



Empowering Private Sector Employees through Volunteering (EPSEV)ⁱ

Evaluation Report – September 2011



Introduction to the Project

The EPSEV project was a one-year project ending in September 2011. This project was launched within the context of the European Year of Volunteering 2011 and was funded with the support of the Europe for citizens programme of the European Union.

This project brought together partners from three new EU Member States, led by SOS Malta in partnership with Volunteer Development Estonia and Savanoriu centras (Lithuania)¹.

The key objective of the EPSEV project was to raise awareness about Corporate Volunteering and to promote the setting up of Corporate Volunteering Schemes between the business and third sectors.

The EPSEV project was divided into five key phases. These five phases are described hereunder. More detail about the outcomes in the respective project partners' Member States are included in later sections of this report.

- Research

Each participating organisation had to obtain information about the current situation with regards to volunteering in their respective Member State, with a particular focus on Corporate Volunteering. The purpose of this research was to both understand what the business sector could offer the third sector and to also assist in identifying the skills third sector organisations need. This research was conducted in the final quarter of 2010.

- Training-the-Trainer Course

A professional trainer from International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) was commissioned to deliver a two-day training course in January 2011 in Vilnius, Lithuania. Two partner representatives from each participating organisation attended this course.

At this training, the participants learnt more about what Corporate Volunteering is, the various types of Corporate Volunteering Schemes that exist and how these schemes can be set up. The partner representatives also gained an understanding about how to promote and facilitate the setting up of Corporate Volunteering Schemes between the business and third sectors in their respective Member States. They were presented with a Training Pack to assist them in training Human Resources Managers (and other relevant staff) and representatives from third sector organisations in setting up such schemes.

¹ Due to a number of shortcomings, the results of the EPSEV project in Lithuania have not been included in this Evaluation Report.





- **Raising Awareness**

The project was given visibility during each phase of the project. The awareness-raising phase was, however, most prominent in the run up to the Workshop and Networking Events, scheduled to be held in each participating Member State in May 2011. It was envisaged that participants would be recruited by means of information campaigns in the media, including articles in print and electronic media, radio, promotional leaflets, electronic messages, and information through the post.

A **website** was also set up by SOS Malta for the project and its partners at www.epsev.eu. It contained information about the EPSEV project, the three partner organisations and Corporate Volunteering. In addition, all the reports and material produced within the project were uploaded onto this website.

- **Workshop and Networking Events**

Each partner organisation was to organise a two-day interactive Workshop and Networking Event for approximately thirty participants from the business and third sectors in the month of May 2011. These events were aimed at introducing the concept and the benefits of Corporate Volunteering to the participants and to discuss how the business and third sectors can set up Corporate Volunteering Schemes. The objective was to also give participants the opportunity to network and discuss possible partnerships. Each participant was to be given a Training Pack produced by the respective partner organisation in its national language. These Training Packs were put together using the Training Pack the partner representatives were given at the Training-the-Trainer Event mentioned above.

Apart from this, each partner was expected to disseminate 130 copies of their Training Pack to businesses and NGOs within their Member State, including those disseminated at their Workshop and Networking Event.

As a follow up to this phase of the project, each partner organisation was also meant to set up and maintain a spreadsheet database aimed at facilitating partnership-matching between businesses and NGOs wishing to set up Corporate Volunteering Schemes in their respective Member State. These databases were to include both a list of NGOs and the skills they need as well as a list of businesses and the skills they are able and willing to offer to NGOs. These were to be uploaded onto the EPSEV website as well as the project partners' websites.

Purpose of the Evaluation Report

The Evaluation Report will be disseminated to members of The European Centre for Volunteering (CEV) as well as posted on the EPSEV website, which is accessible to the general public. The report includes: a general overview of Corporate Volunteering; an analysis of the needs of the third sector with regards to Corporate Volunteering; a description of the feedback received from the business sector with regards to Corporate Volunteering; an evaluation of the Workshop and Networking Event; and lessons learnt and recommendations on further actions that can be taken with regards to Corporate Volunteering.



Education and Culture DG

'Europe for Citizens' Programme



➤ MALTA

A general overview of Corporate Volunteering in Malta

SOS Malta commissioned Bloom Research to carry out the EPSEV research at the beginning of the project. This phase assisted SOS Malta in understanding more about how Corporate Volunteering is perceived and what its current state is in Malta.

