

VOLUNTEERING AS A CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PHENOMENON

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Introduction

Supporting a person in need in this changing and problematic social reality poses a challenge today for many non-governmental organisations. Their activity, so important and unique, is usually pursued without remuneration for the people acting in the interest of others. This applies, first and foremost, to volunteering which, in the current difficult times, may be and is somewhat of an exam in humanity. The war in Ukraine as well as the unlimited constantly growing need for support for the refugees is the best example of that. This support/aid would not be possible without commitment of people of good will, public benefit organisations and, mainly, volunteers. Just as aid for the disabled members of the society, the elderly or organisation of many important and unique cultural, social, political or religious events would not be possible either. It must be noted that volunteering is definitely a valuable initiative, associating many a times many young people. Morrow-Howell emphasised that interest in this form of social activity results most frequently from the convincing idea that volunteering not only strengthens the civil society, but also improves the life of many people at the same time. Enthusiasts point to the increasing human capital of the ageing population and call for increased involvement of volunteers - for the good of the society as a whole and improvement of the quality of life of those who require this support. Thus, questions arise with regard to the determinants of social engagement of young people and methods of promotion of this form of social activity. When looking for an answer to these questions, reference should be made to the analysis of the term "volunteering", characteristics of its scope and activity of volunteers.

VOLUNTEERING AND THE VOLUNTEER – ANALYSIS OF TERMS

Considering the definition aspect of the word "volunteering", reference should be made to the interesting article by J. Grabis. The researcher believes that it is a form of building of an aware and open society in the scope of counteracting negative social

phenomena¹⁶. Another concept of volunteering explains it as an activity taken voluntarily and without coercion, aiming at bringing benefits to a person or group of persons from outside the household (excluding the volunteer's family), which can be also pursued for the benefit of the society, surroundings, a specific town or community¹⁷. On the other hand, G.

¹⁶ J. Grabias, (2006). Wolontariat – praca społeczna alternatywą dla kary pozbawienia wolności (*Volunteering - Social Work as an Alternative for the Penalty of Deprivation of Liberty*), [in:] F. Kozaczuk (ed.), *Optymalizacja oddziaływań resocjalizacyjnych w Polsce i w niektórych krajach europejskich (Optimisation of Resocialization Activities in Poland*

and Certain European Countries), Publishing House of the University of Rzeszów, Rzeszów, p. 211.

¹⁷ Statistics Poland, (2017), Warsaw, p. 9; after: M. Supera-Markowska, (2021). *Podatkowe aspekty wolontariatu (Tax Aspects of Volunteering)*. Praca

Makowski, referring to the Johns Hopkins University Center for Civil Society Studies, indicates that volunteering means gratuitous, voluntary work provided for the benefit of strangers, natural environment, society or local community, taken up individually as part of an organisation or public institution¹⁸. From a slightly different perspective, volunteering is understood as a form of social recognition, "affirmation of features of philanthropy", available to all those who have the knowledge, skills or time needed to help those in need. In other words, volunteering gives every person an opportunity to develop charity behaviours¹⁹.

However, Claire Ellis et. al. point to the fact that the terminology related to volunteering reflects different perceptions of what it really is²⁰. The authors, referring to the studies by Rochester et al., propose three perspectives of perception of volunteering, namely:

- gratuitous work or service –

predominant perception in Anglo-Saxon countries

- civil activities - predominant perception in Scandinavian countries and developing countries of the Global South
- recreational volunteering – volunteering as a discretionary activity, taken in leisure time²¹.

The presented definitions of volunteering, even if slightly diversified in content, refer to analogous tasks addressed to multiple recipients. Therefore, one could assume that volunteering is a form of social activity having different underlying causes in different countries, but having the same goal - gratuitous, socially desirable aid provided to groups and individuals in need of it. A specification of definitions of the term functioning in selected countries and international organisations is presented below (Tab. 1).

Table 1. Comparison of international and national definitions of volunteering

| Country | Freedom of choice | Structure | Beneficiaries | Remuneration |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Australia | Free will | Non profit organisations | Community and volunteers | None |
| Canada | Free will | Any organisation | Community, people, volunteering | None |
| England | Free will | Any organisation | Surroundings, people, family | None |
| Ireland | Free will | Not specified | Community, people and matters | Current expenses |
| Portugal | Not specified | With an organisation | Social and community | Defined compensation |
| Sweden | Free will | Any organisation | Organisation | None |
| International Association | Free will | Not specified | Other people | None |

Socjalna (*Social Work*), No. 4 (36), p. 41, DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0015.3558 [retrieved: 30.05.2022].

