TITHE AN OIREACHTAIS

An Comhchoiste um Ghnóthaí Ealaíon, Spóirt, Turasóireachta, Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta

An Séú Tuarascáil

Saorálaithe agus Saorálaíocht in Éirinn

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

Sixth Report

Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland

Eanáir 2005
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JOINT COMMITTEE ON ARTS, SPORT, TOURISM, COMMUNITY, RURAL AND GAELTACHT AFFAIRS

Report on 'Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland'

INTRODUCTION

The Special Olympics highlighted the role of the volunteer in Irish Society perhaps in a more meaningful way than either the White Paper or the "Tipping the Balance" Report. The Joint Committee were conscious of the perceived lack of progress in the field since those publications and felt the need to advance "economic" arguments for the support of volunteering given the perceived costs to the Exchequer previously demonstrated. I hope that this Report achieves this aim, without advocating any new statutory structures, and that it will lay the foundation for a more efficient, beneficial and socially enriching volunteering sector.

Cecilia Keaveney T.D.
Chairman
 January 2005.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF JOINT COMMITTEE

Many voluntary organisations participated in the preparation of the White Paper and the "Tipping the Balance" report – both of which were very positive about volunteering. However, many in the sector feel that nothing has changed and the contributors to the Joint Committee's hearings complained of low morale on the ground.

A clear strategy is needed on volunteering. For this, the formulation of agreed objectives and of clear targets, set in a time frame, is essential. Many elements are in place already, but many beneficial links are yet to be realised. It is beyond the scope of this report to supply such a strategy, but the following recommendations provide an outline.

I)   **Volunteering Policy**

(a) Research into volunteering in Ireland needs to be undertaken urgently as the latest survey data available refer to the 1990s. This work needs to be done on a regular basis, must be funded by the State and either be put out to tender or be incorporated into the CSO's data collection remit.

(b) The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in the mean time should launch a national campaign to promote volunteering and its positive effects, especially appealing to young people to come forward and demonstrating the potential benefits to business.

(c) Academic accreditation for long-term volunteers in social and paramedical work should be advanced.

(d) Given the importance of proper volunteer management for the attraction and retention of volunteers, the State should give financial incentives to organisations, which can show that they have the proper structures in place. Grant applications by voluntary organisations should contain a volunteering policy element – certain funding should be conditional on having proper volunteer management and training structures in place.

(e) The following actions should be taken in the education sector with the specific aim of increasing volunteering among young people:

- Transition Year should strongly promote projects which involve a core element of volunteering (input from the local Volunteering Centre would be important).

- The current review of the secondary schools' senior cycle must ensure that the excellent junior programme of CSPE [1] is carried on through to the Leaving Certificate.

- Volunteering Centres on the campuses of third level institutions would ensure the comprehensive exposure of young people to the voluntary sector.

(f) Suggestions for volunteer recognition schemes should be put forward by the voluntary organisations (maybe through a competition) and be acted upon and funded by the State as a way of rewarding volunteers and attracting new people.

(g) A national volunteering passport would provide a useful record of voluntary activity over the lifetime of a person which could be referred to for recognition and would be beneficial at job interviews etc.

(h) The establishment of a comprehensive vetting procedure for volunteers (particularly for those working with children and vulnerable adults) needs to be given priority and appropriate resources at Garda level must be made available.

II) Volunteering Infrastructure

(a) The existing volunteering infrastructure should be developed. Volunteering Ireland and existing Volunteering Centres/Bureaux should be supported and granted long-term funding, as an alternative to an additional layer of bureaucracy in the form of a new statutory body (as had been recommended by "Tipping the Balance").

(b) Voluntary organisations can only make proper use of a volunteering infrastructure if they have a proper volunteer management plan [2] in place. Without one, they would not be able to assess their labour needs and be able to deploy the skills made

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[1] It is called "Making a Difference" and is very strong on promoting social values in Ireland.
[2] The success of the Special Olympics' volunteering programme should act as a model for other volunteering organisations.

available through the Centres. By investing in the training of volunteer managers, the value of volunteering output will be increased, thus increasing the return on the State's investment in the volunteering sector.

(c) The existence of a functioning volunteering infrastructure is also essential for organisations such as Business in the Community. They provide a vital new impetus on the volunteering scene in Ireland and should be facilitated in every way possible.

III)   Funding Issues

(a) New sources of funding for volunteering should be explored:

- The Dormant Accounts Fund should be targeted primarily at funding voluntary organisations, subject to the Board's [3]dispersal criteria.

- The ring-fencing of some CAB funds which are now coming on stream should be investigated (particularly for projects related to communities affected by the abuse of drugs and by organised crime).

(b) Ad hoc and multi-agency funding make it difficult for organisations to plan ahead. All funding for voluntary organisations and volunteering should in future be channelled exclusively through the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. This would improve efficiency and transparency. Funding commitments should be entered into over a number of years. In this way the monitoring of State expenditure would also be facilitated.

(c) Grants for the in-service training of volunteers should be made available from the State and be ringfenced so that they cannot be used for other services within the organisation.

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[3] The Dormant Accounts Fund Disbursements Board was established on a statutory basis on 5th June 2002 and is under the aegis of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The overall objective of the Board is to ensure that dormant accounts funds are disbursed in a manner that optimises their effectiveness and assists the personal, educational and social development of persons who are economically, educationally or socially disadvantaged or persons with a disability.

Appendix 1

Report of DKM Economic Consultants

On

Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland

VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTEERING IN IRELAND

Report for

Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

November 2004

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Section 1   **Introduction**

In 2004, the Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (the Joint Committee) received oral or written submissions from 21 voluntary organisations.

The organisations presenting to the Joint Committee were a very heterogeneous group. They included long established social-service charities, sporting bodies, the Special Olympics, community organisations working on a parish level and overseas aid organisations. Not only is it to be expected that these organisations should put different emphases on their presentations, but differences of opinion and even rivalry would not be surprising, given the different backgrounds and areas of activity. Sometimes the similarity of activities can lead to direct competition for volunteers.

Two documents underpin the presentations and subsequent discussions during the hearings: The "*White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector*" published in 2000 and *"Tipping the Balance"*.[1]

In many cases, the issues raised by contributors mirror the topics covered by *"Tipping the Balance"*.

In this report, we analyse the results of international research on the economic and social implications of volunteering. This includes our own estimate of the replacement costs of the work done by volunteers in Ireland.

We also summarise the contributions made by the voluntary groups, which appeared before the Joint Committee, and present them under seven major headings.

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[1] National Committee on Volunteering (2002), Tipping the Balance

Section 2 **The Economic Benefits of Volunteering**

2.1   The Economics of Volunteering [2]

Economists tend to study mainly the private, profit-oriented sector and the public sector, paying less attention to the third sector, which is the voluntary, not-for profit sector of the economy. Thus there is research from the viewpoint of political science, sociology and social politics, while there are few theories from the economic perspective. This deficit on the economics of the third sector also affects our knowledge of the effects of volunteering.

Roy and Ziemek [3] summarised four macro economic theories of volunteering:

- Demand-side theories link the existence of voluntary organisations to demand for public goods that are not met by the State or the private sector.

- Supply-side theories explain the growth of agencies committed to supply public goods that are not delivered by other sectors. However, there may be a self-serving motivation behind this action, for example in the case of religious organisations, which hope to win adherents to their faith through their provision of services.

