

Survey of the willingness to participate in voluntary initiatives

Survey within the project “CAN and HELP” initiated by ACES (Academy of Central European Schools), founded by ERSTE Foundation and coordinated by Interkulturelles Zentrum (Austria), in cooperation with VČELÍ DOM (Slovak Republic).

Kardzhali 2015

aces is an initiative of



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General information:

Investigated group of people:

Students and teachers from the both partner organizations in the project "CAN and HELP" - Colegiul National "Zinca Golescu" Pitesti, Romania - Coordinator and Vocational School of Economics "Aleko Konstantinov" Kardzhali, Bulgaria - partner.

Methods of survey:

Quantitative survey without fulfilling a quota and without preliminary selection for ensuring maximum coverage of the target group.

Registration by filling in an online questionnaire prepared in two options - Bulgarian and English.

Registered number of participants: 290

Activities:

- Development of a methodology
- Preparing a questionnaire
- Technical organization and distribution of the questionnaire
- Carrying out the survey
- Processing and analysis of the results

Reference period: October 2015-November 2015

Prepared by: Dimitriya Hristova

Aims and context of the survey

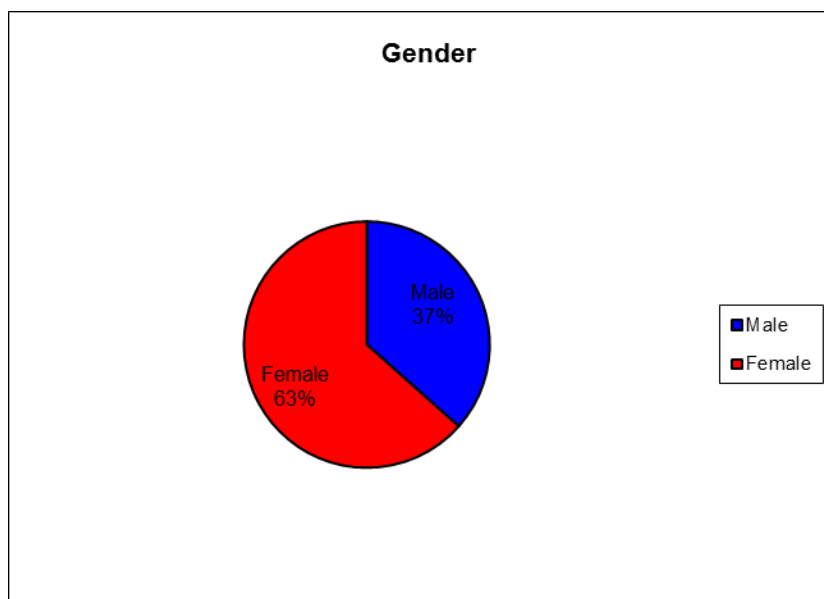
The aim of the survey was to determine whether the respondents are familiar with the term volunteering, its forms and expressions. The survey provided information about the degree of willingness of the students to participate in voluntary and charitable initiatives. The questionnaire was anonymous and was prepared in two options - Bulgarian and English.

The survey was prepared by representatives of Vocational School of Economics "Aleko Konstantinov" Kardzhali for the needs of the project CAN and HELP initiated by ACES (Academy of Central European Schools).

For the aims of the survey, there were no quotas and maximum participants were registered. The total number of the surveyed people was 290 (210 from Bulgaria and 80 from Romania).

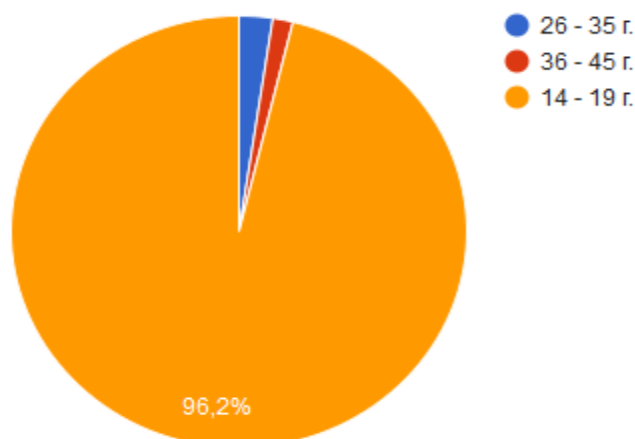
Profile of respondents

The distribution of the respondents belonging to each sex is presented in the following figure.