An interesting finding is that the businesses who participated in the research are more aware of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Corporate Volunteering than the third sector organisations. In fact, only 56% of the NGOs interviewed believe that the leaders and committee members of their organisations are aware of the concept of CSR, as applied in the business sector, as opposed to the 61% of the businesses interviewed that claim to be familiar with the concept. In fact, 67% (41 companies) have been involved in CSR initiatives and 21% (13 companies) have a CSR policy. What's more, only 37% of the NGOs interviewed had previously heard of Corporate Volunteering Programmes with only 9 of these having participated in such schemes. On the other hand, 45% of the businesses interviewed have heard of Corporate Volunteering Programmes of which 11% (5 companies) say they have a Corporate Volunteering Programme in place.

In addition to the results of the research component, SOS Malta also gained information through the direct contact it had with both NGOs and businesses throughout this one-year project. On a number of occasions, businesses and NGOs realised that it had in fact been engaged in some form of Corporate Volunteering activities in the past, mainly done-in-a-day events, but had never defined them as being "Corporate Volunteering".

An analysis of the needs of the third sector with regards to Corporate Volunteering in Malta

The apparent lack of interest NGOs seemed to have in completing the EPSEV questionnaire came as a surprise to SOS Malta. Over 400 registered voluntary organisations were invited to participate in the research Bloom Research was conducting with a view to obtaining a response rate of around 25%. An unexpectedly very low response rate was obtained with the self-completion method and in order to boost response rate, research interviewers had to follow up with a telephone method. This may have been a result of these NGOs not knowing enough about the subject especially since the awareness campaign had not started at this stage of the project. It may also have been a result of the method which was being used, self-completion, since very often individuals do not have the time or are reluctant to complete questionnaires. Despite this apparent lack of interest, 76% of all the NGOs eventually interviewed in the survey said they are interested in their organisation being listed in a database aimed at facilitating the matching of businesses with NGOs for the creation of Corporate Volunteering Programmes. Moreover, 88% of the 100 NGOs interviewed agreed to being contacted by SOS Malta for further information. Nonetheless, when SOS Malta later contacted these NGOs to be included in this same database, only 19 NGOs submitted their details.

With regards to the needs of the third sector, 64% of the NGOs contacted through the EPSEV research reported that they have sought resources from the business sector. This assistance was mainly in the form of financial sponsorships, donations and grants in kind. From the 9 NGOs that said they have a Corporate Volunteering Programme in place, nearly all recognise the importance of having intermediary organisations networking between the business sector and NGOs. Out of the 37% of NGOs that are aware of Corporate Volunteering Programmes, 92% said they go about (or would go about) forming partnerships with the business sector through word of mouth whilst 46% mentioned intermediary organisations as useful in this regard. The types of services most required by these NGOs range from PR, media and communication services (68%), active participation in fundraising activities (68%), IT services (62%), administration and office work (59%), manual work (57%), and project proposal design and writing (54%). From the same 37%, 76% (28 NGOs) reported



'Europe for Citizens' Programme



that their organisation has the capacity to handle 1 to 5 employee volunteers per week whilst 14% (5 NGOs) said they can handle more than 10 employee volunteers per week. 57% (21 NGOs) answered that each of the employee volunteers could contribute up to 5 hours per week whilst 14% (5 NGOs) said each employee volunteer could dedicate more than 20 hours per week.

An element that surfaced a number of times during this one-year project is that NGOs are often more concerned with obtaining financial help from the business sector rather than assistance through human resources. This may happen both because of the limited financial resources NGOs often have to operate with and also due to not knowing enough about Corporate Volunteering and how it can benefit their organisations.

A description of the feedback received from the business sector with regards to Corporate Volunteering in Malta

Through the EPSEV research, SOS Malta was able to gain insight into the way businesses view CSR and Corporate Volunteering and what has and is being done in these areas.

The research revealed that businesses are mainly engaged CSR activities that relate to donations (85%), financial sponsorships (78%) and grants in kind (54%).

With regards to Corporate Volunteering, the activities undertaken by the 5% that said they have a programme in place target a range of groups such as children, persons with physical and intellectual disabilities, youth, persons with mental health issues, the community at large, the homeless, the environment and heritage. The types of services provided by these five companies range from active participation in fundraising activities, manual work, financial services, administration and office work, PR, media and communication services, and project proposal writing.

Four out of the five companies reported that employees are able to choose whether to volunteer individually or in teams. Four of the companies provide their staff with a list of NGOs which they can then choose from.