- Partnership theories argue against the competitive relationship between the State and the voluntary sector. The voluntary sector is not seen as an alternative to State provision of public goods, but the two may complement each other. Thus the State generates resources which are deployed in conjunction with the voluntary organisations' ability to respond to local needs.

- The social origin approach explains the growth of voluntary organisations in the context of the social, economic and political dynamics of a society. They state that vibrant voluntary organisations are a reflection of the strength of the middle class and a weakening of the old elites.

Volunteering clearly makes an important contribution to society:

- The act of volunteering is an expression of a commitment to the community, which is valuable to the State.

- The benefits of the services provided by volunteers may differ fundamentally from services offered by professionals, because the motivation to serve may be different. In many cases, a unique benefit is derived when the volunteer has more in common with the person being served than a professional might have (former sufferers of an illness,

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[2] Roy K. and Ziemek S. (2000), <u>On the Economics of Volunteering</u>, Center for Development Research, University of Bonn
[3] ibid, pp 12-13

family members who cared for a person with a specific illness in the past, age, race, economic background, etc.)

- Volunteers also expand the community support of the voluntary organsiation that is sponsoring them, by making their work more transparent. They also enable the organisation to deliver services to clients and communities in need.

However, since voluntary work is by definition mostly performed without any monetary compensation, its contribution to the national economy is very difficult to calculate.

The motivation behind the decision to volunteer has been summarised by three micro-economic models [4] as given in the following table:

Table 2.1: The Microeconomics of Volunteering

Model	*Motivation of Volunteer*
a) Public Good Model	To increase the supply of the public good
b) Private Consumption Model	"Altruism" or "warm glow" utility from giving
c) Impure Altruist Model	Synthesis of model a) and b)
d) Investment Model	Gain labour market experience, skills and attributes

Source: Roy and Ziemek, p.14

While all of the models described above may have some validity, the motivation behind volunteering may be a mixture of all three "pure" models described in the table. This is reflected in the submissions to the Joint Committee the responses to the "*Reaching Out*" [5] surveys, which were reproduced in "*Tipping the Balance*". The altruistic motive was strongest among respondents (belief in cause, wanted to help/be neighbourly), but 10 per cent linked their volunteering to knowing/liking persons involved, while 7 per cent stated that they enjoyed the activity.

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[4] ibid, pp 14
[5] Ruddle & Mulvihill (1999), <u>Reaching Out: Charitable Giving and Volunteering in the Republic of Ireland,</u> National College of Ireland

2.2 Methods of Measuring the Economic Value of Volunteering

National income statistics and labour force statistics are concerned with remuneration accumulated by "paid" work, thus unpaid volunteer work remains outside the remit of these information sources.

As with all national income statistics, there are two approaches to measuring the value of volunteering:

Output related method: this is based on calculating the value of the goods or services produced by volunteers. However, voluntary organisations often do not have data on their produced outputs available. Moreover, some of the goods and services produced may not have a market equivalent and therefore cannot be easily priced. This is particularly pertinent with regard to the creation of social capital.

An input- related method of valuing volunteering is thus more realisable as it is based on an estimation of the value of the labour used. The replacement cost method of estimating a value of volunteer labour takes the reported hours spent volunteering and multiplies them by the average hourly wage which the State would have had to pay its workers for the services provided by volunteers. Given the lack of statistics relating to the output of volunteers, this method has been most frequently used in economic studies of the economic contribution of volunteering.

There are of course a number of difficulties with this approach as well:

- Lack of information on volunteer hours (survey results are the only source available in Ireland, and there is a danger there could be an over-reporting of voluntary work)

- People may be less productive as volunteers than in their work place (the replacement cost of volunteering may thus be less than the earnings of an average worker).

Many volunteers, as mentioned above, also receive personal benefits ("utility") from volunteering, i.e. improved job prospects, increased social network. When imputing the value of voluntary service, these benefits should be subtracted from replacement costs. Apart from positive effects on future job prospects, the "feel-good" factor of volunteering would also have to be taken into account, thus reducing the imputed value further.

On the other hand, the work of volunteers enhances the community and brings with it many benefits which we will expand on in Section 3.

2.3   The Economic Value of Volunteering in Ireland

The economic benefit of the work done by volunteers in Ireland is very hard to pin down. Firstly, we do not really know how many volunteers there are in the country and how involved they are with respect to time input. Secondly, the social benefit – to which we will return in Section 3 – of volunteering also has monetary implications. However, in this study, we will concentrate on the evaluation of the time spent by volunteers.

The latest large-scale survey results on various aspects of volunteering date back to the late 1990s. Indeed, one of the recommendations of *"Tipping the Balance"* was:

> *"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 Household Surveys."* [6]

In order to derive an estimate of the imputed value of volunteers in Ireland, we need the following information:

1.   Number of volunteers

2.   Number of volunteering hours per volunteer

3.   Wage data as proxy for replacement cost of the volunteers' labour time.

2.3.1 Number of Volunteers in Ireland

There are no official statistics on the extent of volunteering in Ireland. We therefore depend on the results of surveys. The most recent of these surveys was conducted for the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) in 2002 [7]. They found that 17 per cent of all adults questioned were "taking a regular part in any type of unpaid voluntary activity or service outside the home or workplace". Applying this percentage to the adult population as measured by the Census 2002, gives us an estimated 475,000 volunteers.

It must be borne in mind that survey results are extremely sensitive to the type of question asked and in the case of volunteering, people might want to exaggerate their involvement if they feel that would make them look good in the eyes of the interviewer.

Below, we give the results as implied by the three *"Reaching Out"* studies and the NESF. [8]

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[6] Recommendation 19, p.110
[7] NESF Report 28 (2003), The Policy Implications of Social Capital, p.51
[8] N.B. The comparison between surveys is problematic, since they are based on different sets of assumptions and different questionnaires.

Table 2.2: Estimated Number of Volunteers in Ireland

	Volunteers as % of Adult Pop.	Adult Pop. '000	Volunteers
1992	38.9	2380	925,947
1994	35.1	2356	827,026
1997	33.3	2471	822,876
2002 [9]	(A) 17.1	2904	496,613
	(B) 21.7	2904	630,205

Source: Reaching out, 1993-1999, NESF Report No. 28 2002,
CSO Population and Migration Estimates, 2002 Census

The table shows that due to the declining proportion of the total population who claim to be involved in volunteering, the number of volunteers fell from an estimated 926,000 in 1992 to the lowest estimate of 496,000 (a decline of 46 per cent). If one takes the looser definition in the NESF report, the drop in volunteers is less pronounced (from 926,000 to 630,000) but still considerable at 32 per cent.

2.3.2 Number of Full Time Equivalence Volunteers in Ireland

In order to derive an estimate of the number of Full Time Equivalence (FTE) volunteers, we need to make an assumption regarding the number of hours per week that the average volunteer donates. According to the survey contained in Ruddle and Donoghue (1999), people volunteered for an average of five to twelve hours a months in 1997 (the equivalent of 1.2 to 2.8 hours per week). In the submissions summarised in Section 4 we will see that the number of hours available from each volunteer has fallen over recent years. However, no reliable new information as to the current average volunteering commitments emerged.

In the absence of any more up-to-date information, we will thus assume that the average number of hours volunteered in 2002 remained at the lower limit of 1.2 hours per week. This is a conservative estimate. [10] Applying this to the estimated number of volunteers gives us a FTE estimate, which we can then use to calculate the replacement costs that the State would face if it had to pay for the services provided by volunteers.