It is evident that in the target group that took part in the survey, female students are more than male ones.

The distribution of the respondents by age shows that they were mainly students aged between 14 and 19 years. A few teachers took part in the survey.

Age**Volunteering Common Vision**

Trying to know how respondents understand the term volunteering (What is it or what is not? Who provides it? Which organizations work with volunteers? Is it important at all to exist volunteers and is voluntary work valuable?), there were set out various predefined categories in the individual questions. Some of the questions suggest a selection of more than one possible answer, while others need to specify a particular response.

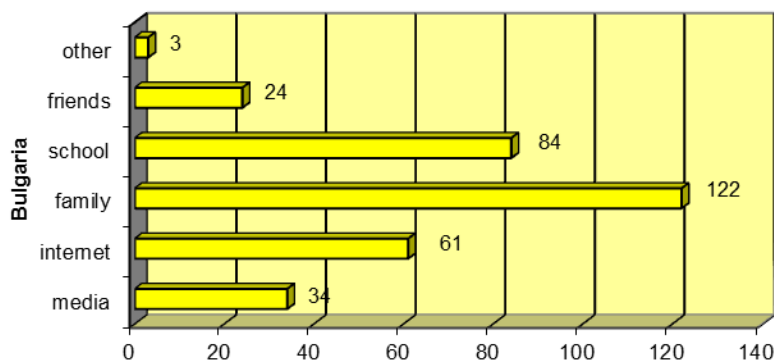
What is volunteering?

Volunteering is a multiaspected social phenomenon for which there is no universal valid definition. For the aims of the survey, the respondents were given the opportunity to specify their own definition of "volunteering" according to their views and attitudes.

The most common definitions were related to "grant for needy", "voluntary employment or assistance related to any type of humanitarian activities", "mutual aid, cooperation and tolerance," "kindness, compassion," "to be dedicated to others or to help without expecting anything in return". Some respondents even saw volunteering as "an opportunity to participate actively in changing the community environment, organization, relationships etc".

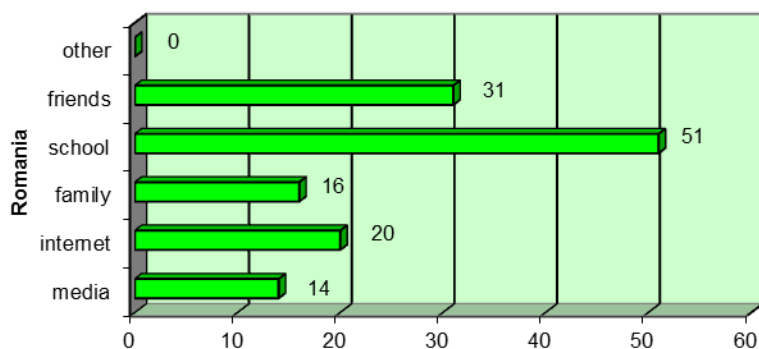
Over 50% of Bulgarian respondents replied that they first known about volunteering from their families. Next in the list came the school institution and the Internet. In Romania, the answers of that question differed significantly from those in Bulgaria. 63.8% of Romanian respondents replied that their school has given them basic information about volunteering, and 38.8% have received this information from friends.

How did you understand about volunteering for the first time?



media	34	16.2%
internet	61	29%
family	122	58.1%
school	84	40%
friends	24	11.4%
other	3	1.4%

How did you understand about volunteering for the first time?



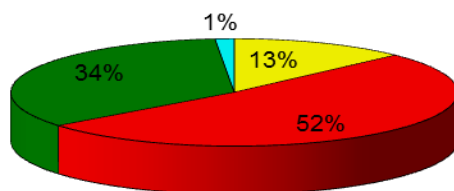
media	14	17.5%
internet	20	25%
family	16	20%
friends	31	38.8%
school	51	63.8%
other	0	0%

The data analysis shows that it would be better if Bulgarian schools increase their promotion of volunteering and attract students to participate in voluntary initiatives.

Participation in voluntary initiatives

The data indicate that the majority of the students have not participated in voluntary and charitable activities so far, but they are willing to join in future. A small number of people are not interested in such kind of activities.

