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ANALYSIS OF SELECTED SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF VOLUNTEERING IN SLOVAKIA

ABSTRACT. Slovakia is a country where volunteering interest lags behind in recognition and development. Reasons of such insufficient development lay in deep system character. Evaluation of Slovak voluntary activities and quantification of analysed issues represent the principal aims of this study. The National Volunteer Center realized the research, while 95 registered non-governmental organizations out of 300 organizations participated in it. Regional disparities in specific fields of volunteering and also in focus on targeted groups were analytically determined. Most numerous group is formed by irregular volunteers while their activities are mainly related to public, social groups and families with children. Economic, financial, legal, legislative and human resource area represent an issue for volunteering organizations and their development. The research results provide information for social policy creators and the institutions that have links in their processes. However, elimination of insufficient development of the Slovak volunteering requires many new system solutions.

JEL Classification: L31, L38**Keywords:** volunteering, valuing of volunteer work, the benefits of volunteering, volunteering of seniors, volunteering of handicapped.**Introduction**

Volunteering and non-profit sector are specific for each country depending on different historical, political, economic and social relations of their development. Similarly, the approach of non-profit sector and the differences in the extent of voluntary activities significantly vary in the individual countries. However, these differences also result from a volunteering division into various areas. Numerous definitions of volunteering had been created on the basis of given facts in spite of some originally preferred aspects (e.g. emphasis on financial aspect, social and health characteristics, work and social processes, etc.). Each definition has a very general scope and put its emphasis on a free will to organize voluntary activities, to develop skills as well as potential contributions (Brozmanová Gregorová *et al.*, 2011, 2012). As Rochester, Paine, Howlett, and Zimmeck (2010) claim in their work, volunteering may be performed regardless of race, sex, religion, disability, age, sexual orientation, and/or abilities and skills. Institutional definitions of volunteering are mostly general and lack particularities of processes, motives and aims. For instance, the concept of volunteering represents “a cornerstone of civil society” according to the International

Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) (MVRO, 2014). Majority of authors agree on four basic features which characterize volunteering. This term is also considered as multidimensional. These four features are as follows: free will; reward (no expectations related to rewarding for provided aid); structure (formal and informal volunteering); orientation to recipient (contribution to recipient of provided aid) (e.g. Holmes and Smith, 2009; Salamon *et al.*, 2012; Konrath *et al.*, 2012; Musick and Wilson, 2008; Phellas, 2013). Contemporary literature describes volunteering as selfless and friendly activities which are performed for general welfare (Connors, 2012; Duguid *et al.*, 2013; Salamon *et al.*, 2012). In practice, there exist many characteristics of volunteering that differ in preferred aspect of voluntary activity, social environment, or culture of a given country (EAC-EA and DG EAC, 2010; United Nations Volunteers, 2011; Cnaan, 1996).

1. Health and psychological impacts of volunteering

The most natural form of volunteering is characterized by informal and independent version of organization which takes into consideration present needs and requirements (Pavelek, 2014; Radková, 2011). As a consequence of team's long cooperation with many significant health institutions, such as Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic (MOH SR), Institute of Health Policies (IHP), National Health Information Center (NHIC), Association for the Protection of Patients' Rights – Slovak Republic (APPR), Association of Health Insurance Companies Slovakia (AHIC), Slovak Hospital Association (SHA), numerous social facilities that provide services of long-term health and social care, etc., we focused on the analysis of chosen economic aspects of volunteering in Slovakia in the research areas in order to find out quantifiable causalities of its development and determinants which will eliminate potential health and social risks that are related to social exclusion as well as morbidity rate. Over the last few years, there were published many researches which declared both health and psychological impacts on volunteers caused by voluntary activities' performance (Rochester *et al.*, 2010; Holmes *et al.*, 2009; Grimm *et al.*, 2007; Li and Ferraro, 2005). These researches are very rare in Slovakia, however, in the U.S., they are performed very frequently (e.g. Krkošková and Pavelek, 2008; Pavelek, 2011). The results of numerous foreign researches focus on health categories, such as lower rate of mortality, lower rate of morbidity and within it, lower rate of depression occurrence at higher age and provision of total organism function in relation to voluntary activities (Lum and Lightfoot, 2005; Schnittker, 2005). Some foreign researches emphasize a positive influence of retired people's volunteering on improvement of their mental health, depression decrease as well as morbidity elimination (e.g. Lum and Lightfoot, 2005; Musick and Wilson, 2008; Li and Ferraro, 2005; Phellas, 2013). Konrath *et al.* (2012) adds other information to these relevant facts, i.e. the volunteering contributions of older volunteers, while socioeconomic status and other demographic characteristics represent his fundamental research components. Especially these facts were relevant in realization of the researches (presented as well as complementary researches in health and social areas, which were focused on the analysis of morbidity and mortality in Slovakia). It is very important to know a concept of relevant sociological theories that will enable us to perceive various motives of volunteers, in order to evaluate the determinants of volunteering. The main subjects of the following chapter are simplified correlations of chosen volunteering components in sociological theories and their analysis.