Given the difficulties of comparing the results of different surveys, we will concentrate on the 2002 NESF survey. It is also the latest available and thus provides us with the most up-to-date

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[9] The NESF report gives two percentages, depending on two different definitions of voluntary involvement: *(A) taking part in any type of unpaid voluntary activity or service outside the home or workplace; and (B) actively involved in any type of voluntary or community group in the last 12 months.*
[10] Roy and Ziemek for example used an average weekly volunteering input of 4 hours in their international study on the economics of volunteering.

snap shot of the situation. In addition, we can use the two definitions of volunteering as a high and low scenario when calculating the contribution of volunteering to the Irish economy.

Table 2.3: Calculating Number of FTE Volunteers

	Volunteers Number	FTE Volunteers	Hrs/wk
2002(A)	496,613	14,898	1.2
2002(B)	630,205	18,905	1.2

Source: NESF Report No. 28

The number of FTE volunteers in 2002 arrived at by this calculation lies somewhere between 15,000 and 19,000. This appears low when compared with the figure of 33,690 FTE volunteers in 1995 as calculated by Freda Donoghue [11]. On the other hand, a halving of the number of FTE volunteers over the seven years of the Celtic Tiger period, a time which most contributors to the Joint commission's hearings thought of as having greatly impacted on volunteering in Ireland, may not be unreasonable. In the absence of any more recent published data it is not possible to verify or dismiss the outcome of our calculations. We think that this underlines the issue that official data collection on the voluntary sector would be very important.

2.3.3 Imputed Value of Volunteering in Ireland

The imputed value of volunteering depends on the wage rate used. The minimum wage would give us a lower end estimate, while using the average industrial wage gives us an upper limit estimate. We are assuming that FTE workers work for 40 hours a week for 49 weeks a year. In the table below we present both scenarios for the replacement cost (RC).

Table 2.4: Replacement Costs (RC) of Volunteering in Ireland

	Volunteers FTE	Av. Industrial Wage €	High Scenario Implied RC of Volunteering €	Minimum Wage €	Low Scenario Implied RC of Volunteering €
2002(A)	14898	13.09	382,216,732	7	204,393,974
2002(B)	18905	13.09	485,035,268	7	259,377,149

Source: NESF Report 28, CSO Average Industrial Earnings

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[11] Freda Donoghue et al (1999), <u>Uncovering the Nonprofit Sector in Ireland-Its Value and Significance</u>, National College of Ireland, p.19

- Using the average industrial wage of €13.09, the value of volunteering in 2002 in terms of replacement costs was in the range of €382 million to €485 million.

- Using the minimum wage of €7, the implied value of volunteering in 2002 ranged from €204 million to €259 million.

It is interesting to note that Donoghue [12] stated that volunteers were worth €598 million to the Irish economy in 1995. This was calculated by applying an average wage to the hours put in by volunteers in a formal capacity, i.e. to an organisation. She remarked that a similar calculation for volunteers involved in informal volunteering would almost double their imputed economic value, which would bring it to about €1 billion. [13]

Our own range of the economic value of volunteering is summarised in the following table:

Table 2.5: Range of Volunteering Contribution to Irish Economy, 2002

Scenario	€
Low	204,393,974
High	485,035,268

Our low estimate of €204 million amounts to about half of the value of Donoghue's formal volunteering definition. Our high estimate is also about half of Donoghue's top estimate, in line with the decline in volunteers.

To put these figures into context, it is useful to mention that the DCRGA's expenditure on Community Affairs for 2005 will be around €133 million, and it will spend €63 million on Rural Affairs [14]. Together, these two items account for 96 per cent of the low scenario replacement costs of volunteering in Ireland (40 per cent of the high scenario). Thus, if volunteers would have to be paid, this expenditure would – at a minimum - have to be doubled (low scenario), just to pay for the wages of the replacements of the volunteers.

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[12] Donoghue (2002), cited above, p.63
[13] ibid, p. 75
[14] 2005 Estimates for Public Services and Summary Public Capital Programme

2.4   The Costs of a Volunteer

Following President George W. Bush's call to Americans to devote more time (two years of their lifetimes) to volunteer service [15], the American voluntary and community sector expressed doubts as to whether they could absorb any huge influx of new volunteers – much as they subscribed to the value and ethic of volunteering. The sector feared that it would not be able to provide the staff and resources necessary to train and supervise large numbers of additional voluntary workers.

Many contributions to the hearings of the Joint Committee (see Section 4) also emphasised that volunteering was not free. Below, we summarise a report that attempted to estimate the cost of a volunteer for the US.[16] They interviewed 21 volunteer managers or executives from organisations with high quality volunteer programmes around the United States. Due to this small sample size, the results cannot be seen as representative, but they still give a good indication of the effort involved in training and managing volunteers.

According to the Grantmaker Forum:

- Organisations found that the modern volunteer asked not "what can I do for you?", but "what can you do for me?" and sought short-terms assignments with a high level of personal reward. This leads to a higher level of time and investment into new volunteers.

- However, just over half of the groups they spoke to had dedicated volunteer budgets, and even among those, most of the real costs were effectively invisible.

- The diversity of volunteer roles and requirements contributes to the difficulty of calculating the cost of the average volunteer: a museum guide requires more training and scheduling than a person packing envelopes; a youth leader needs closer supervision and more support than somebody cutting the grass in a community sports facility.

Estimates of the costs of a volunteer ranged from $300 per year per volunteer for the necessary infrastructure for a volunteer programme to $1000 for the cost of an effective monitoring match [17]. This reflects the difficulties outlined above. In conclusion, the Grantmaker Forum stated that:

> "*The support, supervision and attention that volunteers require, not to mention the logistical aspects of scheduling volunteer labour, are significant burdens to an organisation and cannot be established casually as an "add-on" service. New*

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[15] State of the Union address, January 2002
[16] The Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service (2003): The Cost of a Volunteer, www.gfcns.org
[17] ibid, p.4

organisations and organisations interested in adding a volunteer component to existing programmes should have access to technical assistance and materials that draw on what strong voluntary organisations have learnt as they built their programmes." [18]

The report dealt with organisations, which had a high quality volunteer programme in place. However, at the moment, many Irish organisations would not yet fit this description. If we take the lower cost estimate of $300 (€230) per year and apply it to the estimated number of FTE volunteers in Ireland, we get a cost estimate of €3.45 million to €4.37 million (low and high scenarios respectively) which has to be borne by the organisations using volunteers.

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[18] ibid, p.11

Section 3   **Social Impact of Volunteering in Ireland**

The social impact of volunteering manifests itself in two ways:

- Firstly the positive effect of volunteering on those who are helped and the community at large, and

- Secondly, the positive effects of voluntary activity on the volunteer itself.

Below, we present the results of a brief literature review on both topics.

3.1   The Concept of Social Capital

Resources available to communities include physical capital (roads, public transport, technology) and human capital (investments in skills and technological knowledge).

According to the NESF [19], social capital is an additional resource. While human capital is vested in the individual, social capital is vested in the community or in groups of individuals. It refers to the social ties, shared norms and relationships among people and communities. It acts like social glue or a lubricating agent in association with the other resources.

