



# UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Population Unit

[www.unece.org/pau](http://www.unece.org/pau)

## Policy Brief on Tapping the potential of Volunteering

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3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Working Group on Ageing



# Introduction: A concept of volunteering

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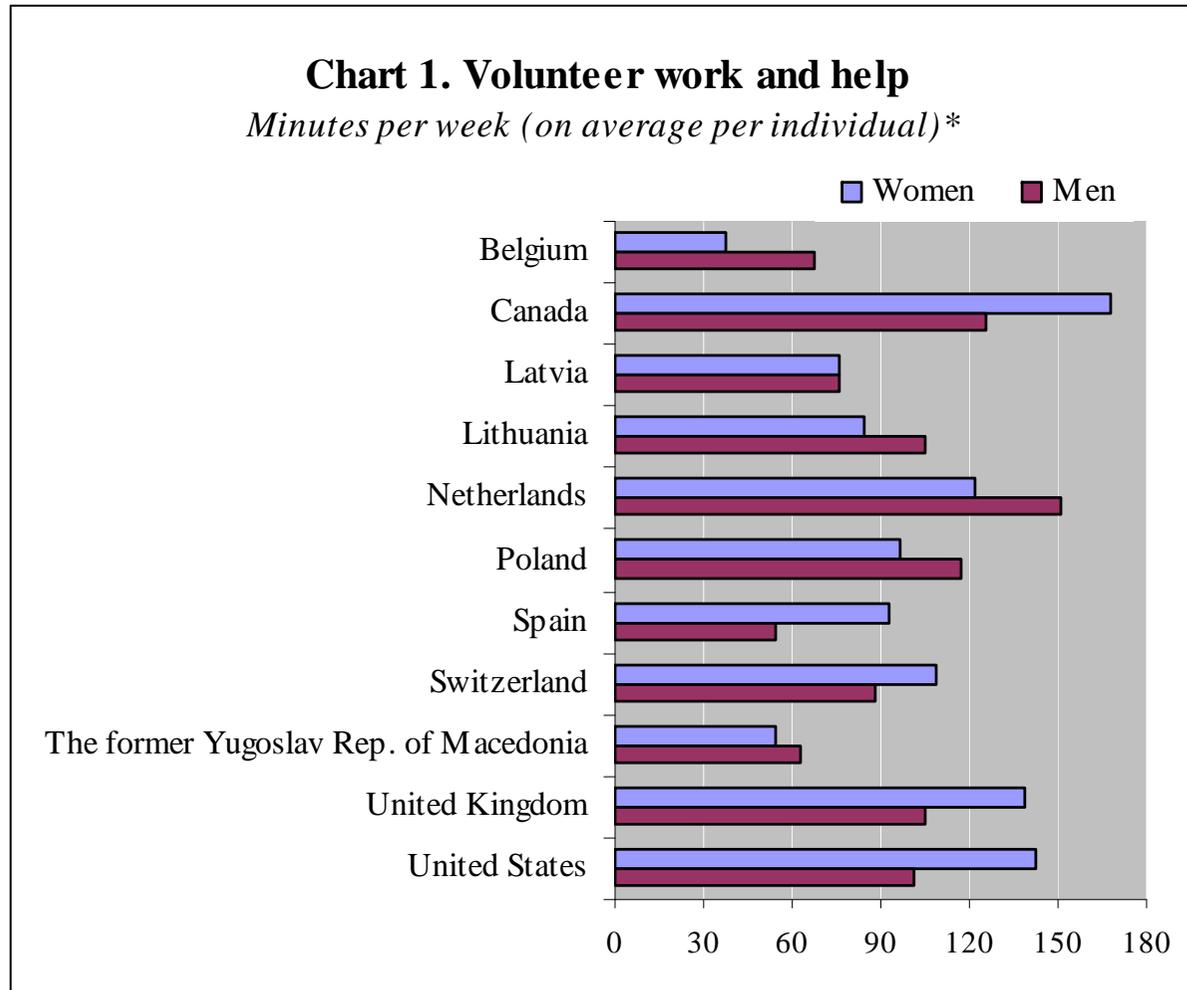
- opportunity to make meaningful contribution to an area of interest
- independent from educational background, job profile, or age
- instrument to enhance social inclusion and participation