¹⁸ International Labour Office, *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work*, Geneva 2010, after: G. Makowski, (2011). *Młody, bogaty, wykształcony, religijny – mit polskiego wolontariusza [Young, Rich, Educated, Religious - the Myth of the Polish Volunteer]*, CBOS, Warsaw, p. 2. https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2011/K_063_11.PDF [12.06.2022].

¹⁹B. Voicu, (2005). *Voluntariatul. În Penuria pseudo-modernă a postcomunismului românesc. Schimbarea socială și acțiunile indivizilor*, Vol. I, pp. 121-136. Iași: Editura Expert Projects;

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242022746> [retrieved: 30.05.2022].

²⁰ C. Ellis, K. Holmes; L. O'Dwyer; M. Oppenheimer; M. Paull; C. Webber, (2014). *Volunteering Australia's national review of the definition of volunteering in Australia*. https://researchnow-admin.flinders.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/16718689/Ellis_Volunteering_P2014.pdf [retrieved: 30.05.2022].

²¹ Rochester, C, Ellis Paine, A. Howlett, S. (2010). *Volunteering and society in the 21st century*. Basinstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; after: C. Ellis, K. Holmes; L. O'Dwyer; M. Oppenheimer; M. Paull; C. Webber, (2014). *Volunteering Australia's ... op. cit.*, p. 3.

| | | | | |
|---|-----------|--|---------------------------------------|------|
| for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) | | | and community | |
| International Labour Organization (ILO) | Free will | Both through an organisation and directly with customers | Recipients from outside own household | None |

Source: Ellis, C., Holmes, K., O'Dwyer, L., Oppenheimer, M., Paull, M., Webber, C., (2014). *Volunteering Australia's national review of the definitions of volunteering in Australia*. <https://researchnow.flinders.edu.au/en/publications/volunteering-australias-national-review-of-the-definition-of-volu> [retrieved: 30.05.2022].

The definitions of the term "volunteering" developed in the specified countries of the world are, in principle, determined by a specific type of activity addressed to a specific person, community and family. However, Ellis et.al. pointed to differences in definitions between Australia and other key world units, which makes:

intercultural comparison of indicators of volunteering, its size, range and other patterns²² a challenge for many international societies today. One could even add, based on the studies of Dávil and Díaz-Morales, that volunteering can be an activity that allows to satisfy highly diverse motivations throughout one's life. This activity, shaped based on human motivation, may vary over time, but volunteering can adapt to these changes²³.

Thus, adopting the so-called social approach in the understanding of the term "volunteering" proposed by J. Chrapek, we assume that it is *"a diversified social movement that can be described by specification of its essential elements. It is based on selfless will to serve others. Therefore, it is not motivated by the will to find employment or earnings. The volunteer's engagement is voluntary and, thus, it results from his/her free will and not any binding standards. Volunteering assumes certain continuity and consistency in the actions taken directly for the benefit*

*of the people in need. These actions are most frequently organised professionally within specific groups, but we can also encounter individual volunteering. Volunteering is one of the most noble attitudes a person can demonstrate and, at the same time, an exalted and priceless work of his/her soul"*²⁴.

Considering this very idea of volunteering, we are heading straight towards the person of the volunteer without whom this exceptional idea of helping others is virtually impossible.

Volunteer – Selected Concepts

The volunteer, as an exceptional figure, underestimated by the society, is a crucial link in the process of aiding and supporting of persons or communities in organisation of volunteering. Thus, we can assume, agreeing with the Polish Network of Volunteering Centres, that a volunteer is a person who brings help voluntarily and gratuitously, engaging in work for the benefit of people and institutions functioning in various areas of social life. Volunteers can be encountered in orphanages, hospices, nursing homes, museums and animal shelters. They work in public institutions, non-governmental organisations, culture centres, sport centres and many other²⁵.

²² Ellis, C., Holmes, K., O'Dwyer, L., Oppenheimer, M., Paull, M., Webber, C., (2014). *Volunteering Australia's national review ... op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

²³ M. C. Dávila, J. F. Díaz-Morales, (2009). Age and motives for volunteering: Further evidence. *Europe's Journal of Psychology* 2/2009, pp. 82-95.