Definitions of social capital are wide-ranging:

> *"The concept of social capital sounds abstract, but it couldn't be simpler, do you trust people? How many clubs, societies or social groups are you a member of? If your child gets sick do you have support to call on? Basically how much social contact do you have in your life?"* [20]

Putman [21] adopted a narrower definition and emphasised the role of social networks and associated norms of behaviour (e.g. propensity to co-operate, volunteer or reciprocate in social networks of various types).

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[19] NESF (2003): The Policy Implications of Social Capital, p.21
[20] Cork County Development Board, http://www.cdbcorkco.ie/aboutus(march02)_seminar.htm
[21] Robert Putman (2000), Bowling Alone, Touchstone, New York

The principal dimensions of social capital are:

- Community engagement and volunteering;

- Community efficacy;

- Political and civic participation;

- Informal social support networks/sociability; and

- Norms of trust and reciprocity. [22]

Volunteering is thus one of the cornerstones of social capital and a civil society.

However, as we have seen above, faith-based communities and many of the large-scale national voluntary, sporting and cultural organisations are undergoing rapid change. Some of the traditional ties and forms of belonging are weakening, while new forms of social engagement are emerging [23]. A growing sense of disconnection and alienation, particularly among the young is frequently reported. In addition, the pressures of modern life with its longer working hours, longer commutes and increasing individualisation are putting pressure on volunteering, as we will hear over and over again from the submissions to the Joint Committee (Section 4).

3.2   The Impact of Social Capital

Measuring the impact of social capital has proven to be a very difficult task, given that it is a complex concept. The following difficulties arise in empirical work [24]:

- Causal mechanisms are difficult to prove because there are many factors at work.

- The level of aggregation is important and can range from the micro level of interpersonal relationships to neighbourhoods to the macro level of society and State.

- Accounting for all types of social connections is difficult, because even informal social networks form an important input into the formation of Social Capital.

However, recent years have seen great interest in this type of research, as summarised by the NESF Report 28. Below we reproduce the main results listed in their report, which itself drew from many sources.

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[22] NESF (2003), p. 49
[23] As evidenced by the corporate sector through Business in the Community.
[24] ibid, p. 37f

Poverty and Social Exclusion

There appears to be a positive relationship between social capital and equality. One possible explanation for this is that greater equality of condition and opportunity facilitate co-operation through a lowering of barriers and greater contact and trust between different social groups. However, the reverse may also be true and the *direction* of causation needs to be explored further.

Quality of Governance and Civic Engagement

People who know each other through residents' associations, parent-teacher meetings, school runs, sporting organisations and other forms of social contact are more likely to take an interest in their local communities and society more generally.
Such citizens:

- Tend to be more civic-minded and co-operative and;

- Act as sophisticated and vigilant consumers of politics.

As a result of this, public officials reflect the same facilitating skills as other citizens in a high trust environment.

Personal Well-Being, Health and Life Satisfaction

There is a link between the incidence of suicide and the degree to which individuals have a sense of belonging to the community. Rates of suicide have generally increased in periods of rapid social change when the fabric of society was under strain. Perversely, rates have tended to fall during periods of war or revolution – possibly suggesting the impact of national crises on community solidarity and purposeful collective action.

A person's social contacts, whether or not they trust most of his/her neighbours, whether or not he/she feel that he/she lives in an efficacious neighbourhood, and his/her perceptions of the services in the local area, all play a significant role in their health and life satisfaction. The consistency of these findings across a range of measures (including general health, satisfaction with health, limiting long-term illness, general mental health and quality of life) highlights the potential importance of local social capital in health.

Job Search

The success rates in job searches by unemployed persons has also been linked to their level of connection to friends, neighbours and social networks, particularly contacts across geographical areas and social class boundaries.

Economic Performance

In the pressure to compete and search out new ideas and new talent, networks based on trust and sharing of information externally can also assume competitive importance.

Regional industrial systems based on local learning networks are potentially more flexible and dynamic than those whose learning is confined to individual firms. A survey of manufacturing

firms in Canada found that diverse forms of social capital in companies contribute more than any other explanatory variable to the likelihood of radical innovation.

Standards Achieved in School/Adult Literacy

Learning can be supported by Social Capital through the existence of many types of supportive relations among adults who are parents of the children in the same school. The types of support relate to homework, out-of-school activities, and direct parental involvement in school activities and support for families and children in difficulty.

Crime and Social Deviance

Young men in poor, urban areas are likely to be more disconnected from social networks and norms at a crucial transition stage in life. Anti-social behaviour is frequently at its greatest among young males who have weaker bonds with parents and families and have not yet formed new bonds to a family, workplace or neighbourhood of their own.

A neighbourhood undergoing change and fast residence turnover may be more prone to "tipping" – where some families and groups move out leading to a downward spiral in social capital. The role of leadership and spontaneous self-organisation can be important in reversing a trend such as this.

3.3   Are Volunteers Happier?

We have seen above (Section 2.1) that volunteers are either intrinsically (enjoying helping others) or extrinsically (hoping to obtain human capital and improve their social network) motivated. For most people, the benefits of volunteering will be a combination of the aforementioned factors.

Empirical studies have shown a positive statistical relationship between volunteering and life satisfaction. In a recent paper on the relationship between volunteering and life satisfaction, Meier and Stutzer [25] used the unique opportunity afforded by the fall of the Berlin Wall to compare data from the German Socio-Economic Panel for the period 1985 and 1999. Shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but before German reunion, the first set of data was collected in East Germany, where volunteering was widespread. Reunion brought with it the closure of many companies (with their associated clubs for sport and diverse cultural activities). People randomly lost their opportunities for volunteering. Those who continued to volunteer formed the control group.

Meier and Stutzer found:

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[25] Meier S. and Stutzer A. (2004), Is Volunteering Rewarding in Itself?, Working Paper No. 180, Institute for Empirical Research in Economics, University of Zurich

- After German reunion, average life satisfaction in East Germany decreased. Persons who did not change their volunteering status (i.e. those who never volunteered and those who volunteered before and after reunion) experienced very similar declines in their levels of life satisfaction.

- However, people who had to drop their volunteering work, reported the largest drop in life satisfaction.

- People who put more emphasis on extrinsic goals (rather than intrinsic goals) are less satisfied with life.

- Volunteers on average rate intrinsic goals as more important than extrinsic goals.

- People who are more extrinsically oriented benefit less from volunteering than people who consider intrinsic goals more important.

Of course, causation could also run in the opposite direction: happier people might be more willing to help others through volunteering. Also, the act of volunteering may be intrinsically more rewarding, the better off one is in terms of happiness. However, these two directions are not mutually contradictory.

The results reported by Meier and Stutzer are based on an extensive panel data set, the like of which is not available to Irish researchers. However, it stands to reason that volunteers everywhere derive positive feedback from their efforts and that this in turn has a positive effect on their well-being and health, as we have seen above.

Against that, some of the contributions to the hearings held by the Joint Committee mentioned that volunteers also suffered from rivalry and tension within organisations and endured the ill-effects of burn-out from being over-stretched and ill-supported.

Section 4 **Review and Summary of Written and Oral Evidence Received by the Joint Committee**

In this section, we approach the issues raised by witnesses to the Joint Committee in order of importance, as evidenced by the number of times each issue was brought up during oral hearings and/or in written submissions. We endeavour to summarise the main points made by contributors under each issue, without, however, giving any background information on each group.

4.1   Implementation of National Policy of Volunteering

The development of a national policy of volunteering is the first core recommendation of *"Tipping the Balance"*.

