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VOLUNTARY WORK: TRENDS, PROFILES AND VALUES

Empirical
study

Keywords

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JEL Classification

A13, D64

Abstract

Is voluntary work a pathway channelling transition for school to work, or from inactivity to activity, or rather a top up activity for those already employed? The paper aims to identify trends in the voluntary work in Romania as against EU countries, to profile the persons engaged in voluntary work, as well as to analyse the way the profile changed over time. Also, the article emphasizes the work related values of those involved in voluntary works. This analysis is based on the date sets of European Values Study for the period 1990-2008 (three waves). The survey is based on probabilistic samples that are representative for the population aged 18+ years old.

Introduction

According to GHK (2010), 22-23% of Europeans are involved in at least one form of voluntary works, Romania being placed in the 4th point of the scale (relatively low) with an incidence of volunteering up to 18% (estimations for 2006), along with Belgium, Czech Republic, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain. Also, according to the same report, during the previous decade, the increase of volunteering was assessed as modest.

There are several definitions and alternative methodologies for measuring voluntary works. For instance, in its papers and programs, the European Commission defines the volunteer as “a person who carries out activities benefiting society, by free will (...) who commits their time and energy for the general good without financial reward” (as cited in Porcaro, 2012).

Other definitions classify volunteering in formal, non-formal and informal, according to the place where voluntary works take place: in organized structures or in unorganized forms (Angermann and Sittermann, 2010).

Therefore, central to the definition is the “free will/engagement” of individuals without expecting material or financial rewards. As individuals are rational actors, other kind of rewards must be taken into account (Sardinha and Pires, 2011). The benefits of volunteering could be divers in accordance to people expectations and motivations for engaging in voluntary work.

According to Sardinha and Pires (2011), personal satisfaction of individuals, access to networks, skills and knowledge, the need to feel him or herself useful or needed by others, the feeling of importance and being exposed in public spaces represent possible benefits for voluntary workers. While in countries with strong communities volunteering and its symbolic rewards have

higher incidence and importance, in Central and Eastern Europe there is a “legacy of the communism” consisting in a negative attitude towards volunteering, as during communism people were forced to do voluntary work in several controlled organizations (GHK, 2010, Voicu and Voicu, 2003). Did the level of volunteering register any increase twenty years after the fall of the communism? And does it cover as much as possible different segments of population or it involved only a specific one? When it comes to Romania, due to the negative legacy of the communism, one could expect to find a higher incidence of volunteering among youth segments as against older ones.

Theoretical and empirical contributions

The topic, as pointed by the high amount of data collected by different organizations proved to be of increasing importance during the last decade.

European Commission under the 2011 European Year of Volunteering commissioned a Special Eurobarometer (carried out by TNS Opinion and Social for the European Parliament, 2011). The two topics of the Eurobarometer were volunteering and intergenerational solidarity. The findings of the survey revealed that almost one quarter of Europeans are involved on a regular or occasional base in voluntary works. The incidence of volunteering picked in Netherlands (57%) and northern states, Romania (14%), Greece (14%), Bulgaria (12%), Portugal (12%) and Poland (9%) are well below the EU average of 24%. According to the same study, the incidence of volunteering is not influenced by age or gender; it reaches a higher level among the most educated and a lower one among manual workers, pensioners or unemployed. Most appealing type of voluntary work proved to be the one performed in sport or

recreational activities (24% of those declaring they did voluntary work). Also, the study evidenced the most important benefits of volunteering in the perception of respondents: maintain and reinforce social cohesion (34%), self-fulfilment and personal development (25%) and strengthening the fundamental values of EU (25%). The role of volunteering in acquiring knowledge and competences for professional integration is on the 4th place (22% of respondents).

Under the auspices of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, McCloughan, Batt, Costine and Scully (2011) carried out a study on volunteering and unpaid work. According to their findings, rates of participation to voluntary and charitable activities vary according to incomes, educational attainment and employment status and are higher in EU15 than in NMS12: persons in the highest income quartile, with high level of education, and being employed or self-employed have the highest probability to participate in voluntary works (McCloughan et al., 2011, p.13). The econometric modelling carried out in the study contributes to the identification of the factors predicting the likelihood of a person to engage in volunteering: age (participation increases with age, peaks at 45-50 years old and then decreases), health (those in good health have a higher probability), educational attainment (higher the educational level, higher the probability), satisfaction with lives (higher the satisfaction, higher the probability), area of residence (those residing in large cities or suburbs have a lower probability), incomes (those in economic difficulties have a lower probability to participate), while employment status was not found to be a good predictor for volunteering.

