volunteers with a range of organisations that represent different degrees of attractiveness to the individual volunteer. The organisation that is entirely voluntary in terms of its human resources represents a particular

case in point. However, while many organisations are operated predominantly by voluntary effort, others are more dependent on paid staff for their daily operations. In other words, the voluntary sector is populated by organisations running along a continuum from total dependency on volunteers at one end to those organisations in which the only volunteer involvement is on the board or at the level of governance, at the other end.

4.2.3 The Relationship between the volunteer and the organisation

4.2.3.1 The relationship between the volunteer and the organisation is based primarily upon the act of volunteering for a specific organisation. The quality of the volunteering experience becomes a function of that relationship. Alternatively, as in the case of employer supported volunteering an organisation may be supporting and facilitating the individual in their act of volunteering. In such latter instances, although there is typically a second organisation towards which the volunteering act is directed, the key determinant of the nature of the volunteering experience is the volunteer's relationship with her or his employer.

4.2.3.2 The act of volunteering is not always recognised as being such and the language of volunteering is not always used to describe activities that may be considered as acts of volunteering. At times, individuals do not see themselves as being engaged in a volunteering role. In other cases, 'volunteering' as a concept is seen to have negative connotations or associations. Alternatively, organisations may not treat *de facto* volunteers as volunteers.

4.2.3.3 It is vital to recognise that diversity is at the root of the domain of volunteering and to value this diversity. Hence we do not talk about what constitutes 'good' or 'bad' volunteering from a value perspective but rather consider what constitutes good practice in the volunteer-organisation relationship under specific circumstances.

4.3 THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

4.3.1 The selected case studies

4.3.1.1 As part of the background work undertaken in the preparation of this report, research was undertaken into the experiences of volunteers in a number of Irish voluntary organisations.[8] Five case study organisations were selected on the basis of variations in key characteristics. The selected cases cover differences in organisation type, size, history and value orientation. They included volunteering in the context of a state-sponsored scheme, a small environmental organisation, and one of the oldest voluntary organisations. There was also an example of employer-supported volunteering, a subject we discuss in more detail later in this chapter. While the research related to this group of organisations cannot provide a comprehensive examination of the experiences of all volunteers in formal settings, it can provide insights into their experiences within a rough cross-section of such organisations.

4.3.2 Findings

4.3.2.1 **A reciprocal relationship**: A common feature of the experience of volunteers across the organisations in the study was the sense of mutual support and benefit that they derived from their volunteering. Thus although the outward symbolism of the volunteering act was of giver (volunteer) and receiver (voluntary organisation), the personal experience of the volunteer was of one who is also a receiver.

4.3.2.1 While such feelings of the reciprocity of the relationship served generally to confirm, support and sustain volunteers in their activity, there were also some expressions of feelings of entrapment in volunteering roles. This was particularly true of instances where volunteers faced substantial or unrestricted organisational workloads and where there did not appear to be others with whom this workload could be adequately shared. In other words, as shown in Chapter Three above, too much can be expected of volunteers.

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8   This research was carried out by Ralaheen Research and Design Ltd. on behalf of the National Committee on Volunteering during the period June to November 2001. The full research report is available from the NCV Secretariat

4.3.2.3 **Becoming a volunteer**: It is noticeable that considering becoming a volunteer was strongly linked to personal and social networks of family, friends and colleagues. Actual decisions to volunteer, however, were based on moral factors and levels of consistency between individual beliefs and the organisational work. Of particular note in this process of becoming a volunteer is the apparent low level of active recruitment of volunteers by the study organisations, leading the researchers to the conclusion that the 'organisations did not sell themselves strongly as centres of volunteer activity or as attractive places to volunteer'.[10] However, elsewhere in the report they acknowledge 'the use of well-planned national media campaigns, the employment of membership organisers and recruitment by existing volunteers on a one-by-one basis'[11] within the sector.

4.3.2.4 **Volunteer perceptions and management style**: The research identified substantial variation in the level of management and co-ordination of volunteers practised among the study organisations. This the researchers typified in terms of 'light management', 'medium management' and 'structured management', where medium management involved both formal and informal practices and supports and structured management utilised volunteers in a highly structured and strongly supported manner. Such typifications are best understood as representing points along a continuum rather than strictly delineated managerial approaches. The practice of management within a voluntary organisation may be subject to the culture and ethos of the organisation. Indeed 'management' may be regarded as an expression of managerialism and hence as inappropriate to the organisational values.

4.3.2.5 In those study organisations with a highly structured and supported approach to the management of their volunteers, the reported experience of the volunteers was very positive. Some of the relevant factors in generating this experience seem to have been clear delineation of the role and expected performance of the volunteer, coupled with time limited commitments and strong feedback processes. This is not to say that a highly structured approach is consistent with the ethos, organisational needs, or volunteer expectations in many organisations, and in many cases it would be both inappropriate and counter-productive. Further, it needs to be noted that such an approach requires a substantial paid staff involvement to deliver it – a resource many voluntary organisations simply do not have.

4.3.2.6 The employer supported volunteering case study was highly structured and managed. In general, volunteers viewed this experience very positively, appreciated the skill transfer that occurred and the fact that the time given was limited and specified from the beginning. They also felt that the recognition that they gained from their involvement was a benefit.

4.3.2.7 **Paid and voluntary roles**: Many voluntary organisations involve volunteers in activities which have similarities with the work carried out by paid employees. Increasingly, formal policies and procedures govern practice in such paid roles, particularly where there is a statutory involvement. These are normally in place for the protection of both the employee and the service recipient.

4.3.2.8 Briefing volunteers: The researchers argued that, according to the volunteers themselves, 'informing volunteers of safety rules, supervisory reporting, training in changes in the law, were all relatively lightly handled in most organisations. Volunteers did not express any particular difficulty with this arrangement, which seemed to match their expectation of a light structure. This was somewhat surprising to researchers since all but one organisation had volunteers involved with children or were visiting homes where children or other vulnerable persons might be living… In this context, one might have expected volunteers to have reported on formal briefings and information on adult-child relationships. This was not the case in all instances.'[12]

10 Ralaheen Report p.61
11 ibid p.61
12 ibid p.62–63

4.3.2.9 **Support Needs and expectations of volunteers**: Among the study volunteers, the most frequently cited support needs were, in rank order, (a) a requirement for more volunteers, (b) guidance in handling difficult situations, (c) greater recognition of volunteering effort and (d) more training in the skills required for the work they were carrying out. However, this pattern of support need identification was not consistent through the case organisations, with, for example, a requirement for 'more volunteers' hardly registering in some organisations. In relation to training, and orientation, one third of the study volunteers were not in receipt of training, although, 80 per cent received a basic information package about their organisation. Within the study group, volunteer expectation of support provision appears to have been low with recognition that it had clear resource implications for the time of both paid staff and volunteers.

4.3.2.10 **Volunteer identification with organisation values**: Surprisingly, the study found little correlation between either the values or the stated mission of the case study organisations and the articulation of these by the volunteers in these organisations. '(There) was no evidence of familiarity with the language or concepts to articulate their organisation's values or ethos… In a single organisation there could be 10 or 15 descriptions of the organisation, of which two, perhaps (were) connected to formal core values as declared by the organisation… For volunteers, the core values are one level and they (the volunteers) are positioned at another.'[13]

4.3.2.11 **A Focus on outputs**: A focus by managers on the volunteer 'output' rather than on the volunteer 'experience' was reflected in a number of aspects of the research findings. The researchers referred to 'the ambiguous recognition of volunteers in organisations' and suggested that, '(with) a very strong emphasis on the value of the giving work of the volunteer, as opposed to the volunteer her/himself, organisations may be at risk of inadvertently devaluing or effacing the volunteer's own personal contribution.'[15] It was the view of the researchers that, '(in) the majority of organisations, the 'output' or actions of the volunteer gets more attention than the provider of that output. The volunteer is somewhat instrumental in this relationship, and is expected to be sufficiently motivated and capable of carrying on, 'on their own'.[16] That said, a desire for greater recognition was not a major support requirement among volunteers across all the case organisations.

4.3.2.12 **Reciprocal transfers of skill**: It is interesting to note that skill transfer occurred in both directions in the relationship between volunteers and organisations in the case studies. In some instances, particularly in the cases where there was active volunteer management, the volunteers received substantial skills to enable them to perform their roles. In other cases, volunteers brought considerable technical or scientific skills into organisations that enabled the delivery of specific programmes. In some organisations, the direction of skill transfer was less clear-cut and indeed varied from event to event. More generally, the researchers noted that the importance of matching qualifications and skills to tasks within organisations and the monitoring of the direction of skill flows 'is probably underestimated in human resource terms, in the participating organisations.'[18]

13 ibid p. 64

15 ibid p. 63
16 ibid p. 64
18 ibid p. 65

4.4 Emerging organisational and policy themes

4.4.1 Introduction

4.4.1.1 In this section, we look at a number of organisational and policy issues in a preliminary way. These include employer supported volunteering (ESV), the legislation, regulation and good practice in volunteer management.

4.4.2 Employer supported volunteering

4.4.2.1 In this section we provide some comments on the theme of employer-supported volunteering. For a variety of reasons, this is becoming more prevalent in Ireland and abroad (see also Chapter Seven). Although a case study on employer-supported volunteering was included above, it is worthwhile offering some specific observations.

4.4.2.2 **Corporate social responsibility**: Although not confined to the private sector, where it is, employer-supported volunteering may be viewed in the context of the promotion of corporate social responsibility.[20] Proponents include among the duties of firms, care for employees, ethical trading, donating the skills, time or other resources of the company to the local community and respect for the environment. Corporate social responsibility, in brief, refers to the extent to which for-profit businesses demonstrate a concern for social or environmental matters. It may include corporate giving of money or resources in-kind, or it may involve organising schemes through which employees of a company may volunteer their time.

4.4.2.3 There are, of course, a number of potential benefits for a company engaged in implementing socially responsible business practices and ensuring that every decision taken reflects the needs of all company stakeholders. In general, these may include improved competitiveness, a strong and committed workforce and a reputation based on sound performance. The most important of these is obviously an enhanced corporate reputation, which affects every level of the business.

4.4.2.4 According to corporate social responsibility advocates in Ireland, companies are now beginning to realise that they are part of the local community and cannot operate successfully in isolation from it.[22] Working with the local community, they suggest, benefits the locality in which the business operates and can contribute to the image of a company as a 'responsible' business.

4.4.2.5 **Structured employer supported schemes**: In developing policies and practices on ESV a company can support two methods of community involvement. It can take an organic approach and ask its employees what they would like to support or it can align itself strategically with a community organisation that fits with the ethos of the business. In adopting an ESV programme an employer moves away from involvement which is ad hoc (where individuals within a company personally support projects) to the adoption of a permanent policy of community support.[24] Such opportunities can include staff giving of their time on a regular basis (weekly or monthly) mentoring or supporting an individual, community group or small business. The experience can also be on a once-off basis, such as establishing a team for a community regeneration project, which has a limited time span and clear aims and objectives. When opportunities are created for the company and community to work together for mutual benefit, brand loyalty is reinforced among all those involved. ESV can also be used to improve teamwork among employees and can contribute to increasing the confidence of individual employees and increasing the attractiveness of the company to potential recruits within the community.

4.4.2.6 The types of corporate supports to an ESV programme can include:
- Time off in lieu
- Donated goods and services
- Matched giving
- Use of facilities
- Business networking opportunities.

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20 See: Business in the Community - Ireland (2002):
A Step by Step Guide to Integrating Corporate Social Responsibility Across Your Business.
Dublin: Business in the Community – Ireland

22 See: Business in the Community - Ireland (2001):
A Workbook on Employee Community Involvement for Employers, Employees & Community Organisations.
Dublin: Business in the Community – Ireland

24 See: Business in the Community - Ireland (2002):
A Step by Step Guide to Integrating Corporate Social Responsibility Across Your Business.
Dublin: Business in the Community - Ireland

4.4.2.7 Local volunteer centres and employee volunteering schemes:[26] In the case of employer supported volunteering, companies may choose a 'go-it-alone' strategy. In order to develop links with the community however, the existence of a broker (in the shape of an independent local volunteer bureau or centre) has been found elsewhere to be crucial. Such local volunteer centres are well established in other countries and serve not only employer schemes - which are relatively novel – but the whole range of volunteer-involving organisations and spectrum of volunteers seeking to offer their services.

4.4.2.8 Local volunteer centres offer specialist knowledge of local community needs and can thus identify where such schemes might be most effectively applied. They also have detailed knowledge of the organisations seeking and offering to deploy volunteers, and of course, they have the time which employers or voluntary organisations lack, to research and obtain suitable partners. Local volunteer centres also provide advice and guidance to volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations on best practice. When linked to a national centre such local centres can work very effectively by drawing on a range of centralised resources.

4.4.3 Regulation, practice and management

4.4.3.1 **The importance of the volunteering experience needs to be acknowledged**: There is often a tension between the need of voluntary organisations for human resources on the one hand and the specific interest of the individual volunteer on the other. It is necessary to address this and to reconcile the organisation's need for human resources and the volunteer's need for a fulfilling volunteering experience. There is an added difficulty in focusing on the volunteering experience given that so much of voluntary effort is intuitively 'other' directed. The fact that volunteering *per se* is not seen as a 'primary need' served by voluntary organisations, either by the volunteers, the organisations, the organisations' funders, or society at large, further complicates the question. The proper valuing of volunteering in society will require a substantial mind-shift in commonly held perceptions of volunteering.

4.4.3.2 Such a re-evaluation of the individual, organisational and social importance of volunteering should be reflected in the operational dynamics which voluntary organisations face. For example, if volunteering opportunity and volunteering development is valued, then we may expect that organisational funders would support programmatic expenditure on these matters and would look for evidence of organisational action in relation to them. Indeed, a specific funding line for volunteer development would clearly signal as well as practically support such a new approach.

4.4.4 Legislation and codes of practice

4.4.4.1 Volunteering is one of the few areas where an individual may interact substantially with an organisation, or with a member of the public on the behalf of that organisation, that is not subject to legislation that affords protection and scope to all stakeholders. While the development by individual organisations of policies and procedures relating to these matters is to be welcomed it may be the case that the development of norms at a national level is a more appropriate way of providing guidance to both volunteers and organisations involving volunteers.

4.4.4.2 A distinction needs to be made between actions on either side of the volunteer-organisation relationship that ought to be subject to legislation, and actions that may be deemed to be outside the spirit of the relationship. Hence it is necessary to develop a combination of legislation and guidance on best practice.

4.4.4.3 There is a need for a nationally recognised code of practice in the volunteer/organisation relationship. Issues such as the suitability of certain people for certain types of voluntary activity might need to be addressed at a national level. Protection of rights of volunteers, and recognition of their contribution might also be addressed in a variety of ways, including a charter of rights for volunteers, as developed elsewhere.

26 See: National Centre for Volunteering (2001): *Brilliant Brokerage, How to create Employee Volunteering Partnerships,* London: National Centre for Volunteering

4.4.4.4 **Insurance**: The cost of liability insurance is a challenge to voluntary organisations running programmes in particular areas, and has led directly to the cessation of programmes in a number of instances. This provides an example of a dynamic within the wider society (that of increasing litigation and the concomitant increase in insurance premia) which has a negative impact on the development of voluntary activity. Although this problem is not confined to the voluntary sector it may be more detrimental for this sector because of the relatively small financial flows to it.

4.4.5 Best practice in volunteer management

4.4.5.1 There may be a need for support for voluntary organisations to aid the introduction of best practice in volunteer management and volunteer development. In keeping with the nature of the sector, such support should be of an advisory and facilitative nature. It is likely that such support would cover areas such as:

- Recruitment and retention of volunteers;
- Policies within the organisation on volunteering, particularly on supports required for specific roles;
- Recognition of volunteers;
- Flexible arrangements and roles, so that organisations may support different levels of engagement;
- Facilitating volunteer involvement in policy development;
- Developing the voluntary board, through support on issues of governance and working harmoniously with paid staff, and
- Skill transfer to and from the organisation and the volunteer.

4.5 SOME CONCLUSIONS

4.5.1.1 On the basis of our brief review of the organisational setting, the case studies provided by researchers of the experience of volunteers in various organisational settings, and our considerations on employer-supported volunteering, it is difficult to generalise about dynamics of volunteer management. However, some preliminary conclusions are set out below.

4.5.1.2 The size, length established, and resources of the volunteer-involving organisation are potentially important factors. In particular, the ratio of paid staff to volunteers, and the extent of overlapping tasks of paid staff and volunteers are important to the internal dynamics of volunteer management.

4.5.1.3 Processes taking place over time, such as the professionalisation of activities undertaken, will have implications for the role of volunteers, possibly tending to marginalise them from the more skilled areas or concentrating them in new or ancillary activities. There may be some who will remain involved in key roles in boards of management.

4.5.1.4 The use of state schemes, such as Community Employment, which create stipended positions that may previously have relied on volunteer labour, may imply various policy challenges, for instance in the case of more buoyant labour market conditions, or as this affects relations between volunteers and CE employees.

4.5.1.5 The level of training and briefing of volunteers, whether in day-to-day activities or on boards of management, can be critical to effective relations with management and staff, and affect the public profile and achievements of the organisation. In particular, it is necessary that the core values be properly communicated to volunteers.

4.5.1.6 While various styles of management are possible, and appropriate to different types of setting, it is necessary to provide clear guidelines for the benefit and safety of the public, the volunteers and to protect the interests of the organisation. For example, volunteers may become aware of confidential information about service recipients. It is vital that this is protected by the organisation, as it would be by a professional service provider.

4.5.1.7 Organisations need to achieve a balance between pursuing 'output' objectives on the one hand and their duty to recognise the value of volunteering as an experience, on the other. Given the absence, by definition, of a contract of employment governing the volunteer, it is necessary to establish codes of best practice, particularly where the volunteer begins to approximate an employee in terms of organisation's expectations. For example, although employment equality legislation does not apply to volunteers, it is appropriate that principles of equal opportunities are applied.

4.5.1.8 Furthermore, there is a need to recognise the wider social benefits, such as strengthening citizenship, that volunteering brings. This is a matter to which organisations wishing to involve volunteers need to have regard.

4.5.1.9 In the case of employer-supported volunteering, there is scope for development. Increasing numbers of working-age people – particularly women – are in the labour force. As noted in Chapter Three, part-time employees have a very high propensity to volunteer. Schemes organised through the workplace may take many forms and potential exists for more structured forms.

4.5.1.10 The issue of volunteer centres and a national centre, and the limited provision of these in Ireland, arisen. It relates to the promotion of volunteering and of good practice, and is pertinent to employee volunteering schemes, volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers. This issue is further explored in Chapter Nine on international approaches.

Just Beyond Focus
David Maybury

Watch them on the avenues and walkways
sustaining the tortoises' crawl.
Hear them calling deep into darkness
and returning light.

Wonder at their strength to cause this
clamour.
Envy the charge they follow and consider
them freely.

Look away from them quickly as if ashamed
not to have seen before.
Now stagger at the ease at which they
do this.

Enlist in their numbers and witness for
yourself,
human nature, of its own accord striving
to form.

Part One

5 Young People and Volunteering

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1.1 In this chapter we examine the experiences of young people in relation to volunteering. This arises within a context of lower participation rates in volunteering by younger people (see Chapter Three above) and a stated wish by voluntary and community organisations to attract young people as volunteers. The chapter points to the need for fresh thinking about the meaning and image of volunteering, and the need for appropriate policies and meaningful support programmes among young people.

5.1.2 Background

5.1.2.1 The 'greying' of the voluntary sector has been the subject of much comment in Ireland and beyond, as voluntary organisations point to a fall in the number of younger people volunteering and the length of time that they stay with an organisation. Research has shown that well over a third of voluntary organisations have fewer volunteers than they require (VSB 1998, Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs 2000, National Youth Council of Ireland 2001). It is important to note, however, that this trend is not a universal experience within the voluntary sector and some organisations seem to experience little or no difficulty in recruiting volunteers.

5.1.2.2 Figures from the 1996 Census show that Ireland has one of the youngest populations in the EU. There were 1,071,972 children and young people under 18 years of age in Ireland, giving Ireland the highest proportion of children within the European Union, representing approximately 29 per cent of the population compared with the EU average of 21 per cent. In addition, those aged under 25 years in Ireland made up 41 per cent of the population, which is the highest proportion in the European Union

5.1.3 A changing context

5.1.3.1 The social, economic and cultural changes that Ireland has experienced over the last decade, together with the increasing forces of international integration, have served to add complexity and ambiguity to the transition from childhood to adulthood. On the one hand there is a shortening of childhood, as epitomised by the commercial development of the 'tweenies' market. On the other, the increase in proportion of those in third level education and the costs of establishing a separate home existence serve to prolong many aspects of the period of 'youth'. At the same time the rise in consumerism and the financial requirements that it generates, together with labour market shortages, have served to draw increased numbers of young people into part-time work. As value systems have become more diverse, the challenge to young people in understanding themselves, their world and how they wish to relate to it, has increased.

5.2 RATES OF VOLUNTEERING AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

5.2.1.1 As reported in Chapter Three, age is a major predictor of propensity to volunteer (see TABLE 2) with the 18 – 29 age group volunteering at rates of 31 per cent, 28 per cent and 31 per cent in the years 1992, 1994 and 1997–8 respectively. These figures are consistently lower than for any of the other age cohorts except those aged over 60. It is worth noting, however, that the 18–29 age group was the group that registered the largest percentage increase in volunteering levels between 1994 and 1997–8. Although not providing a strict age cohort comparison, in Canada, between 1987 and 2000 young people aged 15–24 years doubled their level of volunteering to 33 per cent. But their average input declined from 174 to 125 hours, possibly reflecting increasing competition from other calls on the time of this age group.[28]

28 See Michael Hall et al., (1998)
Caring Canadians – Highlights from the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and participation, Revised October 2000, Ministry of Industry, Canada

5.2.1.2 The comparison of volunteering rates across age cohorts creates the impression, however unintentionally, that it is reasonable to expect similar rates of volunteering over different age groups. There is no rationale for this and no such comparison across age groups can reasonably be made. Thus while we may note that certain age groups have a greater propensity to volunteer than others it is done so without value judgement. An important aspect of this is the concept of a volunteering life pattern or life cycle. Repeated across surveys and countries we find rates of volunteering climbing into middle age and declining thereafter. As noted in Chapter Three, education attainment levels, employment and socio-economic status are other important predicators of propensity to volunteer. Such a recurring pattern suggests that volunteering as an act of civic engagement may appeal to individuals who feel relatively empowered within society. In examining the issue of young people and volunteering we must recognize the different and changing relationship young people have with society and the different requirements they may have of the volunteering experience.

5.2.2 Young people and civic engagement

5.2.2.1 At the 'Youth Future Conference', (July 2000), young people were very vocal about the issues that they encounter. Over 85 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years of age participated in the conference and outlined the following as key challenges to be addressed as part of a European White Paper on Youth. Of most relevance in the context of this report are the findings from the 'taking part' workshop. These reflect the concerns of the participants regarding the societal structures that impact on their lives and their lack of confidence in the education system to help them prepare for modern life. The young people were of the opinion that structures within the formal education system had to be challenged in order to allow young people to be active and participative. The young people recognised that this process of change was not one-sided and that they themselves had a part to play in effecting change but they also recognised that:

'They are only empowered to do so with the aid of parents and key people within the community if the activities are to be self-sustaining. Young people know what they want. They want to participate at a higher level in society in order to have more control over their own existence. What they need, however, is practical support from parents and others to deliver it'. [29]

5.2.2.2 Furthermore, young people reported that quite often they feel invisible. This feeling of invisibility stems from the fact that they have no real forum to express their opinions on issues that affect them. Young people maintained that the main vehicles for their political engagement in Ireland were community and voluntary work, issue- based organisations and political parties. It was further acknowledged that there were large groups of young people who do not politically engage and the barriers to engagement they cited included (a) lack of information/skills, (b) social disadvantage, and (c) consumerism.

5.3 Young people's views on and experience of volunteering

5.3.1.1 To develop an understanding of the views of young people on volunteering, a piece of qualitative research was commissioned from the National Youth Council of Ireland. Data were collected through the use of focus group discussions, which were held in different locations throughout the State. Two different age groups were consulted: 15–17 and 18–21 year-olds. The focus groups were conducted using a guided conversation schedule, which consisted of a list of topics for discussion, on which all conversations were based. The qualitative approach that was adopted produced a rich and diverse range of responses. The research gives an insight into young people's perceptions and the issues that arise for them in relation to volunteering. Three primary areas were examined, (a) their perceptions of volunteering, (b) their interpretations of why people volunteer, and (c) the factors that influence young people to volunteer.[30]

29 Department of Education and Science (2000) Conference Report:
Youth Future- Europe and You, Let's Hear You.
30 The research report may be obtained from the NCV Secretariat

5.3.2 Perceptions of Volunteering

5.3.2.1 From the groups there appeared to be great disparity about what young people saw as volunteering. The majority reported volunteering as 'helping out, helping people who can't help themselves or aren't as well off'. A lot of confusion was expressed, however, about whether they volunteered themselves, which appeared to be related to what interpretations of volunteering meant. This manifested itself in questions such as 'does it have to be more than what they actually do, does it have to be more formalised? Do you have to do it every week on a routine like basis to be qualified as a volunteer?' Quite often young people did not see their own 'helping out' as volunteering.

5.3.2.2 This even extended out further into the community. When asked did they know anyone who volunteered, young people were often vague. For example, they were not sure whether it constituted volunteering when 'Dad coached the soccer club'. They appeared clearer about the fact that their 'Mum working with meals on wheels' was volunteering, however. From this it seems that there still is an image of 'charity' connected to volunteering. Young people do not seem to make the link between the different skills that are drawn upon and the multitude of areas in which young people can volunteer.

5.3.2.3 Meanwhile, young people who had been given specific training and clearly defined roles identified what they did as volunteering. They did not call themselves volunteers, however, but assigned their role title to what they did. For example, they described themselves as patrol leaders, youth club leaders, captains of team, and chairpersons of committees rather than volunteers.

5.3.3 Why do young people volunteer?

5.3.3.1 With regard to what young people received from the volunteering experience and why young people volunteered the main responses included:
- Satisfaction of helping people;
- Growth in self-esteem and self-awareness;
- Sense of achievement, pride and enjoyment;
- Friendships;
- Personal opportunities;
- Informal activity, and
- Learning something / new skills and experience.

5.3.3.2 While the altruistic motive was very strong amongst these young people it was also frequently allied to a recognition that people benefited from volunteering in a range of ways either emotionally or in terms of their own personal self-development. These were cited as –
- Social responsibility;
- Personal gain, and
- Interaction with others.

5.3.4 Primary factors that influence young people to volunteer

5.3.4.1 Apart from the perception of the image of volunteering, a number of other influences on volunteering were also identified. The following were central to young people's participation and level of involvement:
- Social environment;
- Information, and
- Education.

5.3.4.2 **Social Environment**: Social environment was found to be a very important influence on young people's becoming involved in volunteering. Crucial factors within this social environment were identified as:
- Friends who volunteered;
- Family members who volunteered;
- Knowledge of local people (neighbours, youth leaders, older people), and
- Access to information.

5.3.4.3 With some groups there also appeared to be a link between a positive perception of the community and an interest in volunteering. Where this was absent, there was a lower number of people involved in volunteering. It was notable that where young people knew people, especially friends, families and neighbours who were volunteers, these were often the people who actively supported them or encouraged them to become involved. However it was also noted that young people were dissuaded from volunteering in their community if volunteering was not viewed as a positive activity.