## Distinction from remunerated work

- most people work to secure their financial subsistence
- paid work takes place under market conditions
- paid work is restricted by a mandatory retirement age



# Introduction: How frequently do people volunteer?



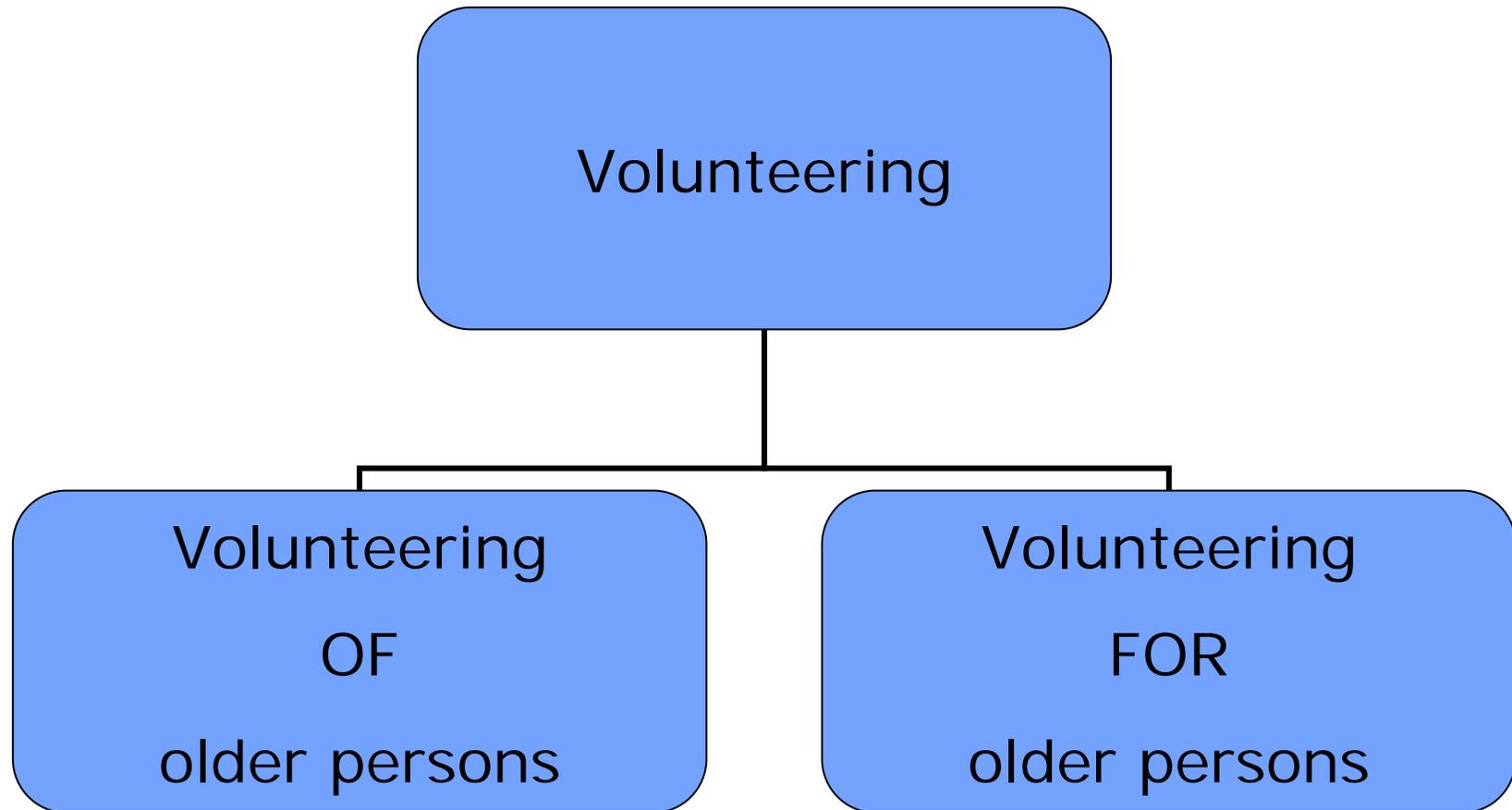
**Source:** UNECE Statistical Database.