2. Practical line – primary research in the voluntary organizations

The sample of 300 registered non-governmental organizations (NGO) was contacted at that time (in February 2014) on the basis of available internet portal www.dobrovolnictvo.sk

that was created by the National Volunteer Center, C.A.R.D.O. This center was created in 2004 and its main aim is a development of volunteering in Slovakia and abroad. It provides services and information for volunteers and organizations, and it publicly promotes volunteering in order to involve as many people as possible. Similarly, it supports the networking of voluntary organizations, organizing of seminars and conferences, researches in the field of volunteering and other activities for the benefit of volunteering in Slovakia and abroad.

2.1. Research sample and research material

There were 95 NGO out of 300 which participated in the research. As a consequence of a character of this research, potential possibilities of data collection and approach to organizations, we chose a method of electronic questionnaire that was combined with a call support. The questionnaire contained structured and semi-structured questions. The first part of the questionnaire focused on finding the basic information of analyzed NGO, the second part included 21 questions and their aim was to find out the specific information of characteristics, determinants, as well as barriers of the Slovak volunteering development. The research was realized in February-March 2014. The collected data were processed by use of standard methods for analyzing questionnaire data (frequency and pivot tables, the basic statistical characteristics). The statistical system, IBM, SPSS version 19 and MS Excel, processed all outputs.

3. Results and discussion

The successive analysis is based on elementary statistical views. Each option is quantified in an absolute way and in a relative way, too. All kinds of the organizations' activity areas, frequencies of target groups and companies cooperation forms are assigned confidence intervals for reliability of 95% in order to get intervals demonstrating the most expectable values of the explored indicators. Computed standard deviations serve as sign of stability of the observed variables.

3.1. The basic characteristics of analyzed NGO

The NGO in the Bratislava Region represented the most numerous analyzed group, N=46 (48.4% – *Table 1*), the lowest number of the NGO that participated in the research was from the Nitra Region. A new attribute that divides Slovakia into four authorities, Bratislava, West, Middle and East (NUTS II) was created on the basis of aggregating the regions due to a low number of the participated NGO in some regions and due to need to determine differences at higher level of the official territorial division. The fifth group (N = 2) states the nationwide organizations. The Bratislava Region (N = 46; 48.4%) is represented the most, while the Eastern Slovakia the least (N = 12; 12.6%) (*Table 1*).

Table 1. Division of the NGO seat frequencies according to counties NUTS II

Region	Number	% share
Bratislava	46	48.4
West	17	17.9
Middle	18	19.0
East	12	12.6
SR	2	2.1
Total	95	100.0

Source: own processing.

Civil associations or groups (64.2%) occur most frequently from the point of view of a legal form of analyzed organizations. Then, there are present non-profit organizations, which provide public services (17.9%) and the lowest rate form the religious organizations (5.3%). We also focused on a possibility to select from different options (*Table 2*) (organizations may have selected more options) in researching the areas of activities of the analyzed organizations. The social and health areas, as well as work with young people have statistically larger rate of organizations in comparison to other areas, which was found out in the statistical testing of a ratio compliance of activity areas' pairs (Fisher's exact test; $p < 0.001$). However, there was a slightly significant difference between a ratio in the fields of Ecology and environmental protection and sport and educational activity in comparison to foreign activities (Fisher's exact test; $p = 0.024$).