5.3.4.4 In areas where there was no community focal point, there was a greater sense of apathy about volunteering. Young people reported that they would volunteer somewhere but the proposal of actually doing work in your community and being seen as not getting paid for it was perceived as inappropriate behaviour.

Because there was no real sense of community spirit there was a sense of apathy in the area, an 'I don't care' type of attitude. As pointed out in Chapter Two, what could be called the 'never having thought about it' factor was important in their lack of motivation. It appeared that the idea of being engaged in something positive for their community had never been presented as an option and so the notion of 'working for free' was an unfamiliar concept.

5.3.4.5 Peer pressure was also found to dissuade young people from volunteering. In one of the focus groups, an example was presented of young people volunteering outside their own community because they did not wish to be embarrassed by being 'slagged'. There was also a suggestion that where family members were directly involved in certain kinds of anti-social activities, this could dissuade some young people from becoming volunteers. In some areas, for example, where family (extended or immediate) were involved in deviant behaviour, whether criminal or just obstructive, this created a barrier to involvement in other activities, such as volunteering, for the young person. It was reported that their peers could put pressure on them and possibly bully them in light of their family member's anti-social activity. Such young people were reluctant to become involved in community events as a result.

5.3.4.6 Some respondents suggested that motivation to be a volunteer required a degree of personal drive and commitment as well as peer support.

5.3.4.7 Information: Being a volunteer depended on knowledge of available opportunities to undertake volunteering activities in the local area. At least two groups referred to the lack of opportunity or inappropriate types of volunteering. Volunteering was also difficult where there was pressure on young people either through financial costs or through costs in terms of time and conflicts with other priorities.

5.3.4.8 Access to information varied significantly between groups. One group reported that it had found lots of information about a range of events and, as a result, was active in volunteering. Another group cited a range of opportunities in the local community and local organisations. Both of these groups had members who were active in volunteering but this was not the case for the majority of other focus groups.

5.3.4.9 Education: In general the opportunities to volunteer within schools tended to be related to fundraising. Young people reported that they had developed a greater social awareness through their schools and through speakers and presentations to them in the school environment. These activities did not serve to overcome any real barriers, it was reported, and although their awareness of social issues was raised, little had been done to assist young people to get involved.

5.3.4.10 In relation to young people participating in the transition year programme, while they were afforded the opportunity to access new opportunities, it was reported that quite often it was a case of an 'overload of civic opportunities'. While young people's social awareness was increased through, for example, voluntary and special interest groups making presentations or giving talks, there was no tangible method for young people to actively participate. It was often left to their own inclinations and individual or group motivation to take the next step to involvement. Furthermore, as many opportunities were presented within a short space of time (the school year from September to May), young people said that they found it difficult to engage in anything meaningful. Once young people left transition year, the opportunities to engage in civic activities were limited due to increased curriculum pressures.

5.3.4.11 There was also little indication that teachers played an informing or supportive role to enable young people to volunteer. Where volunteering was suggested in school, it tended to be school related or to involve fundraising on behalf of a charity, such as the Society of St.Vincent de Paul.

5.3.5 **Review of research findings**

5.3.5.1 From this research it could be suggested that younger people place a high value on their peers' involvement in activities and seek to undertake volunteer work in their community usually through or within the youth organisation in which they are involved. The motivation to be involved may not be clearly thought through and is dependent on peer and adult support. There appears to be a high level of altruism and many young people were undertaking the work without a long-term benefit having been identified. Activities may be time limited, with a specific goal or outcome being achieved within a specific time scale.

5.3.5.2 For young people aged 17-21 the potential for volunteering may be limited by demands on them arising from educational commitments, extra-curricular activities and personal relationships. There was also an expectation expressed that volunteering should mean more than simply taking part. Thus, opportunities to take a more autonomous independent role in the organisation may be requested by young volunteers. This may manifest itself in seeking a choice or role in decision-making and in the functions to be undertaken. It was also noted that young people acted not simply out of altruism but referred to the benefits that could be gained such as being able to cite such experience on their CVs, develop skills, and expected to be out-of-pocket. Access to volunteering was said to come mainly from family, friends, schools or the community.

5.3.5.3 At present, young people in the 21–25 year age range appear not to be availing of the opportunity to volunteer. Given the demands on people at this stage of their lives, such as establishing settled personal relationships, moving on through third level education, commencing an employment career, starting and caring for a family, this age group may seem to be less amenable to volunteering. As noted above, however, the benefits of volunteering – in particular being of service to the community and the social, informal and fun elements –have made volunteering a positive part of people's life experience.

5.3.5.4 The need for more volunteering networks and supports that are accessible to young people was widely reported. It was highlighted through the research that most young people got involved only through word of mouth, a method that is inadequate for many volunteering opportunities. Young people need to be given proper and real access to information. While word of mouth can be beneficial, it excludes whole groups who do not belong to the immediate social circle and raises questions about wider social networks.

5.3.5.5 It appeared from the research that young people want to know more about the variety of opportunities that are available to them. They also reported that it would be of interest and beneficial to themselves to meet other volunteers, to find out what they are doing and to be able to share their issues, concerns and experiences.

5.3.6 **The infrastructure of youth civic engagement**

Youth Organisations are an important focus for involvement of young people and a principle locus for their involvement in civil society. It may be the case that traditional youth organisations are in the process of decline. The renewal of such organisations or replacement with more appropriate structures is potentially important to the continued engagement of young people. Youth policy can play a part in supporting such renewal.

5.3.6.1 The education system: Formal education is the main structure and process through which young people are connected to mainstream society. Ireland's youth population is significantly higher than the European average and, as a result, education providers at all levels are faced with the challenging task of making the education system more flexible, stimulating and relevant to young people. Changes in the global economy reinforce the need for our education system to ensure that all young people participate fully in and benefit from education (NYCI 2001).

5.3.6.2 According to recent OECD figures, the completion rate for students at upper secondary education is 81 per cent and the percentage of full-time students in public or private institutions at tertiary level is 62 per cent (Healy and Cote, 2001). In light of these statistics, education provision, participation, access and retention are among the most relevant and pressing concerns for young people living in Ireland today.

5.3.6.3 There are many respects, therefore in which the retention rate of the education system is important in involving young people in volunteering. Firstly, it is important that higher retention rates are achieved. While important in its own right, it is also likely to increase the level of youth involvement in civil society in the future because this is predicated to some extent on education level, and also because attachment through school to society is often the critical variable in relation to social attachment more generally.

5.3.6.4 The education curriculum too has the potential to increase the involvement of young people in volunteering through promoting civic participation in imaginative ways, including the best use of the transition year, maintaining links to local community organisations

and promoting a participative ethos among students in relation to their school.

5.3.7 International lessons for promoting youth volunteering

5.3.7.1 Internationally, a number of countries operate national programmes designed to stimulate and support volunteering among young people (see Chapter Nine below for more detail). In Northern Ireland and in Scotland, Millennium Volunteers is specifically targeted at young people. The focus on 16–25 year-olds is intended to draw in young people and counter the age and social stereotypes of more traditional philanthropic volunteering. Quality control principles are important. Each volunteer must be provided with a volunteering plan, and upon completion of their volunteering, a report of their work is provided for reference purposes An emphasis is placed on the personal benefits to the volunteer. Volunteering for 200 hours results in receiving an Award of Excellence. Organisations may apply for funding and/or recognition as Delivery Partners. Recognition as a Delivery Partner is valuable because Millennium Volunteers is a brand image denoting quality in relation to recruitment, training, management and the accreditation of volunteers. The following chapters, which look at recognition and accreditation, will pick up on these important points.

5.3.7.2 In Canada, Volunteer Canada runs Generation V, a programme which draws on current volunteer management theory to promote the involvement of young people in Canadian charities. Over an 18-month period, several host organisations work with community agencies to create a youth oriented volunteer programme. Volunteer Canada stresses that good volunteer management is key to the success of this programme and an investment in volunteer management pays off both in terms of services to Canadians and more satisfying experiences for young people as volunteers. Another initiative in the planning stage is based on the observation that children of volunteers are more likely to become volunteers. Volunteer Canada is to engage in further work in this area with the Volunteer Centre of Calgary and the Points of Light Foundation to explore the feasibility of introducing a national family-volunteering programme in Canada.

5.4 Conclusions

5.4.1.1 The research carried out by the National Youth Council of Ireland has highlighted many issues facing young people with regard to volunteering. In order to effectively engage young people it is important that we know where they are at and what the factors are that impede them from volunteering. From the various focus groups, it appeared that young people want to participate, they want to volunteer, they see it as a useful activity, both for themselves and their communities. Very few respondents in the focus groups stated that they were not interested and that volunteering held no appeal for them. Yet, when explored further with these respondents, they revealed that they had been involved in organising and participating in events within their schools or communities but had never regarded such activities as volunteering.

5.4.1.2 One of the greatest challenges to be faced, therefore, is changing the image of volunteering. Volunteering needs to be made more accessible and friendly. For those young people involved, the primary motivation to engage is because volunteering is fun. This appears to be the most important element in volunteering, so that although there is a need to develop an infrastructure to allow young people the opportunity to volunteer, the fun element needs to be given an important place.

5.4.1.3 Although altruism is a motivator for some young people, the development and promotion of volunteering needs to be based on more than altruism if it is to appeal to young people for the sustainable future. International research on young people's motivations also records the desire to acquire work and social skills that will be relevant to a future career.

5.4.1.4 There also needs to be a shift from the altruistic, charity type style of volunteering that has traditionally symbolised volunteering in Ireland. Young people need to be afforded the opportunity and given their right to be fully active social citizens. The 'helping out' syndrome, which has come to symbolise volunteering for young people, needs to be changed. As Donnelly-Cox and Jaffro state "(the) view that the sector is the "caring heart" of society places great emphasis on its ethos and values but little, if any, on how aspirations may best be transformed into action through substantive elements' (Donnelly-Cox and Jaffro 1999).

5.4.1.5 Young people want to be seen as pro-active in the widest sense, not solely as helpers. The greatest challenge is opening up and changing our structures to give young people the opportunities to which they are entitled. It is important not to lose sight of promoting the positive aspects of volunteering to make it interesting and attractive. The capacity to develop volunteering opportunities that are (a) fun, (b) allow a sense of control, participation and ownership, (c) fit in with potential volunteers' own priorities and timescales, and (d) provide opportunities that will have a visible measurable or concrete outcome, will be vital. In addition, increased quality and delivery is required with regard to:

- recruitment processes,
- young people's access to relevant information,
- opportunities for the development of skills and learning through volunteering, and
- recognition of the value of young people's volunteering inputs.
These will be central to generating positive volunteering experiences for young people.

Asma

Louis de Paor

Is cuimhin liom an glothar
– dríodar bainne á shlogadh
tré phíobáinín brúite ag leanbh –
mar a bheadh cith clúmh lachan
á phlúchadh is aer ramhar na hÉireann
ag maíomh a choda air.

I gCosobhó, tá'n t-aer
chomh caol le leamhnacht
is anáil mo cholceathrair
chomh cothrom le cuigeann
tar éis a chuid saothair.

Ní cheansódh saint na gaoithe anois
laom na coinnle
i bhfothrach a scamhóg,
ní cheilfidh anáil a chuid solais.

Asthma

I remember the rattle
– milk dregs being swallowed
through a crushed braw –
as if showers of duck down
were smothering him
and the swollen Irish air
grudged him his share.

In Kosovo, the air
is thin as new milk
and my cousin's breath
beady as a churn
for all his labour.

Now the selfish wind won't quench
the candle flaring
in his ruined lungs
nor dim its healing light.

TRANSLATION: *Mary O'Donoghue*

PART ONE

6 Accreditation

6.1 **INTRODUCTION**

6.1.1.1 In this chapter we aim to examine the background to and the present context of the development of accreditation processes in Ireland. We are particularly concerned with the development of a flexible and responsive system that will allow for the development of accreditation for the training of volunteers.

6.1.1.2 We examine the present context following the publication of *Learning for Life, the White Paper on Adult Education* (Department of Education and Science, August 2000) and the setting up of the National Qualifications Authority. We are concerned that developments in accreditation will, while maintaining principles of best practice, continue to facilitate the ongoing development of the accreditation process within the community and voluntary sector, enabling and supporting the sector in its interaction with accreditation bodies.

6.1.1.3 We are particularly concerned with how these developments impact on accreditation of training for volunteers.

6.2 **BACKGROUND DEVELOPMENTS**

6.2.1.1 Of the many developments in the community and voluntary sector over the last twenty years, the growth of community and issue based training tailored to the needs of local communities and communities of interest has been to the forefront, and a source of significant developments within adult education in Ireland.

6.2.1.2 Consequently, there is a growing recognition of the need to develop tailored accreditation and progression routes for these courses. This topic has been discussed in various forums, such as the Community and Voluntary Accreditation Forum[31] (CVAF) and the subject publications over a number of years.

6.2.1.3 Among these publications is *Can You Credit It?* published in 1995, by a consortium including Aontas, the Combat Poverty Agency and the NOW Programme. It included a list of recommendations for accreditation and progression in the community and voluntary sector, directed to the Department of Education at national level, and to the community and voluntary sector itself. The central concern of the CVAF is 'to develop and sustain non-university routes to vocational qualifications for those wishing to work or already working in the community and voluntary sector.' In 1999, it published Towards an Integrated Accreditation Framework.

6.2.1.4 Document[32]. In these, it states, 'The growth in demand for formal recognition of community based education and training, combined with moves to develop a national accreditation framework led to the decision to develop a mechanism by which the community and voluntary sector could make its voice heard and ensure its inclusion in what is being developed'.

6.2.1.5 In August 2000, the Department of Education and Science published the White Paper on Adult Education, *Learning for Life.* One of its key provisions is: The establishment of a National Adult Learning Council to co-ordinate strategy and policy development in this area, drawing on representatives of Government Departments, providers, training agencies, third level interests, accrediting bodies, national community sector interests, social partners and participants. Under the heading, 'Widening Access while Ensuring Quality' it recommends the speedy development of a national framework of qualifications' and 'the development of transparent mechanisms for the accreditation and assessment of prior learning and work based experience as a priority in Adult Education.

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31 The Community and Voluntary Accreditation Forum comprises: Aontas; Banúlacht (Irish Women for Development); Community Action Network; Creative Activity for Everyone (CAFE); Disability Equality Network; Irish Travellers Movement; Meitheal; National Adult Literacy Association (NALA); National Youth Federation

32 The following agencies participated in the drafting of Towards an Integrated Accreditation Framework: Access 2000; Creative Activity for Everyone; Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed; Lesbian Education and Awareness; Meitheal; National Adult Literacy Agency; National Social Services Board, National Youth Federation and Women's Aid.

6.2.1.6 In England, a Green Paper, *The Learning Age – renaissance for a New Britain*, (1998), brought a response from the National Centre for Volunteering called Lifelong Learning Credits for Volunteer Work? It states: 'Many volunteers want some recognition of the skills and experience they gain through voluntary work. For some, particularly young people, being able to gain formally accredited qualifications to add to their CV is an important return for the work they put in. The National Survey found that young volunteers were the age group for whom it was most important to learn new skills through volunteering.'

6.2.1.7 The White Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity* (September 2000), in Chapter 4, 4.22 to 4.25 deals with accreditation of learning in the community and voluntary sector. It acknowledges the fact that the '*volume and range of education/training courses provided to, and through, the Community and Voluntary Sector is considerable and growing*'. It states that; '*A review of the content and delivery of training to those in the Community and Voluntary Sector should be undertaken. The value of this training should be verified and appropriately rewarded. A priority for the National Qualifications Authority will be to put in place appropriate accreditation arrangements for the Community and Voluntary Sector. The NQAI will work closely with the Community and Voluntary sector Accreditation Forum and with bodies such as AONTAS and NALA to progress this area.*'

6.2.1.8 Aontas published a policy document *Community Education*, (May 2000). This sees that the 'recent Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 has the potential to progress the development of accreditation systems for community education and makes recommendations as to how the sector could be better represented on the new bodies.'

6.2.1.9 Given the amount of expertise and background work already undertaken on the whole issue within the sector, it is important that any future work undertaken is done in partnership with the groups which have developed this expertise, while ensuring that accreditation for volunteers remains central. Given the importance placed on the whole area of education and training within the voluntary and community sector, the Wheel established an advisory group to identify key issues and actions. An education and training roundtable was held in March 2002. At this meeting, which was attended by a broad representation from the sector, a

mandate was given to progress the development of a charter of best practice.

The Wheel is now facilitating a group set up to progress this action. It has already drawn up terms of reference and a project outline and has issued an open invitation to those involved in education and training in the sector to become involved.

6.3 **The National Qualifications Authority**

6.3.1.1 The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) has three principal objects, which are set out in the Education and Training Act 1999. These are:

- The establishment and maintenance of a framework of qualifications for the development, recognition and award of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners;

- The establishment and promotion of the maintenance and improvement of the standards of awards of the further and higher education and training sector, other than in the existing universities, and

- The promotion and facilitation of access, transfer and progression throughout the span of education and training provision

6.3.1.2 The Authority will work closely with the new awards councils which were established on 11 June 2001 – the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), with the existing providers of further and higher education and training, and with learners and the social partners in undertaking its important tasks.

6.3.1.3 Any provider of education and training regardless of the source of that provision, whether it is in an educational institution, the workplace or the community, will be able to apply to either of the two new Councils for validation of a programme.

6.3.1.4 The conjunction of the International Year of Volunteers and the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland in 2001 offered a unique opportunity to progress the development of accreditation appropriate to the voluntary sector.

The broad remit of the NQAI is favourable to the diversity of learning situations within the sector.

6.3.1.5 The Minister for Education and Science is expected to sign an order before the end of 2002 to give full legal existence to the National Adult Learning Council (NALC). The role of the council is to promote the development of adult learning, to ensure a co-ordination strategy across different sectors and agencies, to support quality, engage in research and promote international co-operation. The National Adult Learning Council will also have a specific remit to progress such issues as workplace learning, community education, an equality strategy and to establish an advisory group on the integration of people with physical and learning disabilities into adult education.

6.4 **THE ACCREDITATION OF VOLUNTEER TRAINING – EXPERIENCES OF VOLUNTARY GROUPS**

6.4.1.1 In order to develop an understanding of the experience of organisations in developing accreditation for their volunteers and assess to the supports which might be put in place to make this process easier, six organisations which had relevant experiences of developing accreditation were consulted in order to gain an insight into the different approaches. These groups were of varied size and focus, and illustrated diverse experiences of training provision. They were URRUS (Ballymun), The Shanty (Tallaght), the Canals Community Partnership, the National Counselling Institute, the National Youth Health Programme, and Comhairle.
The training Co-ordinators of all six groups were consulted. Focus groups of trainees were consulted in three of the organisations. All six cases provide an interesting insight and perspective on the processes and options for community and voluntary groups involved in developing accredited training.

6.5 **SPECIFIC ISSUES REGARDING ACCREDITATION FOR VOLUNTEERS**

6.5.1 **Resources**

6.5.1.1 The provision of any training, and more particularly accredited training, requires significant resources. This involves not only financial commitments, but also considerable administrative and staff requirements. In terms of the latter, gaining accreditation for training necessitates lengthy discussions with accrediting bodies, which demand significant time and staff commitments on the part of the group concerned. In this respect, it is also evident that groups with previously established links (formally or informally) with the accrediting body, or an established profile, will generally find this process more accessible.

6.5.1.2 The majority of small/medium organisations in the sector do not have the resources to develop accredited training for voluntary staff and furthermore, while they may be in a position to provide short, task orientated, training they would not necessarily see it as their role or remit to become involved in training at a more advanced or formal level. These groups are therefore more likely to rely on medium to large organisations which focus on the provision of training in the community and voluntary sector, should they seek to provide the option of accredited training to their volunteers.

6.5.2 **Changes in staff profile**

6.5.2.1 Within the community and voluntary sector, groups often have a high proportion of volunteer involvement during the initial stages. However, as the group develops, the likelihood is that their staff profile will expand to include part-time, fulltime, permanent and temporary staff and participants on government sponsored schemes including Community Employment, Jobs Initiative and Social Economy. Furthermore, the profile of the volunteer contribution is likely to change, with some, for example, acting in a management capacity on the management committee and others being involved in project work.

6.5.3 **Profile of volunteers**

6.5.3.1 Therefore, in addition to the diversity within groups regarding the roles played by volunteers, there is also the diversity with regards to the profile of volunteers that different groups will attract. While some groups, by their nature will be more inclined to attract formally educated volunteers, other groups, depending on geographical area or sector, may be more likely to be working with people who would be classified as educationally disadvantaged, including early school leavers. Clearly, the training approach appropriate for these groups will vary accordingly.

6.5.4 Range of training needs

6.5.4.1 The type of training considered can range from that provided in order to carry out specific tasks, to the provision of second chance education within the community setting. With regard to the former, there are mixed opinions on whether or not it is necessary to gain accreditation for this type of training, given the requirements of the accreditation process. Nevertheless, as an element of an overall quality assurance strategy, accredited training may be considered appropriate.

6.5.5 Offering a second chance at education

6.5.5.1 In terms of second chance education provision, this element comes to the fore with in relation to accredited training, given the progression options implied. However, it is necessary to consider this in light of the group involved and the resources and supports available. More fundamentally, it begs the question, in supporting volunteers through the provision of training, at what point does this become community education and furthermore, is this the appropriate forum for educational provision of this nature.

6.5.6 Volunteer motivation

6.5.6.1 Regardless of educational experience to date, the motivation of volunteers also differs significantly within and between groups, with for example, some choosing to take on volunteer work for personal reasons, while others view it more as a progression route into paid employment, or perhaps, further education. Therefore the levels of personal interest in training will vary, and while task orientated or induction training are generally viewed as acceptable, the prospect of accredited training, with the related time and personal commitment, may be more than some volunteers are willing to commit to. However among volunteers interviewed with low levels of previous formal education, accredited training (which involved elements of personal development), was viewed positively. Volunteers commented that they had gained increased confidence in their work and also benefited personally. Furthermore, among this group, accreditation was seen to have attracted them initially to participate in the training programme.

6.5.7 Turnover of volunteers

6.5.7.1 In terms of developing a model for training, it is also necessary to factor in the relatively high turnover of volunteers in many organisations. Given this factor certain models that depend on continuity of staff (e.g. cascade training) may not be considered appropriate.

6.5.8 Recognition

6.5.8.1 Finally, while the provision of accredited training is often viewed as an opportunity to acknowledge the work done by volunteers, there are more suitable ways through which recognition can be given without further imposing on the voluntary staff. (This is dealt with in Chapter Seven). In this respect, one group suggested that providing training for people and expecting them to work subsequently without pay was inappropriate. Furthermore, it was suggested that introducing accreditation inappropriately might in fact lead to fragmentation and competition within groups, thus undermining the dynamic of the organisation.

6.6 THE ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK IN RELATION TO VOLUNTEERS

6.6.1.1 The question of choice in terms of deciding on an accrediting body has been an issue with some groups. In this respect the options currently provided might not be suitable, in terms of either general ethos or approach to training. Particularly it was felt that an adult education focus was often lacking, as was an understanding of the voluntary and community sector that these groups operate in, and that therefore it is particularly important for groups to assess all possible accreditation options in light of their individual needs. This requires the availability of regularly updated information on accredited training options, which has not been collated in Ireland to date.

6.6.2 Time commitment

6.6.2.1 Much of the training currently provided by the voluntary and community sectors tends to involve short-term training, with a limited time commitment required. However, accreditation bodies have much longer time requirements attached to their courses (e.g. eighty hours per module in the case of NCVA/FETAC). Therefore, a considerable gap exists between the style

and type of training currently provided within the sector and what meets current accreditation requirements. It is also necessary to consider the level of certification that might be achieved for a given time commitment. There is a lack of uniformity and clarity at present and as a result, what may be generally perceived as a lower level of certification, may in fact require the same, if not more time and work commitment on the part of the participants. In light of the above, it was suggested that an accreditation body, catering specifically for the sector, is necessary.

6.6.3 Need for flexibility

6.6.3.1 In terms of course design, the main difficulty encountered by groups was a general lack of flexibility, potentially impacting on the entire development of the course. This includes course content, title, delivery, assessment, and potential progression. It is recognised that the standardisation implied by accreditation requires rules and procedures. Nevertheless, excessively stringent requirements on the part of the accrediting bodies can lead to repetition, irrelevancy and ultimately frustration with the process, on the parts of both the providers and the participants themselves. FETAC was NCVA, is relatively accessible and open to negotiation (e.g. locally devised modules), but difficulties still remain in seeking to develop appropriate and relevant training at the local level which will also conform to criteria set at national level. In terms of course content, combining accredited (possibly locally devised modules) with non-accredited training can provide a solution but, this can lead to elongation of the training process or repetition in the course content.

6.6.3.2 Another option is to provide a limited number of modules (locally or centrally devised) that are deemed relevant but this will not be fully certified, thus impacting on participants' progression options. The issue of the course title also reflects the implications of the standardisation of training. While locally relevant training may be developed in conjunction with an accreditation body, it may prove a disappointment if it is necessary to adopt a generic title used by the accrediting body, which does not fully reflect the content or focus of the course. Given the adult education focus of volunteer training, flexibility is also required in terms of assessment methods, taking account of issues such as literacy difficulties and prior learning.

6.6.4 Conclusions

6.6.4.1 In terms of the current research, the principal finding is that training, and associated accreditation, must be relevant, applicable and appropriate to the local context, the sector involved, and the individuals participating. In terms of accreditation and the implicit standardisation involved, meeting these needs is complicated by the sheer diversity in the scope and size of the groups involved and the differences in terms of the profile of volunteers among and between groups.

6.6.4.2 These findings highlight a number of issues in relation to the provision of training in the voluntary sector. At a fundamental level, it is clear that the processes and resources required currently to establish accreditation are outside the capacity of smaller voluntary groups. It is therefore likely that the responsibility will fall to medium and large organisations active in the area of training to spearhead developments in this area. While the value of accreditation is widely acknowledged, enthusiasm for it is somewhat dampened by the fear of a lack of practical application and relevance, and excessive commitment being placed on those who are already giving of their personal time. Therefore, creative approaches are necessary which will allow for maximum flexibility in terms of course content and time commitments. This may involve the development of semi-tailored modules (involving an element of locally devised content) that can accumulate over time to gain incremental accreditation in the process. While such a system has similarities with that currently offered by FETAC, the latter is still viewed as overly stringent in terms of mandatory modules and lacking in application at the local, practical level.

6.6.4.3 Before any significant developments in terms of training provision are considered, a comprehensive needs analysis should be carried out among a broad base of voluntary sector groups. It is envisaged that this would assess current levels of training (accredited/non-accredited) being provided, both internally and externally, current limitations experienced (if any) in terms of training, and perceptions and level of prioritisation in terms of training.

PART ONE

7 Recognition

7.1   Introduction

7.1.1.1   There has been an almost implicit sense of operating in the background, of providing help in an unseen way, in the concept of volunteering. This is acceptable to many volunteers. However, the research carried out for this report shows that attention needs to be given, not just to the output of volunteers and how they can be organised, but also to ways in which the experience can be made positive for volunteers themselves. This is necessary if more volunteers are to be recruited and retained. There is a growing realisation in Ireland and abroad that systems need to be developed of recognising, in a tangible way, the work done by volunteers. These include informal and formal systems that can operate at organisational, community and State levels. In making recommendations, we can draw on the research mentioned above, as well as a considerable amount of information available from organisations and Volunteer Support Agencies. Suggestions also emerged from the work of the National Committee on Volunteering and from the consultation process.