When it comes to Romania, the Country Report undertaken by GHK (2010) estimates the incidence of volunteering up to

12.8% in 2008 (2008 EVS as cited in GHK, 2010), 5.8% in 2007 (Barometer of Public Opinion, CFDS as cited in GHK, 2010), 8% in 2002 (ARC and Allavida as cited in GHK, 2010) and 9.5% in 1999 (1999 EVS as cited in GHK, 2010). So it is difficult to trace a trend due the different definitions that were used to measure volunteering. Also, the report evidences a similar profile of volunteers as in other European countries: well educated, wealthier and displaying higher levels of trust (Voicu and Voicu, 2003). When it comes to age, surprisingly, volunteering picks among the younger (18-29 years old) and older (60-69 years old). According to the same report, volunteers tend to be employed and also are more likely to be employed by private companies than individuals who do not volunteer.

Data

The empirical analysis is based on the integrated data set of the EVS (2011): European Values Study (Longitudinal dataset). The aims of the paper are: 1) to discuss the trends of voluntary work in EU countries and Romania, 2) to discuss the types of voluntary works performed in Romania and to identify significant changes over time and 3) to profile the Romanian volunteers. In order to respond to first two aims of the papers, the answers of respondents to the question "*Please look carefully at the following list of voluntary organizations and activities and say - which, if any, are you currently doing unpaid voluntary work for?*" are analysed (with the following predefined responses: A. Social welfare services for elderly, handicapped or deprived people, B. Religious or church organizations, C. Education, arts, music or cultural activities, D. Trade unions, E. political parties or groups, F. Local community action on issues like poverty, employment, housing, racial equality, G. Third world development or human rights,

H. Conservation, the environment, ecology, animal rights, I. Professional associations, J. Youth work (e.g. scouts, guides, youth clubs, etc.), K. Sport or recreation, L. Women's groups, M. Peace movement, N. Voluntary organizations concerned with health, O. Other groups and None (spontaneous) (EVS, 2011, Master Questionnaire, 4th wave.).

The responses to this question are analysed for all EU countries and for Romanian case, with in-depth view on the type of voluntary works and evolutions for the time span 1990-2008. Finally, a logistic regression is performed with dependent variable "voluntary work" for each wave of the survey in order to identify the profile of the volunteering persons. The independent variables are presented in Table 3 and were selected in accordance with the main theoretical findings of previous work in the field.

Even if similar work was performed on data from other cross-country surveys, as presented above, none of them focused on Romanian case. Also, much emphasis is put on the role of volunteering in acquiring work experience and jobs-related competences for newly graduates in order to facilitate the transition from school to work. Also, one should notice the fact that last wave of the survey was carried out in 2008, when economic growth and employment opportunities reached their peaks in Romania.

Main results

As Table no. 1 shows, evolution of the rate of voluntary work in the last two decades was not uniform in Europe. During the '90s, many countries displayed an increasing trend of the share of individuals performing voluntary work. Countries with highest progress were Great Britain, Denmark, Netherlands and Slovak Republic. On the other hand, both countries with high and low

rates of voluntary work at the beginning of the reference period registered a decline of this indicator. Romania displayed a sharp decrease from 25% in 1993 to 15.7% in 1999. In the second half of the analysed period, Netherlands kept the sharp increase of its share of voluntary workers from 49.2% to 85.4%. Also, Italy, Croatia and Slovenia reached high rates of voluntary work in 2008, while Denmark, Great Britain and Slovak Republic left the positive trend and registered a significant decline. Romania displayed a further decrease from 15.7% in 1999 to 13.2% in 2008. So, according to the data collected in the European Values Study in 1990-2010, Romania belongs to the group of countries with low rates of voluntary work and doesn't present any evidence of improvement.