Table 2. Division of frequencies of the organizations' activity areas

Area	BA	West	Middle	East	* SR	Sum	% share	**95% CI for ratio
Social and health area	18	14	9	8	0	49	51.6	<41; 62>
Work with children and youth	19	6	4	7	1	37	38.9	<28; 50>
Ecology and environmental protection	7	4	2	0	1	14	14.7	<6; 23>
Sport and educational activity	7	4	3	0	0	14	14.7	<6; 23>
Humanitarian organization and human rights protection	7	4	0	1	0	12	12.6	<4; 21>
Cultural organization	7	2	3	0	0	12	12.6	<4; 21>
Other area of activity	4	1	2	1	0	8	8.4	<2; 15>
Foreign voluntary activity	4	0	0	0	0	4	4.2	<0; 9>

*SR – nationwide organizations; **CI – confidence interval

Source: own processing.

There was chosen only one area of activity in approximately two thirds of organizations (67.4%). Two areas of activities were determined in 16 organizations (16.8%), 9 organizations (9.5%) provided three areas of activities. There is only one organization that provided five and six areas of activities. If we look at the results of representative research that was performed by the Volunteering Center in 2011, the volunteers paid especial attention to social help (23%), at the second place, there was an environmental area (15%), the third place occupied area of culture and arts (12%). There was a slight difference at fourth place, sport area (11%), religious activities (10%) and children's and youth organizations (10%) (more detailed results available in the work of Brozmanová Gregorová *et al.*, 2009, 2011). As opposed to the results of the research (*Table 2*), there is an evident increase of volunteers in the social and health area (51.6%) and also in the area of work with children and youth (38.9%). If we look at the number of organizations differentiated by NUTS II, there are significant differences, while the Bratislava and West Regions are dominant. The numbers decrease from the Western to the Eastern parts of Slovakia. These regional disparities represent a clear evidence of a higher preference of various voluntary activities especially in the Western part of Slovakia.

3.2. Analysis of human resources in the organizations

Human resources represent a very important aspect in the organizations. We were mainly interested in the number of full-time employees, total number of members in the

organization, as well as number of volunteers who work regularly or irregularly (*Figures 1 and 2*). In the voluntary organizations, there are 13 part-time volunteers in average, while half of these organizations have one or none full-time employee. Three organizations provide higher numbers of full-time employees (one religious organization in the Košice Region has 260 employees, and two organizations in the Banská Bystrica Region have 170 and 108 employees). These three organizations provide social and health area as their main activity that explains those higher numbers. However, there occurs a different situation in terms of members' number. Their division is more balanced. Regular and irregular volunteering determines an availability of voluntary activities. In the organizations, there prevail volunteers who work one-time/irregularly (*Figure 1 and 2*). The respondents stated as an average number of regular volunteers 27 and irregular 57.

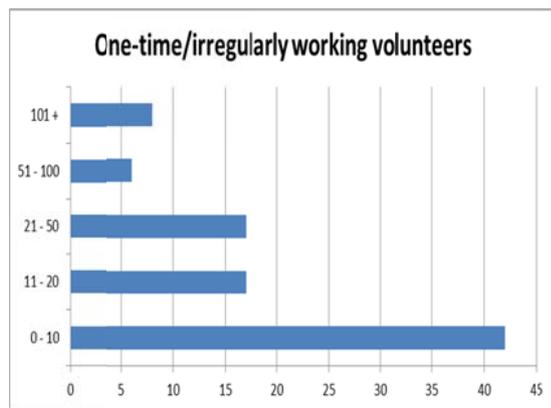


Figure 1. One-time/irregularly working volunteers

Source: own processing.

