



Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality

Division for Youth Policy

The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people

EU cooperation in the youth field consists, amongst other things, of cooperation over four areas with common objectives; Promoting participation of young people, Better information to young people, Promoting voluntary activities of young people and Better knowledge about young people. In February 2006 Sweden reported on the implementation of the objectives concerning participation and information. This is Sweden's report concerning the objectives of voluntary activities of young people.

Summary

1. More than half of all Swedish citizens are involved in some form of voluntary work in or outside associations. Amongst young people aged between 16 and 29, approximately 40 per cent work on a voluntary basis in some form.
2. In 2006 state support to organisations in the popular movements (NGO:s) amounted to more than Euro 780 million. Of this approximately Euro 23 million was specifically set aside for national organisations representing young people.
3. In order to obtain knowledge about the situation of those organising or participating in voluntary programmes, the Government Offices has commissioned a review of these activities in Sweden. The report was submitted in June 2006.
4. The Swedish Centre for International Youth Exchange (CIU) has with state funding developed a new method for the recognition of informal learning. State funds have also been set aside for evaluating the method in a pilot study.

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Introduction

Popular movements in Sweden are unique in their scope. Studies show that of all young people aged between 16 and 29, approximately 40 per cent are involved in some form of voluntary work and more than two thirds are members of an association. State support to popular movements is very extensive and in 2006 amounted to slightly more than Euro 780 million, of which Euro 23 million was specifically set aside for the national activities of organisations representing young people. All democratic associations on a national level, irrespective of the focus of their activities, are eligible for government grants. In this way the self-determination and creativity of associations is strengthened, at the same time as the state encourages voluntary work.

In an international context, discussions on voluntary work often relate to involvement of a full-time nature. As a step in the implementation of the common objectives in the White Paper "New Impetus for European Youth", the Government Offices commissioned Ersta Sköndal University College to conduct a survey of this type of voluntary work carried out by young people in Sweden. The study covers not only organisations arranging full-time voluntary activities and their participants, but also the obstacles which arrangers and participants encounter. The report, which was finalised in June 2005, also contains a brief international comparison. Valuable knowledge has been gained and the report is currently being processed within the Government Offices.

Promoting voluntary activities of young people is important in order to support young people's democratic commitment and active citizenship. The Swedish report concerning the objectives of voluntary activities of young people is aiming to describe voluntary activities in a broad sense in non-profit organisations, including political, sports and leisure organisations, but also in associations for social and aid work. Voluntary activities can be carried out on a full-time basis or as an engagement outside of school or work.

Definitions

Sweden has approximately 9 million inhabitants, and of these nearly 1.5 million are young people aged between 13 and 25. These young people constitute the target group for national youth policy in Sweden. The target group for the priorities laid down in the White Paper "New Impetus for European Youth" consists of young people aged between 15 and 25. In Sweden there are about 1.2 million persons in this group.

Municipal autonomy is a fundamental principle of Swedish society. This means that each municipality determines its own priorities within the framework set up by the Riksdag and the Government. A large part of the decisions that affects the objectives within the youth policy area are thus made in the municipalities. The measures outlined in the report will only cover state initiatives. This means, for example, that total support to

voluntary organisations is much higher than that reported since grants are also provided at the regional and local level. Aggregate statistics on total support provided to voluntary organisations are not available.

The word "volunteer" has in Sweden traditionally often been associated with non-profit development aid work. However, in pace with the establishment of European Voluntary Service and a changed linguistic usage within some NGO:s, the meaning of the word has been broadened and today different actors may use the term in different ways. This means that the term may be used to refer to people who work on a voluntary basis covering periods ranging from one or more occasions per month to full-time involvement each day over several months. In this report, the term *volunteer* refers to *a person carrying out voluntary work as their main occupation* during a period of life, usually ranging from a few weeks up to a year. When referring to *a person involved in voluntary activities in addition to their regular work or studies* the terms "voluntary" or "voluntary worker" are used in this report.