²⁴ J. Chrapek, (2001). *Dzielmy się miłością – Wolontariat (Sharing Love - Volunteering)*. [https://hospicjumzory.pl/wp-](https://hospicjumzory.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/BP-JAN-CHRAPEK.pdf)

[content/uploads/2015/09/BP-JAN-CHRAPEK.pdf](https://hospicjumzory.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/BP-JAN-CHRAPEK.pdf), after: A. Kanios, (2008). *Spoleczne kompetencje studentów do pracy w wolontariacie (Students' Social Competences for Volunteering Work)*. Publishing House of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, p. 47

²⁵ Kim jest wolontariusz (*Who a Volunteer Is*), <https://wolontariat.org.pl/wolontariusze/kim-jest-wolontariusz/> [retrieved: 07.06.2022].

In principle, one could say that according to Dean the volunteer's activity is nothing more than a tendency to get involved in volunteering to improve one's own skills, to become more competitive on the market, and not to satisfy social needs. The turn towards a more instrumentally motivated volunteering changed the strategies of recruitment of organisations engaging volunteers that focus on the benefits volunteering may bring the given person (e.g. increase of economic or human capital) and not on potential altruistic benefits resulting from devoting one's own time to help others²⁶. However, in a slightly different perspective, a volunteer is a natural person who, voluntarily and gratuitously, provides work according to the principles prescribed in the Act²⁷. Analysing the provisions of this Act, we also learn that volunteers can provide work for the benefit of:

- non-governmental organisations and entities specified in Article 3(3) within the scope of their statutory activity, including but not limited to public benefit activity, excluding the business activity conducted by them,
- public administration authorities, excluding the business activity conducted by them,
- organisational units subordinate to public administration authorities or supervised by such authorities, excluding the business activity conducted by such units,
- healthcare entities within the meaning of the law on medical activity in the scope of the healthcare services provided by them – hereinafter referred to as the "beneficiaries"²⁸.

Despite clear criteria of volunteering work

²⁶ J. Dean, (2014). How structural factors promote instrumental motivations within youth volunteering. A qualitative analysis of volunteer brokerage. *Voluntary Sector Review*, Vol. 5 (2), pp. 231-247.

²⁷ Act on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteering of 24 April 2003. Prepared on the basis of: consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2020 item 1057, of 2021 items 1038, 1243, 1535, 2490, of 2022 item 857. <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20030960873/U/D20030873Lj.pdf> [retrieved: 07.06.2022].

as well as a quite precise and broad definition profile, one crucial question remains, i.e. what drives a person to take this role up and what are his/her motives. Generally, one could say that the reasons should definitely be considered on an individual basis, but Clary and Synder point to the issue of various motives and their satisfaction by the same person at different times. Based on this theory, the authors differentiated six basic types of motivations:

- protective (reduction of negative emotions),
- values (expression or values - to express or to act in compliance with important values), - social (to reinforce social relations),
- understanding (to learn more about the world),
- career (to gain career-related experience),
- reinforcement (reinforcement of self-esteem)²⁹.

On the other hand, M. A. Okun and A. Schultz (2003) present a slightly different image of volunteering. They understand it as a new motivation, not described by above quoted Clary and Synder, i.e. "making friends". While this social motive points to the will to maintain existing friendships as a volunteering motivation, the motivation of making friends points to the will to gain new friends³⁰.

Considering the issue of motivation, reference should be made to the criteria put forward by M. Górecki. The author emphasised quite expressly the prosocial behaviours that be connected with five types of motivation: empathic, normative, egoistic, identification-related and task-

²⁸ Ibidem, Art. 42. 1.

²⁹ E. G., Clary, M. Snyder, (1999). The motivations to volunteer: Theoretical and practical considerations. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol. 8, pp. 156–159.

³⁰ M. A. Okun, A. Schultz, (2003). Age and motives for volunteering: Testing hypotheses derived from socioemotional selectivity theory. *Psychology and Aging*, Vol. 18(2), 231–239. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0882-7974.18.2.231> [retrieved: 07.06.2022].

based. As can be seen, only five motivations were specified as each of them demonstrates a dominant constituting feature³¹.