Are you interested in volunteering / charity and have you participated in any way in such initiatives?



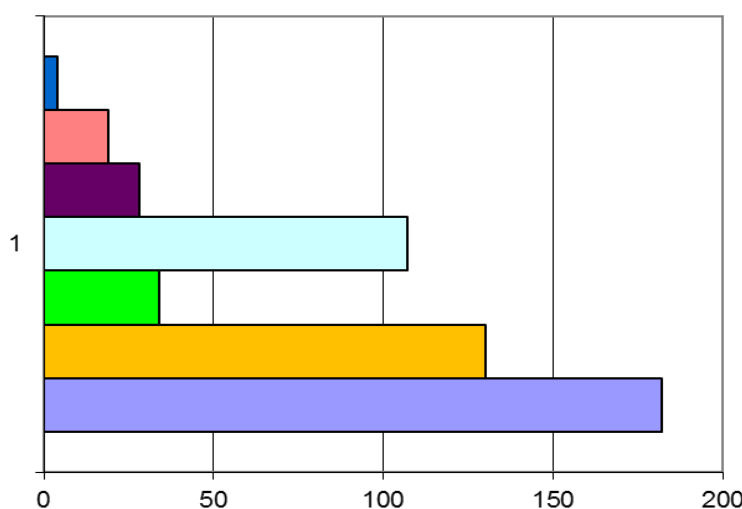
- No, I am not interested in such initiatives and activities
- Yes, I am interested, but I have never participated in such activities
- Yes, I am interested and I have participated (if you want, specify in the field "Other")
- Other

115 of Bulgarian respondents replied that they would like to participate in voluntary or charitable initiatives. 75 respondents answered that they might participate if the initiative is of interest to them. 15 respondents would not like to be included in such kind of activities, and 5 respondents indicated answer "Other". In Romania, 54 of the respondents replied that they would like to participate in voluntary initiatives, 23 still hesitate, and three respondents would not like to take part in them.

Motivation to take part in voluntary initiatives

The motivation of students to participate in such kind of activities are mainly positive emotions, a feeling of personal satisfaction, meeting new people and creating contacts, as well as the opportunity to travel and visit new places.

What would motivate you to participate in such activities?



- Other
- Presents like notebooks, pens, etc.
- Receiving certificates for participation
- The opportunity to travel and visit new places
- If they comply with my schedule and with my personal willingness to participate
- Meeting new people and creating contacts
- Positive emotions and feelings of personal satisfaction

The majority of the respondents would like to participate in undeniable voluntary activities such as helping people in need through donations of money, clothes or food; helping sick children, children with special needs or children deprived of parental care; caring for sick people/ lonely / adults; helping to protect the environment; blood donation. According to the respondents the less common voluntary activities are giving of gratuitous services or consulting - 4%, and raising money for different purposes - 7%.

There was a distinction of real volunteering from virtual one in the answers of the respondents. Considering the weaknesses in such definition, virtual volunteering is every form of voluntary work that takes place in cyberspace, the Internet.

In the survey, there were mentioned two activities that belong to this category: "Involvement in various causes for support on the Internet" – with 4% approval and „Creating thematic groups in social networks” - also with 4% approval.

4% of the respondents identified the signing of petitions as volunteering. ¹

In the survey sample dominated the notion that volunteering is not happening on paper or in front of your home computer. Voluntary activities are actually engaged participation of the individual or group of people in activities addressing specific needs or causes. The support of causes in format LIKE / UNLIKE, creating, maintenance or participating in thematic groups in social networks is often an accompanying activity which is part of a real volunteer initiative. This largely explains the responses of more than half of the respondents who approved the virtual volunteering.