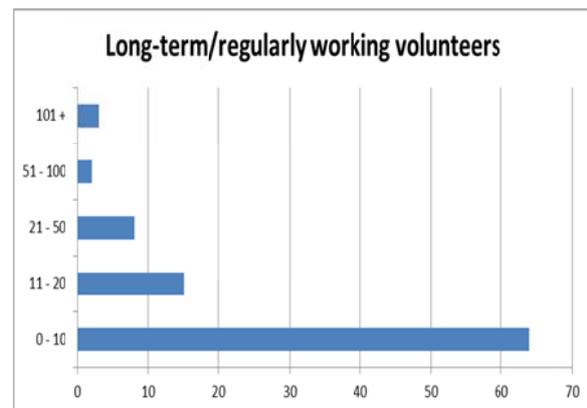


Figure 2. Long-term/regularly working volunteers

Source: own processing.

This fact is connected to the type of provided voluntary work and its required frequency. The median is smaller (irregular volunteers – 13, regular volunteers – 8) and the standard deviation is large (irregular volunteers – 144, regular volunteers – 130). This division includes some considerable values that misinterpret the researched parameters. Maximum number of members, 30, has half of these organizations. The number of members had increased in 48 organizations (52.2%), had stagnated in 33 organizations (35.9%) and had decreased in 11 organizations (12.0%) for the last five years. The number of organizations that state a decrease in members is significantly lower than the number of organizations that observe an increase or stagnation of members' number (chi-square test uniformity of distribution; $p < 0.001$).

3.3. Target groups and a form of a realized voluntary work

In the research, we also focused on target groups of organizations besides the analysis of human resources as the *Table 3* displays. Organizations could choose from various target groups. The most numerous target group of organizations is general public, consequently, social groups, families with children and adults.

Table 3. Division of frequencies of target groups

Target group	BA	West	Middle	East	*SR	Sum	% share	**95% CI for ratio
Public	22	7	7	2	2	40	42.1	<32; 52>
Social groups	14	9	6	4	1	34	35.8	<25; 47>
Families with children	15	6	5	5	1	32	33.7	<23; 44>
Adults	18	5	3	4	1	31	32.6	<22; 43>
Disabled people	9	8	7	3	0	27	28.4	<18; 39>
Retired people	9	3	7	2	0	21	22.1	<13; 31>
Young people	10	1	6	4	0	21	22.1	<13; 31>
Other	5	2	0	1	0	8	8.4	<2; 15>

*SR – nationwide organizations **CI – confidence interval

Source: own processing

There exist statistically significant differences among all given groups in comparison to the group “Other”, which was determined in testing a conformity of pairs of abovementioned groups (Fisher’s exact test; $p < 0.05$). Similarly, the difference between the group that focused on public and the group of retired and young people is statistically important (Fisher’s exact test; $p = 0.005$). The frequencies of the NGO’s seats in the individual regions determine evident regional differences among the regions that may also be visible from the given results (according to NUTS II *Table 1*).

3.4. Form of voluntary work rewarding

The other crucial issue of the research besides the basic characteristics of volunteering was an opinion of respondents to the question: What form of financial reward for voluntary work do you consider as the most proper one? Opinions differed to certain extent (*Figures 3-6*). One of the options of providing the financial consideration for services is remuneration of volunteers by an average wage, or annually adjusted average wages in Slovakia, which takes into account work possibilities and equality in a valuation. However, the respondents agreed on the fact that it is not convenient to financially reward these activities as the voluntary work is not performed in order to earn money, or non-financial benefit. Most of the organizations state that their volunteers are not financially rewarded, otherwise, this work would not be altruistic from a social point of view and it would be in conflict with the essence and basis of volunteering.