Objective 1: Encourage the development of voluntary activities of young people with the aim of enhancing awareness of the existing possibilities, enlarging their scope and improving their quality

Describe briefly the national situation at the moment of the adoption of the common objectives on voluntary activities of young people. Describe also how the voluntary activities of young people have been developed since the adoption of the common objectives.

Ersta Sköndal University College have monitored voluntary work amongst Swedish citizens since 1992. The latest report, which was presented in autumn 2005, found that the proportion of voluntary workers is at a stable and very high level in Sweden. Slightly more than 50 per cent of the population take part in some form of voluntary work and the time citizens put into this work has increased somewhat since it was first measured. Men contribute somewhat more hours than women, and the contributions of persons over the age of 30 are somewhat greater than those of younger persons. However, on average the individual Swede who is active in these areas contributes about 14 hours per month or 3.5 hours per week in voluntary work. The authors of the report consider that this makes Swedish citizens exceptionally active from an international perspective. In comparable studies, it is only the USA, Norway and the Netherlands where contributions on the same scale are made in or outside voluntary organisations. Voluntary work is highly valued and continues to be very strongly supported by citizens.¹

¹ Olsson, Svedberg and Jeppsson Grassman 2005: *Medborgarnas insatser och engagemang i civilsamhället – några grundläggande uppgifter från en ny befolkningsstudie (Citizens'*

Among young people aged between 16 and 29, 39 per cent of the men and 43 per cent of the women are involved in voluntary activities. That is a decline by 11 and 4 percentage points respectively compared to the last survey in 1998. The by far most common area for voluntary activity is sports, that attracts about half of all young voluntary workers. Other areas are for example student's unions, development assistance organisations and culture associations. The division of voluntary contributions between different types of organisations has been fairly steady in the studies of 1992, 1998 and 2005.

As regards the views of young people on voluntary work, more than 80% of those surveyed between the ages of 16 and 29 respond affirmatively to the question of whether they regard involvement in voluntary work as helping people to have an active role in a democratic society. These figures show that there is a strong belief in the positive effects of voluntary work among young people in Sweden.

For a long time, the Swedish Government has both encouraged and supported voluntary work, mainly through providing financial support to non-profit organisations and associations. This support amounts to about Euro 780 million on an annual basis, including support to popular adult education and to sports. A special part of the grant, which in 2006 amounted to around Euro 23 million, is directed to voluntary youth organisations. These involve around half a million children and young people, and account for a large part of voluntary work amongst the young.

As mentioned above, sports represent the area attracting most young voluntary workers, close to 20 per cent of young Swedish people work on a voluntary basis in sports associations². In addition to government grants provided to youth organisations, sports associations for children and young people receive government grants for their activities. In 2006 these grants amounted to more than Euro 100 million. The municipalities are the biggest public sector contributors to Swedish sport. According to the Swedish Sports Confederation, the municipalities are maintaining sports facilities and supporting activities to the value of more than Euro 480 millions annually.

In Sweden volunteer work in the form of full-time involvement over a limited period has traditionally been provided within the framework of the comprehensive activities of development aid organisations. The term "volunteer" in Sweden has thus come to be connected with this type of activity. As a result of the EU Programme "Youth" and the European Voluntary Service (EVS), volunteer activities have increased in scope and more young people are today interested in this area. Between the years of

2004 and 2005, the number of applications granted for EVS increased from 141 to 180 and the number of applications made increased even more. Preliminary statistics indicate that both applications made and granted increased further in 2006.

Today there are approximately 250 organisations which send or receive volunteers, many of them within the framework of the European Voluntary Service. In a report on volunteer activities among young people in Sweden, the total number of such places has been estimated at approximately 1 000 for Swedish young people working in Sweden or abroad, and between 250 and 300 for foreign volunteers coming to Sweden.³

How are the different types of voluntary activities and organisations that provide opportunities for volunteering of young people supported?

As described above, extensive state funding is provided to the popular movements and the NGO:s in Sweden. The main principle is that the civil sector should be a complement to, and not a replacement for, the public sector. The policy is aiming at supporting the Swedish civil sector and the work is today divided into two parts, a sector-oriented part, and a more general, cross-sectoral, part.