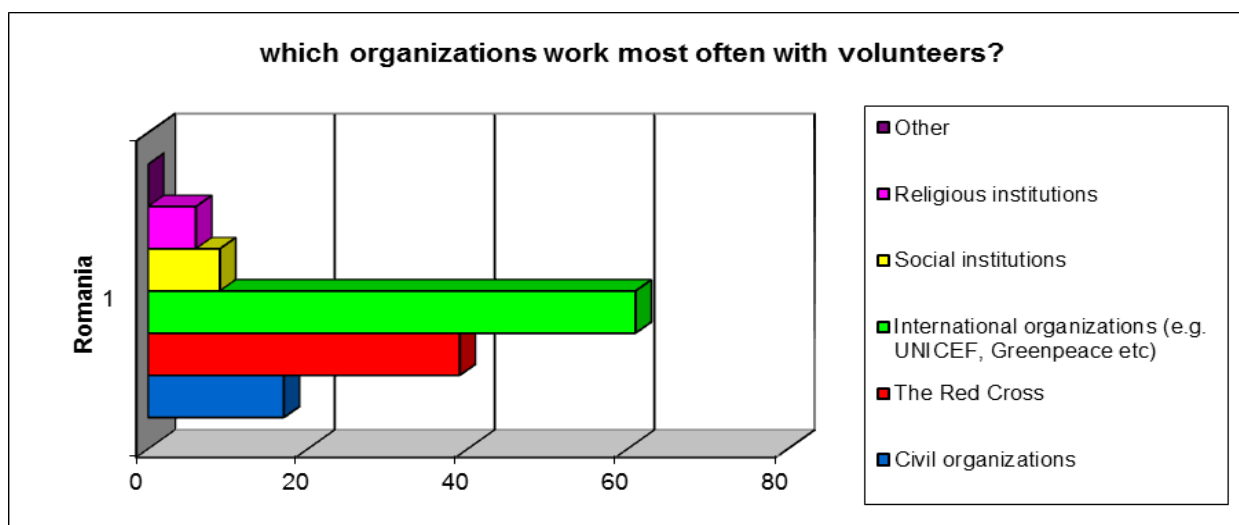
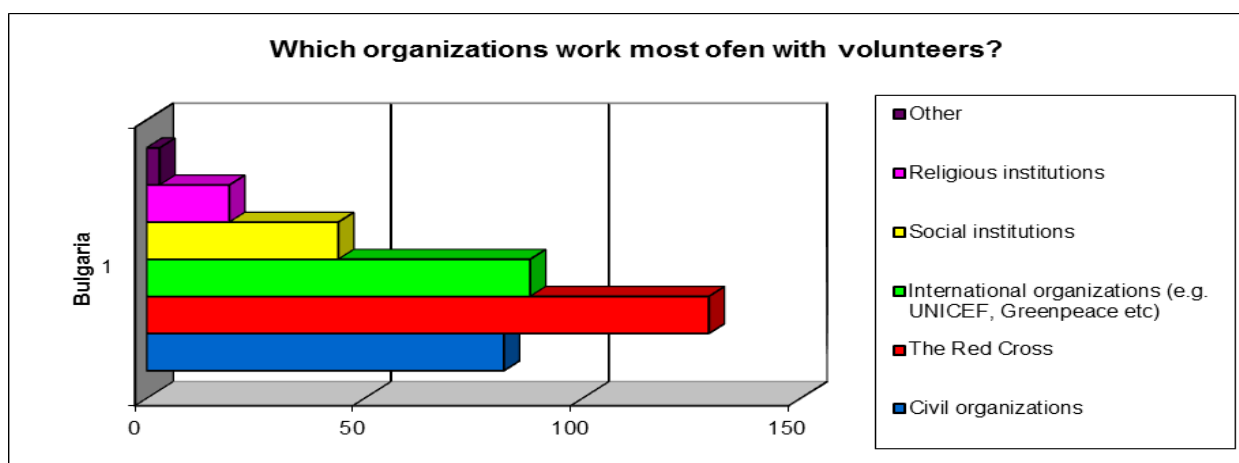
About 90% of the respondents were absolutely convinced that they would like to take part in initiatives for cleaning up polluted areas in the place where they live and would like to help elderly people, orphans, sick children or children with special needs.

Not a small number of respondents replied that they would not like to go to another country as volunteers - 36.7% of the surveyed Bulgarian respondents and 31.3 percent of the Romanian ones. This indicates that the respondents believe that they can be helpful and are able to do more for their own countries.