Figure 3. Average wage rewarding in SR

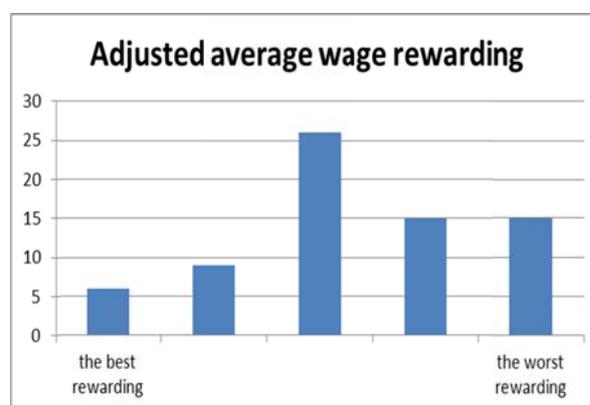


Figure 4. Adjusted average wage rewarding

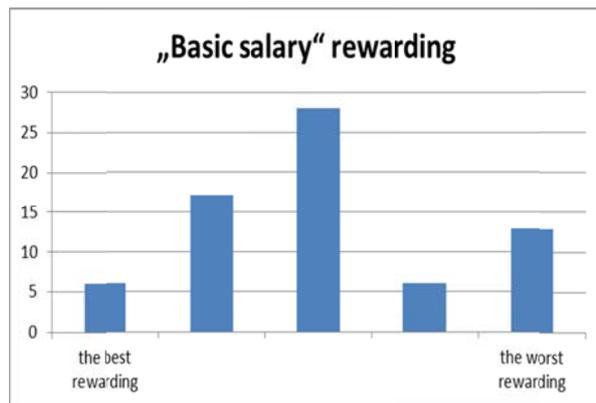


Figure 5. „Basic salary“ rewarding

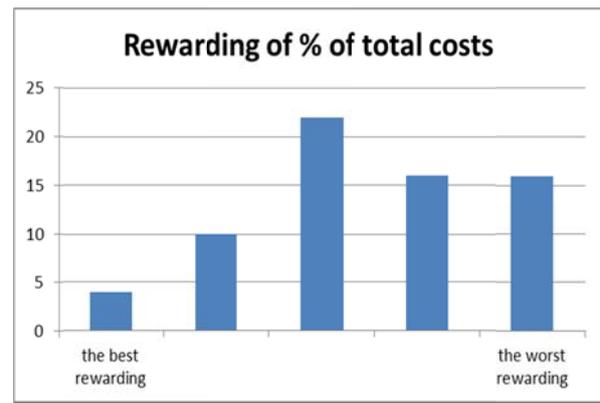


Figure 6. Rewarding of % of total costs

Note: Evaluation was realized on the five-point scale according to a quality of significance;

1 – the most significant, 5 – the least significant

Source: own processing.

3.5. Possibilities of involvement into voluntary activities and public awareness

The internet option is over five other forms of public awareness, which represent other possibilities of voluntary activities' involvement (Table 4). Its ratio is significant as opposed to other options (Chi-square test uniformity of distribution; $p < 0.001$).

Table 4. Division of frequencies of public awareness options

Information form	Value	% share
Internet	52	54.70
Printed materials	13	13.70
Mass media	4	4.20
Oral form	21	22.10
No informing	1	1.10
No answer	4	4.20
Total:	95	100.00

Source: own processing.

The European Commission created a grant scheme called the European Voluntary Service (EVS) in order to support volunteering. This project gives young people between 18-30 years the opportunity to perform a voluntary activity in all countries of the European Union and the other parts of the world. In this way, they may gain new skills and experiences and consequently, support their personal and professional growth. Similarly, this fact emphasizes a significance of the individual information forms' use and preferences of the internet. The use of these possibilities is determined by many obstacles. As the researched results show, the most important cause of a low ratio of public involvement into voluntary activities is a missing recognition of voluntary activities.

3.6. Commitment in the voluntary activities – motives and forms of cooperation with companies

The most important motive of commitment in volunteering is meeting new people (average 1.77), and then follows new skills enrichment (1.79 – Table 5). A reinforcement of

religious and political principles is the least relevant motive (3.07). *Table 5* provides the results of evaluations. We also found out that there exists a statistically significant difference between a cause of “reinforcement of religious and political principles” and other motives, which were determined in testing a compliance of average values (i.e. if an average point evaluation of various motives of citizens’ commitment in volunteering is almost the same) (Kruskal-Wallis test; $p < 0.001$). This motive may be considered as the least significant motive to perform voluntary activities.