7.2   Informal Recognition

7.2.1.1   The research for this report shows that for most volunteers 'seeing results' is the most important benefit that they derive from their work. However, 'being appreciated' is also seen as a significant benefit (Chapter Three, Table 19). By comparison some of the drawbacks of volunteering included 'the negative outlook of others in the organisation' and 'being taken for granted' (Chapter Three, Table 36). When volunteers themselves were asked to rank their support needs they put 'greater recognition of volunteering effort' above skills training. The most important level of recognition for volunteers therefore seems to be that which happens directly from other people involved.

7.2.1.2   This is borne out by information from abroad. The Volunteer Canada website is representative of a range of information sites on this topic and sets out some key elements of recognition programmes that work. These include basing rewards on an appreciation of the individual volunteer as a unique person, relating it to individual tasks, and having consistent reward policies to recognise contributions over long periods. It also suggests more diffuse rewards for teams or the entire organisation. It emphasises the importance of

ongoing forms of recognition as well as high profile events. Some direct methods include thank-you letters and cards, social get-togethers, certificates of accomplishment, insignia pins or even a special parking spot!

7.2.1.3   While many of these approaches may not cost very much there are some resource implications because they do require organisational time and input. This may be an issue particularly for some smaller groups. Although they might have the advantage of having more direct contact with volunteers, the pressure of work and limited information available is likely to make this more difficult to achieve. This is where a volunteer support agency could be of help in generating ideas, providing resources and linking up groups where appropriate in relation to recognition systems.

7.3   Formal recognition

7.3.1.1   Formal recognition systems such as awards and special events can also enhance the experience of volunteering, while also offering the opportunity to promote the concept of volunteering and giving concrete expression to society's commitment to volunteering. If the State is interested in encouraging volunteerism because of the positive effect on social capital and active citizenship, as indicated in the White Paper, then it might be argued that some system of recognition ought to be developed to underpin that interest. There are already a number of examples of formal systems in existence that provide material for discussion around possible approaches.

7.4   Organisational level

7.4.1.1   As an example of recognition at organisational level there is widespread familiarity with the system operating in many of the Scouting Associations in Ireland and abroad. Badges and insignia are awarded for specific skills and milestones. This provides recognition within the organisation and for the members it creates a sense of belonging and achievement. One of the key components of the system is a known progression route that individuals can link with at their own pace.

7.4.1.2   Other organisations that have developed policies around supporting volunteers include celebrating the work of volunteers with high profile events and celebrations. For example, in organisations such as the Motor

Neurone Association, recognition of the contribution of volunteers is a key feature in its newsletters and is the focus of annual events. This theme of celebration is important as it confirms the commitment by the organisation to its volunteers.

7.5 **COMMUNITY LEVEL**

7.5.1.1 There are other celebratory events that include recognition of volunteers at a broader level in the Community. The People of the Year Awards, which include awards for voluntary work, have been televised and given a high media profile on an annual basis. This puts volunteering on a par with other sections of Irish life.

7.5.1.2 During 2001 as part of International Year of Volunteers, Volunteering Ireland in conjunction with private sponsors and the voluntary sector held a high profile event Ireland Involved, at which awards were presented to individual volunteers as well as representatives of groups. The President, Mary McAleese attended and made a point of meeting with as many of the attendees as possible. This in itself was seen as a form of recognition for those involved.

7.5.1.3 One possible impact of award schemes is that they can seem to be selective and exclusive if only a few volunteers are involved but if set in a broader celebratory context they can be positive for a wide range of volunteers.

7.5.1.4 Local authorities were also encouraged to celebrate the contribution of volunteers in 2001. Dublin City Council hosted a series of receptions in City Hall for volunteers throughout the city and presented them with a specially designed commemorative pin. The invitation was general and for many of the participants it was the first time that they received such recognition. There was an enthusiastic take up of the invitations and the pins were proudly worn.

7.5.1.5 As well as these recent schemes there are other long-running schemes such as the annual Tidy Towns Competition. Although competitive in nature, it has the effect of involving whole communities on a voluntary basis, with awards that are sought after and displayed for many years. It provides a real example of the link between voluntary effort and enhancement of civic life and at the heart of its enduring success is the level of recognition that the awards bring. The continuation

of the awards scheme is dependant on private sponsorship as well as voluntary effort, but with the level of media coverage generated by the scheme this seems likely to continue.

7.5.1.6 Overall, the media, the private sector, the voluntary sector and some local authorities in Ireland are seeing the benefits of being involved in providing recognition to volunteers. As well as enhancing the experience of volunteers, it promotes a positive dynamic for civic life.

7.6 **STATE LEVEL**

7.6.1.1 It is more difficult to find extensive examples of State recognition of volunteers in Ireland. Some examples from abroad and suggestions made, as submissions to the National Committee on Volunteering, seem to provide the basis for further development within the context of a State policy on volunteering. The positive and celebratory aspects of State recognition would provide a balance to the more regulatory and structural elements of policy.

7.6.1.2 The involvement by the State in the organisation of the IYV 2001 was in itself a form of recognition and included creative approaches to celebrating volunteering including the commissioning of poetry and the design of sculpture. This report is evidence of the intention to continue State involvement with volunteering which could include on-going recognition schemes. While the 2001 celebrations may be over there are annual national and international volunteer days which offer the opportunity to establish such schemes.

7.6.1.3 There is a state award scheme, which includes recognition of volunteering, the President's Gaisce Awards. This applies to young people between the ages of 15 and 25 who can progress through bronze, silver and gold stages by completing a range of challenges, which include voluntary community work. There are parallels with and links to international schemes such as the International Award for Young People, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and, the Congressional Award in the USA. The impetus behind these awards is to encourage the active involvement of young people in civic life and their development across a wide range of skills. When young people have obtained the Gaisce award they are invited to become part of an ongoing network, which gives some element of continuity.

There is no comparable network for adult volunteers outside their own organisation.

7.6.1.4 While voluntary work is just one of the elements in the Gaisce Awards, in the USA there is a series of awards for young people that focus specifically on community service. Under the President's Student Service Scholarship scheme each high school in the country may select two juniors or seniors to receive a $1,000 scholarship for outstanding service to the community. Students from kindergarten through to college who contribute at least 100 hours of service to the community are eligible for the President's Student Service Award Gold Pin and Presidential Certificate. This places volunteer work on a par with academic and sports prowess. The costs are not necessarily high since the level of recognition is as important as the amount of money involved. The Millennium Volunteers Programme is a similar programme operating in the UK and was designed to promote and recognise sustained volunteer commitment among young people aged between 16 and 24 years.

The Programme aims to, offer challenges and opportunities for young people to participate, learn and develop, set a standard for voluntary opportunities for young people, increase recognition for volunteering as an expression of citizenship and make a positive impact within local communities.

7.6.1.5 Apart from award schemes there may be other forms of State recognition that could be developed. One of the submissions to the National Committee on Volunteering contained the suggestion that 'as part of the Strategic Management Initiative in the public service, participation by public and civil servants in local development structures should become part of their job descriptions'. In addition, it is possible to offer inducements to public service employees to volunteer by allowing special leave while maintaining continuity of service.

7.6.1.6 In Germany there is a further stage of State recognition in that voluntary work is allowed as an alternative to completing military service, and the time spent on this work is credited for social insurance. This approach was echoed in another submission with the suggestion that a volunteer national service be set up in Ireland for people to participate in after their Leaving Certificate. If this qualified for Social insurance it might also be

worth considering for early retirees who often take up part time work in order to keep up their number of contributions.

7.7 **Conclusion**

7.7.1.1 Overall the National Committee concluded that there is an opportunity to develop further the idea of recognition for volunteers at organisational, community and State levels. Existing schemes have proved the value of celebration and offering progression to volunteers. It would be important that these are retained. There seems to be an interest by the voluntary sector, the private sector and at community level in further developing this.

7.7.1.2 If the State is to establish a formal policy in relation to volunteering then it implies some form of State recognition. Rather than creating a specific award, it might be of more benefit if the State resourced the development of a framework that would log the voluntary work done by individuals at different stages in their lives. This would be ongoing and non-competitive although celebratory elements could be built in at certain stages.

7.7.1.3 In the longer term, a more extensive commitment at policy level would be required if the State is to give recognition to volunteering by employees in the public service or if volunteering is to be linked to social insurance. This implies an on-going dialogue between the State and those engaged in, and supporting volunteering.

PART ONE

8 The Consultation Process

8.1 THE CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

8.1.1.1 Advertisements were placed in the national media inviting interested parties, organisations or individuals, to submit their views to the National Committee on Volunteering in early August 2001. Those making submissions were asked to consider measures to widen the pool of volunteers and the range of supports needed in order to promote, sustain and develop volunteering. In response to the call, 67 organisations and individuals made submissions. These are listed in TABLE 7.1 at the end of this chapter.

8.1.1.2 A summary of the issues and recommendations drawn from a reading of all these submissions informs this chapter and is available from the NCV on request. In this chapter we present a synthesis of the main themes. Inevitably differences of viewpoint and emphasis were expressed, and where substantial differences arise these are identified. The themes under which this synthesis is organised are general issues, policy issues, widening the base of volunteering, regulatory issues, volunteering infrastructure, management issues, and volunteer boards.

8.2 ISSUES RAISED IN SUBMISSIONS

8.2.1 General issues

8.2.1.1 **UN Year of Volunteers**: There was a general welcome for the UN's decision to honour the commitment and dedication of volunteers around the world during the UN International Year of Volunteers.

8.2.1.2 **Changing trends in volunteering**: A number of submissions suggested that as Irish people have become richer, more individualistic and participate less in organised religion, there has been a move away from past values and from commitment to community. Changes in work patterns, increased levels of employment and more women in paid employment were put forward as reasons why people may be taking on shorter volunteer commitments.

8.2.1.3 Another theme suggested that the emergence of new concerns like environment, personal and community development and heightened awareness of issues in relation to volunteers, such as work, insurance, screening, support, training and legal issues, has

changed the way people volunteer. People volunteer for different reasons than in the past. They now prefer involvement with an area of interest, or to be involved in the decision-making process. Access to the decision making process has developed with the growth in partnership structures, and the move towards consultation, participation, self help, empowerment and development rather than charity.

8.2.1.4 A number of factors have led to the need for more structured support. These include the development of voluntary organisations leading to the employment of more core staff, the numbers moving from volunteering to Community Employment and Jobs Initiative positions, increased demands resulting in the professionalisation of the sector and an increase in bureaucracy as funding increases and accountability becomes more demanding.

8.2.1.5 **Role of the volunteer:** The vital role of the volunteer in society is widely noted, especially in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. What is also clear is the volunteer's constructive contribution to society, supplementing the role of the State, identifying gaps in services, advocating for rights, developing future citizens and bringing about change. Many submissions record the numbers of volunteers active and the amount of work they carry out, yet there are no comprehensive national data on this.

8.2.1.6 **Benefits of volunteering**: The benefit of volunteering to the volunteer in terms of personal satisfaction, self esteem, confidence and fun is mentioned frequently as well as the benefit to the social, economic and physical environment. Volunteering is often described as a way of giving something back to the community. The other main perceived benefits are seen to lie in the skills learnt, the experience acquired, the opportunity to travel outside one's own community and through these, the possibility of moving into a career based on volunteer experience.

8.2.1.7 **Valuing Volunteers**: There is general acceptance that volunteers need to be valued and nurtured and that their contribution needs to be celebrated. While the economic value of volunteering is noted there is also stress on the social value and the core human values of caring, being a citizen and a neighbour. The need for government, statutory bodies and paid staff in organisations to respect the professionalism and

commitment of volunteers is stressed. This can lead to greater collaboration and improved access to information. Also it helps to change the perception of the voluntary sector as a low cost substitute for service provision by the State.

8.2.1.8 Some suggested that as part of the Strategic Management Initiative in the public service, participation by public and civil servants in local development structures should become part of their job descriptions; also, that county development boards co-ordinate a process to harness the skills and energy of volunteers, while minimising their time input.

8.2.1.9 **Community and society's dependency on volunteering**: Again the huge contribution of volunteers to society is stressed. Volunteers improve the quality of life in communities by helping to tackle poverty and its root causes, preserving stability and cohesion in society and pioneering imaginative responses to social need. Voluntary action also builds inclusive communities and increases cross border co-operation. The level of volunteering as a measure of the health of society and the need for a vision of society based on values like community, co-operation and neighbourliness rather than on wealth, is a recurring theme.

8.2.1.10 **Volunteering and democracy**: Several view volunteering as an essential component of a democratic, civil society and a check on any potential abuse of power by the market or State. There is a perceived need to create a more participatory democracy, which fosters active citizenship. Volunteering is seen to have a central role in this, creating habits of co-operation and a sense of concern for public affairs. In terms of engaging young people in the democratic process, there is a need to increase the quality and quantity of opportunities for their participation in the face of cynicism and political scandals. The growth of new local structures with the integration of local government and local development offers new challenges and requires capacity building among volunteers as well as changes in attitude in statutory organisations to encourage and enhance voluntary participation.

8.2.1.11 **Diversity in volunteering**: There is an acknowledgement of the diversity within the sector from the informal action of an individual to the formal organisational setting. Even within the latter, organisations can have a wide range of ratios of volunteers to paid staff or volunteers at board of management level.

8.2.2 **Policy issues**

8.2.2.1 **Government White Paper**: There is a general welcome for the White Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity*, especially for the statements recognising the role and value of volunteering. There is work to be done to realise the potential of the recommendations of the White Paper. It situates Ireland within the European social market model and has changed the climate within which voluntary activity operates.

8.2.2.2 **Government policy issues**: Opinions vary on the ideal level of State involvement in the provision of services. Some see voluntary provision as a counterpoint to State monopoly and a safeguard of citizen's rights, while others view the State as reneging on its role in the provision of essential services. Submissions recommend a number of strategies at government level. These include:

- setting up a policy framework for volunteering with an anti-poverty dimension;

- a charter of rights for volunteers;
- adequate resources to support new voluntary action;
- implementation and dissemination of good practice, and
- a co-ordinated and holistic approach to funding and accountability criteria.

  Specific policies are requested in the area of inducements to volunteer, like special leave with continuity of service and extra leave for volunteers as well as subsidised volunteerism and tax relief. Submissions ask that the State continue to build on the experience and creativity of the sector to inform policy and facilitate the sector's involvement at every stage in policy development.

8.2.2.3 **Volunteering research**: There is an acknowledgement of the need for new and ongoing research into volunteering in Ireland. This research should utilise the Census of Population to quantify the number and profile of volunteers. Research should also investigate strategies used in Ireland and globally to address recruitment problems, voluntary activity, employment, organisational capacity and standards in the sector. There is also a perceived need for research on the

effect of the local social partnership model on volunteers and the supports they need to work effectively within it. It is also suggested that new scholarships be funded at undergraduate and postgraduate level for studies on issues relating to volunteering.

8.2.2.4 **Partnership**: There is a range of new structures in the local development and local government sector in which local volunteers are being asked to represent their project or area of interest. These structures are intricate, the meetings demanding and the decisions made far-reaching. Volunteers need to be informed, be organised and to possess highly developed negotiation skills to engage effectively. They must be supported to develop these skills. State agencies need to be flexible, organising meetings at times and venues suitable to volunteers, engaging in meaningful consultation and developing an ethos of partnership. Training should be provided to front-line agency staff on partnership and community development principles and capacity built in voluntary groups through social mentor schemes.

8.2.2.5 **Recognition for volunteers**: Many submissions note the need to develop a value system to recognise, acknowledge and celebrate volunteering. Suggestions as to how this could be achieved included the establishment of an Annual Volunteer Award event, distribution of award certificates or the organisation of gifts, outings or special events. It was also noted that the nature of some voluntary work requires anonymity.

8.2.2.6 **Promotion of volunteering**: Submissions acknowledge the need for an attractive, new and vibrant image for volunteering. To this end a Government funded sustained programme of awareness raising, promoting fun as opposed to the staid charity image, is suggested. The media have a key role to play, facilitating young people to encounter a wide range of images of volunteering. Education can alert people to the impact of volunteering on society and its benefit to the individual.

8.2.2.7 **Volunteer national service**: One submission suggests that a volunteer national service be set up with inducements for people to participate after their Leaving Certificate.

8.2.3 **Widening the base of volunteers**

8.2.3.1 Recruitment of volunteers: Some organisations have difficulty recruiting volunteers, while others do not. There is a perception that where there are difficulties, these relate to forces outside the control of the organisation, time, full employment, housing, traffic, and working conditions. It is acknowledged that most volunteers are recruited by word of mouth, that this can exclude potential volunteers, that there is a large untapped pool of volunteers and that many say they do not volunteer because they have never been asked. Targeted recruitment is recommended to source people with particular skills and experience and to avoid inappropriate volunteer placements.

8.2.3.2 There is a need to pilot new initiatives that are pro-active and creative in recruitment approaches. An annual volunteer recruitment fair in a large national venue is suggested. Other suggested recruitment strategies include, targeting people and asking them, using posters and notices and hosting open days. Organisations need to develop equal access and opportunities policies. Local volunteer centres play a vital role in recruiting volunteers for local organisations

8.2.3.3 Barriers to volunteering: The changing pressures of modern life, individualism, materialism, solitary activities, economic wealth, full employment, private transport, commuting patterns, housing and couples in paid employment are seen by many submissions as barriers to volunteering. The Celtic Tiger economy is seen to have increased apathy and diminished interest in community involvement. It is suggested that some barriers will persist regardless of the state of the economy and these include, personal barriers like fear, lack of confidence, or bad previous experiences, and cliques. There can also be practical considerations like fear of loss of benefits, child abuse issues, increased workload and the financial costs involved.
Opportunities to participate in volunteering are often not clear, open or inviting. Volunteering can be seen as 'uncool', information can be limited and perceptions about who can volunteer can reflect society's prejudices. Expectations of volunteers can be too high and burnout is common. In addition, volunteers can get meeting fatigue and be intimidated by jargon and in-talk.

8.2.3.4 It is suggested that short-term assignments, family volunteering and employer supported volunteering can fit into busy lives. Supported volunteering projects to involve socially excluded people as volunteers and provide resources for childcare and transport, would overcome some obvious barriers. Well-organised meetings with training for chairs and secretaries can make the prospect of volunteering for a management board less daunting.

8.2.3.5 Encouraging Volunteering among Marginalised Groups: It is suggested that marginalised groups have not been involved historically in addressing issues in their own communities. In the act of volunteering, people on the margins can identify and articulate their needs and design ways to overcome their own disadvantage. The growth in the number of people with disabilities volunteering reflects their increased independence, supports for independent living and opportunities for them to be contributors rather than recipients. People from disadvantaged groupings like lone parents with low educational attainment and low economic status are more likely to be excluded from voluntary work and the benefits already described. Volunteering also extends a person's social, cultural and economic networks and without the opportunities to volunteer, marginalised people become ever more assigned to the periphery.

8.2.3.6 It is suggested that the NCV should fund or the State set up and promote, models that afford individuals from disadvantaged areas the opportunity to volunteer. This would promote social inclusion and increase social capital. Such models could also facilitate volunteering among ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, mental health service users, amongst others. Barriers to their involvement could be removed by providing childcare, transport and other out-of-pocket expenses and language supports where appropriate. A 'bridge programme', previously provided by the Community Employment Scheme, could be developed to allow volunteers to move into paid employment if volunteers wanted to do so. Elements such as part-time, flexible, local work with accessible childcare would facilitate this.

8.2.3.7 **Widening the pool of volunteers**: It is suggested that the development of local volunteer centres is highly successful in widening the pool of volunteers. There is a need to broaden the base of volunteers and make volunteering more inclusive by targeting key groups like children, youth, disabled people, senior citizens, ethnic minorities, Travellers, employees, employers and the wider community. Organisations need training and support to diversify their pool of volunteers and combat discrimination on the basis of sex, age, class, disability and ethnicity.

8.2.3.8 Demonstrating the positive effects of volunteering and changing its image, making volunteering a cool, legitimate and attractive option and more involvement by the business sector will help to widen the pool of volunteers. It is also important that we learn from the experience of other countries, such as the UK Active Community Initiative and the Northern Ireland model and form a North-South forum for the exchange of ideas, advice, information and methodology.

8.2.3.9 **Volunteering and the business community**: The amount of volunteering already happening within the business sector is acknowledged. Many businesses now keen to give something back to the community are alert to their responsibility to make a positive impact on economic, social and environmental sustainability and are aware of the positive impact it can have on public relations and the corporate image. Much company support is made by way of monetary and product donations but employe supported volunteering is growing mainly through the provision of expertise, advice and training to community and enterprise groups.

8.2.3.10 It is suggested that the business community actively promotes and supports volunteering in the workforce, that employers and trade unions recognise the value of volunteering and develop policies in relation to it. Details could be written into employee contracts and it could be optional for each employee to take time off for volunteering. Businesses could organise secondment for employees volunteering in certain circumstances.

8.2.3.11 A central co-ordinating body for volunteering could develop and support business links with voluntary organisations. Such an agency could organise more major projects and businesses could club together to make a bigger impact. Some businesses state that with such an agency in place they would pro-actively support employees who volunteer. Such an agency could support and train organisations to enable them to use company volunteers more effectively. On the regulation side, tax rebates could be given to employees who devote

time to volunteering, they could be exempted from PRSI for every hour volunteered and corporate tax incentives could be created for employers who release their employees for voluntary activity.

8.2.3.12 There is a need to develop a media strategy on the value and role of employer supported volunteering as part of the wider corporate social responsibility agenda. Volunteering within the business community could see the further development of facilitation between older more established and new emerging firms and there is a suggestion that the social mentor Scheme be developed regionally.

8.2.3.13 **Young people volunteering**: Some organisations expressed difficulty recruiting young volunteers. It is generally seen as important to get young people involved at an early stage, involving the home, schools, churches and youth organisations in developing an environment where young people would be willing to volunteer. This entails losing the 'not cool' image, capturing their imagination, offering them responsibility and trusting them to use it dependably.

8.2.3.14 **Volunteering in sport**: Volunteers created most of Ireland's community-based sports clubs, sports facilities and national governing bodies in sport.
Their commitment and impact need to be acknowledged. There is no precise statistical information on members of sports clubs and sports volunteers in Ireland. Sport needs more volunteers and there is an acknowledged difficulty in retaining present volunteers and recruiting new ones. It is recommended that the Government and sports organisations work together to organise a practical framework and delivery mechanisms for the education and training of volunteers in sport.

8.2.3.15 **Schools and volunteering**: Active promotion of volunteering throughout the education system is proposed, with particular emphasis on transition year and the CSPE curriculum. An international schools volunteering programme is also suggested, as well as a six month or a year's gap between Leaving Certificate and third level education or employment, where young people could volunteer at home or abroad, linked to the European Voluntary Service Programme.

8.2.3.16 **Volunteering at third level**: It is proposed that a community learning project, already piloted at the Dublin Institute of Technology be investigated and assessed with the aim of extending it throughout the third level education sector. This project links Irish third level education with the voluntary sector, improving the quality of education and strengthening the voluntary sector.

8.2.3.17 **Transnational volunteering for young people**: There is a need to encourage greater participation of young Irish volunteers on transnational programmes. Participation in international exchanges is seen as a learning experience, meeting new environments and cultures, gaining independence, personal and social skills and self esteem, combating xenophobia and racism and contributing to conflict resolution and prevention and is particularly beneficial for socially excluded young people. The government should provide support to send young people from disadvantaged backgrounds on short international exchanges and to provide the preparatory training.

8.2.3.18 **Men volunteering**: There is a need for innovative approaches to involve more men in volunteering. It would be unfortunate if as an unintended consequence of best practice – such as the implementation of screening for volunteers in areas like childcare – men were discouraged from volunteering to work with children.

8.2.3.19 **Older people volunteering**: The need is seen for voluntary organisations to target older people in their recruitment. There is great potential in older people given their accumulated skills and experience. They may benefit with a healthier and more enjoyable life, while society benefits from greater social cohesion and intergenerational solidarity. Collaboration between voluntary organisations and business could be fruitful in this area through pre-retirement and release schemes and the extension and development of the social mentor scheme.

8.2.4 Regulation

8.2.4.1 Expenses for volunteers: There is agreement that out-of-pocket expenses should be standardised, reimbursed and added to programme costs granted to voluntary organisations. These costs include transport, subsistence, childcare and carers' costs. It is also suggested that the Revenue Commissioners undertake a fair, clear and broad review of volunteer expenses.

8.2.4.2 Garda clearance for volunteers: The difficulty in obtaining Garda clearance for volunteers is a concern for many organisations particularly those working with children and young people. There is also a fear among potential volunteers in relation to child abuse allegations. It is requested that the NCV make representations to the Minister for Justice to improve the existing vetting procedures and extend them to volunteers. Also organisations should be provided with support to put in place policies and procedures to ensure that both volunteers and children are protected and that volunteers get specific training in this area.

8.2.4.3 Insurance for volunteers: It is submitted that funding be provided by the State for insurance for volunteers.

8.2.4.4 Volunteers in receipt of unemployment or disability payments: It is recommended that the State develops and implements a strategy to promote awareness among people receiving unemployment payments that they can become involved in voluntary activity, at home or abroad and not lose their payments.

8.2.4.5 Cost of Incorporation for voluntary bodies: One submission mentions the high cost of incorporation and offered special rates for voluntary bodies.

8.2.5 Infrastructure

8.2.5.1 Volunteering infrastructure / agencies and bureaux: It is a view widely held by organisations that a government or central agency needs to be set up to co-ordinate resources for volunteering and that local volunteer centres be set up nation-wide to provide support and placement services for volunteers. The central agency could promote volunteering nationally, set quality standards, target new areas for volunteering and fund local volunteer centres. Local volunteer centres could set up a local volunteer register and support services

to provide volunteer exchange, locally administered expenses, training, help with health and safety requirements, as well as awards and recognition schemes for volunteers. It could also act as a forum for local agencies to co-ordinate a package for funding and accountability issues. The local volunteer centres would also be well placed to undertake specific programmes that encourage volunteering among groups which are marginalised or socially excluded. It could also act as a vital link between voluntary organisations, on the one hand, and the business community and local schools, on the other hand.

8.2.5.2 There is already a high level of interest in local communities to set up volunteer centres. Submissions refer to developing centres in Clondalkin, Lucan, Ballyfermot, Coolock, Drogheda, Dundalk, Wicklow, Bray, Galway and Cork. (See also Appendix 3.)

8.2.5.3 Adequate core funding administered by a central body and based on quality of service rather than quantity of volunteers is vital. It is suggested that these centres be independent and run by the community and voluntary sector and also that they could be linked to the national network of Citizen Information Centres.

8.2.5.4 National Committee on Volunteering: Submissions welcomed the role of the NCV in highlighting the richness and diversity of volunteering in Ireland. It is acknowledged that the NCV has developed an awareness of the role and importance of the volunteer and provided a national focus for volunteering.

8.2.5.5 Organisations express the hope that the momentum will not be lost after 2001 and urge the continuation of an interdepartmental committee with similar representation, whose sole remit is volunteering. They suggest that the remit, size and composition of the NCV may need to be reviewed. The government should set out the basic principles and resources which it is committed to putting in place to support volunteering. The government should also ensure that the recommendations of the NCV are implemented at local level and that the sector is kept informed of what the NCV is doing.

8.2.5.6 Volunteering database: The establishment of a national volunteering database is recommended. The purpose of this would be to provide individuals and volunteer-

involving organisations with a mechanism for matching opportunities with volunteers, as has been successfully demonstrated elsewhere.