> "*We recommend that a national policy on volunteering be developed.*" [26]

The components of such a policy are given as:

> "*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 volunteering, and*
>
> - *The image of volunteering.*" [27]

These issues and the overriding issue of the implementation of a national policy on volunteering arose in almost all submissions and presentations. Below, we summarise the main points:

ALONE asked for incentives to get communities involved in becoming stakeholders in the provision of housing for the elderly.

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[26] Page 105
[27] Recommendation 4, page 107

Business in the Community thought that a national volunteering policy and the infrastructure to support volunteers were more important than taxation incentives because the former ensured effectiveness and good practice in volunteering. The screening and managing of volunteers was of particular importance, given the risk averse nature of companies.

The need for screening of volunteers was also stressed by the **Dublin Rape Crisis Centre**. They saw Garda clearance of volunteers as essential. This task should not be left to organisations.

GOAL contended that the absence of a structure of job protection for volunteers who go abroad has led to difficulties in the recruiting of high calibre personnel.

The Irish Red Cross felt that a more enlightened approach to volunteering was needed, including explicit volunteer rights and the mentoring of new members. They suggested inter-agency training in leadership, child protection principles and volunteer management. In addition, and specifically in the case of first aid organisations, they would like more support from state agencies, lamenting the fact that there is no formal state programme for professional counselling of volunteers who have witnessed death and mutilation in ambulance duties.

The Irish Rugby Football Union made the case that the necessary codification and regulation of sports – e.g. the code of ethics for working with young people – has not been matched by programmes designed to strengthen volunteer structures. This combines to make it difficult to recruit adult volunteers who are willing to work in underage sports. We need to make it easier for people to volunteer. They call on national governing bodies, the Irish Sports Council, the Federation of Irish Sports and government departments to put programmes in place which would help to build volunteer capacity and capability.

Muintir na Tíre raised the fundamental issue of the confusion between the role of the state and the community which would have to be addressed at a policy level: the FAS Community Employment scheme paid people to do jobs previously done by volunteers. After the withdrawal of funding for many of these schemes, there is a reluctance to do that work for free. We need a debate about who is responsible for what in the social sphere.

The National Youth Council of Ireland felt that the Government's primary role was to create the right conditions for volunteering. It should support a national information and promotional campaign to highlight and promote volunteering, particularly among young people. To this end, a specific budget for recruitment, retention, recognition and management of volunteers should be put in place. Many voluntary organisations receive funding to provide a service, but not for supporting or training of volunteers.

The Order of Malta Ambulance Corps also stressed the need for greater public awareness of volunteerism and for improved methods for capturing those who want to volunteer. The provision of an official background checking system for youth workers is required. They brought up a different aspect of the State vs voluntary debate raised by Muintir na Tíre: in some local authorities, they experience competition from health board ambulances for lucrative

contracts like services to open air concerts or sporting events. This needs to be resolved, as the Order depends on the income from these contracts for its charitable works.

The Tralee Volunteer Bureau submitted that the core recommendations from *"Tipping the Balance"* (national volunteering policy and volunteer centre) needed to be acted upon. Methods of implementing the recommendations need to be found.

Volunteer Centres Ireland wanted to see the formalisation of relationships between themselves and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA) to discuss volunteer policy and infrastructure issues in an official setting. They saw less of a problem with the recruitment of volunteers, but rather with their retention.

Volunteering Ireland also stressed the importance of the implementation of a national policy on volunteering, particularly with respect to volunteer screening, vetting and recognition. The urgent expansion of the current central vetting unit to include police checks on volunteers was demanded. The development of a national policy on volunteering which would assist in the development of standards for volunteering agencies in the recruitment and selection of volunteers was called for.

They also suggested tax relief for volunteers (citizen credits) and moves to encourage employer-supported volunteering.

4.2   Development of Volunteering Infrastructure in Ireland

The development of a volunteering infrastructure was one of the issues most frequently raised during the hearings. It was one of the two core recommendations of *"Tipping the Balance"*:

> *"That a volunteering support and development infrastructure be established and funded on a nation wide basis"*[28]

After considering a number of different options, the report came out in favour of a statutory body:

> *"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"*[29]

The groups appearing before the Joint Committee had diverging views on the form this volunteering infrastructure should take, but in general agreed that there was a need for it, often citing the *"Tipping the Balance"* report.

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is one of the organisations who referred to Volunteer Centres (VC) from a client's perspective. They found that VCs worked well for getting

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[28] p110
[29] p119

volunteers for support facilities, but not so well in getting care activity volunteers. More centres (in every county) as suggested by other groups would not alleviate the problem of competition for scarce volunteers among the organisations.

Business in the Community Ireland lamented the absence of a volunteering infrastructure, which expressed itself as poorly articulated demand from the voluntary community for skills offered by the corporate sector, leading to an under-utilisation of this valuable source of expertise. In an ideal world, independent local volunteer centres or bureaux with specialist knowledge of local community needs would act as a broker between the needs and the skills available. They drew attention to the fact that there was a budding infrastructure in place with Volunteer Centres in Ireland, which needed to be developed.

The cost of developing that infrastructure would be small when compared to the huge benefits which would be enjoyed by communities throughout Ireland. Some companies, like Bank of Ireland in Cabinteely, which has an extensive volunteer programme, are not able to engage in as many community projects as they would like. On the other hand, Tallaght Homeless Advice Unit benefited from the expertise of the corporate sector through the local volunteer bureau. The existence of a national centre means they can draw on a central resource.

Muintir na Tíre contended that the White Paper and *"Tipping the Balance"* only referred to a section of the voluntary sector, being aimed at marginalised groups specified in the National Anti Poverty Strategy, thus ignoring civic, cultural and environmental organisations, including Muintir na Tíre, who have been active on the ground for more than fifty years. They recommend therefore that action on infrastructure should be addressed for the entire not-for-profit sector. A task force should be set up to design a process for action on this infrastructure.

The National Youth Council of Ireland was in favour of a National Centre for Volunteering, which should be supported by government, but should remain rooted in the voluntary and community sector. They did not agree with *"Tipping the Balance"*, where a statutory body was favoured.

Tralee Volunteer Bureau (TVB) covers Tralee and its surroundings and felt strongly that the development and centralised funding of a local volunteering infrastructure would offer a valuable service to non-profit organisations in the county and enable them to avail of economies of scale with respect to printing and promotional activities. Currently, the funding of VCs was ad hoc. A centralised source of funding dedicated to supporting both existing and emerging VCs was essential.

The current volunteering infrastructure needed to be examined at a national level by the Joint Committee and the DRGA.

TVB referred to the recommendations in *"Tipping the Balance"* and pointed out that in National Volunteer Centres Ireland (VCI) the foundations for a national infrastructure were already in place. This would be vital for the promotion of volunteering in their local areas, by linking volunteers to volunteering opportunities. However, the creation of a National Centre remained a central objective for the development and implementation of volunteering policies at a national level.

Volunteer Centres Ireland (VCI) was formed as part of an initiative of Volunteering Ireland. A volunteer centre acts as a local broker for volunteers, bringing together local voluntary organisations and people willing to give their time freely. They complained about the ad hoc nature of present government funding and the need for centralised support for a volunteering infrastructure, which should be done in consultation with DCRGA, in line with recommendations in *"Tipping the Balance".* The development of a network of local volunteer centres was one of the central recommendations of that report. VCI urged that the existing infrastructure be formally recognised and supported strategically through a more cohesive approach to funding.