The companies that do not have a Corporate Volunteering Programme in place (95%) were asked what benefits would make their company consider Corporate Volunteering. 84% of these companies claimed that the benefit that would be the knowledge that the company is contributing positively towards the community, 72% said that the benefit would be increased staff satisfaction and 59% said a positive company reputation.

Furthermore, 61% (58 companies) of the 95 companies that do not have a Corporate Volunteering Programme in place are interested in introducing such a programme. From the 61% of companies interviewed, most are interested in targeting the community at large (71%), children (55%), youth (31%), the elderly (29%) and persons with physical or intellectual disabilities (29%). The services these companies are mostly interested in providing are manual work (67%), active participation in fundraising activities (67%) and administration and office work (36%). 75% of the companies interviewed are mostly interested in team-based volunteering activities.

The companies that are not interested in introducing a Corporate Volunteering Programme (39% - 37 companies) were asked why they would not consider participating in Corporate Volunteering. 38% of these companies claimed that it is due to not being able to lose employee working hours and 30% said the issue had not yet been discussed.

84% out of the 100 companies interviewed agreed to being contacted by SOS Malta for more information and 58% of the 100 companies interviewed said they are interested in their company being listed in a database aimed at facilitating the matching of businesses with NGOs for the creation



Education and Culture DG
'Europe for Citizens' Programme



of Corporate Volunteering Programmes. This appeared to show a good degree of interest in Corporate Volunteering. Despite this, when SOS Malta later asked these businesses to submit their details for the database, only two replied. From the feedback SOS Malta received from some of the businesses contacted, the difficulties these companies often face relate to the Human Resources Managers, and other staff, finding it difficult to sell the idea of Corporate Volunteering to their superiors, even if they themselves can see the benefits Corporate Volunteering can bring to the company and its staff. Also, businesses seem reluctant to commit to offering certain services to NGOs.

An evaluation of the Workshop and Networking Event held in Malta

The Workshop and Networking Event was held in Malta on the 13th and 20th May. The decision to not hold it on consecutive days was taken so as to increase the chances of reaching our target of having fifteen NGO representatives and fifteen representatives from the business sector on both days of the event. It turned out that a total of seventeen NGO representatives registered to attend the event whilst fourteen representatives from the business sector confirmed that they would be attending. In the end, however, two NGO representatives and two representatives from the business sector did not turn up on both of the days. Three of these did not give reasons for not being present at the event.

The Workshop and Networking Event was opened by Mr Joe Gerada, the Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation for Human Resources Development. The NGOs that attended work with various community groups and the businesses that were present operate within the hotel, telecommunication, real estate, retail and financial sectors. Some of the NGOs and businesses that attended have a very good standing in Malta and are also some of the largest NGOs and businesses operating on the island. On the day, participants came across as very enthusiastic and were very keen on networking and discussing potential partnerships. They also spoke a lot of the benefits such programmes could bring to both the sectors.

At the end of the two days, SOS Malta requested that the participants fill in a Feedback Form. The overall feedback to the training and its content was very positive. One of the questions the participants were asked to answer "Yes", "Not sure" or "No" to was to the statement "After the Workshop and Networking Event, I am certain organisations and companies alike can benefit from having a Corporate Volunteering Scheme in place". Twenty out of the twenty-one participants who completed and submitted their Feedback Forms to SOS Malta answered positively whilst only one answered "Not sure". In addition, the most common comments and recommendations made in these Feedback Forms relate to the importance of having follow-up activities that offer support to these and other NGOs and businesses. This was suggested as they feared enthusiasm could be lost. They also felt relationships between the sectors could continue to develop if activities such as the training were organised on a more regular basis. NGOs also seemed to agree strongly with the database and how beneficial such a database would be for its sector.

➤ ESTONIA

A general overview of Corporate Volunteering in Estonia

A research company, Klaster, was commissioned by Volunteer Development Estonia to conduct a survey with the business sector, within the framework of the EPSEV project. The sample consisted of 100 businesses and the interviewees were mainly either General Managers or the Human Resources Managers.





The survey revealed that almost all companies (86%) are familiar with the term “Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)” and 77% of companies are engaged in some sort of activity that could be classified as CSR. 61 companies (out of 100) even have defined CSR principles.

Most often, the CSR activities were financial sponsorship, so-called green activities for example planting trees and non-financial support such as discount coupons and gifts. Rather popular were also donations and the promotion of volunteering projects through newsletters and intranets. Working for the community was seldom mentioned.