\* Data refer to most recent year available from 2003 onwards.



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# Distinction





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## Volunteering of older persons: enhancing participation in society

- the transition from working life to retirement is a crossroad in life
- retirees feel a void: they miss aspects of work life
- the alternative for active engagement can be found in volunteering, tool for social inclusion
- Volunteering can be:
  - formal (through an organisation)
  - informal (giving unpaid help as an individual)



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## Volunteering of older persons: areas of work

- volunteers work in a variety of areas
- volunteering takes place within the non-profit as well as the private sector
- the non-profit sector should be the prioritized area of work
- for volunteering in the private sector, context and conditions of work need to be clearly framed
- **Good practice example: reading programme in France**
  - Lire et faire lire (Read and let read) is a programme designed to spread the pleasure of reading as well as intergenerational solidarity;
  - Volunteers, older than 50 years, organise out-loud reading sessions for children in primary schools and in other educational structures.



# Volunteering of older persons: supporting volunteers

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## Financial security:

- some older volunteers may have previous or parallel sources of income
- all citizens should be in a position to volunteer if they wish to
- compensation for expenses may be considered: reimbursement, meal tickets, token payments
- **Good practice example: the Reserve Grandparent Scheme in Denmark**
  - retired older people act as substitute grandparents and take care of sick children when parents go back to work;
  - strict selection criteria: check of physical condition and criminal record, training courses in first aid and childhood illnesses;
  - grandparents receive from parents a small monetary token.



# Volunteering of older persons: supporting volunteers

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## Social security:

- right to safe, secure and healthy environment
- insurance coverage against accidents and illness
- civil liability
- **Good practice example: HumanaS network in Serbia**
  - goals: bring older people's issues into policy mainstream and improve their financial and health security;
  - active in the protection of the rights of older persons;
  - older people themselves are involved in HumanaS activities.

## Enabling environment:

- remove barriers
  - statutory retirement age for older volunteers
  - discrimination: 'ageism'
- physical limitations should not be seen as an impediment



# Volunteering of older persons: training of volunteers

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- adult learning programmes
- peer volunteer support
- mentoring or 'buddying' schemes
- networks to share experience
- **Good practice example: Senior Trainers in Germany**
  - older persons receive training to become senior trainers;
  - goal: strengthen the role of older people in society, by assisting them in finding new responsibilities.
- **Good practice example: "Think Future, Volunteer Together"**
  - goal: promote senior volunteering through international exchange visits of elderly people in five European countries;
  - visiting senior volunteers could get a comprehensive view of volunteering in the hosting country.



# Volunteering of older persons: feedback on volunteering

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- clear agreement on the activities, timeframe and responsibility of the volunteer
- supervisors and volunteers:
  - give each other feedback on effort and results
  - discuss room for improvement
- **Good practice example: Volunteering service of all generations in Germany**
  - goal: promote and develop the potential of older people through joint participation of young and elderly;
  - mobile teams advise and support local institutions: introduction or development of volunteering services for all age groups.



# Volunteering of older persons: benefits for the volunteers

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- 'emotional' benefits:
  - new networks,
  - new scope in life,
  - put experience to good use,
  - and contribute to society.
- Volunteering promotes physical activity and an active mind
- 'practical' benefits:
  - training courses,
  - financial remunerations.



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# Volunteering of older persons: benefits for the volunteers

- **Good practice example: “Generations together” in the UK**
  - main purposes are to increase: intergenerational volunteering, number of volunteers, strategic and sustainable approach, evidence of the effectiveness of intergenerational initiatives;
  - activities: mentoring, skills exchanges, healthy eating projects.
- **Good practice example: ULF in Austria**
  - professional structures for the management of volunteers;
  - goals: establish a culture of solidarity and mutual support and a new culture of active ageing.