The sector-oriented policy for popular movements in general applies to all policy and activity areas in the state budget, such as handicap policy, youth policy, cultural policy, environmental policy and sports policy, and covers specific questions concerning different types of associations within the respective sectors. The government grants to the national youth organisations are thus a part of the Swedish youth policy. The general and cross-sectoral policy for popular movements covers common questions related to all types of popular movements and voluntary associations, e.g. state grants allocated to associations. The overall goal of the cross-sectoral policy on popular movements is that people should have the best possible conditions for establishing and participating in different types of popular movements and associations.

The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is Sweden's national agency for the "Youth" programme. Since the start of the EVS programme, the Board has started building up broad competence concerning volunteer exchange. Organisations which have been in touch with the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs concerning their volunteer work describe their experience in highly favourable terms. In

³ Grosse 2006: *Volontärprogram riktade till ungdomar – kartläggning och analys (Volunteer Programmes Directed to Young People – Survey and Analysis)*, Ersta Sköndal University College.

particular they rate the Board's competence highly, as well as its rapid handling of questions, flexibility and not least its receptivity.⁴

Training for voluntary or volunteer activities is normally provided by organisations in the voluntary sector. In some cases training is provided by folk high schools⁵ that can be closely linked to an NGO. The latter applies especially to the training of international volunteers. Colleges and universities offer courses on global issues and so on for people who wish to deepen their knowledge of development aid work.

The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, LSU, is a coordinating body for almost 100 Swedish youth organisations. The members come from all kinds of organisation, from the party political youth organisations, student movements and religious organisations to leisure organisations. LSU operates as a platform on issues concerning youth, both international and national, and provides a network for national as well as international organisations dealing with youth cooperation.

The Swedish Centre for International Youth Exchange (CIU) is a non-profit organisation that receive state support for their work with promoting the internationalisation of young people. The organisation turns to both participants and arrangers, and works not only with exchange but also research and education. CIU also provides a web service known as "MyTellus.com" which provides information on opportunities for young people in Sweden to acquire international experience by e.g. work, education or voluntary activities abroad.

The National Forum for Voluntary Social Work (Forum för Frivilligt Socialt Arbete) is an umbrella organisation for voluntary social work in Sweden and has about 30 member organisations. The Forum provides a platform for exchange of experiences and competence development among their members, and also works with EU co-ordination for Swedish NGOs. The National Forum for Voluntary Social Work is also running an EU- network as well as Volontärbyrån (the Bureau for Volunteers), whose work is described further on in this report.

The Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet) is the umbrella organisation of the Swedish sports movement. The main task for the Confederation is to provide support for their member organisations and to represent the sports movement. The Swedish Sports

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ A folk high school, folkhögskola, is an independent adult education college.

Confederation is also distributing the governmental grants to the sports and athletics associations.

Forum Syd (Swedish NGO Centre for Development Cooperation) consists of about 200 non-governmental organisations in the field of international development cooperation. The organisation provides training, information and exchange of experiences to their members, of which many also operate at the national level with voluntary activities in the field of social care. Forum Syd has been commissioned by the state aid organisation, Sida, to distribute financial support for Swedish organisations working with development cooperation.

Sida also runs a special youth programme, Zenit, with an extensive website and with activities in Stockholm and Malmö for young people who are interested in work in developing countries.

Objective 2: Make it easier for young people to carry out voluntary activities by removing existing obstacles

Which obstacles to volunteering do young people encounter?

As a step in the implementation of the common objectives of the EU in the youth policy area, the Government Offices at the end of 2005 commissioned a survey of volunteer activities among young people in Sweden. In the same year a study commissioned by the Government Offices concerning citizens' involvement and voluntary work was also presented. Both these studies find that obstacles limiting opportunities for young people to work as volunteers may be socio-economic, formal, social or administrative in their nature.⁶

The results of the research report on civic involvement carried out by Ersta Sköndal University College (on a commission from the Government Offices) show that voluntary involvement in associations does not compensate for a lack of resources. It appears that voluntary work does not, on the whole, function as a bridge between private life and societal life for people with a weaker socio-economic position. Corresponding patterns are, according to the report, also evident in other European countries.