The research revealed, however, that contact with Corporate Volunteering Programmes is somewhat more infrequent. Only a third of the respondents have any knowledge of Corporate Volunteering Programmes and only twelve companies (out of 100) have a programme set up. These are mostly companies with more than 300 employees. The most popular target groups for these volunteering programmes are children and youth. Respondents also noted that the homeless, persons with disabilities and drug addicts are also popular target groups amongst businesses. Generally, the programmes involve manual labour and are either individual or a team effort and employees also have the possibility of choosing which NGO to volunteer with.

Half of the companies that do not have a Corporate Volunteering Programme in place think that it would be feasible to start one. It also emerged that the main benefits they see such programmes having are the fact that they help the community, public relations and employee satisfaction. The most popular target groups these companies see themselves working with are also mainly children and youth but people with physical disabilities, the unemployed, the elderly and drug addicts emerged as being popular targets.

In addition to the EPSEV project, a Corporate Volunteering Pilot Programme is currently also being implemented in Estonia by the Ministry of the Interior, within the framework of the European Year of Volunteering 2011. Five businesses will be matched with NGOs with the purpose of offering them assistance, training and experience in setting up their volunteering activities. These experiences will then be shared with others. Volunteer Development Estonia was chosen to hold the training, which is scheduled take place in September 2011. The training was ordered by the Ministry of the Interior. This is a very positive measure and serves as a good follow-up activity from the EPSEV project.

An analysis of the needs of the third sector with regards to Corporate Volunteering in Estonia

The survey “Participation in Voluntary Activities in Estonia” (2008-2009) showed that only 3% of people living in Estonia volunteer with organisations on an active and long-term basis. For them, being a volunteer is considered a conscious choice and a highly motivating activity. On the other hand, 10% of the population volunteer with organisations occasionally and inactively. They engage only if a suitable opportunity or activity emerges.

Self-development and career emerged as the most important motivating factors behind volunteering. Volunteers consider it important to obtain new knowledge and experience, develop and improve their chances to do the job they hope to do as well as test themselves in a new field.

In addition, Volunteer Development Estonia gathered information, during different events and training, about the needs of Estonian NGOs. The feedback they received from NGOs is that they find it relatively easy to engage volunteers on a short-term basis or for a one-off event and the most difficult challenge for them is to recruit, motivate and retain professional and long-term volunteers.

Considering the above information, Volunteer Development Estonia finds that there is a vast need and potential to develop Corporate Volunteering in Estonia.



Education and Culture DG
‘Europe for Citizens’ Programme



A research company, Klaster, was commissioned by Volunteer Development Estonia, to chart the needs of the third sector through a survey, this also done within the framework of the EPSEV project. The total number of respondents was 84.

The research revealed that more than half of the NGOs in this sample have applied for some form of help from the business sector and bit less than half were successful. Usually the assistance is non-financial support such as coupons and gifts, financial sponsorships and donations. Regarding Corporate Volunteering, more than a third of the respondents know about at least one Corporate Volunteering Programme but only seven respondents (out of 84) have participated in a programme.

From the surveys, it also emerged that most NGOs need volunteers with specific professional competence whilst general competence is needed for approximately one third of the cases.

On another note, 91% of the respondents wanted to receive additional information on Corporate Volunteering which demonstrates a very positive interest.

A description of the feedback received from the business sector with regards to Corporate Volunteering in Estonia

According to the direct feedback received from businesses, it can be seen that knowledge about Corporate Volunteering is limited and unsystematic. As a result, companies consider information about how to set up Corporate Volunteering Programmes and how to sell such schemes to company owners and top management as very important. A couple of companies even stressed the need for training.

In the spring of 2011, Volunteer Development Estonia participated in meetings organised by the Ministry of the Interior. The main goal of these meetings was to bring together representatives from all three sectors to discuss the state and progress of Corporate Volunteering in Estonia and the needs of each sector. The discussions gave input into setting up the earlier mentioned EYV2011 Pilot Programme for Corporate Volunteering in Estonia. At these meetings it became clear, that the five largest companies are interested and ready to start their Corporate Volunteering Programmes. They are also convinced that the concept of Corporate Volunteering should be promoted in Estonia more widely and that the public sector should play a greater role in disseminating information, raising awareness, and offering training and broker services. Alternatively, if these activities were to be handed over to a third sector organisation, the public sector should finance them.