Volunteering Ireland sees itself as a national resource for volunteering in Ireland and proposed that, in addition to the existing local volunteer centres around the country, every county should have a volunteer centre or bureau. This was in line with *"Tipping the Balance"* where between 25 and 37 local bureaux were recommended, with an emphasis on areas, which are poorly represented with regard to voluntary activity.

However, Volunteering Ireland contented that the existing infrastructure was drastically under-funded and under-resourced (two centres had to close recently, due to under-funding).

The Wheel spoke on behalf of the voluntary and community sector, and emphasised the fact that two and four years after the publication of *"Tipping the Balance"* and the White Paper respectively, an enabling framework for the sector still has not been established. The speaker dealt with three arguments often put up against the implementation of the recommendations arising from *"Tipping the Balance":*

- "*The State should not interfere*" argument: while the voluntary sector, like any sector of the private economy does not want to be controlled by the State, the State still has a very prominent role to play in promoting and facilitating voluntary activity – just as it does for business and enterprise.

- "*Funding it already*" argument: here the difference between the community and voluntary sector and volunteering is important. Most of this funding goes on providing services and works, and because of under-funding of the sector, very little money is assigned for the purposes of attracting, recruiting, managing and maintaining volunteers.

- "*Forthcoming charities regulation*" argument: this proposed reform would have very little impact on volunteers except those who are members of boards/management committees.

A National Centre for Volunteering, acting as a central resource for voluntary activity, together with local volunteer bureaux would be a cost-effective solution. If there was reluctance to opt for a statutory body, the government should enter into a dialogue with the community and voluntary sector with the view to finding another form. The sector was more concerned with getting a National Centre than with the form it is to take.

The structures, which were already in place (Volunteering Ireland), could evolve into a National Centre for Volunteering.

4.3   Recognition of Volunteers

The recognition of volunteers should form one of the central planks of a volunteer policy both at the organisation and national levels. It featured highly on the score board of the voluntary groups' agenda when making presentations to the Joint Committee. Recognition was mentioned together with the need to treat volunteers properly in order to retain them.

The academic accreditation of work done by volunteers was often referred to together with recognition.

The recognition of volunteers – whether formal or informal – was dealt with in chapter 7 of *"Tipping the Balance"*[30]. In its recommendations, the report stated:

> *"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."* [31]

They went on to recommend:

> *"…The development of a non-competitive national recognition system open to volunteers working in all sectors"*. [32]

All the contributors to the Joint Committee's hearings who commented on this topic, echoed the sentiments expressed in the *"Tipping the Balance"* report, but many referred also to the need for recognition of contributions within the organisation also, as can be seen below.

Aware suggested that devolving power and control within the organisation to volunteers was an important indicator of the appreciation of their role. Marking the years of service in the organisation was seen as important. Organising events, which promote and enhance the concept of volunteering was felt to be a most important and appreciated form of recognition.

The Glencree Centre for Reconciliation points out that a uniform system of recognising the work of all volunteers is needed in Ireland. In particular, they stress the importance of an accreditation system to recognise the practical/applied work that long-term volunteers are contributing.

The **Irish Red Cross** referred to plans for State accredited training programmes in the casualty area, which would allow volunteers in this sector to train until they gained entry level qualifications for full-time emergency services.

The Irish Rugby Football Union felt that an honours system might be a useful way of recognising volunteer input.

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[30] Pages 64 to 66
[31] Recommendation 36, page 114
[32] Recommendation 37, page 115

Muintir na Tíre thought that a Beacon type award (set up in the UK in 2003), which is an annual Nobel-prize type event for philanthropy, should be established here, too. The winner in the UK gets a prize of £20,000 to donate to a charity.

The National Youth Council of Ireland had a number of ideas in relation to volunteer recognition, some of them mirroring the proposals in *"Tipping the Balance"*. They suggested:

- Time off in Lieu: one day off work for every person who spends a week of their personal holiday time volunteering

- Volunteering portfolio: booklet into which the type of volunteering and the time spent doing it is entered. This can then be used when applying for a job.

They made the general point that recognition from the State through its support of volunteering is more important than certificates, since that would make volunteering something to be proud of.

As one of the long-established organisations, the **Society of St. Vincent de Paul** remarked on the fact that in the past, their volunteers felt no need for formal recognition, because the gospel was their motivation. However, this has changed and they felt that the organisation would need to do more in this area in order to recruit and retain volunteers in the future.

Internal recognition of volunteers was part of the volunteer policy for **Special Olympics Ireland**. They recognised the contribution of volunteers with certificates and newsletters and encouraged employers to do something similar. Of course, the volunteers of the Special Olympics as a group had a high media profile and thus recognition nation-wide – something that most other volunteers do not achieve (nor in most cases strive to). This was mentioned by the representative of Muintir na Tíre – he said it caused some resentment among longstanding community workers, as one commented "one would think volunteering was recently invented".

4.4   Costs of Volunteering

While volunteers, by definition, give of their time free of charge, there are considerable costs associated with recruiting, training and retaining voluntary workers. As some organisations before the Joint Committee put it: volunteering may be a cost-effective way of delivering services, but it is not cost free. Below, we summarise the costs of volunteering as submitted by the attendant organisations during the hearings. [33]

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland stated that its volunteers, many of whom are former carers, often resisted training because they had cared for a family member before. The Society was trying to ensure that more training was provided, but due to limited funding, most of the money made available went on core services. Any increase in funding from State bodies – such

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[33] Compare Section 2.4 where we summarise international research on the topic.

as in their case from the Department of Health and Children, led to increased demands for accountability and added to the burden of bureaucracy that the organisation had to fund.

This sentiment was echoed by **Aware** who hope that in the future, more funding would be dedicated to training.

The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre found that its services would be needed in secondary schools and colleges, but due to resource restrictions it was not possible to provide the elaborate training necessary for volunteers, and therefore the opportunity could not be taken up.

GOAL lamented the fact that many of its volunteers were poached by other, bigger organisations, and that GOAL was seen as providing great training at great expense for other organisations, because they could not ultimately compete on the wage front with organisations like the UN.

Muintir na Tíre mentioned that recent years have brought a massive increase in bureaucracy, even with the simplest tasks like getting a monitored alarm for an elderly person. This leads to burnout among volunteers and ultimately a drop-off in the numbers volunteering. The complexity of tasks has also increased, as instanced by rising insurance costs.

The National Youth Council of Ireland stressed that their 40,000 volunteers do not necessarily provide work that is free to the organisation, because much expense is incurred in recruiting and retaining them.

For the **Order of Malta Ambulance Corps** training was particularly important: the typical lead-in period for new volunteers was 2 to 3 months of training, before they could go into the field. This represented a large investment on the part of the Order, making it all the more important to retain trained volunteers.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul stated that for them, compliance with health and safety regulations and child protection law meant a huge cost burden. They have resorted to employing an accountant and a HR consultant to ensure compliance. It has proved difficult for some older members to accept this need, which has lead to some tension. In addition, the problems encountered in today's society were more complex than at the time of the Society's foundation, leading to increasing need for training of its members.

Special Olympics Ireland maintained that volunteers needed to be managed to perform well. This started at the time of application with checking of backgrounds. Devising training schedules, rostering and clearly defined roles for volunteers, as well as matching talents and skills to tasks are essential – but also time consuming and expensive. Their success can be gauged by the fact that 7,000 of the original 30,000 volunteers have remained with the organisation. These will have to be trained for the tasks ahead, job descriptions need to be compiled, etc. as above. One knock-on effect of the Special Olympics has been the inundation of local clubs with respect to Sports for All – as a result, more funds are needed to support them.