The study of volunteer activities in Sweden reveals the same patterns. It is primarily young people with good socio-economic positions who are able to take part in volunteer programmes. The vast majority of volunteer programmes receive many applications from highly motivated young people. As a consequence of this, additional resources are not

⁶ Grosse, 2006.

always allocated for outreach activities to individuals with fewer opportunities or with specific needs.

The majority of other problems identified in the survey on volunteer activities in Sweden was found to be caused by the unclear formal status of volunteer programmes. Young people who become involved in volunteer activities as their main occupation do not fit into any of the groups that are entitled to social security benefits. In certain cases volunteers are treated as being equivalent to either students, or to employees. The current regulatory system runs the risk that volunteers are being inconsistently assessed since it is not always clear how the law should be applied to a volunteer's situation.

According to the study, these formal problems concern most security systems, such as social insurance, unemployment insurance, and the pension system. Other components of social insurance such as parental insurance etc are also affected. In some cases these issues also affect those who are working voluntary in addition to their regular work or studies.

The report identifies some specific problems encountered by young people who come to Sweden on volunteer programs. These mainly concern practical questions, such as having access to a personal identification number or a bank account. Volunteers coming from outside Europe may in some cases encounter difficulties when trying to obtain a residence permit to stay in Sweden.

Other obstacles are connected with the unclear meaning attributed to the term "volunteer". Since such activities are relatively unknown among young Swedish people, the recruitment group for volunteer programmes is significantly reduced. The risk is that only those, who are well positioned in associations, able to take initiatives and/or accustomed to travelling, or active in terms of applying for information, will be contacted. A corresponding problem is that representatives of municipalities are not always familiar with the term "volunteer" thereby accentuating the risk that young people do not receive relevant information.

Administrative obstacles may spring from extensive bureaucracy within the sending or receiving organisations or within any contributor involved. As social difficulties, the report points out problems getting into the togetherness at the place of work, homesickness etc.

How are these difficulties tackled?

Socio-economic obstacles

As regards socio-economic obstacles, measures are continuously being taken to combat social exclusion in all areas of society. The Swedish

National Board for Youth Affairs, as well as other agencies run a number of projects that are directed to young people with fewer opportunities and this is a highly prioritised issue for the new government stepping into office in October 2006. Within EVS there is the explicit goal of addressing young people with fewer opportunities, and the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is actively working to encourage more organisations to use EVS as a tool for recruiting young people with limited opportunities. For several years now, Nordic countries have also cooperated over volunteer activities. The aim of this cooperation is that cultural differences may be regarded as less important if young people travel to countries geographically close to them. This would lower the thresholds for young people who otherwise would not have participated.

Formal obstacles

Some of the organisations arranging volunteer activities have pointed out the consequences of the lack of clarity in the legal position of "volunteer" work as being not just a problem, but also a source of freedom. The fact that volunteer work is not regulated means that it can take many different forms and that volunteers and arrangers may thus experience greater freedom. In the ongoing work of clarifying the formal status of volunteers, it is important to take this into account so that opportunities available to volunteers are not limited.

Through the study carried out by Ersta Sköndal University College, a number of more or less easily remedied obstacles to volunteer activities have been identified. Together with other research and reports and inquiries, not the least the Inquiry on Popular Movements that is described below and that will end in September 2006, this study has contributed to a broad base of knowledge for the future work of the government in this field.

Shortcomings in information

In its capacity as the national agency for the "Youth" programme, the National Board for Youth Affairs disseminates information about the opportunities provided by EVS through its outreach activities. The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs also maintains a dialogue with the Swedish Migration Board in order to increase the knowledge of the latter about working as a volunteer and trying to remedy the difficulties encountered by non-European volunteers when trying to obtain a residence permit to stay in Sweden.

The municipalities have the major responsibility for providing information to young people at the local level. Information regarding voluntary activities may be spread in many ways, for example through employment offices, schools and study counsellors. All information should of course be done in cooperation with the organisations offering voluntary or volunteer activities.