In Table no. 2, data on the nature of the voluntary work performed by Romanians are provided. One could notice the high rate of voluntary work for trade unions in 1993. In that period, soon after the communist regime collapsed, trade unions were very present within the Romanian social and economic life as the national economy still relied on big industrial units with very high rates of unionisation. During the transition period, many industrial factories were closed and people became unemployed. In this context, trade unions lost high numbers of members. This evolution explains the sharp decrease of voluntary work for trade unions in Romania from 14.1% in 1993 to 5.8% in 1999 and 1.9% in 2008. On the other hand, unpaid work for religious organisations registered a positive evolution from 4.4% in 1993 to 6.2% in 2008. As a result, highest rates of voluntary work in 2008 took place in trade unions, religious organisations, political parties, sports/recreation activities, welfare organisation and cultural activities.

Analysis of the work related values for the year 2008 in Romania show that those working voluntary value more:

meeting pleasant people (86.3 % out of those volunteering as compared with 78.3% out of non-voluntary workers), achieving something (73.4 % out of those volunteering as compared with 69.3% out of non-voluntary workers), using initiative (67.9 % out of those volunteering and only 58.4% out of non-voluntary workers) and the opportunity to have a say (64.6 % out of those volunteering as compared and only 57.8% out of non-voluntary workers). On the other hand, those not doing voluntary work value more the job security (86.1% of those not doing voluntary works as compared with 81.9% of voluntary workers), the good hours (75.7% of those not doing voluntary works as compared with 66.3% of voluntary workers), the family friendly workplace (72.6% of those not doing voluntary works as compared with 68.5% of voluntary workers), meeting people (72.6% of those not doing voluntary works as compared with 68.5% of voluntary workers) and generous holydays (52.0% of those not doing voluntary works as compared with 46.0% of voluntary workers).

In order to better understand the changes in patterns of voluntary work in Romania, the profile of those involved in such activity is analysed. Table no. 3 presents results of a logistic regression performed for the dependent variable "voluntary work" (the variable takes the value "1" for performing voluntary work and "0" for not performing voluntary work). The model is estimated for each reference year: 1993, 1999 and 2008. The obtained results show that employment status, age and gender of the individuals represent significant predictors of voluntary work in 1993. Thus, full time employed, youth and males registered higher probabilities of being voluntary workers, as against self-employed, retired, unemployed, older individuals and females. In 1999, the employments status has the same predictive

capacity on the voluntary work, while age and gender are no longer among the significant predictors. Although voluntary work for religious organisations increased in this period, religious individuals perform less voluntary work. Finally, individuals with higher education display higher probabilities for being voluntary workers. In 2008, the pattern of voluntary work in Romania seems to be completely different. Retired are less likely to do unpaid work as against full time employed, while students have almost three times higher odds to belong to the category of voluntary workers. All the other predictors are not significant, except for not having religious feelings.

Conclusions

The present article aimed to provide a better understanding of patterns of voluntary work in Romania as compared with other European countries. While Romania registered low and decreasing rates of voluntary work in 1993-2008, one could notice a significant change in the profile of Romanian voluntary workers. In the first decade of the analysed period, full time employed and males are very present among voluntary workers, especially for trade unions. In the context of important changes at the level of Romanian economic and social environments in the 2000s, patterns of voluntary work changed in a significant manner. Full time employees were no longer those performing voluntary work in the highest extent, while students became the category with highest propensity to unpaid work. Concluding, voluntary work starts to play an important role in facilitating transitions from school to work for youth looking to gain skills and working experience.