8.2.5.7 **Volunteer networking**: An annual national volunteer conference is suggested as well as regional volunteer meetings and seminars to facilitate feedback from volunteers and networking and exchange of best practice. There is a need to learn from the experience of sister organisations in other countries. It is suggested that any future budget for volunteer support contain a transnational element. The need to explore the potential of new technology to develop and maintain networks is suggested and the potential role of State funded resource and co-ordinating bodies.

8.2.5.8 **Access to information**: Organisations need further facilitation to access and use the information they require. Current outlets for information like youth and community information centres, libraries and career guidance offices need to be strengthened, upgraded and resourced. A national volunteering website needs to be developed and accurate information made available on the range of support systems, on volunteering opportunities and on relevant grants and funding as well as statistical data to profile target groups and facilitate planning. Independent information giving organisations help to create a more inclusive and participative society by providing opportunities for citizens to pursue their rights and entitlements.

8.2.5.9 **Access to information technology**: There is a need to consider how voluntary groups can be supported in developing an integrated use of information technology for the benefit of all. This requires resources and access to national databases to develop and maintain networks. There is also potential for volunteers to help marginalised people use computer technologies.

8.2.6 **Volunteer management**

8.2.6.1 **Support for volunteers**: Organisations need to be supported to put policies and procedures in place which focus on recruitment, selection, training, support, supervision, management, grievance procedures, progress reviews, feedback mechanisms and recognition. Childcare, youth and community organisations need policies that ensure both volunteers and children are protected. Anti-bullying and harassment policies

should extend to volunteers. Volunteers should receive support from a designated member of staff and be cared for and rewarded. In some particularly stressful volunteer assignments, de-stress counselling is suggested.

8.2.6.2 **Managing volunteers**: It is recommended that voluntary organisations be supported to employ a volunteer co-ordinator. There is a need to define best practice in volunteer management and develop clear volunteer policies. Volunteers should receive supervision and support, their individual skills and interests should be matched with tasks and clear and meaningful roles defined for them. Organisations need to encourage volunteers to work as part of a team, have policies to deal with disciplinary and grievance matters, provide a safe working environment and good facilities and train their staff in best practice when working with volunteers. A written agreement defining role, period of contract, commitment and training can help to create mutual respect between volunteers and paid staff. Consultation, feedback, review and ongoing evaluation of a volunteer's work can help volunteers to value their own work and be an integral part of planning and development in the organisation.

8.2.6.3 **Challenges facing organisations**: Challenges arise from new legislation in areas like the Freedom of Information Act, Employment Law, Health and Safety legislation, and the Childcare Act. Organisations need information and support to comply with new legislation. There is an increased demand for improved accountability, consultation with members and service users, strategic planning and resource management. Target groups and service users have higher expectations for improved standards. It is suggested that some organisations have not changed to accommodate changes in volunteering.

8.2.6.4 **Improving structures within organisations**: There is a need for organisations to develop policies and procedures that focus on recruitment, selection, training, support and recognition of volunteers. Organisations can be insular and not very welcoming and there is a need to develop volunteer friendly organisations, which involve target groups as volunteers at all levels. Organisations should encourage volunteers to respect the dignity and individuality of consumers and clients and challenge rather than patronise. There is also a need for training and attitude change in organisations so that volunteering for all can be facilitated.

8.2.6.5 There is a need to develop family friendly volunteering options and to keep volunteers informed. A Quality Mark for excellence in volunteer management should be developed and resources provided for the employment of a volunteer co-ordinator in larger organisations. Members of organisations need to have a mandate from the wider community and organisations having difficulty recruiting or keeping volunteers need to look to themselves for reasons.

8.2.6.6 **Training and Accreditation for Volunteers**: The need for a supported system of training and accreditation of volunteers is a key issue and is cited by more organisations than any other single issue. Programmes need to be set up at local, regional and national level in co-operation with educational and training institutions, to deliver this. The development of training programmes appropriate to the needs of volunteers and to the needs of socially excluded people is also seen as important. It is noted that training should be free of charge or at minimal cost and should be through experience and fun.

8.2.6.7 Training courses are recommended in the specific areas of management, such as conducting meetings, human relations, recruiting, training and supporting volunteers, planning and evaluation, grant applications and partnership approaches to planning and policy making.

8.2.6.8 The development of a specific accredited training pro-gramme for volunteer co-ordinators is recommended.

8.2.6.9 Training for volunteer managers should include chairing and secretarial skills, conflict management and facilitation, communication, legal issues, accounts, regulation of charities, health and safety as well as lobbying and negotiation skills.

8.2.6.10 Accreditation systems should recognise prior learning and experience to date and should be linked to a national accreditation system. Accreditation could be given for modules completed and agreed quality standards are needed for training and trainers.

8.2.6.11 **Funding**: Submissions ask that the State provide adequate core funding on a multi-annual basis for community and voluntary organisations, especially those concerned with tackling poverty and disadvantage.

To this end, government departments need to collectively develop policies on funding for the sector, to include a commitment to long-term funding, mainstreaming successful pilot projects, a co-ordinated and holistic approach to funding applications and accountability criteria, funding for core staff and resources for technical support. These policies should eliminate dysfunctional competition and the practice of refocusing services to draw down funding. They should also eliminate the overemphasis on fundraising for volunteers and the time commitment involved in administering funding. Increased flexibility in the structural delivery of programmes could foster creativity, flexibility and ingenuity.

8.2.6.12 A central fund for volunteer programmes should be set up. This fund could enable annual award and recognition events, provide resources for equipment and facilities, fund the employment of volunteer co-ordinators, fund training, skill development and support needs of volunteers, provide subsidies for insurance and rent, transport, childcare and other out-of-pocket expenses.

8.2.7 **The voluntary management board**

8.2.7.1 **Volunteers as managers**: It is acknowledged that many volunteers now work in a management role with responsibilities as employers and financial managers. There can be a fear of the legal responsibilities involved, especially for directors. There can also be a conflict of interest between managers, often former clients or members of the target group in low paid jobs, setting pay scales and terms and conditions for staff. There is also the danger that the initiative and energy of volunteers gets lost in the work of managing the project.

8.2.7.2 Training in the roles and responsibilities of management is vital, as is clarity around roles and responsibilities, aims, objectives, policies and structures of the organisation. This training needs to be at a time and venue suitable to the volunteers. Well organised meetings with good timekeeping, and clearly defined roles and adequate notice are vital.

8.2.7.3 It is suggested that the State investigate, research and pilot new models of voluntary participation in management, provide guidelines for pay scales and increments for staff and produce an information pack for volunteer

managers. As many voluntary board members are members of a number of boards, over-commitment can lead to frustration and burnout of volunteers. Resources are needed to allow voluntary management boards to engage professional legal and financial expertise to assist them to fulfil legal and financial responsibilities.

TABLE 7.1: *List of organisations and individuals who made submissions to the Committee*

ORGANISATIONS

The Association of Voluntary Service Organisations

Ballyfermot Community Civic Centre

Barnardos

Barretstown Gang Camp

Bray Partnership

C.A.S.A. Caring and Sharing Association

Chairs Forum of PLANET, The Partnerships Network

Children in Hospital Ireland

Church of Scientology

Combat Poverty Agency

Comhairle

Cork Communities Training

Cork County Federation Muintir na Tíre Ltd

Cork Y.M.C.A.

Croyden Volunteer Bureau

Cumann Luthchleas Gael

Dublin Corporation Community Section

Dublin Institute of Technology, Faculty of Tourism and Food

Eslin Community Alert Group

Federation of Active Retirement Associations

Federation Trust Charity Incorporation Agents

Galway City Partnership

Guinness Ireland Group

Holywell Trust Support Agency Ltd

I.S.P.C.C.

Intel

Irish Mental Patient's Educational and Representative Organisation

Irish Sports Council

Irish Water Safety

Irish Wheelchair Association

Léargas, The Exchange Bureau

Leinster Branch, Badminton Union

M.A.B.S. West Region

Mid West Community Development Support Agency

NASC, The Irish Immigrant Support Centre, Cork

National Council for the Blind of Ireland

National Irish Bank

Northside Partnership

OPEN, One Parent Exchange and Network

Order of Malta Ambulance Corps

Outhouse Ltd. Community Resource Centre

PLATO Ireland Network

Pobal Community Development Agency

Royal Hospital Donnybrook

Scouting Ireland

South Tipperary Platform

2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games

Tallaght Volunteer Bureau

Vergemount and District Mental Health Association

Viatores Christi

Vincent de Paul National Young Adult Committee

Volunteer Resource Centre

Voluntary Service International

Waterford Youth Drama

West Training and Development Ltd

Westmeath Community and Voluntary Forum

The Wheel

Youthlinks Community Development Initiative

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS

Brian Brady

Patricia Dervan

Patricia Kerr

Michael Mc Carthy

Mary O Gorman

Sean O Riain

Mary O Sullivan

Bill Skerrit

Anthony Talbot

PART ONE

9 International Approaches to Volunteering

9.1 **INTRODUCTION**

9.1.1 Sources of material on international approaches

9.1.1.1 The recognition of the social and economic value of aspects of volunteering has prompted the development of government policies and programmes in many countries aimed at encouraging and supporting volunteering. In this chapter a number of these national examples are examined with a view to their potential relevance to the Irish context. The information comes chiefly from the research carried out by Mr. Joe Larragy[34] for the Committee. Copies of his full report are available from the NCV Secretariat. The report examines the cases of Northern Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Denmark and Germany. The approach of the European Commission to the development and support of volunteering is also discussed. For each case study, the policy context was examined, regulatory frameworks were outlined, infrastructure supports were detailed and the impact of various developmental initiatives was reviewed. The case study countries were selected with a view to providing information from a range of economic, demographic and policy contexts.

9.1.1.2 The material is presented below in broad sections, as follows. This section (9.1) deals with background concepts and definitions, while section (9.2) presents the case study findings. The next section (9.3) draws the main lessons from the case studies and the final section (9.4) outlines some conclusions.

9.1.2 Background

9.1.2.1 **Definitions of 'volunteering'**: Although within the study volunteering is understood as involving activities or work done of a person's free will, without payment and for the benefit of others, there are difficulties in relation to how these boundaries are operated in practice. For example, in Britain a distinction is made in law between work and employment. The National Centre for Volunteering (NCV) in Britain argues a case for the use of the term 'work' to refer to both paid employment and voluntary work, in order to extend the protection of employment legislation to volunteers. In Germany conscientious objectors may opt for civil service instead of military service and there are special categories of volunteering that earn social security entitlements. In Canada there are situations where people volunteer under mandatory programmes, including community service orders.

9.1.2.2 **Approaches to policy**: In the study, volunteering policies refer principally to policies developed by governments to promote volunteering. These range in sophistication from simple promotional campaigns in the media to strategic approaches set out in policy documents. The notion of government policy on volunteering might seem to contradict the principle of spontaneity underlying volunteering but in fact the relationship between volunteering and government is increasing in importance. The International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE), in its Universal Declaration on Volunteering, called on governments:

> '…To ensure the rights of all people to volunteer, to remove any legal barriers to participation, to engage volunteers in its work, and to provide resources to NGOs to promote and support the effective mobilisation and management of volunteers'[35]

9.1.2.3 Inevitably, there are questions about where to draw the line between government policy that stimulates volunteer effort as a value in itself and policy that seeks to make use of volunteers as instruments of other government policies. Generally speaking, if government pursues a perspective on volunteering which sees it as enhancing civil society, democratic participation and civic engagement, this fits in with what volunteering interests wish to see.

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34 Joe Larragy is a lecturer in social policy at the Centre for Applied Social Studies, NUI Maynooth

35 The Universal Declaration on Volunteering, Adopted by the international board of directors of the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) at its 16th World Volunteer Conference, Amsterdam, January 2001

9.1.2.4 Policies to promote volunteering imply that there is some notion of its value, worth or benefit. At official level the notion of this value is articulated across a spectrum ranging from an uncritical valuing of volunteering for itself to various attempts to quantify and place a monetary value on the inputs, outputs and outcomes of volunteering. However, not all the benefits of volunteering may be accounted for in terms of GNP and, while volunteering is assumed to benefit others, individual benefits to the volunteer are increasingly highlighted as important motivations. At a practical level, a quantitative approach to evaluation is becoming prevalent amongst volunteer agencies and voluntary organisations in order to support cases for maintained or increased statutory funding programmes. Nevertheless public policy may also be driven by the qualitative evaluation of volunteering, including recognition that to promote associative activity and voluntary action may provide the basis of more lasting benefits, such as robust democratic culture and greater adaptability of societies. From such a perspective volunteering is understood as a key part of the way in which civil society is constituted, as a reflexive domain of action and discourse required for a healthy democracy. Related to this is the concept of 'social capital', which comprises the notion that social networks and general norms of reciprocity are a form of capital that, like physical and human capital, has a tangible economic value. An important implication for the valuation of voluntary action when viewed in the light of the concept of social capital is that philanthropic connotations of volunteering may give way to connotations of reciprocity and mutualism.

9.1.2.5 **Volunteering Infrastructure**: Volunteering infrastructure has been defined as 'the structures that exist… to represent, promote, and build the capacity of volunteering and community involvement.' Infrastructure may operate "in the public, business, community and voluntary sectors...and at national and local levels."[36] A distinction may be made between primary and secondary infrastructure. Primary infrastructure includes organisations specifically dedicated to promoting and developing volunteering, such as national volunteer centres or local volunteer centres.

Secondary infrastructure includes those with an involvement in the promotion of volunteering arising out of other objectives, such as organisations that involve volunteers. Volunteering infrastructure is increasingly significant in the context of governmental objectives (e.g., social inclusion, lifelong learning and promotion of active citizenship) because these require 'capacity building' in local communities and civil society. By developing primary volunteering infrastructure, governments may be particularly supportive of volunteering. In this way they can provide the necessary support for volunteering while enabling the maintenance of the required independence from government. The presence of a substantial primary volunteering infrastructure is characteristic across the case study countries and may typically be found in some form in most advanced countries.

9.1.2.6 **Impact of policies**: It is very difficult to speak about the impact of policies on volunteering in a general way, particularly when policies can comprise defined projects and initiatives as well as ideological shifts in the general direction of supporting voluntary action. However, a number of features do emerge from the different accounts, such as the importance of developing the primary volunteering infrastructure, particularly at local or municipal level. Research in the UK suggests that a national media campaign for instance did little to raise awareness and had little measurable effect on volunteering levels. What really was effective however, was investment in local volunteering development agencies, which made a promising start at creating a local infrastructure for volunteering, though its impact was blunted by inadequate funding and a lack of strategic thinking"[37]. However, media campaigns, by offering an imaginative brand-image can be adopted by local organisations, such as volunteer centres, as a quality mark, and this can have substantial results.

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36 Volunteering Matters in Scotland, No. 10

37 Justin Davis Smith 1998,
'Making a difference: can governments influence volunteering?',
Voluntary Action, Vol.1, No.1 Winter

9.2 CASE STUDIES

9.2.1 Northern Ireland

9.2.1.1 **Background**: Philanthropy and volunteering have a long history in Northern Ireland and reflect both the middle-class philanthropic traditions of the 18th and 19th centuries associated with the enlightenment and the emergence of catholic, religious and clerical philanthropy in the 19th century. The 'Troubles' have made life difficult for community development and voluntary organisations. Yet, over the period, volunteering and the voluntary sector have generally succeeded in operating in a way that has served to bridge sectarian and political divisions. Significantly, the New Labour Government has proved committed to the notion of community building, volunteering, and activism at the local level, and has translated this into new policy initiatives.

9.2.1.2 **Level of Volunteering**: It is estimated that, of people over the age of 16 in Northern Ireland, some 72 per cent take part in voluntary activity. Thirty-five per cent are involved as formal volunteers and 37 per cent are involved in informal volunteering, while 28 per cent are involved in both formal and informal activity. Formal volunteers are more usually women (58%) married (59%), in full time jobs (39%), and aged between 35-64 years (51%). Informal volunteering patterns are somewhat similar. Volunteering is most popular in the areas of sport and recreation (30%), followed by religion (27%) and youth/children (23%). It is noteworthy that almost half (49%) heard of volunteering opportunities through relatives or friends, some 22 per cent through church or religious organisations, 20 per cent through being a member of an organisation and 12 per cent through their place of work or occupation.[38]

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38 Source: Volunteer Development Agency, June 2001,
Volunteering in Northern Ireland - 2001,
Prepared by Ulster Marketing Surveys, funded by the
Voluntary Activity Unit of the Department of Social
Development

9.2.1.3 **Policy Approaches**: UK-level thinking has increasingly given shape to the policies followed in Northern Ireland, and these have evolved over the decades, through the Community Volunteering Scheme, Make a Difference, Millennium Volunteers and Active Communities. The most comprehensive of these, the Active Community Initiative was launched UK-wide in March 2000 with the goal of rebuilding a sense of community throughout the UK, by encouraging and supporting all forms of community involvement. The Northern Ireland Action Plan under this initiative aims to:

- Bring about a change in attitude to volunteering and community action;
- Increase the number of people involved in volunteering;
- Broaden the base of volunteers and make volunteering an inclusive process;
- Locate the Active Community Initiative at the heart of policy in order to promote a community empowerment approach.

9.2.1.4 The methods underpinning the plan are:
- Research;

- Promotion and publicity;

- Policy and practice;

- Volunteering infrastructure;

- Demonstration projects, and

- Monitoring and evaluation.

  Under the initiative the Department of Social Development provides a budget of £1.8m over three years and funds projects under each of the above four key objective areas.

9.2.1.5 **Volunteering infrastructure**: Implementation of government policy to promote volunteering depends on the existence of voluntary sector organisations that comprise volunteering infrastructure. In Northern Ireland this is relatively advanced and comprises a central component, the Volunteer Development Agency, and local services through the array of volunteer bureaux. The Volunteer Development Agency promotes and develops volunteering by providing a central resource of support, information, training and research.

The Agency is a membership-based organisation comprising individuals and organisations from across statutory, voluntary and private sectors. Its mission is to 'promote and develop volunteering as a valued way of life by promoting a positive climate for volunteering, developing and supporting standards of practice for involving volunteers, developing the capacity of the volunteering infrastructure and influencing public policy'.[40] It has 25 paid staff and provides services covering policy, practice, development and grants programmes. In 2000 the income of the Volunteer Development Agency was £2.25m, mostly in the form of statutory grants.

9.2.1.6 Volunteer bureaux are key components of the volunteering infrastructure at local level, complementing the work of the Volunteer Development Agency at central level. The bureaux are not only a matchmaking service but offer various types of expertise on volunteering in each local area. To volunteer-involving organisations, they offer support on policy issues, training on how to involve volunteers, access to volunteers and advice on how to retain them. They also provide information on issues such as child protection, on implementation of new initiatives such as employer supported volunteering and on developing new projects that involve volunteers and meet local needs.[41] The expansion of this type of local infrastructure has been the focus of the Volunteer Bureaux Initiative funded by the Department of Social Development and managed by the Volunteer Development Agency. The initiative has set a target that no citizen should be outside a 15-mile radius of a volunteer bureau. There are now 15 bureaux in Northern Ireland. These are varied in structure and origins but all are autonomous, although some are housed within other organisations.

9.2.1.7 The bureaux are part of a network, the Volunteer Bureaux of Northern Ireland, which has developed a strategic plan for them in conjunction with the Volunteer Development Agency. The plan outlines a set of activities (recruiting volunteers, supporting volunteers, training and developing volunteers, developing and supporting volunteering opportunities, promoting volunteering and volunteering bureaux, linking with other agencies, promoting good practice, influencing policy, planning and evaluation, accessing resources). The plan also defines aims, objectives, priorities and performance indicators for each of these activities. Funding of the bureaux comes from the Department of Social Development, and amounts to £750,000 per annum, an average of £50,000 per bureau, though the actual level varies considerably because each bureau has its own history and affiliations and other sources of income. Central government funding has been important, however, in directly supporting volunteer bureaux and in developing policies and programmes which the bureaux can work to implement.

9.2.2 Scotland

9.2.2.1 **Background**: Devolution in Scotland provided potential opportunities to promote volunteering in Scotland. As the Deputy Minister for the Communities in Scotland stated 'Voluntary action, volunteering and community action are essential to the Scottish Executive's vision of creating an inclusive and mutually supportive society'.[42] Measuring levels of volunteering is fraught with difficulties and slight differences in methodology can lead to substantial discrepancies. This is illustrated in the Scottish case where the National Survey of Volunteering estimated that 50 per cent of Scottish adults (aged 18 or over) volunteered[43] while the Scottish Household Survey found only 20 per cent of adults (aged 16 or over) volunteered on a regular basis.[44]

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40 Volunteer Development Agency, January 2001, *Information leaflet*
41 Volunteer Development Agency, *Local Expertise on Volunteering*, leaflet.

42 See Scottish Active Communities Working Group, January 2000, *Supporting Active Communities – A Draft Strategy for Supporting Volunteering and Community Action*, Page 5.
43 Institute for Volunteering Research, *National Survey of Volunteering* 1997
44 Scottish Executive: *Household Survey*

9.2.2.2 **Regulatory environment**: The regulatory environment covering volunteers in Scotland is somewhat open to interpretation due to the blurring of boundaries between volunteering and employment, arising out of developments in labour law. Because there is no strict legal definition of a 'volunteer', organisations are advised to treat their volunteers as if they were paid employees. Volunteer Development Scotland has yet to decide on whether to support extending the relevant employment law or to favour the promotion of best practice as the more effective route to volunteer protection. Volunteer management remains an important issue, in which the ethos and meaning of voluntary work must be preserved notwithstanding the need to apply standards that would apply in normal employment relationships.

9.2.2.3 In the case of people on social welfare benefits, government policy has been to remove barriers to engagement in volunteering. For example, people claiming unemployment allowance can do as much voluntary work as they like so long as they remain available for work and can attend for interview within 48 hours. People claiming various disability or incapacity benefits have no restrictions on the number of hours they may volunteer.

9.2.2.4 Volunteer recruitment screening is another area where there are ongoing developments. Volunteer Development Scotland provides advice in relation to recruiting and supporting volunteers working with vulnerable groups.[45] The Scottish Executive has agreed to fund free police checks for volunteers working with children, young people and vulnerable adults in the voluntary sector. Volunteer Development Scotland is to run the Central Registered Body that will process voluntary sector applications for police checks.

9.2.2.5 **Volunteering infrastructure**: Volunteer Development Scotland is the national centre for volunteering and community involvement in Scotland. It promotes equality of opportunity and high standards of achievement in volunteering. It also generates new initiatives to expand the range and effectiveness of volunteering and community involvement. It was founded in 1984 on the initiative of organisations in Scotland that recognised the need for a national focus on volunteering. Among its functions are:

- To be the voice of volunteering through liaison with government and other statutory authorities and with business, voluntary and community sectors, all of which can play a part in promoting volunteering;
- To promote the value of volunteering and community involvement and to celebrate its achievements;
- To expand the boundaries of volunteering and community involvement locally and nationally;
- To develop infrastructure for volunteering and community involvement at local and national level, and
- To be the key resource on good practice and community involvement.

9.2.2.6 In 1999–2000 Volunteer Development Scotland had a paid staff of 40, plus a large number of volunteers and volunteer mentors. Its budget was Stg£887,000; comprising Stg£356,000 in Government grants, Stg£432,000 in other grants and a mixture of fees, charges, subscriptions, sponsorship, courses and conferences and donations. It is the central player in the Government's Active Communities Strategy and continues to develop employer supported volunteering in Scotland which it has done since the late 1980s.

9.2.2.7 In Scotland there are 36 volunteer bureaux operating out of 50 offices in 29 of Scotland's local authority areas with a combined annual income of Stg£3.25m. The Scottish Executive has recently allocated Stg£1m to complete the network of local volunteer development agencies (LVDA) and ensure that each local authority area has one. LVDAs are complemented locally by councils for voluntary service and community development agencies, and the Scottish Executive has committed itself to supporting these, including the provision of support for information technology.[46]

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45 See *Protecting Children: A Code of Good Practice for Voluntary organisations in Scotland Working with Children and Young People*, Volunteer Development Scotland, 1998

46 The Scottish Executive June 2000, Active Communities *Supporting Active Communities in Scotland… The Scottish Executive Response*

9.2.2.7 **Policy impact**: Assessing the impact of volunteer development policies in Scotland is difficult as it is elsewhere, not least because of the challenge of isolating the impact of the policy from other factors in the environment. However, work on the impact of the Millennium Volunteers and the Active Communities programmes in Scotland concluded that government does have a role to play in promoting and developing volunteering. Four areas in particular are noted:

• Setting out a framework, supporting volunteering infrastructure, and providing adequate resources for volunteering and promoting volunteering;

• Recognising the importance of intermediate goals, such as the ease of access to volunteering and the quality of the volunteering experience;

• Adopting a long-term commitment to funding and acknowledging that the development of volunteering is a long-term process, and

• The implementation and benchmarking of development programmes against baseline data is important to tracking impact. Evaluation needs to focus on process as well as outcomes and needs to be built into the programme design.[47]

9.2.2.9 The Scottish case reveals that volunteering policies and volunteering infrastructure at central and local level have been developing since the early 1980s. Volunteering Development Scotland, the national centre for volunteering, is an independent body receiving funding from government and other sources. Evaluation of policy impact has led to the recognition that in order to make the most of government campaigns to promote volunteering, it is necessary to have a local and national infrastructure. Moreover, good policy is not necessarily a question of generating volunteering where there is little of it; rather, it is necessary to improve policy and practice so as to ensure the continuation of volunteering in changing circumstances. This involves new approaches, for instance, fostering employer supported volunteering or involving young people through new and better-tailored images and ideas about volunteering.

9.2.3 **Denmark**

9.2.3.1 **Background**: Denmark is an example of the Scandinavian group of 'social democratic' welfare regimes with high reliance on State transfers and service provision. The State, rather than the family or voluntary sector provides insulation from market risks such as unemployment. The State, rather than the market or voluntary sector, has been the mainstay of services to relieve family members across a range of caring responsibilities related to age, disability, and childcare. A strong social democratic tradition, however, does not imply a weak civil society sector and citizenship is expressed not only through paying taxes but also by active participation in associations and volunteering.[48]

9.2.3.2 **Levels of Volunteering**: Despite the strength of the statutory sector in welfare provision, volunteering is at least as significant in Denmark as in other European countries. One study conducted in the early 1990s covering 10 European countries showed that 28 per cent of Danes had volunteered over the previous year, compared to an average of 27 per cent for all countries in the study.[49] There are thousands of voluntary organisations and associations with many new ones on-stream. They address a wide range of issues and range across charitable, service providing, advocacy, and self-help.

9.2.3.3 **Policy Approaches**: The Danish government has become increasingly cognisant of the potential of volunteering and the voluntary sector on the one hand and of the potential dilemmas posed by its increasing interdependence with the State on the other. The potential of current volunteering arises out of its activism and the high level of solidarity it generates. It is perceived as very responsive to new needs and innovative in its approaches. Also, there is a great networking capability that mobilises a broad range of qualifications and skills in its service. It also places the emphasis on citizens' rights and eligibility and adopts a professional approach. On the other hand, risks to

47 Olivia Marks-Woldman, 2000,
Volunteering and the National Context: Can Government Policies Influence Volunteering? MPhil Dissertation, University of Glasgow

48 Communication from the General Secretary Danish Committee on Volunteer Effort, 4th September 2001
49 See Catherine Gaskin and Justin Davis Smith 1995, *A New Civic Europe? A study of the extent and role of volunteering*, London: The Volunteer Centre, p. 16–17.

the development of volunteering may arise from the dominance of the public sector, leading to assimilation and to compromising of the voluntary sector's legitimacy, for example if it led to the containment of criticism.[52]

9.2.3.4 The Danish government supports the development of volunteering indirectly through support programmes for the voluntary sector. The government also has specific support policies, however, for developing volunteering and the development of the volunteering infrastructure. The constitution specifically upholds the right of association among its citizens, although there is no obligation for voluntary organisations to register. Government funding to support volunteering may be divided into three categories:

- Basic grants awarded to organisations to stimulate the independent development of activities by these organisations. Funding under this programme amounts to 140 million Kroner (€18.8m.) per annum.