The difficulties identified in the report are not always formal obstacles, but may arise from uncertainty or a lack of knowledge on the application of certain regulatory provisions. A number of the obstacles which volunteers and arrangers encounter largely arise from a lack of information. One example of this is that the Swedish National Tax Board published a letter on the payments to volunteers a couple of years ago after discussions with the National Board for Youth Affairs. The letter established that the benefits for foreign EVS volunteers and their pocket money were to be regarded as scholarships and thus exempt from tax. Despite the fact that the letter was drawn up at a central level, local tax offices are not always aware of how these payments should be handled.

More and better information is, of course, also a solution to the problem that not enough young people and municipal representatives are aware of the opportunities provided by volunteer work.

Objective 3 Promote voluntary activities with a view to reinforcing young people's solidarity and engagement as responsible citizens

How has the volunteering of young people been promoted in Sweden during the past two years?

Voluntary and volunteer activities are traditionally provided in Sweden by membership associations. Non-profit, voluntary work is, as described above, mainly promoted through an extensive economical support of these associations. NGO:s can apply for general support from the government as well as from the county councils and the municipalities.

The government grant for youth organisations can be applied for by all types of organisations at national level, providing the organisation is run on democratic principles, is independent from a mother organisation and has young people represented on its board. This way young people are guaranteed influence over the organisation and its work without having the government determining in detail what the funds should be used for. Instead, the size of the grant reflects the number of members the organisation has, and/or the scope of its activities. A number of national youth organisations receiving government grants run some form of exchange activity with other countries.

About 90 national youth organisations are today allocated organisational grants. These organisations include political, religious as well as social organisations. All these organisations carry out different kinds of voluntary work. By supporting youth organisations with general grants, volunteer activities are promoted indirectly, at the same time as account is taken of young people's right of self-determination. The National Board for Youth Affairs are having an ongoing dialogue with youth organisations about the system design and the effects of the government grants in order to keep the system up-to-date with the development in

the field of youth organisations. In addition to organisational grants, there are a number of other state, regional and local support options to which youth organisations in Sweden can apply.

The Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation, Sida, is providing funding for a number of development aid organisations also offering volunteer work and exchange programmes. In 2005 Sida's support for aid through popular movements and individual organisations amounted to approximately Euro 135 million. Funds were allocated to about 1 000 organisations working in around 100 countries.

In recent years there has been a decrease in the traditional work carried out in popular movements, mainly amongst women and younger people. New forms of involvement are emerging, probably inspired by factors such as the tradition of volunteering. Researchers argue that this may reflect the fact that citizens today wish to have a "freer" relationship with the associations they are involved in, and thus be more independent in determining their involvement. This could serve as one explanation for the decline in the number of members of NGO:s at the same time as the proportion of voluntary workers is relatively stable⁷, a factor which must be given appropriate attention in promoting voluntary work.

One successful attempt to capture and channel these new forces has been made by the Bureau for Volunteers (Volontärbyrå). The Bureau for Volunteers provides a web site that helps NGO:s to get in contact with voluntary workers and vice versa. Associations can publish assignments on the Bureau's web site, and individuals can receive notification of assignments for which they have registered an interest. If a voluntary worker does not find an interesting assignment right away, he or she can register and receive information when the help offered is needed by an organisation. The Bureau is a non-commercial initiative and thanks to cooperation with municipalities and companies the service is free of charge. In 2004 the National Forum for Voluntary Social Work (Forum för Frivilligt Socialt Arbete), who runs the Bureau for Volunteers, was allocated state support to launch this activity nation-wide. The Bureau has grown rapidly in the last few years. Since the launch of the web site a little over four years ago, the Bureau for Volunteers have mediated more than 9 000 contacts between individuals and associations and 64 per cent of the voluntary workers are between the ages of 16 and 35⁸. Many municipalities have acknowledged the work of the bureau and shown an interest in establishing a local cooperation⁹.

⁷ Olsson, Svedberg och Jeppsson Grassman, 2005.

⁸ Volontärbyrå, 2006.