¹ Reference: Annex 1 – Graph

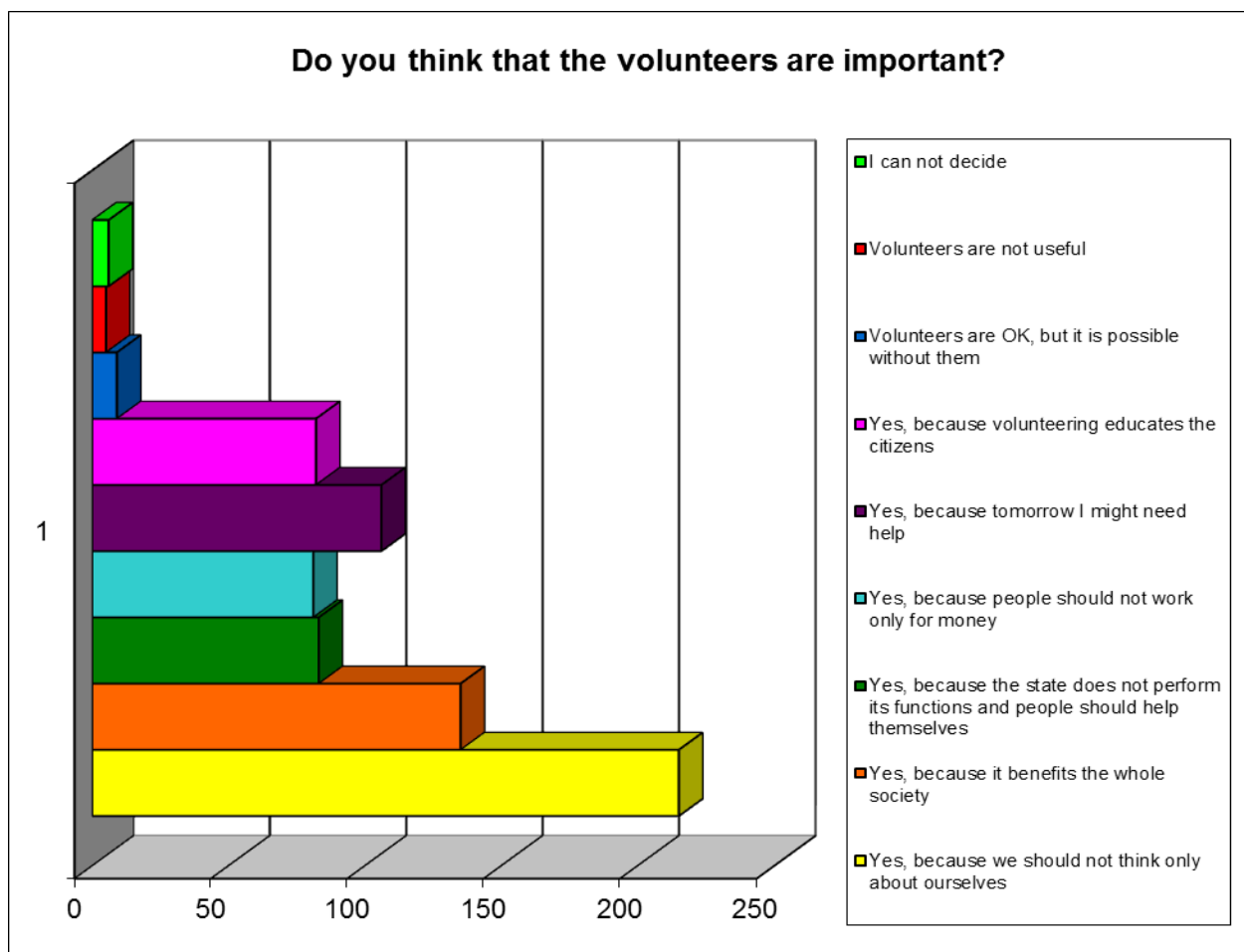
Organisations that work often with volunteers

There is a significant difference between the answers of the both target groups of respondents. Bulgarian students thought that the undisputed leader among the organizations which work with volunteers is the Red Cross. The next in their list with very similar values are various international civic organisations. According to the Romanian respondents the most common organizations that work with volunteers are the internationally recognized organizations UNICEF and Greenpeace.