- Grants towards specific projects, primarily for the development of voluntary social work to address problems encountered by socially vulnerable people. To qualify, projects must involve a substantial element of volunteer labour. Funding under this programme amounts to 48 million Kroner (€6.4m.) per annum.

- Funding recouped to local authorities from central funds for expenditures on voluntary social work with a substantial volunteering component. A fund of 100 million Kroner (€13.4m.) per annum is available for this programme.

9.2.3.5 Apart from direct funding, there are tax policies to promote the growth of voluntary organisations and volunteering. Taxation policy is fairly straightforward. Expenses for travel or telephone use recouped by volunteers are tax-free. Tax relief applies to a proportion of income if donated to certain voluntary organisations. There are also various types of tax exemption for voluntary organisations.

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52 See Niels Rasmussen and Terkel Andersen, 'How can Governments Promote Voluntary Work?', paper presented at the International Association for Volunteer Effort, January 2001, Amsterdam.

9.2.3.6 **Volunteering infrastructure**: In terms of volunteering infrastructure there are two key organisations at national level, the Danish Committee on Volunteer Effort and the Volunteer Centre in Denmark. The Danish government established both and they work closely together. The Danish Committee on Volunteer Effort was established in 1983 to promote the development of voluntary social work. The Committee has a wide range of functions. It sponsors research and compiles data on the profile of volunteering and services. It makes policy proposals to national and local authorities and voluntary organisations and provides policy advice and guidance to the Social Affairs Minister concerning voluntary social work. The Committee also seeks to provide an effective information service. It operates as the main forum of ongoing debate concerning the role of voluntary work in Danish social and political life.

9.2.3.7 The Volunteer Centre in Denmark was established in 1992 as the national centre to promote and support the development of voluntary work in Denmark. The Centre does this by offering consultation and information services, collecting documentation and developing working methods and research in the field. The centre is an independent institution, but falls under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and it is funded by government grants. The services of the centre are mainly offered to the voluntary sector but they are also utilised by the public authorities and the general public. Key service areas are:

- Counselling and advice concerning the daily work of voluntary organisations on a range of matters;
- Information and documentation on volunteering and voluntary sector issues;
- Training and education mainly geared to the needs of volunteers and employees in the voluntary sector, and
- Evaluation and research related to developments in the field of voluntary action.

9.2.3.8 Volunteering infrastructure has also been developing at the local level. There are over 50 local volunteer bureaux, most of which have been formed over the past decade. Many of these have links with the National Centre but there is recognition that such links need to be strengthened. Since the 1998 Social Assistance Act, the role of volunteer bureaux has become potentially much more important because local authorities are obliged to work with voluntary agencies and to promote volunteering.

9.2.3.9 **Review**: The Danish case shows that even in the most developed welfare state model, based on social democratic principles, there is an increasing interest in the promotion of volunteering by government. Although the initiative for establishing a national level volunteer centre has come from the Ministry of Social Affairs, there is a bottom-up counterpart to this. Local volunteer bureaux also have emerged, as have new social movements. The latter have had an effect by seeking to achieve greater flexibility and innovation in the range and form of service delivery. An interesting feature of the Danish example is the merging of two agendas. On the one hand, there is the agenda of devolution of governmental responsibility from central to county, municipal and local authorities. On the other hand, there is a bottom-up pressure from voluntary organisations and civil society to achieve more direct influence on policy and service delivery. Currently, the promotion of voluntary action in Denmark is based on the principle of achieving synergies between the state at central and local level and the voluntary sector, and not to substitute the latter for the former inappropriately. Policy to promote volunteering and voluntary initiative is also focused on achieving social integration, (as an emphasis on promoting volunteering among refugees and immigrant workers indicates), and on the prevention of problems in the future through the development of social capital rather than belatedly seeking a 'cure'.

9.2.4 **Germany**

Background: The concept of civic duty has long been acknowledged in Germany, dating back to the legal concept of *Ehrenamt*, or 'honorary duties'. In the post-war years, in reaction to the usurping of volunteerism under the Nazi regime, organisations placed particular stress on *eigenstendichkeit* (autonomy) and some emphasised an oppositional role. The concept of 'subsidiarity' is written into the Constitution and underpins the position of voluntary organisations within the welfare model, stipulating that the community in the narrow sense acts first, and the State should intervene only when there is no alternative. A number of very large welfare associations hold prominent positions in the provision of health and social services. These associations, which mirror regional religious and political differences, have special recognition under federal social assistance law. Professionalisation and bureaucratisation trends have been a feature of these voluntary welfare organisations, with a concomitant decline in the role of volunteers in mainstream welfare fields as paid staff have become dominant. Nevertheless, the 'big six' have about 1.5 million volunteers as against some 450,000 staff.[53]

9.2.4.1 **Levels of volunteering**: A 1999 survey found that 34 per cent of Germans over 14 years of age were engaged in formal volunteering through organisations, initiatives and projects. Volunteering levels and the pattern of distribution across activities reflect the European norms. The study noted the importance of volunteering to the culture of democracy by highlighting the fact that many volunteers are acting in an elected capacity (39%). Interestingly, the survey report also identified the potential for additional volunteers, and named three sources of this potential. These were: (i) 'expanders'– people already volunteering who would be prepared to undertake additional volunteer activities, (ii) 'former volunteers' who were interested in becoming active again, and (iii) 'newcomers' – people who had not volunteered previously but were interested in doing so.[55]

9.2.4.2 **Regulatory environment**: In general the regulation governing volunteering is light although compulsory accident insurance now extends more widely to include volunteers working regularly in specific areas. There are no special tax provisions for volunteer workers but travel costs and other expense allowances are tax-free. In some instances voluntary workers may be deemed by those assessing eligibility for unemployment assistance as unavailable for paid work and as a consequence may lose their unemployment benefits. An important exception to this is the 'voluntary social or ecological year' whereby it is possible to undertake full-time voluntary or community work under the auspices of a recognised organisation. Legislation covering the voluntary social year sets out the activities covered, the regulations relating to introductory and supervisory guidance, and provides social insurance eligibility for these volunteers. From 2002, it will be possible to volunteer for a 'voluntary social or ecological year', for which the Government would also reimburse the cost to voluntary organisations.[56]

53 See Brian Harvey, 1995, *Networking in Europe - A Guide to European Voluntary Organisations,* London: NCVO
55 See Bernhardt von Rosenbladt, 2000, *Volunteering in Germany – Results of the 1999 Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement,* Volume 1, General Report.
56 This should not be confused with the civil service year whereby conscientious objectors, who do not wish to do military service, may undertake other work in the public service.

9.2.4.3 **Volunteering infrastructure**: The development of primary local infrastructure of volunteer bureaux is at an early stage although a number of initiatives are emerging. Existing welfare and other kinds of voluntary organisations have been attempting to address the need for a primary infrastructure, but this can be a fraught area in which co-operation can be difficult due to competing fields and interests. The Federal Government is supportive of developing new types of primary infrastructure although it has focused financial assistance on supporting volunteer bureaux in the former East Germany. Within the country as a whole there are about 150 local volunteer bureaux, most of which were established in the 1990s. Funding sources are varied. Some have obtained private sponsorship, others get assistance from a parent body such as a welfare association, and others receive funding from the municipal level of government. However, as yet there is no clearly established division of responsibility between different levels of government on the funding and co-ordination of bureaux.

9.2.4.4 One emerging structure at the federal level is the Federal Society of Volunteer Agencies (BAGFA) which was independently established in 1998 as an interest based union of specialist volunteer work agencies, centres and offices. Its listed services include:
- Advice and training during the start-up of new projects;
- Planning and conducting conferences on volunteering;
- Addressing key themes and issues facing volunteer agencies;
- Providing advice and further education on volunteer management, and
- Promoting quality management and standards.

9.2.4.5 BAGFA is rapidly developing its base, presently having a membership of 60 agencies and co-operative links have been forged with a further 60. It is seeking to develop organisation by adopting a network model with minimal central control.

9.2.4.6 **Review**: The case in Germany presents something of a paradox. As a welfare regime with a constitutionally in-built role for welfare organisations, it might be expected that Germany would have been one of the first to put in place the primary infrastructure of volunteer development. Although there are about 150 volunteer centres, there is not yet a strong and well-resourced national volunteer centre. Ironically, the relative dominance of the voluntary sector in welfare provision, together with the ethos of subsidiarity, may have inhibited the creation of a non-governmental independent centre co-ordinating the volunteering support function across associations. It was noticeable that the government was prompted to support the establishment of local bureaux in the former East Germany, where the need was obvious and the field was clearer. Moreover, the issue of volunteering has only recently been identified as important from a policy perspective, as illustrated by the undertaking of federally funded research on its extent and implications. Indeed, the distinct traditions of voluntary welfare associations, while possibly inhibiting initial development of primary volunteering infrastructure, still remain strong enough to bolster and develop the concept. It is evident that the Federal Government accepts that the potential of volunteering must be identified and fostered if its capacity for policy development is to be fully realised.

9.2.5 **Canada**

9.2.5.1 **Background**: Canada has a strong volunteering tradition that is often attributed to three particular influences:
- a co-operative model of community development grounded in the emigrant and pioneer history of the country;

- a tradition of church-based philanthropy, and

- a strong political commitment to statutory welfare services which are delivered with a high degree voluntary or non-profit sector involvement.

Most Canadian governments have supported volunteering with conservative ones stressing the right and responsibility of individuals to contribute to community while left/liberal ones have adopted a more supportive, partnership type approach.

9.2.5.2 **Rates of volunteering**: In 1987, 1997 and 2000 the national rates of formal volunteering were 27 per cent, 31 per cent and 27 per cent respectively. Age, education and employment were important predicators of volunteering. The 45–54 age group consistently had the highest rates of volunteering. The rate was 21 per cent among those with less than a high-school education, compared to 48 per cent among university graduates.

Volunteering is greater among those in part-time employment, at 44 per cent, compared to 32 per cent for those in full-time employment. Those outside the labour force (29%) and the unemployed (27%) have lower rates.[57]

9.2.5.3 **Policy approaches**: Funding dedicated to the support of volunteerism in Canada occurs at federal and provincial levels. The partnership between the Federal Government and organisations that constitutes the volunteering infrastructure is critical. Policy, in this context, means enabling organisations to get on with involving volunteers, and the emphasis is placed on utilising research and evaluation as a basis for developing codes of practice, and developing policies that are adopted below the level of government, and pertain to operational matters. At national level projects are negotiated on an individual basis. Projects in the pipeline include a National Volunteerism Initiative to be developed on a partnership basis between the sector and the Federal Government. It is aimed at encouraging Canadians to participate in voluntary organisations and at expanding the capacity of organisations to focus, manage and benefit from volunteer contributions.[58] Provincial governments have likewise created special projects related to volunteerism, with the Government of British Columbia, for example, establishing a fund of $Can4.4m. (€2.8m.) over two years to enhance volunteerism.

9.2.5.4 **Volunteering infrastructure**: There are now more than 200 local volunteer bureaux in Canada providing common services and tailored programmes to fit the needs of the local community. They have developed significant expertise through programmes, research and training. They work as the nucleus of the volunteer community. Core services include promoting volunteerism, attracting new volunteers, helping to retain current ones, communicating the benefits of volunteering and informing the public about the impact volunteers have on the community.

9.2.5.5 Volunteer Canada originated in the 1980s as the association of volunteer bureaux. Gradually its role developed from servicing bureaux into policy arenas and the promotion of volunteerism more broadly. In 2000, Volunteer Canada had a budget of $Can5m (€3.2m.) and a paid staff of 25 people. Although it does not receive core or annualised funding from the government of Canada, it has a very collegiate relationship with it. Volunteer Canada seeks to serve as the national voice for volunteerism, through a combination of advocacy, celebration, education and research, and the provision of training on issues and trends within the volunteerism movement in Canada. Its strategic goals are:
- To establish and develop resources and skills within the volunteer centre movement in Canada;
- To establish effective means of communication between and among the national, provincial and local levels of the volunteer centre movement;
- To engage in projects aimed at supporting and promoting voluntary action in Canada, and
- To create a self-supporting and self-directed national organisation with a diverse funding base.

9.2.5.6 Volunteer Canada seeks to deliver on these aims through national projects and initiatives.[61] Examples include:
- *Voluntary Sector roundtable* – working on redefining the relationship between the voluntary sector and government;
- *National surveys* – carried out in partnership with the Canadian Centre on Philanthropy;
- *National volunteer week* – promoted in partnership with volunteer bureaux
- *Screening Initiatives* – promotion and development of best practice in volunteer screening;
- *Volunteer opportunities exchange* – an Internet-based service to connect volunteers and voluntary organisations;
- *Generation V* – a programme to promote the involvement of young people in Canadian charities, and
- *Volunteering works!* – a programme to strengthen the links between community service components in educational curricula and the skills required in paid employment.

57 Michael Hall et al (1998) *Caring Canadians – Highlights* from the *1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participation*, Revised October 2000, Ministry of Industry, Canada.
58 See: Government of Canada, August 1999, *Working together: a Government of Canada/Voluntary Sector joint initiative: report of the Joint Tables*

61 For more on current programmes see the research report: International Approaches to Volunteering; Joe Larragy, Centre for Applied Social Studies, NUI, Maynooth

9.2.5.7 Volunteer Canada now occupies a pivotal role in the infrastructure of volunteer development and influences policy through its relationship with government. It is a good model because it provides for autonomous status for the national volunteering centre in a framework of collegial government support.

9.3 Lessons from the case studies

9.3.1 Policy approaches

9.3.1.1 Across the case studies, the similarity of the approaches to volunteer development is striking. Countries mainly differ in the extent of overall progress with policy development, and in relation to the aspects of policy on which they have made most headway. Despite differences in welfare regimes, which have unclear effects, there is little evidence of radical divergences in relation to the importance of promoting volunteering.

9.3.1.2 The case studies provided additional insights into the boundaries between voluntary and other types of work. If civil society is defined as the societal domain of organisations and associations that operate outside the family, market and statutory sector, on the basis of normative and value-based motivations, then volunteering is the equivalent – at the individual level – of civil society at the collective level. Policy makers can make a difference to the context or climate for volunteering by providing societal incubus to promote it through several linked policies. Volunteering requires specific policy approaches that recognise its multi-faceted potential, not only in service provision but also more particularly in relation to the development of civil society, community engagement and social capital. However, there is frequently only limited recognition that volunteering is a matter that deserves specific attention from policy makers. Moreover, the development of policies dealing with volunteering is of relatively recent origin.

9.3.1.3 Though there are many legitimate purposes towards which public policy might seek to foster and promote volunteering, there should also be concern to avoid treating volunteering simply as a resource to be tapped in whatever way seems expedient. What the case studies indicate is that a policy approach to volunteering should start from an understanding of generic issues. The case studies indicate that at the heart of good policy on volunteering lies a concern to promote civic engagement and to pursue broader societal objectives, such as a better functioning democracy.

9.3.1.4 The key rationale for volunteering policy is not to conjure it up but to foster it by ensuring that volunteers are treated well, that organisational goals are satisfactorily achieved, and that groups receiving the services of voluntary endeavour are treated properly. Many of the benefits of volunteering are impossible to quantify but are no less tangible for all that. We know that when civil society is weak trust declines, crime increases, discourse collapses, and problems mount up without anyone taking responsibility for their solution. Although we cannot quantify this, volunteering policies that are sensitively conceived may contribute to the sustenance and reproduction of a healthy democratic, civil society. This appears to be the main rationale for volunteering policies that are both fruitful and sustainable.

9.3.1.5 Public policies should be designed with sensitivity to the nature of volunteering. First, there is a need to understand current patterns and trends in volunteering activity and to draw implications for the policy from appropriate research. This has been a feature of those countries reviewed that have made most advances. Secondly, in the context of promoting and developing volunteering, issues of partnership between the government and voluntary organisations arise in comparative review. Thirdly, there are regulatory, quality control and management aspects to the type of policies reviewed in the case studies. Fourthly, there is potential for developing a European dimension, and a European Union interest in promoting good quality policies on volunteering.

9.3.2 Value of research

9.3.2.1 There has been a surge of interest in voluntary sector studies, studies of voluntary giving and volunteering in all of the countries reviewed. Some of the research interest springs from an ongoing sense of the limitations of existing forms of political participation. In other cases, volunteering is seen as intrinsic to the attempt to rebuild communities in disadvantaged urban areas, following the consequences of de-industrialisation and economic restructuring during the 1980s and 1990s. In addition to research on patterns and trends at the macro level there is a need for ongoing monitoring

and evaluation and demonstration programmes in various sectors. The case study countries, for example, engage in evaluations of employer supported volunteering, programmes to recruit older volunteers and policies to encourage young people to volunteer.

9.3.2.2 Research is also central to the development of quality control and is part of the basis for accreditation of training courses for volunteer managers and volunteers. In Northern Ireland, for example, extensive work has been undertaken on identifying accredited educational programmes appropriate to the training of volunteer managers and volunteers. Such investment in the human resources of volunteering in the Republic of Ireland is in need of development. Finally, research is needed with a view to innovation, for example in developing information technology options, such as computerised matching of volunteers and organisations. In Canada, the Volunteer Opportunities Exchange operates as a free internet-based service and has shown great promise. Similarly, in Scotland, the concept of computerised matching via the internet is under evaluation.

9.3.3 The challenge of change

9.3.3.1 The case studies show that there is a growing recognition that volunteering differs from the voluntary sector and requires specific approaches. In the past, it has been left to the voluntary, non-profit, or mutual organisations, to recruit volunteers. For a variety of reasons this approach needs supplementation. If governments are to stimulate volunteering, it seems obvious that they should be able to relate to the world of volunteer-involving organisations; both in recognising their strengths and identifying where they need supplementing. Voluntary organisations, if they are to thrive and continue to embody the virtues of voluntarism, must re-equip themselves, or reconstruct their approach in the light of societal change. Just as paternalistic approaches to the clients of voluntary organisations are being challenged, from a rights perspective, so also attitudes to volunteering are changing. In the countries reviewed, images of volunteering are frequently perceived as outdated stereotypes, having little relevance to the younger generation or contemporary attitudes.

9.3.4 Regulation

9.3.4.1 In different ways each of the countries studied demonstrates that much of volunteering policy is about satisfactory regulation and achieving good practice in the involvement and management of volunteers by organisations. There are specific regulatory issues related to volunteering that emerge from the case studies. In order to realise the potential benefits for society of increasing the level of volunteering among different social groups all need to be addressed. These include:

- Defining clear legal rules and practical guidelines on the boundaries between the status of volunteer and that of an employee. This has been an important area of work in the UK, exemplified in the Good Employment Guide and other publications.

- Establishing a balanced set of rules in relation to volunteering activity on the part of people in receipt of social welfare benefits or allowances, particularly as it affects the entitlements of those on unemployment payments. This area has been developed in the UK and in Denmark.

- Defining codes of practice in relation to the fair treatment of volunteers, such as preventing discrimination at recruitment, training or promotion to more responsible roles, respect for confidentiality of information, protection from abuse and bullying, and health and safety. Elements of this are envisaged as part of the UK Active Communities Initiative.

- Setting standards for achieving good quality services or outcomes through volunteer involvement.

- Setting standards for good practice in relation to the development of the volunteering experience, related to personal qualities, skill and knowledge in the volunteer, particularly young volunteers.

- Promoting good practice in the relationship between paid staff and volunteers in voluntary organisations, in the context of staff supervising or working alongside volunteers.

- Defining standards for the relationship between paid staff and volunteers on governance boards.

- Establishing good practice in relation to the screening of volunteers for work in sensitive fields, such as childcare and youth work. This has been a key area of expertise developed in Northern Ireland by the Volunteer Development Agency.

- National regulatory issues also arise in the context of statutory-voluntary relationships. In Denmark, central government policy is to promote volunteer action, subject to its use in ways that do not undermine the statutory obligation to provide essential services.

9.3.5 **Volunteering infrastructure**

9.3.5.1 The case studies reveal that Canada, Northern Ireland and Scotland have been developing primary volunteering infrastructure at national level over the past two decades. Volunteer Canada was set up in the early 1980s but was not placed on a sound financial basis until the 1990s. The Volunteer Development Agency was established in Northern Ireland in 1982 and Volunteer Development Scotland was set up in 1984. In Denmark a National Committee on Volunteer Effort was established in 1983 with a policy advisory mandate, and a National Centre on Volunteering in 1992 with a more practical role. In Germany, in 1998, the BAGFA was established as a national centre, and is in a very early stage of development.

9.3.5.2 In all cases, except Denmark, the initiative for the national centres came from the grass roots, such as the emergence or increase in the numbers of local volunteer centres. However, governments in all the case studies are keenly interested in these develop-ments and it is largely through such national centres that volunteering policy is developed and implemented. National centres are the locus of expertise, propagators of good practice, and a channel for the range of national programmes to promote volunteering. The centres, in spite of government funding, need to maintain independence and credibility in the eyes of statutory bodies, voluntary agencies and volunteers. They are not primarily concerned with the specific purposes of volunteering, and must be able to promote the diversity of potential that exists.

9.3.6 **Government funding**

9.3.6.1 More directly, the government has a role in the funding of national volunteer centres. The pattern of funding varies from one country to another and government funding may take the form of both core and programme funding. In this way, national centres have evolved into the keystone between top-down government policies and bottom-up endeavours by local volunteer bureaux, voluntary organisations and volunteers and indeed by companies supporting volunteering among employees.

9.3.7 **Local volunteer bureaux**

9.3.7.1 At a local level the case studies reveal considerable variation among volunteer bureaux. Whatever the variation, among the many important functions of volunteer centres is to facilitate and match the myriad capacities of diverse groups of people to the potential volunteering opportunities. Potential and actual volunteers can have different talents, different availability rates and suitability for diverse types of voluntary activity. It is important, therefore, to recognise the individual's propensity to volunteer so that that volunteering experience can be supported for the benefit of other individuals, communities or organisations served, and the wider society. Moreover, this brokerage function is very important at local level. Volunteer bureaux or centres, operate on the basis of good local knowledge, accessibility to potential volunteers and organisations within a small geographic area.

9.3.7.2 A key issue for bureaux is how to ensure a quality service, and what responsibility to take in relation to the quality or suitability of volunteers provided, on the one side, and the quality of volunteering experiences on the other. It is for this reason that local centres began to come together to achieve the benefits of networking in relation to research, expertise, best practice, policy and legislation. Volunteer bureaux usually operate amid a mix of business, household, voluntary and community sector organisations, and within the shadow of local government and statutory health authorities. In order to enhance the potential of local volunteer bureaux it is important that they are acknowledged by other agencies and organisations and publicised in the media.

9.4 The EU and volunteering

9.4.1.1 The European Union does not provide the basis for a case study in the same way as the political jurisdictions reviewed above. But it would be remiss to ignore it in view of its significance for policy development in member states. We therefore present some conclusions from a review of EU policy, insofar as it exists, in relation to volunteering. We identify a policy vacuum and some respects in which it might be addressed.

9.4.2 European Union and volunteering

9.4.2.1 As the process of European integration and enlargement continues, the EU has increasingly recognised the importance of the voluntary sector and the role of civil society in achieving cohesion and political legitimacy. Some pilot programmes have been initiated and there are significant NGOs representing the interests of volunteer infrastructure agencies at EU level. However volunteering is relatively low on the EU policy agenda and as yet there is no specific policy at the level of EU institutions on volunteering. The reasons for this are discussed in more detail in the research report. They include the application of the principle of subsidiarity and the relatively limited scope of European social policy.

9.4.2.2 Nevertheless, developments in the EU, arising out of the process of monetary union and enlargement, have triggered EU engagement with 'European civil society'. The EU may have significant indirect influence on volunteering arising from these developments. Since the mid-1990s, there has been a growing interest in the concept of civil dialogue, whereby voluntary sector organisations are consulted by the EU institutions. The Nice Treaty included a declaration on the civil dialogue, although it is still not in the Treaty proper.

9.4.2.3 More specifically, the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht) contained a declaration on the importance of establishing co-operative relations between the EU institutions and 'charitable associations and foundations as institutions responsible for welfare establishments and service.'[62] In May 1997, in the run-up to the Amsterdam Treaty, the Commission issued its *Communication on Promoting the Role of Voluntary Organisations and Foundations in Europe,* its first major document on the subject.[63] But this did not address the subject of volunteering.

9.4.2.4 Similarly, in February 2000, the Commission issued a Discussion Paper on partnership with NGOs, which again made scant reference to the promotion and support of volunteering.[64] In a response, the European Volunteer Centre (CEV) welcomed the broad thrust of the Paper, but noted the absence of any treatment of the theme of volunteering.[65] It focused on the need for support for 'voluntary participation in the "third sector", which it sees as' an important element of active citizenship and social inclusion and in extending civil dialogue.' The CEV also wished to see recognition of the value of the unpaid work done by volunteers as 'a real and substantial contribution to national economies'.

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62 See Declaration 23 to the Treaty on European Union

63 European Commission 1997, *Communication on Promoting the Role of Voluntary Organisations and Foundations in Europe,* June 1997 (COM/97/0241 final)

64 European Commission April 2000, *The Commission and Non-Governmental Organisations: Building a Stronger Partnership,* Discussion Paper presented by President Prodi and Vice-President Kinnock

65 The CEV 'represents 20 national and regional volunteer development centres across Europe. Its member organisations work to promote volunteering, share ideas and experience, make volunteering more effective, support new Volunteer Centres, and influence policy relevant to these activities in civil society in Europe.' See The European Volunteer Centre 2000, *Response to the discussion paper 'European Commission and Non-Governmental Organisations: Building A Stronger Partnership'*

9.4.2.5 The EU, even if it does not specifically address the issue of volunteering or policies to promote volunteering, has had considerable influence through the application of structural funds under various programmes on policies with implications for local voluntary action and volunteering. The Commission has recently supported initiatives such as the European Exchange Programme for Older Volunteers.[66] However, the ramifications of other policies for volunteering provide the basis for a more active interest being taken by the EU in volunteering.

9.4.2.6 There is, moreover, much scope for the development of a coherent approach to promoting volunteering in the EU, whether through volunteer exchange programmes, exchange of research, experience and best practice, or through the facilitation of networking between national centres. There are many areas of social policy that cross-cut with volunteering, and which could benefit from innovative developments in the voluntary sector. There are also important aspects of the wider European integration project that could benefit from a more explicit focus on volunteering across the EU.

9.5 Conclusions

9.5.1.1 It is apparent from the case studies that Ireland is significantly behind international counterparts in such areas as strengthening its volunteer policy and infrastructure development at both a local and central level (see TABLE 37). Despite this, Ireland has a strong and vibrant voluntary sector. However, it is characterised by under-resourcing and fragmentation. Although diversity, and the individuality from which much of this diversity springs, are essential elements and strengths of the sector, these need not be compromised by the development of appropriate support structures. Clearly, we are in the fortunate position of being able to learn from the experience of other countries. But we are also in a period of sustained economic, social, cultural and demographic change which, on the one hand, creates new challenges for voluntary sector organisations, and on the other, serves to highlight the social capital building values of voluntary sector activity generally and of volunteering specifically.