Victim Support made the case that they had a comprehensive volunteer document and viewed training as crucial. The need for volunteers was expanding as we experience more violent crimes. Proper supervision and the assessing of a volunteer's potential were essential. This had to be fitted in with the organisation's need. The organisation had a duty of care to advise people if they were not suitable for a role.

4.5 Difficulties in Recruiting/Retaining Volunteers

We have already alluded to the importance of recruiting and training volunteers. The difficulties in recruiting and retaining volunteers were a recurring theme arising from the contributions heard by the Joint Committee.

Most organisations were united in their plight: greying of volunteers, difficulties in getting people to commit, volunteer burn-out etc, but there were some dissenting voices which stated that they found lots of young people who were willing to help out. Below we summarise the main points made by the contributors.

ALONE spoke of a new challenge that arose in recent years: they found it difficult to incorporate immigrant volunteers. They also mentioned the other side of that coin, which they felt was just ahead of us, namely the need to work with elderly people from different ethnic backgrounds. The changing times required also an increased vigilance with respect to vetting of volunteers. As a trust, they were unable to implement changes easily. More transparency within the organisation would help in the retention of younger volunteers, because some of their suggestions could be taken on board. They called for a re-examination of the legislation on trusts in this context.

The **Alzheimer Society of Ireland** stated that the number of volunteers in their organisation was down from 400 to 500 a few years ago to 250 now. They found it easier to recruit volunteers for direct contact activities than for the management of local activities. Their volunteers went through cycles: many were former carers who would give back some years of service and then retire. It was difficult to find new volunteers, because of competition from other organisations, which have a "sexier" image.

For **Aware**, maintaining volunteer commitment was a major concern. Due to the transient nature of contract work, volunteers may have to move away after expensive training and induction, which was frustrating for the organisation.

Feis Ceol sought volunteers for their skills in special areas rather than being approached by volunteers. They were, however, finding it challenging to attract volunteers from the younger age group.

The **Glencree Centre for Reconciliation** reported problems with obtaining visas for volunteers coming from overseas.

GOAL stated that there was a fall-off in Irish volunteers: while in the past, 90 to 100 per cent of volunteers sent abroad were Irish, at present the proportion was closer to 40 per cent. They attributed that fall to a combination of the Celtic Tiger and the fact that volunteers in the field were not looked after well enough – due to a lack of funding and lack of security on the ground in what are increasingly violent and dangerous environments in the Third World.

They proposed a gap year (between Leaving Certificate and work or university), during which young people could be brought to the Third World for a short period. There they would not work as volunteers (since they would not yet have the skills required), but be exposed to what is happening there. This would lead to a more concerned society back home and would make people more willing to volunteer later on in life.

The **Irish Red Cross** stated that Ireland had become cash rich but time poor. Lack of time was the key. For adults, work pressures, increased commuting times and concerns about working with young people were inhibiting factors. For teenagers, the points race, part-time job pressures, peer pressures (it is not cool to volunteer) and the counter attractions of DVDs and drink were big influences.

Internal personality clashes and infighting also gave volunteering a bad name (Brendan Behan famously spoke of the "First item on the agenda is 'The split'"). A more enlightened approach to individual volunteers was needed.

The Irish Rugby Football Union also reported a fall-off in voluntary input, leading to a missing generation of voluntary administrators. The reasons were twofold:

- Society: longer hours of work, fewer holidays and public holidays than in Europe, increased commuting times and increased expense of housing and education

- The cost of running clubs has also increased, due to insurance costs and litigation risks. Traditional fund-raisers like bars, functions and dances were becoming less attractive leading to greater pressures on the membership and volunteers, resulting in burnout. The move to suburban fitness clubs and gyms was often at the expense of organised sports like rugby.

Muintir na Tíre commented that the age profile of volunteers was increasing and that this kept younger volunteers out. They were also affected by longer commuting times. However, the work in local communities of today requires a changed skills profile from the volunteers.

The **National Youth Council of Ireland** contradicted some of the other organisations in that they found that despite the greying image of volunteering there were many young people involved. However, they needed to be given a sense of ownership in the organisation, not just to be asked to collect money. They stressed that volunteers needed a positive experience as soon as they joined, otherwise they will soon leave. In this age of time poverty, new ways of organising volunteering were needed: family and work life needed to be incorporated. The Council stressed the importance of promoting volunteering to young people, because young volunteers tend to return after a break for raising children. A gap year for young people during which they are encouraged to volunteer is also recommended. This is practised in other European countries.

The Council did not believe that the number of volunteers was falling, rather that people were volunteering in different ways: e.g. virtual volunteering, where an accountant would do the books for a group without ever setting foot on their premises.

The **Order of Malta Ambulance Corps** reported that with them, the average time of volunteering was 6.5 years, which is long by comparison, reflecting the high training input each volunteer receives. However, their volunteers are overstretched because of greater demand for their services due to statutory requirements. They attribute the reduction in the number of volunteers to lifestyle changes, commuting demands, migration away from home. They noted that existing volunteers also have less time to give due to family demands.

The **Society of St Vincent de Paul** also reported a reduction in volunteers (from 11,000 in the 1970s to 8,000 today). In the past, volunteers joined the Society for life, this is no longer an option. The VdP now ask people for a few hours of expertise. The volunteer age profile is seen as being in the 50s. However, early retirement provides recruits, which have useful experience.

For **Special Olympics Ireland** the lessons learnt include: organisations must be clear in what they expect from a volunteer and be honest about the commitment asked for. Most of the initial recruits had never been asked to volunteer which brings up the important issue of communications for all organisations.

Victim Support told of the increasing need for volunteers as times are getting more violent on the one hand and of the increasing difficulty in recruiting volunteers on the other hand. The reasons for this were: less time, longer working hours, longer commutes and the tendency for women to return to work when the children are reared. Many people also took up a new job after retiring. In general, they felt there was less inclination to become involved in the local community.

Volunteering Ireland (VI) told the Joint Committee that their outreach programme and web site projects were successful in reaching young people: 48 per cent of volunteers who used their services were aged between 20 and 29 years. VI believed they could replicate this performance throughout Ireland.

4.6 Problems with Resources/Funding

Submissions frequently referred to the funding of voluntary organisations and volunteer activities. Some of the points raised have also been incorporated in earlier sections:

- Public funding leads to increased bureaucratic burden;

- Problems with training due to funding restrictions;

- Funding was ad hoc and short term and thus unpredictable.

ALONE brought up the issue of the distribution of its resources, much of which was tied up in housing. They contended that this should be the State's responsibility.

9th Donegal Muff Scout Group talked about the funding of voluntary organisations and the funds available for volunteers at ground level. The constant need for fund raising in order to keep activities going in a disadvantaged area led to exhaustion on the part of volunteers. They stated that money sent to headquarters was of little use at local level.

GOAL maintained that the bilateral programme currently in place for delivering aid to the Third World caused problems because it dealt with corrupt governments. While other governments have supported their main overseas aid organisations, GOAL have not received any State funding in 27 years.

The Irish Red Cross looked for VAT exemptions to be extended to organisations purchasing vehicles and equipment for the community sector.