Table 5. Frequency division of citizens’ motives into volunteering commitment

Motive	Value	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
Meeting new people	86	1	5	1.77	1.059
New skills enrichment	90	1	5	1.79	0.930
Social help	89	1	5	1.85	1.093
Satisfaction with the results	86	1	5	2.01	1.068
Pleasure in the job	90	1	5	2.04	1.090
Feeling of recognition	87	1	5	2.05	0.987
Active leisure time	90	1	5	2.19	1.069
Reinforcement of rel. and pol. principles	84	1	5	3.07	1.269

Note: Evaluation was realized on the five-point scale according to a quality of significance; 1 – the most significant, 5 – the least significant

Source: own processing.

Development of voluntary activities among citizens, their structure and motives are mostly (primarily or secondarily) influenced by different programs. According to Bútorá *et al.* (2012), the increases of charity, donation and volunteering are supported by volunteering management in the social services’ facilities that are established by non-profit NGO. Similarly, the trends from other countries, as well as a support of international cooperation, influence the development of volunteering. Corporate volunteering has increasingly become popular by direct involvement of employees into public welfare activities as well as other projects that are created and supported by an employer, such as specific employees’ programs, which support the public welfare activities. It is certainly considered as one of many contributory ways of support and development of volunteering in Slovakia.

3.6.1. The most frequently used forms of cooperation with companies

Respondents could choose more forms of cooperation. *Table 6* displays that mostly used form of a cooperation in the organizations is a corporate donation, the next one is 2% income tax assignation and finally, sponsoring. The results of the statistical test of file pairs’ compliance show that the NGO ratio, which uses the corporate donation, 2% income tax assignation and sponsoring differ from other forms of companies’ cooperation, where belong a corporate volunteering, campaign leadership, strategic partnerships, etc. (Fisher’s exact test; max $p < 0.05$).

Table 6. Frequency division of companies' cooperation forms

Cooperation form	Value	% share	** 95 % CI for ratio
N	75*		
Corporate donation	50	66.7	<55.5; 77.9>
2% physical person income tax assignation	49	65.3	<54.1; 76.5>
Sponsoring	40	53.3	<41.3; 65.3>
Corporate volunteering	24	32.0	<20.8; 43.2>
Campaigns' leadership	11	14.7	<6.7; 22.7>
Strategic partnerships in a community development	7	9.3	<2.5; 16.1>
Other	4	5.3	<0.1; 10.5>

*20 NGO did not answer the question; **CI – confidence intervals

Source: own processing.

Similarly, the form of cooperation is connected to an existing model of volunteering and its financial system in Slovakia. At present, the tax assignation represents a key tool of decentralized support of non-profit environment by public resources in Slovakia. The potential decrease of financial capacities from assigned mechanism would negatively affect the existence of the NGO in public, as well as the social network, which may result in financial resources' failure (e.g. Bútorá *et al.*, 2012).

3.6.2. Higher commitment of the business sector and the barriers in cooperation with the NGO

The *Table 7* shows options that were available for the respondents in the following case. Bad economic situation ($n = 53$; 57.6%) is considered as the most frequent obstacle. Then, there follows demotivated legislative acts ($n = 52$, 56.5%). The ratio over 35% was evident in the following obstacles: insufficient knowledge of cooperation advantage, philanthropy ignorance and insufficient presentation of the non-profit sector.

Table 7. Obstacles in cooperation between business and the NGO

Item	Number	% share
N	92	
Bad economic situation	53	57.6
Demotivated legislative acts	52	56.5
Insufficient knowledge of cooperation advantage	44	47.8
Philanthropy ignorance	39	42.4
Insufficient presentation of the non-profit	33	35.9
Egoism	30	32.6
Partners' distrust towards each other	28	30.4
Mutual prejudices	24	26.1

Source: own processing.

These results are determined by a public attitude towards the non-profit, which is, according to the experts, less positive than in a local authority, however, even more positive as towards the political parties. This also justifies the importance of public opinion in the process of formation of the civic participation, which may be confirmed by interesting

research knowledge in the work Bútorová and Gyárfášová (2010). The positive image of the NGO is especially connected with their activities in charities, or helping people in need as numerous researches in this field present. On the other hand, the negative associations were connected with fear, or suspicion of insufficient control and in transparency of financial resources, as well as self-interest (Bútorová *et al.*, 2012). We assume that the prevailing bad economic situation of Slovak companies that is related to legislative restrictions, as well as significant informational asymmetry in the area of forms, processes and advantages, which emerge from a cooperation with the NGO represent deep system barriers of the Slovak volunteering development that may be eliminated by precisely target policies.