So, in learning from the experience of others, we must not seek to follow in their footsteps, but rather to move forward from their experience towards the development of a more comprehensive set of policies, regulatory frameworks and infrastructure supports tailored to the needs of Irish society. The movement towards a shared understanding or vision which such developments require represents a substantial challenge to the State and volunteering interests in Ireland. A vision that is sufficiently clear, however, will promote real synergies across policies, regulations and supports and yet remain sufficiently broad to foster and encourage the diversity that is essential to the sector's capacity for innovation and renewal.

9.5.1.2 Volunteering, and the voluntary sector as the domain within which much of this activity takes place, is not about a kind of segregated activity which takes place in a discrete space separate from the rest of society. It involves a type of civic engagement on the part of the individual with society and it is manifested in its everyday complexity of interacting domains and sectors. Hence volunteering is intimately associated with the reality of the context created by the public and market domains. Similarly, 'volunteers' are not a 'species' that inhabit one part of society but are individuals, like all members of society, who engage with many domains. Volunteering policy must consider this interaction and in acknowledging the value of volunteering also acknowledge that it requires support from the public and market domains if it is to thrive. Therefore the State needs to provide a policy, fiscal and regulatory framework that supports the development of those relationships across the different sectors that serve to promote and develop volunteering.

9.5.1.3 International study of volunteering: includes an examination of European Union developments. It is important for a member state, such as Ireland, to include a European Union dimension in its policy agenda. This is particularly important in view of the ever-deepening and widening union and in view of the relative absence of EU policy in this area. Given this absence the State should make the EU institutions aware of the value it places on volunteering and seek to encourage European level support for voluntary activity.

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66 See: Euro-Volunteer Information Pool on this. For the report see http://www.euro-volunteer.org/partners.htm

	National volunteer development policy	National volunteer development budget	National volunteer development agency	Number of local volunteer bureaux	Ratio of bureau per head of population
			TABLE 37: *Volunteer development policy, budget and infrastructure comparisons*		
Northern Ireland	Yes	Yes	Volunteer Development Agency (NI)	15	1:106,000
Scotland	Yes	Yes	Volunteer Development Scotland	36	1:141,000
Denmark	Yes	Yes	Volunteer Centre in Denmark	50	1:106,000
Canada	Yes	Yes	Volunteer Canada	200	1:153,000
Germany	Yes	Yes	Currently being established	150	1:550,000
Republic of Ireland	No	No	No	4 operational 2 setting up	1:950,000

PART ONE

10 Reflections

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1.1 We have presented in this report a picture of volunteering in Ireland today. Based on research and consultations conducted mainly in Ireland but also, importantly, drawing on international practice and policy, this report aims to provide a context for the development of volunteering in the future. Indeed, as the report indicates, a concern with volunteering is not confined to Ireland alone but is also evident in other countries.

10.1.1.2 To put this in some context, for example, the Laeken Declaration published under the Belgian Presidency of the EU in December 2001 announced the establishment of a Convention on the Future of Europe. This is necessary it states, because Europe is at a crossroads and 'what citizens understand by "good governance" is opening up fresh opportunities, not imposing further red tape'. The Convention will comprise a Forum which will include organisations representing civil society including 'the social partners, the business world, non-governmental organisations, academia, etc'.

10.1.1.3 Closer to home, Ireland has recently undergone recent substantial social and economic change and will continue to do so. A vision of a future is required, therefore, so that we are not overtaken by the developments around us. This chapter will present the rationale for volunteering as one key element of a future vision by drawing on what has been presented in the report so far. We will first examine the context and relevance of social capital, then move on to what lessons can be taken from the earlier chapters. Finally, attention will turn to what is required in order to provide key developmental supports for the future of volunteering in Ireland.

10.2 Social capital

10.2.1.1 In Chapter Two we saw that volunteering is both an individual act and an inherent part of social capital. While volunteering may be motivated by individual reasons, it contributes to the 'glue' that holds society together. Volunteering has had a long history in Ireland and has become more institutionalised over time. Central tenets to volunteering in Ireland, however, are notions of mutuality and reciprocity and it is these that reinforce the 'ties that bind' and, therefore, our social capital.

10.2.1.2 Indeed, both Chapters Three and Four emphasise the social capital function of volunteering. Social networks – part of social capital – are important routes to becoming involved in volunteering. It appears that central concepts of volunteering in the past, that is the notions of reciprocity and mutuality, which were inherent in so-called community volunteering and the existence of a community, now appear to be replacing philanthropic connotations of volunteering. In other words, the 'giving' side of volunteering appears to be less important than the two-way relationship that volunteering involves and the consequences of that relationship for the community and society at large.

10.2.1.3 In Chapter Two, we also saw that Irish society is at present faced with a number of challenges arising from the substantial social and economic changes experienced over the past decade or so. Linked to our increasing prosperity, Ireland has become a society of immigration rather than emigration. An urban focus rather than rural-centricity is increasingly the norm. Consumerism and issues related to a commuter society are to the fore. As a result, individualisation appears to have replaced group solidarity and has been made more evident by increasing atomisation and the growth of new communities that have not developed organically. Meanwhile, the proverbial rising tide has not lifted all boats and while many people in today's Ireland are undoubtedly a lot wealthier than they were a decade or so ago, there are many who are poorer and whose access to wealth has not been enhanced. The increasing alienation, anomie and the need to foster self-help among communities are recurrent themes that the government has stated it wants to address. For example, An Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D., spoke in March 2001 of the importance of social capital in resolving such social problems.

10.2.1.4 He noted that social capital '…has the potential to be a very positive influence in public policy development in this country and throughout the European Union. It is a concept that puts communities at the centre of our debates' (Ahern 2001: 1). Commenting on the Health Strategy, which had not yet been published at that stage, the Taoiseach stated that that strategy would incorporate a 'framework of rights and responsibilities for all' (Ahern 2001: 4). Similarly, the Children's Strategy, in his view, marked the development of government thinking, '… away from being purely focused on state

actions and towards a broader framework aimed at challenging a much wider series of actors... I believe that it represents the idea of social capital in action as a useful tool of public policy' (Ahern 2001: 3–4).

10.2.1.5 A common theme, therefore, running through recent government social policy and initiatives is the issue of rights and responsibilities and the development of an integrated response, by many actors, to social problems. This could be what the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair refers to when he talks about 'joined-up government'. Indeed, the Taoiseach states that he prefers to think of such initiatives in terms of 'an attempt to get the government and the community joined-up' (Ahern 2001: 4).

10.2.1.6 This report presents a rationale for one way in which that can occur. If, therefore, the development of social capital is regarded as a key policy, as the Taoiseach has stated, we need to look at what supports should to be given to volunteering so that it can continue to contribute to the development of social capital in Ireland? On the one hand, volunteering will need to be supported in a manner that does not quench the individual action that is an important motivating factor. On the other hand, the State will need to create a facilitative environment for individuals and groups to flourish because the present system and structures cannot deal with the challenges currently being faced and there is a serious need for support.

10.3 **LESSONS DRAWN FROM THE CHAPTERS**

10.3.1 **Social capital and volunteering**

10.3.1.1 What is the state of volunteering in Ireland at present? If social capital is the 'glue' that holds society together and is an important part of social policy for future development in Ireland, what have we found out about the role that volunteering plays in it? In Chapter Three we saw that the numbers of volunteers have declined throughout the past decade. Gender, age, educational and socio-economic differences are apparent in the levels of volunteering. Male volunteering has declined more than female voluntary activity. Middle aged people, and with higher educational qualifications and a higher socio-economic status are most likely to volunteer.

10.3.1.2 There are also regional variations. While some of these regional variations may be attributable to factors such as the civil unrest in Northern Ireland – and, therefore, perhaps less apparent in 2002 during the peace process than in 1998 when the data presented in Chapter Three were collected – there are other factors in contemporary Ireland that can contribute to regional differences. These include demographic differences and the predominance of the eastern region, and the recent division of the state into two administrative regions for the purposes of European structural funds – the Border, Midland and Western Region and the Southern and Eastern Region. It cannot be presumed, therefore, that regional differences are not going to continue.

10.3.2 **Volunteering and the organisation**

10.3.2.1 Volunteering is a central and defining part of the voluntary and community sector and, as such, key to volunteering is the voluntary organisation. This relationship was explored in Chapter Three above. Indeed, while the Irish voluntary and community sector is strong, the substantial change that has occurred in Ireland requires a response that the sector by itself is too fragmented and under-resourced to give. As shown in Chapter Four for example, organisations rely on their volunteers to a great extent but may not be using volunteers as effectively as they could be. Indeed, the challenge for voluntary organisations is not about increasing the numbers of volunteers, *per se*, but about developing good policies and practices with regard to volunteers. Such policies and practices, which are incumbent upon voluntary organisations and the voluntary sector to develop and implement, need the support of external agencies such as central and local government. The relationship between paid staff and volunteers also needs recognition, support and management.

10.3.2.2 Such policies and practice must contribute to effective management within voluntary organisations. Indeed, as shown in Chapter Three, this area is a key challenge for voluntary organisations, which is not being addressed sufficiently. In the case of volunteer boards, for example, volunteers are vital for the efficient and effective operation of the organisation itself. Policies and practice must, therefore, recognise the diversity of volunteers in type, experience and in their contribution to the organisation. Volunteer-involving organisations

must be more pro-active in the support they provide to volunteers. If too much is expected of volunteers, as respondents have indicated, organisations must be prepared to put structures in place that provide support and training to volunteers so that clarity of roles and functions is improved. Management practices with regard to volunteers, therefore, need to be integral to management policy and practices.

10.3.2.3 Chapter Four, on the relationship between volunteers and voluntary organisations, indicates that although volunteers are recognised as a real resource to the organisation, there is a need to support volunteers more. This has to be done strategically and in ways that are built into the development of the organisation. Policies and practices are required, therefore, to support and protect volunteers.

10.3.3 The volunteering experience

10.3.3.1 Volunteers are central to the development of a voluntary organisation; they have an economic value, they help renew the organisation and the sector; they are an important part, in many cases the only part, of the organisation's governance and they give legitimacy to organisations and to the sector. Yet, within voluntary organisations, as shown in Chapter Four, volunteers are often viewed in terms of their output while the volunteering experience is overlooked. The recognition at governmental level of the social capital value of volunteering has not occurred at organisational level and while volunteers are regarded as a vital resource to the organisation, the social capital value of volunteering needs to be more fully recognised.

10.3.3.2 Volunteers, as a consequence, may feel trapped by the organisation although many acknowledge the mutual support and benefit that they derive from the experience. The notion of volunteers 'giving', as if that act in itself is enough, is outdated. Not only do volunteers become involved for a variety of motivations, as both Chapters Two and Three indicate, but there is also a pool of people in contemporary Irish society with talents available which could be utilised far more effectively by organisations. These talents could contribute to the amassing of social capital and while a scheme like social mentoring is a welcome development, there needs to be more creativity about tapping such sources.

10.3.4 The image of volunteering

10.3.4.1 Indeed, just as the image of volunteers within organisations needs to be challenged, the image of volunteering in the wider Irish society needs to be addressed. This theme finds resonance in both Chapters Five and Nine. Volunteers may well be under-represented in Ireland because they, themselves, do not regard what they do as 'volunteering'. In Chapter Five, for example, we saw that several young people were reluctant to identify what they did as volunteering. This presents a challenge for both the organisation as well as society at large. For example, where belief in the cause, as shown in Chapter Three, is a motivating factor, voluntary organisations, as argued in Chapter Nine, must be prepared to use this to build their brand image.

10.3.4.2 All of this indicates the need to move away from traditional images of volunteering as 'helping' or 'giving'. Volunteering involves a mutual relationship, a relationship that is reciprocal. Just as the image of the voluntary sector has shifted from a charity to a rights basis, so, too, has volunteering. The recognition by voluntary organisations and society of this, and action to address it, can help in raising greater awareness of the wider value of volunteering.

10.3.5 Volunteering and society

10.3.5.1 Although volunteers are central to voluntary organisations, volunteering is not just about voluntary organisations. Indeed, the lessons to be drawn from international experience (Chapter Nine) indicate that volunteering highlights the relationships that occur between different sectors in a society. Furthermore, it demonstrates that sometimes to talk about sectors as if these were discrete and autonomous is misleading. First, Chapter Nine demonstrates that there is a distinction between the voluntary and community sector, on the one hand, and volunteering, on the other. Secondly, volunteering involves a number of different actors, some of whom are only just beginning to recognise the part that they can play. Therefore, Chapters Four and Nine show that the initiative of employer supported volunteering, relatively new in Ireland, is supported in other states as part of the fostering and nurturing of social capital and civil society. Such an initiative recognises that relationships

between the sectors are important and are also part of any individual's experience of life. The reality of life is that our experiences necessarily involve overlapping and complex relationships. To isolate volunteering as part of the voluntary and community sector alone is to ignore its social capital role and that volunteering is about how individuals relate to their own communities and engage with society.

10.3.5.2 Indeed, as Chapter Nine also showed, effective policy on volunteering involves the promotion of civic engagement and the pursuit of broader societal objectives such as the better functioning of democracy. Significantly, Chapter Nine demonstrated that notwithstanding the welfare tradition of an individual state, or its political ideology, the promotion of volunteering is of interest and volunteering has been recognised as important for policy development.

10.3.6 Employer supported volunteering

10.3.6.1 Employer supported volunteering (ESV) also helps bring value to the experience of volunteering. Corporate social responsibility recognises that the volunteering experience aids the position of business in the community as well as enhancing the contribution that employees can make to their company. Recent initiatives under the Finance Bill 2001 have emphasised the tax effectiveness of cash donations to voluntary and community organisations and have sought to improve these. Engaging with voluntary and community organisations involves more than mere cash donations, however, and there is a need for the state to foster an environment that can facilitate such engagement at different levels. One way in which this can be done is through ESV, which also involves recognition that volunteering is not just the 'property' of the voluntary and community sector. ESV demonstrates that different 'sectors' can be involved in the promotion, maintenance and regeneration of volunteering.

10.3.7 Volunteering infrastructure

10.3.7.1 The value of the experience from other countries (Chapter Nine) is that although policies on volunteering vary in their scope and sophistication, they reflect the increasing importance of the relationship between volunteering and government, regardless of the welfare-provision model that that government adopts.

This provides yet another sign that the value of volunteering is not confined within the boundaries of one 'sector'. What experience from other countries indicates, as described in Chapter Nine, is the importance of – both primary and secondary – volunteering infrastructure. Such infrastructure is becoming increasingly significant in the context of government objectives related to social inclusion, lifelong learning and the promotion of active citizenship. These are themes found in government policies here, as well as reflected at EU and wider international levels.

10.3.7.2 Raising awareness of and providing support to volunteering in the future, therefore, could be effectively done through the establishment of a primary infrastructure of volunteer centres. As Chapter Nine on the international arena indicates, volunteer bureaux operating at both national and local level, which are autonomous units, independent of local government but in receipt of central government funding, play a major role in the promotion and sustenance of volunteering in other countries. At national level such infrastructure is essential to the development of volunteering and to its promotion and support. At local level, volunteer centres could be useful, in an Irish context, for addressing regional differences and making an effective match between volunteers and organisations. They might also be useful in helping clarify expectations of both parties so that the volunteering experience can be enhanced. It is noteworthy in this regard to see that the White Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity*, recognised the crucial role that volunteer bureaux can play.

10.3.7.3 Volunteer centres could also help foster links and relationships between voluntary organisations, business and potential volunteers. This could lead to matchmaking between companies willing to engage with ESV and employees ready to volunteer. It would also mean that voluntary organisations themselves could find it easier to be proactive about seeking volunteers. Volunteer centres, at local level, would operate as one central location for companies, voluntary organisations and those individuals keen to volunteer.

10.3.8 Incubators of volunteering

10.3.8.1 Chapters Five and Nine introduced the concept of incubators of volunteering, for which a volunteering infrastructure can play an important role. Chapter

Five on young people indicates the importance of the family as an incubator, which has also been found to be the case internationally as shown in Chapter Nine. Providing support to such incubators as well as helping to generate others would be useful. Indeed, the role of schools and families deserves further exploration. As with studies on political participation (Miller, Wilford and Donoghue 1996), such locales play an important part in the shaping of attitudes and activity levels. If lower volunteering rates are linked to social disadvantage, as Chapter Three indicates, the fostering of a volunteering sensibility may be one way in which social exclusion can be addressed; this may merit consideration and inclusion in the next National Anti-Poverty Strategy, for example.

10.3.9 Research

10.3.9.1 All of the chapters indicate that good research is necessary to inform policy development and, as shown in the example of Canada in Chapter Nine, has been put to effective use. There is a need to start building up time-series data on volunteering in Ireland. This could then examine the effects of age cohorts and track participation through the life cycle. This would be useful in exploring the role that incubators play in fostering voluntary activity. Data collection on volunteering could be included at national level, through different data collection exercises conducted by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) for example (such as the Census or the Quarterly National Household Survey). This would further serve to ensure the place of volunteering as a contributor to active citizenship and civil society, as indicated in the White Paper *Supporting Voluntary Activity*. It should be noted at this juncture, however, that inclusion in the Quarterly National Household Survey presupposes the existence of a register or database representative of the non-profit voluntary and community sector in Ireland. This does not exist and would need to be set up before reliable data on the volunteering experience in the organisation could be generated.

10.3.9.2 Further research is also needed on the motivations for and the routes taken into volunteering and the adoption of qualitative approaches, to explore such factors in depth, as well as quantitative methods to map their extent, would be beneficial. More research is needed on barriers to volunteering and here a qualitative

approach would be useful in order to explore what barriers there are and how these can be surmounted. Such research would also be helpful in establishing a volunteering infrastructure in Ireland.

10.4 Conclusions

10.4.1.1 From the foregoing discussion, and from the submissions received and research undertaken, we are able to identify some key requirements if volunteering is to be promoted and developed successfully. These may be grouped under two headings, policy and infrastructure.

10.4.1.2 First, it is evident from international experience, and research and consultative processes in Ireland, that it is necessary to have a stated national policy on volunteering. Very broadly, national policy covers:

- Supporting, regulating and protecting volunteering;

- Developing and promoting volunteering and addressing barriers to volunteering;

- Targeted measures and measures to address images of volunteering.

10.4.1.3 Secondly, in furthering policy it is essential to develop volunteering infrastructure. Without this infrastructure it is not possible to realise the aims and objectives of policy. International comparisons have demonstrated the importance of primary infrastructure, i.e., dedicated centres at national and local level which focus specifically on promoting and developing volunteering and best practice. This type of infrastructure needs to be distinguished from the array of existing voluntary or other organisations that recruit volunteers to further their own aims and mission. These are of obvious importance, but in today's circumstances, insufficient as a basis for promoting and developing volunteering.

10.4.1.3 Part II of the report presents specific recommendations with regard to each of these areas. It sets out two core recommendations on policy and infrastructure, respectively, and details a set of recommendations under each core recommendation.

TIPPING THE BALANCE
Report of the National Committee on Volunteering

PART TWO

11 Recomendations on Volunteering Policy and Infrastructure

11.1 Introduction

11.1.1.1 The Taoiseach, Mr. Ahern, has stated that we must view 'the spirit of voluntary participation… as a key social goal' (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs 2000: i). The Government is interested in furthering greater civic participation, active citizenship and the development of social capital. According to the White Paper, there is a need to 'promote the active involvement of people in community and voluntary groups as an essential component of a democratic society' (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs 2000:83).

11.1.1.2 The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and the White Paper *Supporting Voluntary Activity*, recommended the establishment of the National Committee on Volunteering. The Government regarded the International Year of Volunteers 2001 as an opportunity to further its policies on social capital and the encouragement of volunteering. One of the clear remits of the National Committee was to make recommendations on the promotion and support of volunteering in the future.

11.1.1.3 Specifically, the White Paper states that the Committee's remit is to 'devise strategies and actions for supporting and developing volunteering… for the longer term'. The recommendations made by the Committee in this report are intended to deliver on the brief outlined in the White Paper for the Committee, which entailed examining and making recommendations on:

- the possibilities for recognition and accreditation for voluntary work and for training undertaken as a volunteer

- measures to widen the pool of volunteers

- the range of supports needed in order to promote, sustain and develop volunteering

11.1.1.4 As seen in Chapter Two of this report, volunteering is a key indicator of social capital, civic participation and active citizenship and has a long history in Ireland. As this history shows, volunteering is not just about charity and helping but it is about community involvement, mutuality, reciprocity, community-building and social solidarity. The White Paper contains explicit recognition of volunteering as a key contributor to a healthy, democratic society. Yet, maintaining a healthy, democratic, vibrant and participative society requires support, and several factors have been identified in Chapter Two and Chapter Three as contributing to a current crisis in volunteering in our society. Briefly,

- Volunteering levels have declined during the 1990s, particularly among men.

- Participation in volunteering fluctuates according to a number of social indicators, most importantly age, socio-economic status, education and region.

- Ireland is experiencing considerable changes. These have occurred at socio-economic levels, in our demographic structure and we now live in a climate of increasing regional disparities, urbanisation, consumerism and individualisation.

11.1.1.5 If volunteering involves a contribution to social capital and there is a concern with civic participation, active citizenship and social solidarity at present, one approach to addressing this could be to facilitate, promote and develop volunteering opportunities in Ireland. Voluntary participation, whether for idealistic or functional motivations, leads to the setting up of social relationships and networks, social cohesion and societal sustainability. This can result in a:
- more inclusive society,
- better functioning democracy,
- more active citizenry,
- greater sense of belonging and community.

11.1.1.6 A policy on volunteering must maintain a balance between the State, the actions of volunteer-involving organisations and the individual, voluntary nature of volunteering; this is a balance that is conditioned by the very voluntary nature of voluntary activity. Volunteering is an individual act and an important expression and builder of social capital. It reinforces and generates social capital through its relational nature, that is, the fact that it involves mutuality and reciprocity. Any approach to a policy on volunteering must be based on an understanding of these generic issues. The concern with policy should be to promote civic engagement and to pursue broader societal objectives such as a better-functioning democracy. A policy on volunteering development and support, therefore, should seek to create and develop the conditions for volunteering and demonstrate sensitivity to these concerns.

11.2 Core Recommendations

11.2.1.1 On the basis of the foregoing research findings, consultations and process of reflection the National Committee on Volunteering now makes its recommendations on the future of volunteering in Ireland. The Committee makes two core recommendations which we regard as being crucial to the Government's commitment to social capital and fostering volunteering:

1 *We recommend that a national policy on volunteering be developed.*

2 *We recommend that a volunteering support and development infrastructure be established and funded on a nation-wide basis.*

11.2.1.2 In the remaining sections of this chapter we set out these recommendations in greater detail. In relation to the development of a national policy on volunteering in Ireland we elaborate more detailed recommendations in Section 11.3 under the key headings of:
- The location of responsibility for policy at government level;
- Components of a policy on volunteering, and
- Key relationships influenced by this policy.

11.2.1.3 In Section 11.4 we expand on the second recommendation, that is, on establishing the infrastructure required to support and develop volunteering. Under this heading we offer several more detailed recommendations covering
- The aims and objectives of volunteering infrastructure;
- The purpose and remit of a National Centre for Volunteering;
- Alternative models for a National Centre, and our preferred model, and
- Infrastructure required at local level, where the focus is on local volunteer centres.

11.3 CORE RECOMMENDATION 1: That a National Policy on Volunteering be developed

11.3.1 Departmental responsibility and integration with other policy

11.3.1.1 The aim of this policy is to increase opportunities for volunteering, to enhance the image of volunteering and to increase the opportunities for civic expression and participation through volunteering. Volunteering is the giving of time by an individual in a freely chosen manner. Policy on volunteering must not undermine the freedom or the individuality of that act through prescription or coercion. It must, therefore, be facilitative, create opportunities, support the diversity of the volunteering experience and develop the arena for volunteering in an innovative, creative way.

11.3.1.2 **The location of responsibility for policy**: As with other social policies, a Government department should have leading responsibility for the development of the national policy on volunteering in consultation with other relevant parties, outside as well as within the state administration. Several government departments have some responsibility for different areas within the community and voluntary sector and an interest in supporting and developing volunteering.

11.3.1.3 The department with leading responsibility for volunteering policy needs to work in consultation with other government departments and with other relevant agencies and parties. This is recommended in the spirit of integration - both with regard to the development of a national policy on volunteering and with regard to the integration of volunteering with other social policy. These points will be taken up in the next two recommendations.

11.3.1.4 The National Committee on Volunteering, in its deliberations prior to the recent general election, considered the advantages and disadvantages of locating responsibility for volunteering policy in each of several departments (listed in Appendix 1). While each one had an interest in and some responsibility for volunteering, it was felt that the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (DSCFA) had established a solid tradition of support for volunteering. This is exemplified by the fact that the Department

has funded Comhairle, Volunteering Ireland and the NCV. The DSCFA, it was felt, could provide sound support and resources while allowing independence and local ownership. It is likely that the DSCFA would understand and welcome this remit and that the voluntary sector would wish to build on the strong relationship with the Department. The development of models like the Money Advice and Budgeting Service are good examples of processes developed within this Department.

11.3.1.5 This has been affected, however, by the announcement on Thursday June 6th 2002, of the names of his new Ministers and their portfolios by the Taoiseach. Announcing the appointment of Mr Éamon Ó Cuív as Minister to the new Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA), the Taoiseach stated that this portfolio would allow for a more co-ordinated engagement by the State with local communities, especially in the west. Among its responsibilities he listed community and local development, including, drugs, volunteering and the CAIT Initiative[67]. DSCFA has now become the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA). The Taoiseach's statement designated the DCRGA as the one responsible for volunteering, including volunteering policy, and therefore clearly defined the matter for the National Committee on Volunteering. The Committee welcomes this assignment of leading responsibility for volunteering to the DCRGA, while stressing that voluntary action is of course a concern that involves several Government departments.

11.3.1.6 *We therefore recommend that a national policy on volunteering be developed by, be housed within and be the responsibility of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in co-operation with other relevant government departments and agencies and the social partners (1).*

11.3.1.7 **Links to other policy areas**: In line with other recent policy developments, we propose that a volunteering policy should not be a stand-alone entity. It needs to be integrated with other relevant social policies because at its core it is about certain aspects of the kind of society we want to achieve.

The role of volunteering in the promotion of social inclusion and social capital, therefore, might merit recognition in other social policies such as the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), the National Health Strategy and other national strategies. *We recommend that the national policy on volunteering be integrated with other social policies (2).*

11.3.1.8 **Working with other departments and agencies**: Given the inter-departmental nature of the funding of volunteering, and the different domains involved in the volunteering experience, the government department in which this policy is located must work with other government departments and agencies, as occurs at present with the NAPS. The implementation and review of this policy, therefore, must involve other government departments and other agencies in the spirit of integration, co-ordination and partnership that informs other current social policy. Volunteering occurs with the involvement of a number of different domains (State, private for-profit companies and voluntary organisations) and has implications for a number of actors – the individual, the volunteer-involving organisation, the community and wider society. Meanwhile, governance is changing in Ireland. The government's White Paper, *Better Local Government*, has resulted in more regional governance structures such as the county development boards.

11.3.1.9 At the same time, other initiatives and developments have implications for regional and local governance. For example, health boards have increased in number from 8 to 10 and their relationship with the voluntary sector for the delivery of services funded by the State under the former Section 65 grants is to be guided by service agreements.[68] Initiatives and programmes such as RAPID, LEADER and CDP also feed into local governance structures, most specifically in the case of RAPID, which is involved with the integration of provision of State services in areas of disadvantage. *We recommend the adoption of an integrated approach to the implementation of the national policy on volunteering (3).*

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67 CAIT stands for Community Application of Information Technology.