⁹ For further information about the Bureau for Volunteers, visit www.volontarbyran.org

Objective 4: Recognise voluntary activities of young people with a view to acknowledging their personal skills and engagement in society.

What has been done to enhance the recognition of voluntary activities of young people?

In Sweden work is proceeding on finding methods for recognising non-formal and informal learning in a number of areas. The Government has established a special authority, the Swedish National Commission on Validation (Valideringsdelegationen) to carry out development and dissemination measures with a view to raising quality, strengthening legitimacy and increasing equivalence concerning validation of competence and knowledge acquired outside the formal education system. In addition, the Commission will develop working forms for validating, publicising ongoing validation measures, as well as working for good cooperation between partners in the area. The Swedish National Commission on Validation also has the task of ensuring that national and international validation issues receive greater attention.

In the year 2000, the Government commissioned The National Board for Youth Affairs to study methods for enhancing the value of informal learning and non-formal education within the work of youth organisations. The Board stated that such validation involves both positive and negative aspects and did not therefore recommend a state initiative. A public validation of this kind could lead to organisations and their members feeling forced into a system they do not feel suits their way of working. Instead of developing a state alternative, grants have been given to NGO:s working with recognition of informal learning in order for the initiatives to be an optional undertaking for all those involved.

In June 2005 the Centre for International Youth Exchange (CIU) was granted state project funds for developing a method to recognise international experience acquired by young people. The aim was to draw up general and explicit tools to identify and document informal learning and inter-cultural competence. The result of the project is a method which CIU calls ELD (Experience, Learning, Description) in which participants together with a supervisor identifies acquired skills from concrete situations within the scope of a certain project. The method is intended to be applicable to a number of activities and the project in question can be anything from an exchange program to a training course. On 1 December 2006 a pilot study was initiated by CIU to evaluate the ELD method. The study is made in cooperation with the Swedish Sports Confederation and some ten other organisations and is financed through government funds. If the results of the pilot study are positive, the method may in the future also be applied to experiences gained by volunteers in their work.

In March 2006 the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, LSU, presented a report of their work with validation and recognition of experiences made by those active in youth organisations. The compilation is meant to be an inspiration and a support for youth organisations in Sweden that are interested in further developing their work with these issues. The report was financed by the government and is mainly concentrated on validation with reference to the labour market.

In addition to these measures, the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs has been selected to participate in the pilot phase for developing Youthpass as a tool for recognising learning that takes place within EVS. This means that the Board in conjunction with 12 other organisations has tested the tool developed by the commission. The results of the pilot phase will then be used in the overall work of developing Youthpass and Europass. Furthermore, the National Board for Youth Affairs and CIU are the Swedish representatives in the group of experts working with the development of Europass-Youth during 2007.

Were the common objectives useful? Did they help to enhance the voluntary activities of young people?

The common objectives have contributed to focus being put on volunteer activities where this is a person's main occupation over a limited period. Thanks to the common objectives, knowledge about volunteer activities has increased as a result of a special study commissioned by the Government Offices. The work of processing the proposals presented in the report has recently been started.

Sweden, as reported earlier, has a comparatively high proportion of voluntary workers in the whole population. A large part of the voluntary activities of young people in Sweden are carried out within the work of the youth organisations. This implies that the common objectives of promoting voluntary activities in the White Paper are closely linked with the objectives of promoting participation of young people. Sweden reported on the follow-up of the latter objective in February 2006.

Objective: A better understanding and greater knowledge of youth

Which actions were taken in order to identify existing knowledge on the voluntary activities of young people at national, regional and local level?

The two reports, on volunteer activities and on citizens' activities and involvement in civic society, that has been presented above have meant a significant addition to the existing knowledge of voluntary and volunteer activities in Sweden. Ersta Sköndal University College, who has produced both reports, has taken a leading role in research on NGO:s and on voluntary activities in Sweden. The research programme

concerning citizens' voluntary activities is still ongoing, and in 2007 the University College is planning to publish a book on the subject.