3.7. Evaluation of the most significant issues of the analyzed organizations

In the economic and financial sphere (average 3.47), there occur most issues according to the respondents. Then, there follow other four spheres at almost the same level from 2.89 (legal and legislative sphere) to 2.61 (personal sphere) (Table 8).

Table 8. Statistical characteristics of organizations' problem areas

Item	Personal area	Project area	Partnership	Legislation	Economy
N	88.00	87.00	88.00	87.00	90.00
Average	2.61	2.62	2.63	2.89	3.47
Median	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00
Standard deviation	1.26	1.21	1.19	1.25	1.42
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Note: Evaluation was realized on the five-point scale according to a quality of significance; 1 – the most significant, 5 – the least significant.

Source: own processing.

In these analyzed aspects, there are evident financial and legislative characteristics of problems of the volunteering development in Slovakia. It is a sign of problem interactions among the system parts and the feedbacks they lack. The given consequent facts clearly indicate an inevitability of solving the issue of the NGO financing in relation to the volunteering development, as well as to a need of creating a supportive legislative platform that would reflect these facts and would enable simpler and easier access to financial resources. This platform would also support their efficient allocation. We may assume that there is an absence of systematic and transparent NGO financing from state resources in Slovakia, and the partnerships with other economic sectors are at insufficient level and there are also evident insufficient possibilities of receiving the necessary sources from own activity.

4. Discussion

In Slovakia, the non-profit offers many options to form and implement social reforms, to justify the interests of different groups of people, to provide services, to solve health, social and environmental issues, etc. Many voluntary organizations in Slovakia proved their purpose and non-substitutability. They are able to mutually connect many significant activities, to organize purposeful campaigns, to search for possibilities in the process of active help to socially excluded persons, as well as disabled persons. Thus, they may prove their pro-social behavior and value. However, it is inevitable to develop partnerships among active citizens, to strengthen institutional infrastructure, and constant education and training of successors of these activities in order to develop these organizations. Social campaigns and target

supportive programs that should support an activation of citizens and thus motivate and control various civic activities play also a very important role in this process. There are distinguished two groups of citizens in evaluating the process of voluntary activities: those who are dependent on help and care from others and those who provide help and care for disabled, retired people, women, young, unemployed people, etc. The significance of voluntary activities that are provided by disabled and retired people abroad constantly increases and many researches declare their contribution in the whole society. The Slovak situation is rather different and it represents an enormous challenge and potential of a development. We observe a potential in the volunteering development in Slovakia and other lines, which will be beneficial for health and social policy with regard to team's cooperation with significant actors of health system, and also active participation in a development of long-term healthcare system and its legislative support in cooperation with the MOH SR, IHP, APPR and AHIC (note: there has not been made any long-term healthcare act yet). We map the particularities of voluntary activities' development by making them specific in accordance with possibilities (health, physical) and abilities of the individuals depending on age differentiation, present working experiences, stages of a particular illness and its time-consuming and physical difficulty of a treatment in the complementary researches which are performed in cooperation with the APPR. Other important group of volunteers, except of people with disabilities, is a group of retired people who may positively contribute to the development of the Slovak society. However, the Slovak society pays a minimum attention to this group. There needs to be emphasized that a citizen who retires, experiences also many changes, such as changes of social contacts, social statuses, identity, or even social exclusion. At present, we may speak of advantages of senior volunteering for an individual and voluntary organizations, private sector, and government. In Slovakia, these benefits are neither qualitatively nor quantitatively recognized, there absent many researches, which would evaluate significant and measurable parameters of these relations and effects, or potential. However, the situation abroad is more positive and the experts have been dealing with this issue for many years. Their research and data base provides relevant evidence, e.g. information of how the formal volunteering positively influences health of older people irrespective of individually perceived health or diagnostic one. Onyx and Warburton (2003) research results focused on a relation between volunteering and retired people's health that is not taken into account in explicit selection of positive influences on health in terms of formal volunteering. The research also provides consistent evidence of a degree and type of morbidity, index values of functional and individually perceived health, which are influenced by formal and informal voluntary activity. The given facts represent an enormous research potential in solving of this particular issue in a process of volunteering development in Slovakia. It is necessary to consider negative consequences of the Slovak population's aging due to present global aging process. Healthy and active older generation will contribute to the well-being of our society, which would decrease financial and procedural difficulty of health and social care system. On the other hand, there exist three groups of obstacles that prevent retired people from performing voluntary activities: functional health issues, mobility and financial constraints. However, it is possible to minimize these obstacles in favor of volunteering by adapting the voluntary activities to abilities and possibilities of each volunteer, or by a potential reimbursement of expenses which are connected with activities as well as provision of transport services, or a work which does not require commuting. Unfortunately, the appropriate environment for a development of voluntary activities provided by disabled people has not been created in Slovakia yet. Disabled person is able to gain social capital, successfully integrate into society, easily overcome the communication barriers, strengthen a sense of purpose and value, and improve the quality of his life and health by performing voluntary activities. The voluntary activities need to be a part of social