68 These are outlined in the Health (Eastern Regional Health Authority) Act 1997, and the White Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity*.

11.3.2   **Components of the Policy**

11.3.2.1   *We recommend that the national policy on volunteering contain specific strategies concerned with the following:*
- *Supporting volunteering;*
- *Regulating and protecting volunteering*
- *Developing and promoting volunteering*
- *Addressing barriers to volunteering*
- *Targeting volunteers, and*
- *The image of volunteering (4)*

11.3.2.2   **Supporting volunteering**: Volunteering policy must recognise that volunteering is not free, there are costs associated with the development and promotion of volunteering opportunities, as well as enormous benefits. Volunteering policy must be supported financially by the State. One possibility is the setting up of a social capital fund under which a volunteering line could be established. The aim of this would not be to subsume volunteering under social capital, and therefore make it dependent upon this for its survival but to give recognition to volunteering as a key component of and contributor to social capital. At present, there are several funding supports but we suggest that these need to be augmented and co-ordinated. ***Therefore, we recommend that volunteering must be supported financially by the State through dedicated funding programmes (5).***

11.3.2.3   **Regulating and protecting volunteering**: Part I, Chapters Five and Eight, showed that regulation is poor and the volunteer, client and volunteer-involving organisation are under-serviced at present.
This is particularly apparent in the area of child protection but there is a more general need for consistent policy and procedures on the provision of clearance for volunteers by an Garda Síochána.
We recommend that the protection of volunteers and those with whom they work, children, young people and vulnerable groups within organisations, be enhanced through regulation and/or best practice. This protection might occur through changes in regulation or the development of best practice and must happen with the involvement of interested stakeholders (6).

11.3.2.4   **Developing and promoting volunteering**: A policy on volunteering development and promotion is vital for the maintenance of volunteering as a cornerstone of vibrant democracy and citizenship. ***We recommend that a policy on volunteering specifically include measures to develop, promote and support volunteering throughout the State (7).***

11.3.2.5   **Addressing barriers to volunteering**: Chapters Three, Four and Five noted the presence of a variety of barriers to volunteering in Ireland. These include time, information, opportunities, and images of volunteering. However barriers can be subtler. For example, services traditionally operated by volunteers (such as pre-school childcare and counselling) are now deservedly subject to professional regulation, but this may create barriers. It is therefore important that the volunteers, often working for many years to develop a necessary service, are facilitated in every way to acquire the necessary certification. ***We therefore recommend that a national volunteering policy should specifically address and seek to remove barriers to volunteering where they exist. The policy on volunteering therefore should support equality of access to volunteering opportunities (8).***

11.3.2.6   **Targeting volunteers**: Chapter Three outlined the present context of volunteering in Ireland. As noted, there are differences in levels of participation in volunteering according to age, socio-economic status, educational attainment and region. Volunteering by individuals is cyclical and governed by diverse factors, and the volunteering experience is one of diversity. More targeted measures must be taken, therefore, to provide a facilitative environment making it easy to volunteer and making opportunities to do so more accessible. Targeted measures can a) attract new volunteers; b) guard against attrition amongst present volunteers and c) address youth volunteering. (One example would be to support successful pilot projects already developed such as transnational volunteering opportunities for young people.) ***We recommend that the volunteering policy contain strategies that target participation, and address differences in participation, such as age, educational attainment, socio-economic status, regional variation and cultural diversity. Such strategies, therefore, must, actively promote social inclusion (9).***

We also recommend that volunteering opportunities be made available to people who are socially excluded or marginalized and that these opportunities and any supports required to enable them to be taken up are

provided in an appropriate manner and in a format which is affordable and accessible (10).

11.3.2.7 **The image of volunteering**: This report has shown that the definition and image of volunteering are affected by changes in wider society, in the practice of volunteering and the experience of volunteers over time. A policy on volunteering must define its concerns in a contemporary way and recognise the reality of change and diversity in the volunteering experience. It must seek to promote an image of volunteering that is positive, diverse and inclusive. One way in which this could be achieved is through a sustained promotional programme of awareness-raising focusing on the fun and social capital aspects of volunteering as opposed to its image as 'charity'. (Success in promoting positive images, however, as noted in Chapter Nine, requires that this is co-ordinated and followed through in terms of practical organisation and volunteering infrastructure – see below). *We recommend that the national policy on volunteering promote and support strategies to raise awareness about the positive and diverse images of volunteering and emphasise its contribution to social capital (11).*

11.3.3 **Key relationships influenced by this policy**

11.3.3.1 Volunteering – and the same is true of the voluntary sector – exists not in one discretely defined space but interactively, in communities and society, as shown throughout the report. Important relationships exist between the volunteer, the State, the voluntary sector and the business community. The nature and quality of these inter-sectoral relationships have a direct bearing on the volunteering experience. Finding ways of making volunteer development part of the 'business' of the other sectors in society will be important in the success of a national policy on the promotion and development of volunteering. Volunteer-involving organisations are very dependent upon the other two sectors for resources. Despite substantial strides made in Ireland in the last number of years, relationships between voluntary organisations and the State, and between voluntary organisations and the corporate sector, are still under developed at present and need to be supported.

11.3.3.2 **The relationship with the State**: The relationship between volunteer-involving organisations and the State presents a very real challenge to the State and its

agencies because of the variation and complexity of the forms that it may take. The domain of volunteering in a volunteer-involving organisation involves several relationships with the State, not all of which sit easily with each other. For example, some volunteer-involving organisations, which are dependent on the State for financial resources, can be in a dependent relationship. Other organisations, which are advocating or campaigning for improved services or on social issues, can be in a critical relationship with the State, that is, providing a vigorous critique of State services or policies. Still others may be working closely in partnership with the State towards the solution of social problems e.g., on local development partnership boards. The volunteering experience may be influenced by these relationships. If this volunteering experience is to be supported in full, then these relationships need to be recognised and nurtured. While some government departments and State agencies have become much more open to a critique by voluntary organisations in the development of their policy agenda, there is still a challenge for the State in balancing these relationships. It is likely that the State's commitment to voluntary participation will be judged partly by its capacity to work with volunteers in a manner that accords equal status regardless of the type of relationship involved. *We recommend that the State continue to develop its commitment to voluntary participation, which accords equal status to volunteers, irrespective of whether they are in dependent, critical or partnership relationships with the State (12).*

11.3.3.3 **Supporting volunteers in governance**: Governance in Ireland is changing at local and national levels. Developments in the governance infrastructure entail greater participation by many different actors and agencies and such participation is, of necessity, voluntary in part. Given the State's commitment to partnership and enhanced participation as highlighted for example in *Better Local Government*, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*, the State must match that with a commitment to resourcing such participation to ensure that fairness, equity and equality are maintained. Voluntary participation needs support because it requires resources for it to occur in equal and equitable measure. *We recommend that the State continue to improve its commitment to facilitating voluntary participation in national and local partnership structures and City and*

County Development Boards through developmental support and the dedication of resources (13).

11.3.3.4 **Incentives to organisations to involve volunteers**: Research in Ireland has indicated the economic value of volunteering in an organisational setting (€598m in 1995); however, its organisational and societal value, significant but indeterminate in financial terms, has not been given any public profile. Such recognition, if promoted by the State, would serve to further societal and organisational realisation of the value of volunteering. There are two ways in which the State could support voluntary organisations' recognition of volunteering. Firstly, the State's recognition of the volunteering experience and its commitment to supporting that experience within the domain of the volunteer-involving organisation needs to be expressed through clear funding incentives for such organisations. This would support these organisations to develop or increase their volunteer programmes. In so doing, costs associated with volunteering and volunteer management, such as payment of out-of-pocket expenses and childcare, would be recognised as valid in grant applications. Secondly, facilitating voluntary participation should be regarded as a valid organisational output in any organisation's funding request to the State. *We recommend that the State's commitment to volunteering be evidenced in clear funding incentives to voluntary organisations that involve volunteers (14).*

11.3.3.4 **The Relationship with the Voluntary Sector**: Voluntary sector organisations are one of the core domains where volunteering opportunity is delivered and structured. Organisations in the sector may so driven by the needs of service provision or so constrained by resources that they fully recognise neither the value of the volunteering experience nor their organisational responsibility to ensure that it is a positive one for the volunteer. *We therefore recommend that volunteer-involving organisations explicitly recognise 'volunteering' as a valued and legitimate organisational output. Furthermore, we recommend that such explicit recognition be evidenced in the provision of volunteer development programmes and in the measurement of 'volunteering' as an organisational output (15).*

11.3.3.6 *We also recommend that the value of volunteering as an activity should be recognised by the voluntary sector via a Charter for Volunteers (16).*

11.3.3.7 **The relationship with the business community and the public sector**: As shown in the foregoing chapters, volunteering is a diverse experience. With the participation of the business sector it can occur through employer supported volunteering or other corporate social responsibility initiatives. While relationships between volunteer-involving organisations and the corporate sector are underdeveloped at present in Ireland, volunteer-involving organisations (primarily in the voluntary sector) are dependent on this sector for a measure of their resources. This has implications for such organisations and ultimately for the volunteering experience in such organisations. It is important that this relationship be facilitated and supported in conjunction with existing bodies currently involved in the development of employer supported volunteering and other volunteering and voluntary sector support already taking place within the sector. This might occur through capacity building within community and voluntary organisations to facilitate opportunities for the involvement of employee supported volunteering, developing structures within State and public bodies that would allow civil and public servants volunteer through employer supported volunteering or supporting corporate sector employers and employees to engage in volunteering. *We therefore recommend that the relationship between the voluntary sector and corporate and public bodies be facilitated and supported by the State in a proactive and sustainable manner that supports the development of volunteering (17).*

11.3.3.8 **The relationship between volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations**: The relationship between volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations needs specific support. As shown in various chapters, training and management of volunteers are serious issues facing volunteer-involving organisations. If volunteering is to be promoted and developed these issues need to be addressed. Similarly, we have shown the need for recognition and accreditation programmes and awards in supporting volunteering. *We recommend that the volunteering experience within volunteer-involving organisations be supported through better management, recruitment and retention policies. We recommend that the volunteering support and development infrastructure provide real and ongoing support to volunteer-involving organisations through training, management programmes, accreditation and recognition (18).*

(See also recommendations on infrastructure below)

11.3.4 Research

11.3.4.1 Research on volunteering has been under resourced to date. Yet, such research, as indicated by previous chapters in this report, is essential in the development of policy. In particular, as Chapter Nine highlighted, research has been identified in international practice as a key ingredient in formulating volunteering policy. Recognition of the value of such research has been given in the White Paper's specific recommendation on the provision of funding for voluntary sector research. It can also be seen in the Royal Irish Academy's programme of grants for voluntary sector research. To augment such grants and programmes and to provide a specific focus on volunteering, the collection of volunteering information at a National Census level would be beneficial. This would provide a regular measurement of volunteering at both the formal and informal levels. It would also ensure that data produced on volunteering would be kept up to date. Another route to measuring volunteering would be to include voluntary and community organisations within the scope of the Quarterly National Household Surveys, which provide a snapshot of labour force activity within organisations. This would necessitate building up a database of voluntary and community organisations in Ireland; such a database does not yet exist for Ireland but would contribute towards fulfilling one of the research recommendations made in the White Paper on quantifying the full extent of voluntary and community activity. *We recommend that a programme of research on volunteering and voluntary activity be established. In addition we recommend the ongoing collection of data on volunteering through the Census and Quarterly National Household Surveys (19).*

11.3.4.2 International study of volunteering includes an examination of EU developments. It is important for a member state, such as Ireland, to include a European Union dimension in its policy agenda. This is particularly important in view of the deepening and widening of the European Union and the relative absence of EU policy in this area.

11.3.4.3 *We recommend that the DCRGA, through its links with EU institutions encourage EU support for volunteering, including the exchange of best practice, the development*

of volunteer exchange programmes, and the networking of national centres for volunteering (20).

11.4 CORE RECOMMENDATION 2: THAT A VOLUNTEERING SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT INFRASTRUCTURE BE ESTABLISHED AND FUNDED ON A NATION-WIDE BASIS

11.4.1 Introduction

11.4.1.1 Volunteering infrastructure has been defined as '*the structures that exist… to represent, promote and build the capacity of volunteering and community involvement*'[69]. It is recognised that a local and national support infrastructure for volunteering is becoming increasingly significant in the context of government objectives related to social inclusion, lifelong learning and the promotion of active citizenship.

11.4.1.2 The White Paper *Supporting Voluntary Activity* has recognised the crucial role that volunteer centres can play in the support and development of volunteering. '*Volunteer Centres… can be a vital ingredient of support for community and voluntary organisations at local level. They have the capacity to support organisations and volunteers, through a placement service and to publicise the potential of volunteering to citizens*'.[70] In 1998 the National Social Service Board undertook a study Supporting, Promoting and Facilitating Volunteering. The study recommended the development of a policy framework for volunteering and the development of an infrastructure to support volunteering.[71]

11.4.1.3 As can be seen from Chapter Nine, Ireland is a long way behind the countries chosen for the comparative study in terms of the development of volunteering infrastructure. A number of models of infrastructure support exist in these five countries at local and national level. All of the models, however, involve a national level remit on research, policy and practice, promotion and publicity, monitoring and evaluation and support of local centres. The case studies show that there is growing recognition that volunteering is not co-terminus with the voluntary sector and needs specific approaches and supports.

69 Volunteering Matters in Scotland No. 10
70 DSCFA, 2000, Supporting Voluntary Activity, P.84
71 NSSB, 1998, Supporting, Promoting and Facilitating Volunteering

11.4.1.4 The presence and work of a number of organisations[72] active in volunteer development in Ireland is noted and applauded, as are the valuable volunteer programmes being operated by many voluntary organisations. However, while these may form part of a volunteer development infrastructure they do not constitute a substantial, comprehensive, nation-wide service.

11.4.1.5 The broad aim of the recommendations in this section is the development of an infrastructure to support and develop volunteering in Ireland. Such a volunteer support and development infrastructure should be capable of delivering, or facilitating the delivery of, opportunities for a positive volunteering experience to people in Ireland across the range of demographic, geographic and social circumstances.

11.4.2 **Aims of volunteering infrastructure**

11.4.2.1 *We recommend that a national volunteer development infrastructure be established (21).* The aim of this infrastructure should to be to support the development and promotion of volunteering in Ireland through:
- Actively developing volunteering opportunities in society;
- Providing information on volunteering opportunities and linking services between potential volunteers and these opportunities;
- Seeking to develop and support the quality of the volunteering experience;
- Encouraging and maintaining diversity in the realm of volunteering;
- Improving and supporting the access to volunteering of under-represented groups;
- Stimulating and developing discussion and debate on volunteering, its value to individuals, communities and society, and examining potential development directions and strategies for volunteering in Ireland;
- Improving the management and development of volunteers in organisations involving volunteers;
- Supporting the capacity of volunteers to carry out the work in which they are engaged;
- Developing, as required, the regulatory frameworks that inform the context of volunteering; and
- Increasing the status and profile of volunteering in Irish society.

72 Comhairle, the National Committee on Volunteering, Volunteering Ireland, local volunteer bureaux etc.

11.4.2.2 *We recommend that this infrastructure include the following two key components: (1) A National Centre for Volunteering and (2) local volunteer centres (22).*

11.4.3 **The remit of a National Centre**

11.4.3.1 A National Centre for Volunteering will have a remit in the areas of policy development, implementation, regulation, and volunteer development and support. The work of the White Paper Implementation and Advisory Group is acknowledged within the community and voluntary sector. The National Centre for Volunteering will work closely with this body to ensure efficient support for volunteers and no duplication of effort.

The National Centre for Volunteering will:

1. Formulate strategies and programmes for the development and promotion of volunteering in Ireland and co-ordinate their implementation. Specifically, it could:
- Develop a national programme of activities aimed at widening the pool of volunteers;
- Develop imaginative school and third level volunteer programmes;
- Liaise with business and promote and facilitate employer supported volunteering;
- In conjunction with local volunteer centres, develop and promote imaginative projects for the integration of marginalised groups as volunteers;
- Provide support for volunteering in schools and family settings;
- Develop an ongoing publicity and promotional campaign on volunteering, and
- Promote national level initiatives such as 'National Volunteer Week'.

2. Develop training programmes for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations. This could include developing and implementing specific training packages for:
- Volunteers;
- Volunteer managers, and
- Members of volunteer boards of management.

3. Lead the development of national recognition, quality and accreditation systems for volunteer practice. This could include:
- Imaginative national-level recognition systems, and
- Support for local and national voluntary organisations

that require accreditation mechanisms for their own volunteer training.

4. Initiate and encourage research and disseminate information concerning volunteering in Ireland. Such research and information dissemination programmes could:
    * Link with third level colleges to promote and facilitate research into volunteering;
    * Develop and maintain a national volunteering database;
    * Develop and maintain a national volunteering website, and
    * Support voluntary groups in integrating information technology into their operations.

5. Facilitate and promote good standards of volunteer management practice.
    This could include the promotion of:
    * High standards in volunteering practice;
    * High standards of volunteer management and a commitment to quality of volunteering experience, and
    * Equality of opportunity in volunteering.

6. Consult with voluntary sector and advise the State. This could involve:
    * Debate on volunteering policy and development issues;
    * Promoting the networking of volunteers through the organisation of an annual national conference for volunteers, and
    * Regional volunteer meetings and seminars to facilitate feedback from volunteers, networking and exchange of best practice.

7. Act as a central resource, facilitating and supporting local volunteer centres. This could include:
    * Supporting the ongoing development of local volunteer centres, and
    * Targeting new areas for the establishment of new volunteer centres, particularly where a need is identified but development has not occurred organically.

11.4.4   Key programme areas within the National Centre

11.4.4.1 The National Centre for Volunteering, in the light of this broad remit will need to focus on key programme areas, develop relationships with a number of sectors and deal with a number of key issues. These include:
* Support and development;

* Training and accreditation;
* Recognition;
* Best practice and regulation;
* Volunteering and the education community;
* Volunteering and the business community;
* Volunteering and the public sector, and
* Volunteering and information technology.

11.4.5   Support and development

11.4.5.1 Among other things, this report has highlighted concerns such as: declining levels of volunteering; demographic, geographic and social variation in voluntary participation; substantial social, cultural, economic and demographic change; and challenges to the maintenance and building of social capital in Ireland.

11.4.5.2 Against this background we recommend that an independent space be considered for debate, generation of new ideas, consultation, consideration of research and the provision of policy advice in any programme of activities planned by the National Centre for Volunteering. This space would need to facilitate and support the development of a deeper understanding of the role of voluntary participation in Irish life and would provide a locale where the multiple voices of voluntary endeavour could be heard. Results of discussion would offer a commentary on the impact of a national volunteer development policy and strategy, maintain a comparative perspective on international experience in the field and elucidate options for future developments.

11.4.5.3 *We recommend the development of a programme of support for volunteers which would include all the key programme areas: support and development, training and accreditation, recognition, best practice and regulation, volunteering and the education community, volunteering and the business community, volunteering and the public sector and volunteering and information technology (23).*

11.4.5.4 *We recommend that an annual conference or forum, drawing in a wide range of interests and expertise, be organised by the National Centre for Volunteering. This conference would facilitate national and international input, debate, innovation, consultation, and consideration of research and input to national policy (24).*

11.4.5.5 *We recommend that the pool of volunteers be widened by support for the further development of social mentoring schemes to assist volunteer-involving organisations to build capacity in a number of areas including engaging in local development processes (25).*

11.4.5.6 *We recommend that pilot projects be supported to encourage the involvement of volunteers from under-represented groups (26).*

11.4.6 **Training**

11.4.6.1 **Volunteer management training**: The development of volunteer management practice in Ireland should be a central plank in any national volunteer development programme. We have spoken in this report of the potential value of the volunteering experience to the individual and of the possibility of both positive and negative volunteering experiences. However, we have not sought to identify in any detail, critical aspects of volunteer management practice that might support a positive experience. We have noted that, given the diversity among volunteers, there will be wide differences in volunteer support needs. Further, best practice is best understood as evolving rather than static. Taken together, these points suggest that best practice in volunteer management is context-bound. Nonetheless, good practice that is context relevant may be identified and evolved.

11.4.6.2 There is a body of international work already in place in this arena, which could be developed and or adapted, to suit the Irish or the individual organisation's experience.

11.4.6.3 *We recommend that a programme of best-practice volunteer management education be made available to volunteer-involving organisations through the National Centre for Volunteering and local volunteer centres (27).*

11.4.6.4 **Volunteer Training**: The need for a supported system of training for volunteers is a key issue and one which is cited by more submissions to the consultation process than any other single issue (see Chapter Eight). Programmes that provide training for volunteers already exist but we suggest that further programmes need to be developed in co-operation with educational and training institutions at national and local level to augment, support and co-ordinate current provision

and delivery. It is also clear that volunteers are increasingly called upon to be active in areas that are subject to regulation, professionalisation, and legislation. Examples include working with children and young people and counselling and information provision.

11.4.6.5 *We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering set up and co-ordinate a volunteer training programme at local and national level with links to education and training institutions (28).*

11.4.6.6 **Training for the voluntary board of management**: It is widely recognised that many volunteers now work in a management role with responsibilities as employers and financial managers. Voluntary members and directors of boards of management have specific legal responsibilities for employment, health and safety legislation, etc. If boards of management are to continue to attract members from the target groups of the organisations involved, ongoing training in the roles and responsibilities of management is vital.
We acknowledge the current provision of training for voluntary boards of management currently provided by a number of organisations including the support agencies for the Community Development Programme. We would suggest that this training needs to be augmented, supported and co-ordinated, specifically tailored to the members as volunteers and should cover the objectives, policies and structures of the organisation and be at a time and venue suited to the volunteers.

11.4.6.7 *We recommend that the area of training for volunteer management board members be substantially increased in a volunteer training programme run in addition to current training programmes (29).*

11.4.6.8 **Training for volunteer members of local development and partnership boards and other similar agencies**: A closely related but specific area needing attention is support for the volunteer member of the many new structures in the local development and local government sector including the city and county development boards. These structures are intricate, the meetings demanding and the decisions made far-reaching. Volunteers need to be informed, organised and possess the negotiation skills to engage effectively.

11.4.6.9 *We recommend that a volunteer training programme specifically address the area of confidence building and negotiation skills for volunteers on local development boards and other similar agencies (30).*

11.4.6.10 **Government staff training**: As government departments and state agencies are increasingly required to engage in partnership with volunteer-involving organisations, and in many cases have no prior experience of this kind of work, it is important that their organisations are resourced to prepare them for this work. This could include training in partnership, equal opportunities legislation and community development principles. This issue has been recognised already in the White Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity* (s.4.8). Here, we focus on volunteers as distinct from voluntary and community organisations.

11.4.6.11 *We recommend that staff of State bodies working in partnership with volunteers, receive training in partnership and community development principles to encourage mutual respect and involvement of volunteers on an equal basis (31).*

11.4.7 Accreditation

11.4.7.1 Accreditation is understood as the formal confirmation of achievements attained in conformity with agreed standards. Accreditation programmes, principally through their learning content and hands-on experience enhance good practice and improve the quality of volunteer involvement, thus highlighting the intrinsic value of volunteering. By accessing accreditation, an organisation's skills and profile within the community are raised – good practice and improved performance result. Accreditation is not regarded as necessary for all volunteers, nor should it be seen to devalue unaccredited work and skills.

11.4.7.2 *We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering develop a support system enabling volunteers to access appropriate training and qualifications for the skills developed as a volunteer. This support system could provide information and advice and act as a link to accrediting bodies to help them negotiate the accreditation path for their volunteer training (32).*

11.4.7.3 *We recommend that accreditation systems developed recognise prior learning and experience to date (33).*

11.4.7.4 *We recommend that resources be provided within the National Centre for Volunteering to set up, publish and annually update a directory of accredited training and progression in Ireland (34).*

11.4.7.5 *We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering set up an expert body for volunteers in partnership with the NQAI, to work with the authority to establish standards for training and accreditation. This body will incorporate into these standards the core values of volunteering, where appropriate, as well as specific skills and knowledge. It will have links through the NQAI with relevant technical bodies and with the awarding councils of FETAC and HETAC. The make-up of this body should be flexible to allow for new developments in the sector (35).*

11.4.8 Recognition

11.4.8.1 Recognition is understood as the formal confirmation of an individual or team's commitment to volunteering, or to a particular volunteering activity. Recognition programmes will complement methods of recognition adopted by organisations and create uniform national recognition systems.

11.4.8.2 *We recommend that a key programme area within the National Centre for Volunteering will put in place the structures and resources necessary to enable volunteer-involving organisations to nominate individuals or teams to be formally recognised by the State for their voluntary work (36).*

11.4.8.3 Mindful of the quality and range of recognition systems already in place e.g. Ireland Involved and Gaisce, the specific aims of this programme are to link volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations with the available recognition systems. Also, we seek to develop a nationally recognised system that is non-competitive and open to all volunteers who fulfil certain criteria.

11.4.8.4 An outline of how assessment for recognition might be evaluated should deal with the quantitative and qualitative elements of the work completed, including:
- Provision of a personal activity log book;
- Record of total time given in a particular period;
- Types of activities undertaken;

- Benefits of such activities to the membership;
- Responses of the membership to the activities;
- Comments of the governing body, and
- Recommendations of the individual's peers or managers.

11.4.8.5 *We recommend the development of a non-competitive national recognition system open to volunteers working in all sectors (37).*

11.4.8 Best practice

11.4.9.1 Regulation is mandatory in its requirements. Not all activities carried out within the voluntary sector require regulation. A distinction needs to be drawn between what is necessary as best practice and what is compulsory by means of regulation. Voluntary work is carried out within an ethos and context of best practice. Regulation is required in certain aspects of the work particularly that which assures the safety and protection of all.

11.4.9.2 Best practice can be defined as a widely accepted procedure, aiming for excellence in the attainment of clearly defined goals and objectives and the means to achieving them. A best practice procedure is a commitment to excellence in the services provided and the processes and procedures used to attain them.

11.4.9.3 While recognising that the Implementation and Advisory Group (IAG) for the White Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity,* is examining this area, we recommend the following with a specific focus on volunteers.

11.4.9.4 *We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering support local and national volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers to develop best practice procedures and quality assurance systems (38). These protocols, specifically focused on volunteers should cover the following areas:*

1. **Competency and Standards**:
- Quality assurance.
- Accreditation of courses and qualifications.
- Selection and recruitment policy.
- Training protocols and training structures
- Code of ethics and practice.
- Complaints procedures.

2. **Volunteer welfare**:
- Charter of rights and duties (in association with the White Paper IAG).
- The contract – expectations in terms of organisation input and volunteer output.
- Volunteer relations policies.
- Recognition / award systems.
- Out-of-pocket expenses.
- Volunteer role and involvement in policy development affecting the nature and level of engagement.
- Advice on good practice regarding Garda clearance of all volunteers working with children, young people and other vulnerable groups
- Security of volunteers.
- Liability insurance cover
- Disengagement process to ensure fairness to all.

3. **Client welfare**:
- Charter of rights and duties.
- Essential competencies for volunteers to carry out tasks.
- Support and supervision
- Child protection issues
- Complaints procedures
- Disciplinary procedures

4. **Organisation welfare**:
- Charter of rights and duties.
- Value for money or return on investment in terms of costs and benefits to the individual, the organisation and the client.
- Funding
- Independence and non-political status of the voluntary organisation.
- Equality of esteem for both volunteers and clients.
- Voluntary work versus employment.
- Promotion of voluntary bodies and public relations.
- Planning and policies.
- Continuity and innovation.
- Research and development.