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## Volunteering for older persons: age group and gender of volunteers

- Volunteers who work for older persons could be students, workers, unemployed or retired people, of both sexes
- It is desirable that men and women, young and old, are welcomed in organisations in equal number and same level of responsibilities according to their skills
- **Good practice example: Help lines for elderly people in Italy and Ireland**
  - Filo d'Argento: Italian helpline (national toll-free number), that offers conversation, support, home deliveries and transportation, to combat loneliness and social exclusion of older persons;
  - Irish Senior Help Line: confidential listening service for older people by older people for the price of a local call.



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## Volunteering for older persons: areas of work

- Volunteer services may take place:
  - in hospitals and nursing homes
  - at home
  - in community and day centres
- Volunteers also organise special events to raise awareness of age-related issues
- **Good practice example: Yad Sarah in Israel**
  - free or nominal cost services to help people with special needs and their families;
  - goal: keep people in their homes and enable them to be treated and rehabilitated among their families.



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## Volunteering for older persons: supporting volunteers

- Younger volunteers do not necessarily have the financial backup that senior volunteers can rely on
- Providing financial security would guarantee a more stable working framework
- Social security also includes preventive health care measures or training
- **Good practice example: Core functions supporting local voluntary work and family care in the Netherlands**
  - Goal: raise the number of volunteers in the Netherlands and (at least) maintain the number of family carers;
  - developed to help municipalities with policy formulation.



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## Volunteering for older persons: training of volunteers

- Training may focus on:
  - assistance techniques,
  - first aid,
  - age-related diseases,
  - and listening skills,
  - networks to share experience.



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## Volunteering for older persons: training of volunteers

- Good practice example: The National Gerontological Association 'Second Breath' in Moldova
  - Second Breath is an NGO active in promoting a rights-based agenda for older people in Moldova;
  - project to promote social reintegration of vulnerable older people in Northern Moldova;
  - similar project in Southern Moldova, with the participation of 5 Northern organisations as mentors.



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## Volunteering for older persons: benefits for the volunteers

- 'emotional' benefits may be:
  - understanding of older persons' issues,
  - personal development,
  - useful employment of free time,
  - and contribution to society.
- 'practical' benefits could entail:
  - reimbursement of expenses,
  - token payments,
  - training courses,
  - field experience,
  - enhanced employability in the job market,
  - accreditation and certification.



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# Conclusions and recommendations

- *Appropriate legal framework*
  - drafting process in close consultation with stakeholders
- *Support to organisations and volunteers*
  - adult learning
  - awareness-raising activities
  - research



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# Checklist

<b>Checklist: Tapping the potential of volunteering</b>		
<b>Goals</b>	<b>Policy Areas</b>	<b>Key Policy Elements</b>
Ensure an enabling environment	Appropriate legal framework	Eliminate obstacles to the participation of senior volunteers
		Close consultation with stakeholders
		Legal distinction between non-profit, governmental and private sector
		Tax incentives
		Fundraising opportunities
Concrete support to organisations and volunteers	Life-long learning	Training
		Mentoring
		Networks of organisations to share experience
	Awareness-raising	Promoting a positive image of volunteering
		Campaigns, annual events aimed at the whole society
		Specific recruitment campaigns towards senior citizens
	Research	Data collection
		Data analysis
		Dissemination of results
		Measuring the economic value of volunteering



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Thank you very much for listening...

- Questions:
  - Is there any specific good practice example that you would like to see added?
  - Where do you see a need for improvement?



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## Further policy briefs

- Tell us whether the past briefs were useful
- Consider translating the briefs in your language
- Which topics are most interesting for you to be addressed in future policy briefs?  
(paragraph 11 in ECE/WG.1/2010/4)
  - active ageing
  - images of older persons
  - dementia
  - ...