The Order of Malta Ambulance Corps was asking for increased State support, in particular in relation to the increased costs of insurance, equipment, premises and ambulances. A reduction in VAT on medical equipment and ambulances would also be very important to them. They stressed that this was in place in Northern Ireland, and also pointed out that life saving equipment on fishing vessels was zero-rated.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul reported that they were not able to move people on from their hostels because local authority accommodation was unavailable. In addition, they wanted relief in administration and VAT payments.

The Volunteer Centres Ireland (VCI) complained that at present, Government funding was ad hoc and on an annual basis, contrary to Government policy and the White Paper. There was an urgent need for a centralised source of funding to support and consolidate the existing volunteer centres, in consolidation with DCRGA. The existing local development boards did not have a fund for volunteering, while the DCRGA already had a central budget for volunteering, as they supported TVB and VI. Would it be possible to widen this budget to encompass other centres and new applicant centres?

Volunteering Ireland asked for help in getting recognition for value and support of volunteering through financial commitment.

4.7   Social and Economic Benefits of Volunteering

Alone mentioned that its volunteers benefited from the wisdom and experience of its elderly clients.

Business in the Community stated that the companies who participated in their schemes gained through better team development, improved staff interaction, improved internal communications, and staff development. In addition, companies with social commitments reported a positive impact on graduate recruitment.

The National Youth Council of Ireland felt that volunteering meant ordinary people doing extraordinary things and making extraordinary contributions. Volunteering should be viewed as a vital part of society, rather than merely in terms of value of services or activities provided. Young people involved in volunteering get the opportunity to develop social skills, learn to work in a team and gain knowledge and experience not provided by the educational system. Many European countries used a gap year between secondary and third level education for young people to get involved in volunteering. Early involvement often meant that people returned to volunteering after they had raised their children.

The **Tralee Volunteer Bureau** told the Joint Committee that the development of volunteering leads to more effective and equitable communities.

The Wheel contended that the old ties that bound society were slipping and needed to be rewoven. Volunteers were at the forefront of this vital work and needed structured development and support. Volunteering delivered dividends on social capital. Social capital delivered benefits across society, volunteering was the catalyst.

Appendix 2

Membership of the Joint Committee on

Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs

LIST OF MEMBERS

<u>Deputies:</u>

James Breen (Ind)
Michael Collins (Ind)
Jimmy Deenihan (FG)
Jim Glennon (FF) {Vice-Chairman}
Cecilia Keaveney (FF) {Chairman}
Peter Kelly (FF)
Dinny McGinley (FG)
Fiona O'Malley (PD)
Brian O'Shea (Lab)
Jack Wall (Lab)
G.V. Wright (FF)

<u>Senators:</u>

Brendan Daly (FF)
Frank Feighan (FG)
Joe McHugh (FG)
Labhrás Ó Murchú (FF)
Joe O'Toole (Ind)
Kieran Phelan (FF)

Appendix 3

Orders of Reference of the Joint Committee

Orders of Reference

Dáil Éireann on 16 October 2002 *ordered***:**

"(1) (*a*) That a Select Committee, which shall be called the Select Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, consisting of 11 members of Dáil Éireann (of whom 4 shall constitute a quorum), be appointed to consider -

    (i) such Bills the statute law in respect of which is dealt with by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs;

    (ii) such Estimates for Public Services within the aegis of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; and

    (iii) such proposals contained in any motion, including any motion within the meaning of Standing Order 157 concerning the approval by the Dáil of international agreements involving a charge on public funds,

as shall be referred to it by Dáil Éireann from time to time.

(*b*) For the purpose of its consideration of Bills and proposals under paragraphs (1)(*a*)(i) and (iii), the Select Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 81(1), (2) and (3).

(*c*) For the avoidance of doubt, by virtue of his or her *ex officio* membership of the Select Committee in accordance with Standing Order 90(1), the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (or a Minister or Minister of State nominated in his or her stead) shall be entitled to vote.

(2) (*a*) The Select Committee shall be joined with a Select Committee to be appointed by Seanad Éireann to form the Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to consider -

    (i) such public affairs administered by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs as it may select, including, in respect of Government policy, bodies under the aegis of those Departments;

    (ii) such matters of policy for which the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs are officially responsible as it may select;

    (iii) such related policy issues as it may select concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by Members of the Government or by the Oireachtas;

    (iv) such Statutory Instruments made by the Minister for Arts, Sport and

Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas as it may select;

(v)   such proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues as may be referred to it from time to time, in accordance with Standing Order 81(4);

(vi)   the strategy statement laid before each House of the Oireachtas by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs pursuant to section 5(2) of the Public Service Management Act, 1997, and the Joint Committee shall be so authorised for the purposes of section 10 of that Act;

(vii)   such annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law and laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, of bodies specified in paragraphs 2(a)(i) and (iii), and the overall operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of these bodies, as it may select;

Provided that the Joint Committee shall not, at any time, consider any matter relating to such a body which is, which has been, or which is, at that time, proposed to be considered by the Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to the Orders of Reference of that Committee and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993;

Provided further that the Joint Committee shall refrain from inquiring into in public session, or publishing confidential information regarding, any such matter if so requested either by the body or by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; and

(viii) such other matters as may be jointly referred to it from time to time by both Houses of the Oireachtas,

and shall report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

(*b*)   The quorum of the Joint Committee shall be five, of whom at least one shall be a member of Dáil Éireann and one a member of Seanad Éireann.

(*c*)   The Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 81(1) to (9) inclusive.

(3)   The Chairman of the Joint Committee, who shall be a member of Dáil Éireann, shall also be Chairman of the Select Committee.".

Seanad Éireann on 17 October 2002 *(*23 October 2002) ordered***:**

(1)   (a)   That a Select Committee consisting of 6 members* of Seanad Éireann shall be appointed to be joined with a Select Committee of Dáil Éireann to form the Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to consider-

        (i)   such public affairs administered by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs as it may select, including, in respect of Government policy, bodies under the aegis of those Departments;

        (ii)   such matters of policy for which the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs are officially responsible as it may select;

        (iii)   such related policy issues as it may select concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by Members of the Government or by the Oireachtas;

        (iv)   such Statutory Instruments made by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and laid before Houses of the Oireachtas as it may select;

        (v)   such proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues as may be referred to it from time to time, in accordance with Standing Order 65(4);

        (vi)   the strategy statement laid before each House of the Oireachtas by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs pursuant to section 5(2) of the Public Service Management Act, 1997, and the Joint Committee shall be so authorised for the purposes of section 10 of that Act;

        (vii)   such annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law and laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas, of bodies specified in paragraphs 1(a)(i) and (iii), and the overall operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of these bodies, as it may select;

        Provided that the Joint Committee shall not, at any time, consider any matter relating to such a body which is, which has been, or which is, at that time, proposed to be considered by the Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to the Orders of Reference of that Committee and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993;

        Provided further that the Joint Committee shall refrain from inquiring into in public session, or publishing confidential information regarding, any such matter if so requested either by the body concerned or by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism or the Minister for

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* by the substitution of '6 members' for '4 members'.

Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs;

and

(viii) such other matters as may be jointly referred to it from time to time by both Houses of the Oireachtas,

and shall report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

(*b*) The quorum of the Joint Committee shall be five, of whom at least one shall be a member of Dáil Éireann and one a member of Seanad Éireann.

(*c*) The Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 65(1) to (9) inclusive.

(2) The Chairman of the Joint Committee shall be a member of Dáil Éireann.