**Role and significance of volunteers**

For the majority of the respondents volunteering is a social phenomenon concerning the very existence of the society. The respondents share the view that they shouldn't be selfish and think only about themselves. They think that volunteering gives people in need and educates people who give. It reminds belonging to the larger social group beyond the family and friends. Moreover, volunteering is a feature of high civic culture and it "educates

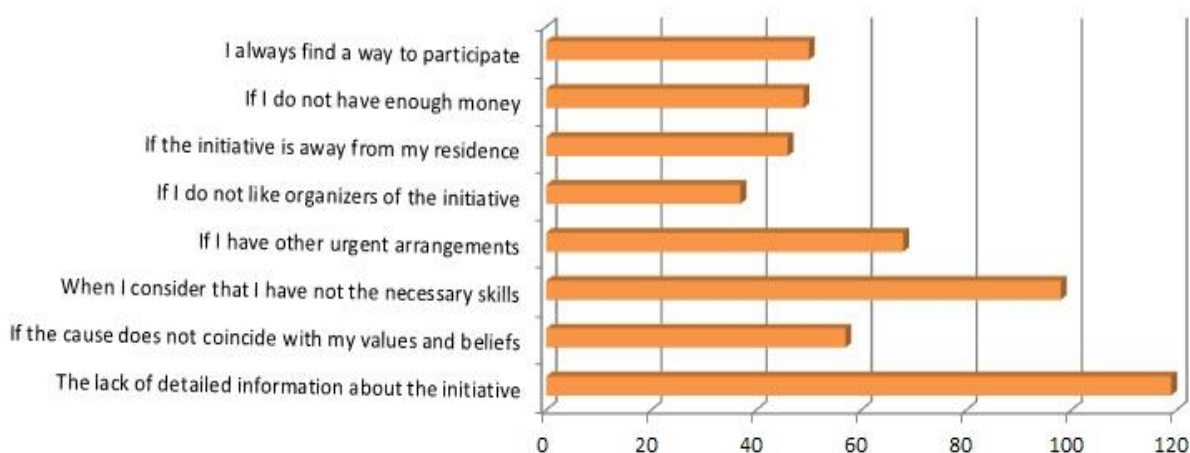
adequate citizens." A lot of surveyed people answered that they show solidarity because someday they may need help. According to some of the respondents volunteering compensates the weaknesses in the public sector, resulting from the fact that the state does not fulfill its functions successfully as a regulator of the public sector.



Factors hindering participation in voluntary initiatives

There are a lot of important factors that discourage or prevent participation in voluntary initiatives. According to the respondents of primary importance is the lack of detailed information about volunteering initiative and place of its holding. Value barriers or life circumstances of the respondents are the other reasons which discourage them to take part in voluntary initiatives. They also added in this group the lack of time, urgent arrangements, the recognition of the cause and assessment of personal skills. 9% of the respondents would not like to participate in certain initiatives because they haven't got enough financial resources. 7% of the respondents pointed out the disapproval of the organizers.

What would prevent you to participate in voluntary initiatives?



Conclusion:

The survey covered a large part of the target group and achieved its aims of giving information about the degree of willingness of students to participate in voluntary and charitable initiatives.

The surveyed group of people has a clear idea about the essence of volunteering. It connects it to voluntary employment and to help people in need. The respondents associate it with compassion, empathy and cooperation. They regard it as an opportunity to be dedicated to others or to help without expecting anything in return, to participate in changing the community environment, organization and relationships between people.

Almost all of the respondents have expressed their readiness to participate in various voluntary initiatives such as helping the elderly, orphans, sick children or children with special needs, cleaning polluted areas or raising money for charity.

The main motivations for them are positive emotions, a sense of personal satisfaction and making new friends and contacts, as well as the opportunity to travel and visit new places.

In the surveyed group of people dominated the view that working with volunteers is reserved for civil society organizations and that significantly overlaps with the real situation. Volunteering is a widespread practice in the activities of civil society at local and

international level and it is hard to place it in public. Religious institutions and community centers are assigned to the civil sector because of the specifics of their activities and status.

School and family are loaded with the biggest expectations to educate the voluntary spirit in adolescents. In a much smaller extent those expectations are directed to the media and religious institutions.

It is necessary to analyze the reasons for the lack of interest to participate in voluntary initiatives. We must work harder to attract and involve students in such kind of activities.

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ANNEX 1

In what kind of activities would you like to participate as a volunteer?