Throughout the EPSEV project, Volunteer Development Estonia got the impression that businesses often expect NGOs to better their volunteering management skills prior to seeking a partnership with the business sector. Although, Volunteer Development Estonia agrees that this is needed, private companies need to realise that NGOs have limited resources and in some cases the professional help they need may in fact be in the field of management. NGO-private company partnerships will be successful only if both parties are open to learning from each other and are able to see the partnership as mutually beneficial.

An evaluation of the Workshop and Networking Event held in Estonia

The Workshop and Networking Event did not take place in Estonia in the planned format. It was initially scheduled for the 13th and 14th of May 2011 and was to take place in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. The target was to have fifteen NGO representatives and fifteen representatives from the business sector. Volunteer Development Estonia uploaded information about the Workshop and Networking Event on its website www.vabatahtlikud.ee/vta and on the national volunteering portal www.vabatahtlikud.ee. Invitations were sent via email to the NGOs and businesses that participated



Education and Culture DG
'Europe for Citizens' Programme



in the EPSEV research. Personal phone calls were also made to ten NGOs and ten private companies. The registration was open from the 18th of April to the 8th of May but by the deadline only four participants had registered, two from NGOs, one from the public sector and one from the business sector.

Many of those contacted by Volunteer Development Estonia were interested in participating in the Workshop and Networking Event but the timing was unsuitable for them. Some of those contacted from the business sector had planned business trips and vacations and stated in their feedback that notice of the Workshop and Networking Event should have been given even earlier.

In addition, two large events of EYV2011 took place in Tallinn just a week before, the main target group also being NGOs. The EYV2011 Tour in Estonia took place between the 3rd and the 7th May and the European Volunteer Centre (CEV) Conference took place between the 4th and 6th May. This was organised in cooperation with Volunteer Development Estonia.

Rescheduling the Workshop and Networking Event in Estonia was considered but no suitable time was found. Finally it was decided that Volunteer Development Estonia would cancel the Workshop and Networking Event but still seek to distribute the EPSEV Training Pack that was edited and translated into Estonian, at other events and activities running parallel to the EPSEV project.

On August the 26th and 27th, an NGO Summer School "Recruitment and Retaining of Professional Volunteers from the Business Sector" was organised by the Network of Estonian non-profit organisations (NENO). Volunteer Development Estonia held a two-hour workshop here where the definition of Corporate Volunteering, its different levels and also possible obstacles and their solutions were discussed. The EPSEV Training Pack was distributed to the participants of the NGO Summer School. In total there were sixty-six participants at this event.

As a follow-up activity to EPSEV project, Volunteer Development Estonia has also agreed to promote Corporate Volunteering at a meeting for Human Resources Managers in autumn 2011, organised by the Estonian Association for Personnel Development (PARE).

Another follow-up activity is the project Volunteer Development Estonia is proposing to the National Foundation of Civil Society. The main goal of this project is to work out a business plan for a broker service for Corporate Volunteering Programmes in Estonia.

One of the outcomes of the EPSEV project is a spreadsheet database of Estonian NGOs and businesses, with the aim of seeking to build partnerships. The database is published on the website of EPSEV project and on the website of Volunteer Development Estonia. When first uploaded, the database contained information about eight NGOs and one business. Volunteer Development Estonia consider this a useful tool to build contacts between the two sector.

Lessons learnt and recommendations on further actions that can be taken with regards to Corporate Volunteering

- Projects similar to the EPSEV project should run for longer than one year as this will leave greater impact and allow for development and progress;
- A database for partnership-matching would benefit from an interactive web database system whereby NGOs and businesses can log in, add, amend and maintain their information themselves;
- Follow-up activities for NGOs and businesses within our Member States to maintain enthusiasm and garner greater support for Corporate Volunteering;



Education and Culture DG
'Europe for Citizens' Programme



- The introduction of intermediary organisations (brokers) would offer much needed assistance to NGOs and business wanting to set up a Corporate Volunteering Programme;
- Training, field trips and networking events for third sector organisations that may want to operate as intermediary organisations (brokers);
- More training for Human Resources Managers and other relevant staff, on how they should sell the idea of Corporate Volunteering to their superiors.

CONTACT DETAILS:



Address: 4, Rüütli Street, 51007 Tartu, Estonia

Tel: +372 7 420 341

Email: info@vabatahtlikud.ee

Website: www.vabatahtlikud.ee/vta



Address: 10, Triq il-Ward, Santa Venera,
SVR 1640, Malta

Tel: +356 21 244123 or +356 21 335097

Email: info@sosmalta.org

Website: www.sosmalta.org

ⁱ This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Education and Culture DG
'Europe for Citizens' Programme