prevention. In Slovakia, the perception of disabled persons by healthy citizens creates a negative element, which is a result of the research findings based on a communication with various groups of disabled persons in numerous patients' organizations. Generally, the discussions within these groups, insufficient skills in a mutual dialogue which would clear the positions, ambitions and ways of realization represent the core issue. Therefore, it is inevitable to change people's perception of disabled volunteers, which requires their participation in this process via encouraging the awareness of their abilities and a will to sell them. Active promotion of activities of these people, e.g. by means of mass media, social services facilities, educational institutions, etc. are also inevitable.

Conclusion

Over the last decades, the significance of voluntary activities and their relevance have been constantly increasing in Slovakia. At present, they represent one of the fundamental areas, which are of particular interest to chosen communities and public, while the extent of these activities exceeds religious, or social groups, and also of nationwide character. Despite the availability of relevant facts of the volunteering development abroad, the situation is unsatisfactory in Slovakia. The abovementioned facts may be confirmed by limited outputs of the researches that would provide relevant overview of volunteering system as such, its processes, links, and interactions with external and internal environment of a company. Even though these researches provided a clear image of motives and forms of voluntary work, they missed a complexity. Consequently, their information value and interpretation character were considerably limited. Also, there was not created any organization that would focus on volunteering development in Slovakia since 2002 – 2007. There was also missing a legislative restriction of voluntary activities till 2011. The main impulse to solve these negative facts appeared in realization of the research and also in development of cooperation with institutions of health and social system that are target to voluntary work. The main interest in terms of cooperation were chosen aspects of the volunteering development that declare its potential in all particular groups of people, especially for retired people and disabled people. The disabled persons should perceive voluntary activities as a way of a strengthening of public interest, but also as an effective tool of using their leisure time, gaining new skills and knowledge, and supporting their professional growth. We realized a research, whose main aim was a quantification of the present situation in the process of volunteering operation that was declared by means of a level of citizens' involvement into voluntary activities. This was determined by an intensity of a present cooperation between voluntary organizations and a business sector, as well as by a level and form of public awareness of possibilities to involve into voluntary activities. We were interested in an attitude of organizations to reward the voluntary activities in order to recognize the qualitative aspects in implementing the appropriate motivators for voluntary activities' development in a particular organization. The ambition was a creation of a complex image of possibilities to actively support volunteering of retired and disabled persons. These would form a valuable platform in a process of supportive programs and policies' specification, which were targeted to the volunteering development of these two particular groups. As a consequence of this fact, these programs and policies would form a basis in the process of support and development of long-term healthcare as well as in providing the processes, which would solve the issue of active aging of the Slovak citizens. The research results will help us to interconnect the determined potential of volunteering development with patients' organizations potential in a way each human could contribute to the society's development and improve his quality of life.

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