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Appendices

Table No. 1
Rate of voluntary work by country and year (%)

	Wave 1990 - 1993	Wave 1999 - 2001	Wave 2008 - 2010
Austria	25,80%	30,40%	27,70%
Belgium	28,20%	35,40%	34,20%
Bulgaria	19,70%	18,80%	13,10%
Croatia	-	23,60%	53,90%
Czech Republic	29,40%	33,20%	41,80%
Denmark	25,70%	37,20%	17,00%
Estonia	33,50%	18,00%	22,50%
Finland	44,70%	38,00%	39,40%
France	23,30%	27,10%	26,00%
Germany	34,20%	19,30%	23,80%
Great Britain	21,70%	42,30%	22,10%
Greece	-	39,80%	15,60%
Hungary	16,40%	15,40%	11,90%
Ireland	26,50%	32,60%	32,30%
Italy	23,50%	26,10%	60,70%
Latvia	36,10%	22,40%	23,90%
Lithuania	30,20%	15,80%	16,30%
Malta	22,60%	28,60%	14,60%
Netherlands	35,60%	49,20%	85,40%
Northern Ireland	25,70%	21,10%	29,80%
Poland	28,20%	13,90%	12,90%
Portugal	18,30%	16,40%	12,20%
Romania	25,00%	15,70%	13,20%
Slovak Republic	27,00%	51,40%	12,30%
Slovenia	15,20%	28,50%	57,80%
Spain	12,00%	17,60%	12,90%

Source: authors calculations on EVS (2011): European Values Study Longitudinal Data File 1981-2008 (EVS 1981-2008)

Table No. 2
% of Romanians performing unpaid work for ...

	1993	1999	2008	Total
...welfare organisation	1,80%	1,00%	2,60%	1,90%
...religious organisation	4,40%	3,60%	6,20%	4,90%
...cultural activities	1,50%	1,70%	2,40%	1,90%
...trade unions	14,10%	5,80%	1,90%	6,70%
...political parties/groups	2,20%	1,80%	2,10%	2,10%
...local community action	0,60%	0,60%	1,40%	0,90%
...3w-development/human rights	0,10%	0,40%	0,80%	0,50%
...environment, ecology, animal rights	0,60%	2,60%	1,70%	0,50%
...professional associations	1,50%	1,00%	1,30%	1,30%
...youth work	0,60%	0,50%	1,10%	0,80%
...sports/recreation	2,70%	1,20%	2,10%	2,00%
...women's groups	0,40%	0,30%	1,00%	0,60%
...peace movement	0,10%		0,40%	0,20%
...voluntary health organisations	0,40%	0,60%	1,00%	0,70%
...other groups	1,80%	1,50%	1,20%	1,50%

Source: authors calculations on EVS (2011): European Values Study Longitudinal Data File 1981-2008 (EVS 1981-2008)

Table No. 3

Predictors of voluntary work in Romania – results of Logistic regression (Method = Enter) with dependent variable “voluntary work” (1=performing voluntary work and 0= not performing voluntary work)

	1993		1999		2008	
	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)
Employment status						
full time (30h a week or more) - reference	0,000		0,001		0,01	
part time (less than 30 hours a week)	0,636	1,186	0,312	0,613	0,827	0,896
self employed	0,000	0,314	0,026	0,187	0,296	1,609
retired/pensioned	0,004	0,439	0,001	0,317	0,016	0,505
housewife (not otherwise employed)	0,580	0,806	0,005	0,293	0,135	0,564
student	0,311	0,680	0,400	0,686	0,011	2,87
unemployed	0,000	0,160	0,002	0,182	0,113	2,12
other	0,186	0,418	0,998	0,000	0,376	1,686
Age	0,035	0,986	0,132	1,014	0,108	1,012
Gender (male - reference)						
female	0,000	0,512	0,927	1,018	0,381	1,178
Income household respondent						
low - reference	0,244		0,199		0,740	
medium	0,769	0,945	0,381	0,762	0,452	0,837
high	0,135	0,740	0,557	1,189	0,606	0,884
Religion (not getting comfort and strength from religion - reference)						
getting comfort and strength from religion	0,193	1,263	0,081	0,650	0,073	0,601
Education	*	*				
(lower - reference)	*	*	0,003		0,454	
middle	*	*	0,020	2,108	0,254	1,296
upper	*	*	0,001	3,289	0,290	1,449
Constant	0,623	1,180	0,001	0,134	0,001	0,134
Nagelkerke R Square	0.118		0.178		0.043	
% correct	74.9%		83.8%		86.5%	

Note. * Variable not available in the 1993 survey

Source: authors calculations on EVS (2011): European Values Study Longitudinal Data File 1981-2008 (EVS 1981-2008)