11.4.10 Regulation

11.4.10.1 Regulation should flow from a supportive stance and a quality assurance perspective, and should be carried out in such a way that it does not stymie creativity or create unnecessary red tape.

11.4.10.2 Regulation should seek to ensure that organisations have regard both for clients and for volunteers, and the delivery of services within a framework of best practice.

11.4.10.3 Diversity within the sector makes it more difficult to provide a uniform regulatory instrument for all organisations. Nevertheless, there are principles applicable across the board essential in the attainment of quality standards and best practice.

11.4.10.4 *We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering liaise with the relevant government departments and lobby for changes in regulation necessary to support local and national volunteer-involving organisations in developing quality assurance systems (39).*

11.4.10.5 Regulation will take place in all those areas that are essential for the adequate protection of the individual as a client, a volunteer or an employee of a voluntary organisation. Quality assurance will be necessary to ensure the maintenance of standards in:

- Security of clients;
- Security of volunteers;
- Out-of-pocket expenses for volunteers;
- Protection for children being cared for or involved in a voluntary organisation ;
- Garda clearance for all volunteers working with children, young people and other vulnerable groups;
- Clarity on the situation of volunteers in receipt of unemployment or disability e, and
- Review of the cost of incorporation for voluntary bodies.

11.4.11 Volunteering and education

11.4.11.1 The education system has a role in the development and support of a volunteer ethos. The White Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity,* and the research and consultation process results in this report all point to the need to involve young people in volunteering at an early stage, through family, educational and community settings. A volunteer development strategy needs to examine the present situation in the education system and devise new programmes as well as supporting and facilitating existing programmes of volunteering and civic engagement throughout the education system.

11.4.11.2 *We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering develop proposals and projects and support current initiatives on engaging all levels of the formal education system, and the non-formal education sector, in volunteering and civic engagement (40).*

11.4.12 Volunteering and the business community

11.4.12.1 Community related activities on the part of the corporate sector in Ireland are underdeveloped. Many factors underlie this, such as norms of business practice in Ireland, underdeveloped taxation incentives for such activity, and not least, the lack of capacity in voluntary organisations to develop on-going relationships with corporate sector organisations.

11.4.12.2 Increasingly, however, there has been a growing movement in Irish business towards corporate social responsibility and stakeholder dialogue, one of the key pillars being corporate community involvement. For example, Business in the Community – Ireland has been working with Irish companies to promote corporate social responsibility policy and practice since 2000 and has a dedicated taskforce on employer supported volunteering. Other examples include the AIB Better Ireland Awards and the considerable local business support for sports and local social activity.

11.4.12.3 *We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering develop proposals and projects and support current initiatives in employer supported volunteering in association with all the social partners (41).*

11.4.13 Volunteering and the public sector

11.4.13.1 The government, through the White Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity,* and by setting up the National Committee on Volunteering, continues to express its support for the development of volunteering and to increase its understanding of the role of volunteering in the development of participatory democracy and active citizenship. To encourage the development of employer supported volunteering, a helpful first step would be to promote pilot projects with incentives for public sector employees to volunteer and for public sector employers to release employees who volunteer.

11.4.13.2 *We recommend that the National Centre for Volunteering develop proposals and projects and support current initiatives in employer supported volunteering within State agencies and the public sector in general (42).*

11.4.14 Volunteering and information technology

11.4.14.1 There is great potential for the support of volunteering in Ireland through effective and comprehensive information and communications technology supports. These supports could vary from 'on-line time-banking' facilities for volunteers and 'e-volunteering', to developing a volunteer spirit in young people.

11.4.14.2 The third report of Ireland's Information Society Commission outlines the characteristics of 'early adopters' as young, urban, employed, professional, high-income and of high educational attainment. The characteristics of 'later adopters' are older, rural (outside Leinster), deprived-urban, non-professionals, housewives, lower income and of lower educational attainment. This analysis has a bearing on how information and communication technology could be targeted to encourage younger, urban and professional people into the sphere of volunteering. For example, an older volunteer in a community group who wishes to get information on a Government grant scheme and does not know how to use the internet, can be put in touch with a local student who will guide them through the process.

11.4.14.3 *We recommend that research should be commissioned into the possible uses of information and communication technology initiatives to target specific groups for increased volunteering rates (43).*

11.4.14.4 As outlined in the Government Action Plan, March 2002; *New Connections - A strategy to realise the potential of the Information Society,* the concept of e-inclusion is a key priority. The Action Plan states that 'Public policy interventions are needed to avoid the danger of exacerbating existing inequalities, and to prevent the emergence of what has become known internationally as a digital divide'. The paper goes on to state that 'proposals for low-cost ISP, web-hosting and technical support solutions for community and voluntary groups will be progressed through the inter-departmental working group on e-inclusion'. Such a centralised ICT resource should be used to support volunteers and volunteering and the establishment of such a resource should rest with a body such as the White Paper Implementation Advisory Group and Comhairle.

11.4.14.5 *We recommend and support the establishment of a central information and communication technology resource for the community and voluntary sector (44).*

11.4.15 Possible models for the establishment of a National Centre for Volunteering

11.4.15.1 Five options are presented here for consideration, describing five possible models for the organisation and management of the National Centre for Volunteering.

11.4.15.2 **Option One**: The National Centre for Volunteering as a unit of a government department: This model would establish the National Centre for Volunteering as a specialist unit within a government department. This would be serviced by the recruitment of Civil Service staff and have the option of contracting specialist staff. This model would be totally controlled within that department and would not have an independent board of management.

- **Advantages**: Secure and long-term funding allowing long term planning and good resources, offices, equipment and staffing. Existing management structures within the department may suffice. While this might start its life as a dependent unit of a parent department, it could become an independent agency in time as is happening presently with MABS and NAPS, which are currently becoming independent of the Department of Social and Family Affairs.
- **Disadvantages**: Not representative of, or owned in any way by the voluntary sector. This does not facilitate the sector's involvement in the development of policy related to it and goes against present day thinking on partnership and the development of social capital.

11.4.15.3 **Option Two**: The National Centre for Volunteering as an organic development from within the voluntary sector: This model would allow the support system to develop organically from within the sector itself. The State's role would be to organise a funding stream that can be accessed by the sector to fund the model that has grown out of networking by the local volunteer centres. Volunteering Canada developed in this way originating in the 1980s as the association of volunteer bureaux.

- **Advantages**: The very process of evolving this model would ensure ownership by the voluntary sector and would ensure relative independence from the State and the ability to be constructively critical that this allows.
- **Disadvantages**: Short-term funding, possibly from a number of sources. (This can also be an advantage).

No built-in cross-sectoral representation on the board of management. This could be seen as representing the voluntary sector only and lacking constructive input from the other social partners. As with the first model this goes against present thinking on the benefits of social partnership and integrated services.

11.4.15.4 **Option Three**: The use of existing volunteer support bodies: This model would access funding directly from the State but this funding would be channelled through an existing body. This could be Comhairle, (which already has a national remit from the State on volunteering, information provision and support for the voluntary sector). It could, alternatively, be a voluntary body like Volunteering Ireland, (which has campaigned on volunteering issues for a number of years) or a scaled down board of the National Committee on Volunteering, (which has already built up expertise, credibility and networks).

- **Advantages**: Cost effective, quick to implement, linking in to expertise already developed and to infrastructure already set up and in the process avoiding duplication of effort and resources.
- Disadvantages: May not be seen by the voluntary sector as a new dynamic body and may lack representation from and ownership by the sector.

11.4.15.5 **Option Four**: The establishment of an Independent Entity by Statute: This model would allow for an organisation to be created by statute with specific functions transferred to the new legal entity by the Minister. Legislation would be required to establish the body. The Unit would have a Board of Management appointed by the Minister and reflective of voluntary, statutory, trade union and business interests, as on the National Committee on Volunteering. Combat Poverty and the Irish Sports Council are examples of bodies established by statute.

- **Advantages**: Establishing the body by statute would give added permanence to the Unit, allowing for long term planning. The Unit could develop into a powerful voice for volunteers.
- **Disadvantages**: Such a Unit could also be seen as distant from volunteers on the ground and would not have the level of ownership by the sector that other models might have.

11.4.15.6 **Option Five**: A unit established as a company limited by guarantee, with representation and funding from all sectors: This model has a number of members of the Management Board appointed by the State with the balance of membership elected from paid up affiliated members. Membership through fee payment would be open to all sectors with an interest in volunteering. The Volunteer Development Agency in Northern Ireland is modelled in this way.

- **Advantages**: This has the advantages of being a partnership model with ownership through affiliation and affiliation fees by the voluntary and business sectors, representation from the State, mixed funding from the State and the voluntary and business sectors and the possibility of drawing in funding from other sources.
- **Disadvantages**: This model could end up focusing on fundraising as opposed to implementing national policy on volunteering.

11.4.16 **The National Committee's preferred option**

11.4.16.1 A policy on volunteering development and support, as outlined earlier in this chapter, must strike a balance between maintaining the individual nature of volunteering and the facilitation of that activity by the State. The structure of the National Centre for Volunteering must achieve this same balance between what could be seen as the diametric opposites of state intention and individual action and must manage to bridge different relationships. The Centre must have sufficient managerial and resource capacity in order to deliver the brief that has been outlined in this chapter but its governance and modes of operation need to reflect the local and individual nature of volunteering endeavour.

11.4.16.2 The most significant elements of the proposed new structure are that it be a partnership between voluntary and State representation, which will give it independence and sustainability in the long term. A partnership with representation across sectors would ensure an organisation with substance and power. Ownership by volunteers and credibility within the sectors would be achieved. Such a structure would also be in line with current developments in citizen state decision-making processes, as outlined in Better Local Governance. A number of examples of such bodies exist such as the Equality Authority, Léargas and Comhar.

11.4.16.3 *We recommend that a National Centre for Volunteering be set up by government, as a statutory body with specific functions transferred to it by the Minister. The proposed National Centre for Volunteering should be independent, have a clear mandate, a substantial representation of volunteers, and appropriate representation of volunteer-involving organisations and statutory bodies (45).*

11.4.16.4 *In view of the time needed to develop legislation we recommend that an interim body, comprising the expertise developed by the National Committee on Volunteering and other volunteer support organisations be set up (46).*

11.4.16.5 In any arrangement, due regard should be given to the fact that practically every government department has interaction with volunteers and that the work of the National Centre for Volunteering will be to support voluntary participation in areas that may fall outside the remit of the lead department.

11.4.17 **Local Volunteer Centres**

11.4.17.1 Apart from the local volunteer centres already in existence in Dublin City Centre, Tallaght, Swords and Blanchardstown, there is a high level of interest in local communities in Ireland to set up volunteer centres. Submissions in Chapter Five refer to fledging centres in Clondalkin, Lucan, Ballyfermot, Coolock, Drogheda, Dundalk, Wicklow, Bray, Galway and Cork. (See also Appendix 3.)

11.4.17.2 These have emerged from a need perceived locally and developed through volunteer effort into organisations which, while having the same aims and objectives, are managed in different ways and funded in different ways. Some local areas wish to maintain a certain independence from the State and the local authority and organise funding from a range of sources. Others have lobbied the local authority to take on the management and funding in their area. There are advantages and disadvantages to both models.

11.4.17.3 Local volunteer centres are vital not only to matching the varied capacity of different groups of people to the wide variety of volunteering opportunities available. They are also needed to realise and facilitate people's willingness to volunteer to the benefit of the individual volunteer, the organisation with which they volunteer, the communities served and the wider society.

11.4.17.4 *We recommend that local volunteer centres be set up on a nation-wide basis in association with existing local structures to provide support and placement services for volunteers (47).*

11.4.17.5 Ideally, the process of developing new Local Volunteer Centres needs to happen in conjunction with the National Centre for Volunteering. The National Centre could then evaluate the situation as it already exists and develop a picture of what is working best on the ground. In consultation with Local Volunteer Centres already in existence, with organisations and committees in the process of developing new local centres, and taking into account the results of the evaluation process, a plan could then be drawn up for the future development and funding of Local Volunteer Centres on a nation-wide basis.

11.4.17.6 The required density or optimal size of such a network in the Irish context would appear to be a function of population density and geographic distance. International practice as outlined in Chapter Nine, suggests a centre/population ratio of between 1: 100,000 (Denmark 1: 106k) and 1:150,000 (Canada 1:153k). In Northern Ireland a target of ensuring every citizen is within a 15 mile radius of a local bureau is being pursued. A per head of population approach would suggest a requirement for between 25 and 37 local bureaux in Ireland. A geographical distance approach could require a substantially higher figure, depending on the permissible radius adopted. Examples worth considering in this instance include, the Citizens Information Centres (Comhairle) and the National Youth Information Network (Department of Education).

11.4.17.7 These are crude criteria, but provide an indication of the need. In practice, it may be far more important to take account of local initiative and other criteria, such as the strength of local identity and its role in generating real local ownership of and support for a local volunteer centre. This said, the National Centre for Volunteering will need to be proactive in the initiation of local volunteer centres in areas which have substantial under-representation in volunteering activity. It is also preferable if the establishment and operation of local volunteer centres is co-ordinated and integrated

within a network at regional and sub-regional level so that competition between centres for funding, and gaps and duplication of effort are avoided.

11.4.17.8 The local volunteer centres' remit would be to:

- Set up a local volunteer register;
- Set up a local voluntary organisation register;
- Set up support services to provide volunteer exchange and placement;
- Make recommendations and advise on volunteer expenses;
- Organise training for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations;
- Help with health and safety and other regulatory requirements;
- Administer awards and recognition schemes for volunteers ;
- Act as a support to volunteer-involving organisations on policy issues, training on involving volunteers, access to volunteers and advice on how to retain them and information on issues such as child protection;
- Link with local businesses, volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations to broker and facilitate employer supported volunteering;
- Develop new projects, e.g. with local business, that involve volunteers and meet local needs;
- Develop projects that encourage volunteering among groups which are marginalised or socially excluded;
- Make volunteering links and organise volunteering projects with local schools and colleges, and
- Network with other local volunteer centres to exchange ideas and good practice models

11.4.17.9 *We recommend that adequate core funding provided from national budgets be made available for the development of local volunteer centres (48).*

11.4.17.10 *We recommend that the national funding line for local volunteer centres come under administration by the National Centre for Volunteering (49).*

11.4.17.11 *We recommend that local volunteer centres maintain independence at local level to enable them to source other funding support from their local authorities, local communities and other funding lines. local authorities, while respecting the importance of autonomy in volunteer centres, have a key role to play and responsibility for supporting volunteering,*

particularly through the directorates of community and enterprise (50).

11.4.17.12 *We recommend that local volunteer centres be represented in the governance of the National Centre for Volunteering (51).*

11.4.17.13 **Management structures and funding mechanisms**: Already, with only four local centres operating, there are diverse models of management and funding mechanisms already in existence.
- Management by a representative local voluntary management board;
- Funding as a mixture of central and local government, State agency and local business sponsorship, and
- Funding and management directly by the local authority.

11.4.17.14 It is not intended in this report to be prescriptive about the ideal management and funding mechanisms. However there are some basic criteria that need to be in place.
- Management should be representative of all sectors with an interest in volunteering in the local community;
- It should be open, accessible, accountable to the local community and have a proactive equal opportunities policy;
- Links to the local authority, the new local government structures, strategic policy committees and directorates of community and enterprise are vital;
- Links to local partnership companies and other local development organisations are also vital;
- Core funding and project funding should be multi-annual, centrally administered (rather than piecemeal, from several government departments), and
- There should be funding provision for innovation, pilot projects and, where relevant, for mainstreaming.

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In the first draft of the report a number of possible Government Departments were suggested as the location of leading responsibility. After discussion by the National Committee on Volunteering these were narrowed down to the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

With the re-organisation of Cabinet posts, responsibility for the field of volunteering has been expressly located in the newly defined Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA), while the DSCFA has become the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The new Department has set out its scope as follows:

> 'Upon its establishment in June 2002 the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs assumed responsibilities for a range of matters previously under the remit of the former Departments of Arts Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands; Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Tourism Sport and Recreation; Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Department of Public Enterprise.' (DCRGA, Government website)

Below the essential considerations of the Committee on each department are summarised.

Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs

This Department has had a history of involvement in the development and production of a Green Paper and then a White Paper on supporting voluntary activity, so there is an historical reason for locating a national policy on volunteering in this Department. As well as having an active voluntary activity unit, there is a White Paper Unit located in the Department, and the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs has expressed his Department's interest in the wider arena of social capital. Other agencies, with a strong presence in the voluntary and community field, such as Comhairle and the Combat Poverty Agency, come under the remit of this Department.

Department of the Environment and Local Government

Changes in local governance structures following on the publication of *Better Local Government* have meant that this Department has a developing infrastructure at national and regional levels, which would enhance the implementation of a national policy on volunteering. This would also mean that the infrastructure, recommended in Chapter Two, could fit into this network.

Department of the Taoiseach

Locating responsibility for the national policy on volunteering in this Department would mean that a central funding line might be easier to establish. This may also recognise and support the fact that volunteering takes place across a wide social domain and that volunteering has an impact on a wide range of government departments.

Department of Health and Children

In terms of the essentially local nature of volunteering activity, this Department has established local structures for the delivery of local services and has close links with large elements of the voluntary sector. The White Paper, Supporting Voluntary Activity, lists the amount of Irish and EU funding to the community and voluntary sector for the year 1999 from all government departments. This Department disbursed far more funding to the sector than any other Department in 1999.

Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation[74]

Given that this Department has responsibility for Area Development Management which has a wide remit around supporting, monitoring and funding the community and voluntary sector and, along with the Combat Poverty Agency, the Peace and Reconciliation Programme. It could also be considered as a home for the National Centre for Volunteering. It also has responsibility for local, urban and rural development and sports.

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

This Department with its remit around equality is another possible choice. It has responsibility for the Childcare Programme, Victim Support, the National Women's Council, Strategy for the Travelling Community, the People with Disabilities in Ireland and other programmes with close links to the community and voluntary sector.

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74 This Department has since changed to the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism.

The key functions of the National Committee on Volunteering will be:

- To provide a national focus for volunteering in the context of IYV 2001

- To develop awareness of the role which volunteers play in Irish society

- To oversee central celebratory events marking the role of volunteers in Ireland

- To contribute to the work at an international level connected with IYV 2001

- To oversee the management of IYV 2001 in Ireland

- To provide support for voluntary and community organisations at local and national level, to run events and carry out activities celebrating and highlighting the role of volunteers in their organisations and to recruit additional volunteers

To examine and make recommendations on:

- The possibilities for recognition and accreditation for voluntary work and for training undertaken as a volunteer

- Measures to widen the pool of volunteers

- The range of supports needed in order to promote, sustain and develop volunteering

Carol Baxter	National Women's Council of Ireland
Paddy Behan	Services Industrial Professional Technical Union
Brenda Boylan	Department of an Taoiseach
Frances Byrne	OPEN/European Anti Poverty Network in Ireland
Noel Clear	Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Eva Creely	Dúchas
Fidelma Cullen	Department of Social and Family Affairs
Paddy Donegan	Irish Senior Citizens National Parliament
Freda Donoghue	Centre for Non Profit Management School of Business Studies Trinity College Dublin
James Doorly	National Youth Council of Ireland
Tony Fallon	Department of Social and Family Affairs
Eamonn Farrell	Civil Defence
Sean Farrell	Scouting Ireland CSI
Fidelma Finch	National Parents Council, Primary
Frances Fletcher	Department of Health and Children
Chris Flood	Chairperson
Martin Gallagher	Department of Foreign Affairs
Clodagh Gorman	Foundation for Investing in Communities
Mary Griffin	Irish League of Credit Unions
Ruth Griffin	National Youth Council of Ireland
John Hannan	ACCORD Catholic Marriage Care Service Central Office
Gráinne Hehir	Department of Foreign Affairs
Susan Kelly	Volunteering Ireland
Matthew Kennedy	Irish Sports Council
Anthony Leddy	Farming Pillar
Leonie Lunny	Comhairle

Eiblin Mahon	North West Community Volunteers
Michael Mernagh	South Inner Community Development Association (SICDA)
Frank Mulcahy,	Kildare Network of People with Disabilities
Mary Murphy	Department of Social and Family Affairs
Margaret McDermot	Community Games
Charles McDonald	Irish Council for Social Housing
Bernadette MacMahon	Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice
John Nealon	Muintir na Tire
Caitríona Ní Cheallaigh	Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge
Máire Ní Fhlithbheartaigh	Department of Education and Science
Máire Ní Ghraham	Cumann Luthcleas Gael
Tricia Nolan	Tallaght Volunteer Bureau
Cahir O Byrne	Volunteer Centre Fingal
Suzanne Reeves	Department of Environment and Local Government
Andrew O'Regan	School of Business Studies, Trinity College, Dublin
Jim Quigley	Muintir na Tíre
David O'Sullivan	Department of Environment and Local Government
Brigid Reynolds	Conference of Religious Orders in Ireland (CORI)
Colm Ryder	Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands
Tom Ryder	Voluntary Services International / Dóchas
Sandra Velthuis	Volunteering Ireland

SECRETARIAT:

Helen Lahert	CO-ORDINATOR
John Ryan	ADMINISTRATOR
Marguerite Bourke	MEDIA AND INFORMATION OFFICER

Recognition of the need for a volunteering infrastructure

Throughout the 1990s, there was growing recognition of the importance of a volunteering infrastructure for the Republic of Ireland. A key all-Ireland conference in 1992 *Volunteers: the Vital Link*, organised by the Volunteer Development Resource Unit (now the Volunteer Development Agency, Northern Ireland) and the National Social Service Board (now Comhairle), recommended the immediate development of appropriate support structures for volunteering in the Republic, learning from the experience in Northern Ireland. This was echoed by Ruddle and O'Donoghue in their 1995 report, *The Organisation of Volunteering* and the 1997 Green Paper on *Supporting Voluntary Activity*. In 1998, the National Social Service Board commissioned a study entitled *Supporting, Promoting and Facilitating Volunteering*, which also recommended a policy framework for volunteering and the development of an infrastructure to support it. This was reiterated by the White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity in 2000.

The development of a volunteering infrastructure

The volunteering infrastructure in the Republic of Ireland is underdeveloped by international standards. Current interest in the expansion of this infrastructure is growing annually. The following chronological description outlines the extent and nature of the infrastructure as it exists in September 2002. It does not include in-house volunteer programmes run by organisations (some of which can be quite significant), nor funders, research bodies, statutory agencies, etc, which provide sporadic support for volunteering. It focuses instead on organisations whose specific mission is to support volunteering.

Volunteering Ireland

Volunteering Ireland grew out of the Volunteer Resource Centre project at Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups. It is a company limited by guarantee. It was launched in 1998 as the Republic's first centre for volunteering. It promotes voluntary activity to the general public, the media and to policy-makers. It supports organisations wishing to establish good practice in their involvement of volunteers, through information provision, training and consultancy. It also matches volunteers with organisations providing suitable volunteering opportunities, including the provision of a placement service for the central Dublin area. Funding comes from a range of statutory, private and commercial sources. The centre employs three full-time and two part-time staff.

CONTACT: Sandra Velthuis, Volunteering Ireland, Coleraine House, Coleraine Street, Dublin 7, Tel: 01 – 872 2622, Email: info@volunteeringireland.com

Tallaght Volunteer Bureau

The Tallaght Volunteer Bureau was established in 1999 to serve the Dublin 24 area. It provides a placement service and a project to encourage young people to volunteer, as well as a number of other resources for local volunteer-involving organisations. It is set up as a company limited by guarantee and receives core funding from Comhairle, as well as a range of once-off statutory grants, both local and national. One full-time and two part-time members of staff are employed.

CONTACT: Tricia Nolan, Tallaght Volunteer Bureau, 512 Main Street, Tallaght, Dublin 24, Tel: 01 - 462 8558, Email: info@volunteertallaght.ie

Lucan 2000 Volunteer Network

Lucan 2000 is a community group that receives funding from Area Development Management and other sources. The Volunteer Network is a part-time placement service (currently one day per week) for Lucan. Since 2000 it has received piecemeal funding from a number of national and local statutory sources.

CONTACT: Una Ruddock, Lucan 200 Volunteer Network, 1 Church View, Lower Main Street, Lucan, Co Dublin, Tel: 01 - 621 3205, Email: uruddock@lucan2000.com

Business in the Community Ireland

The Foundation for Investing in Communities, of which Business in the Community Ireland is an integral part, was formed in 2000. Its mission is to assist companies to develop corporate social responsibility programmes, including employer supported volunteering. It employs eight staff.

CONTACT: Clodagh Gorman, Business in the Community Ireland, 32 Lower O'Connell Street, Dublin 1,

Tel: 01 – 74 7232, Email: cgorman@bitc.ie

Volunteer Centres Fingal

Launched in 2001, this countywide service has two volunteer centres, one in Swords and one in Blanchardstown. It was initially funded under the Department of the Environment Centenary Awards Scheme and received matched funding from Fingal County Council, with whom executive control rests. Each centre has its own advisory group drawn from the local voluntary and community sector. Two full-time and two part-time staff are employed.

CONTACT: Ian Callanan, Volunteer Centres Fingal – Blanchardstown, Fingal County Council Public Library and Offices, Blanchardstown Town Centre, Dublin 15,

Tel: 01 890 5016, Email: blanch@vcf.ie

CONTACT: Cahir O'Byrne, Volunteer Centres Fingal – Swords, Mainscourt, 23 Main Street, Swords, Co Dublin,

Tel: 01 – 890 4377, Email: swords@vcf.ie

Volunteer Centres Network

This network had its inaugural meeting in 2001 and now meets at least twice a year. It provides a voice and forum for sharing best practice for volunteer centres, North and South.

Clondalkin Volunteer Bureau

The Clondalkin Volunteer Bureau is a company limited by guarantee. It is funded solely by the Clondalkin Partnership at present and employs one full-time worker. It started placing volunteers in Clondalkin in 2001.

CONTACT: Harold Schlok, Clondalkin Volunteer Bureau, Kilmahuddrick Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22,

Tel: 01 - 457 6055, Email: clondalkinvb@hotmail.com

Ballyfermot (volunteer centre in start-up phase)

Part of the URBAN programme in Ballyfermot, a volunteer bureau for the Ballyfermot area will share premises with the local Citizens Information Centre. It will be developed by two new staff over the coming months. The main focus of the centre will be participation by all, especially young people.

CONTACT: Clara Bartley, URBAN Ballyfermot, Community Civic Centre, Ballyfermot Road, Dublin 10,

Tel: 01 – 620 7156, Email: clara.bartley@urbanbl.ie

Drogheda (volunteer centre in start-up phase)

The Drogheda Community Forum, with the support of the Drogheda Partnership, is using PEACE 2 funding to set up a local volunteer centre over the coming months. One full-time worker is employed.

CONTACT: Tara Farrell, Drogheda Community Forum, Unit 8, Workspace, Mayoralty Street, Drogheda, Co Louth,

Tel: 041 – 984 5256, Email: dcforum@iol.ie

Volunteer Centres at feasibility stage

Communities around the country are considering setting up volunteer centres. Detailed feasibility studies have been undertaken by Cork and Bray/Wicklow. Expressions of interest have also been demonstrated by the Canal Communities in Dublin, Coolock, Dundalk, Donegal, Dun Laoghaire, Galway and Newbridge.39

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