In addition to these two reports, representatives from a number of actors providing opportunities for voluntary work were invited to a meeting with government officials in October 2005. The participants represented national and local authorities as well as and NGO:s. The conclusions of this meeting served as a foundation for the commission to study volunteer activities in Sweden. The obstacles identified by the participants in the meeting are to a great extent supported by the study at the same time as the participants stressed the need for the organisations themselves to shoulder some of the responsibility to change the current situation. This points to the importance of a continuous dialogue in the future work of development. The overall measures taken have led to a good knowledge about the situation of young people working as volunteers, as well as volunteer activities as a whole.

In 2005 a Committee of Inquiry on Popular Movements was appointed with the task of reviewing the future policy of popular movements and proposing measures concerning the financing of popular movements and other activities of associations. The committee will also review how statistics and research into popular movements and associations can continue to be developed. Special attention should be paid to the conditions for young people and youth organisations. The committee will finalise its work by 30 September 2007. By means of the committee, the Government will gain further knowledge on the situation for voluntary workers and voluntary organisations.¹⁰

Were difficulties met in the implementation of the common objectives and in establishing the report? If so, what kind of difficulties (administrative difficulties, lack of means, lack of infrastructure etc)?

The main obstacle has been the unclear definition of what constitutes volunteer activities. This has also meant that the focus of this report is to some extent split between describing voluntary activities amongst young people in general, and volunteer work amongst young people in particular.

In view of a strategic forward-looking perspective: should the direction defined by the common objectives continue or should it be changed, and if so how?

The objective of promoting voluntary work amongst young people is part of the work to enhance young people's employability and to offer

¹⁰ Visit www.sou.gov.se/folkrorelse for further information concerning the Committee of Inquiry on Popular Movements.

opportunities of relevant work experience. The objective is also important in terms of strengthening the democratic involvement of young people and promoting active citizenship. In a Swedish context, questions concerning voluntary work are closely connected with the participation of young people. Consideration could be given to the possibility of integrating these two objectives into a common objective on promoting the active citizenship of young people.

Work on volunteer programmes in recent years has provided numerous positive examples which demonstrate the attractiveness of international exchange and encounters with other cultures. For many young people, however, the step to taking part in volunteer activities is not always an easy one to take. For young people with fewer opportunities, short-term volunteer programmes have proved to be useful, but they can also be experienced as a large step, and the programme only partially captures the intended target group. In order to reach young people with fewer opportunities, increased investment in exchange programmes could lead to favourable results.

Were young people consulted?

As has been described above, the Swedish national youth organisations are experiencing a great freedom when it comes to how they choose to organise their work and activities. The government grants to these organisations are based mainly on the size of the organisation and on the scope of its activities. This way, the autonomy and the active participation in voluntary activities of young people is being promoted. The design of the support system is subject to an ongoing discussion with the youth organisations in order to keep it up-to-date.

The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations has studied and contributed to this report and they also participated in the meeting held by the Government Offices in October 2005 on the situation for voluntary organisations.

During the work of mapping volunteer activities in Sweden, young participants were interviewed and the volunteer programme's evaluation forms were studied in order to collect knowledge about young people's views on volunteering.

References

- Olsson, Svedberg och Jeppsson Grassman 2005: *Medborgarnas insatser och engagemang i civilsamhället – några grundläggande uppgifter från en ny befolkningsstudie*, Ersta Sköndal University College.

- Grosse 2006: *Volontärprogram riktade till ungdomar – kartläggning och analys*, Ersta Sköndal University College.

Useful links

- The Government Offices:
<http://www.regeringen.se>
- The National Forum for Voluntary Social Work (Forum för Frivilligt Socialt Arbete):
<http://www.socialforum.se>
- Swedish NGO Centre for Development Cooperation (Forum SYD):
<http://www.forumsyd.org>
- The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, LSU:
<http://www.lsu.se/>
- The Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet):
<http://www.rf.se/>
- The National Board for Youth Affairs (Ungdomsstyrelsen):
<http://www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se>
- The Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation, Sida:
<http://www.sida.se>
- The Swedish Center for International Youth Exchange, CIU:
<http://www.ciu.org>
- The Bureau for Volunteers (Volontärbyrå):
<http://www.volontarbyran.org/>