This slightly different approach shows quite varying tendencies of taking up the role of a volunteer. Bearing this in mind, one cannot ignore the concept put forward by R. Brooks who believes that youth volunteering, only "participative" in nature, is highly inefficient as a means of education in terms of active civil life; critical engagement in social relations is more important. Nevertheless, even where cases of this engagement were found, the predominant motivation for participation was building one's CV³². Thus, a volunteer as a person trying to gain new experience and, in slightly different circumstances, a person improving his/her competences cannot be excluded. Unfortunately, volunteers include also people who, as emphasised by the authors, wish only to add another item in their curriculum vitae. This, even if concise, review of the comprehensive understanding of the term "volunteer" indicates a certain level of diversification but, as emphasised by Dean, focuses on the trends observable in the policy and practice of volunteering and confirms the argument that volunteering and volunteers are heading towards a more market-like approach and attitude³³. Attention must be brought to the fact that the restrictive definition of volunteering (in its strict sense) as a gratuitous and voluntary action for the benefit of people other than having family or friendship ties with the activity participants or for the benefit of a cause, local community, natural environment as part of non-governmental non-profit organisations or other

institutionalised teams, acting *pro publico bono*, cannot be defended in the light of facts and discrepancies showed by practice³⁴.

Types and Sorts of Volunteering

The idea of volunteering sets the goal and direction of action of such a specific organisation, executing tasks for the benefit of a person or society, but in an aware manner and gratuitously. The person creates, works and acts for the benefit of the society that found itself in need³⁵. Volunteering may increase one's levels of empathy and improve efficiency of action in various everyday life situations that may be difficult for many of us. Moreover, volunteering teaches organisation and management of one's own time. This activity offers also an opportunity to gain valuable experience, skills, make new friends and, first and foremost, experience the sense of reward and satisfaction with oneself as a human³⁶.

Different types of "volunteering" are distinguished in both subject-related literature and practice. Volunteering can and is pursued in various areas in various ways and, thus, the decision on joining the group of volunteers should be preceded with an in-depth evaluation of the field and subject of aid as well as finding the one most compatible with the capabilities, interests and needs of the person who

³¹ M. Górecki, (2013). Wolontariat – idea – organizacja, doświadczenia (*Volunteering - Idea - Organisation, Experiences*). Warmińsko-Mazurski Kwartalnik Naukowy, Nauki Społeczne (*Warmia-Masuria Quarterly Journal, Social Sciences*, Vol. 1, p. 90.

³² Brooks, R. (2007) Young people's extra-curricular activities: Critical social engagement - or 'something for the CV'? *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 36 (3), pp. 417-434.

³³ J. Dean, (2015). Volunteering, the market, and neoliberalism. *People, Place and Policy*, Vol. 9(2), pp. 139-148.

³⁴ M. Górecki, (2013). Wolontariat – idea – organizacja, doświadczenia... (*Volunteering - Idea - Organisation, Experiences...*) op. cit., p. 83.

³⁵ Ch. Millora, *Volunteering Practices in the Twenty-First Century*, London 2022r., pp. 7- 8

³⁶ A. Roguska, (2010). Wolontariat – działania na rzecz jednostki i społeczeństwa (*Volunteering - Actions for the Benefit of an Individual and Society*). [in:] M. Danielak-Chomać, B. Dobrowolska, A. Rogulska, (ed.), *Wolontariat w teorii i praktyce (Volunteering in Theory and Practice)*. Fundacja na rzecz dzieci i młodzieży Szansa (*Szansa Children and Youth Foundation*), Siedlce, pp. 13-14.

wishes to act as a volunteer³⁷. Thus, we distinguish: hospice volunteering, school volunteering, employees' volunteering, sport volunteering, NGO volunteering (understood as all types of non-governmental organisations), seniors' volunteering as well as international volunteering, action-based and long-term volunteering and the increasingly popular e-volunteering³⁸.

Analysing the types of volunteering, Górecki indicates that the classifications of volunteering activity may differ, but points to four classifications as the most useful ones. These include the following criteria:

- social grounds for the functioning of volunteering,
- number of persons involved in the work,
- scope and intensity of activities taken,
- geographic range (territory)³⁹.

D. Moroń proposes a slightly different typology of volunteering, dividing it into:

- continuous volunteering - the volunteer, on a continuous and long-term basis, cooperates with the given organisation or institution and works for its benefit regularly,
- action-based volunteering – the volunteers are engaged for the purpose of one-time or periodical actions,
- international volunteering - as part of international volunteer exchanges or international volunteer projects,
- professional trainings and internship - if voluntary and gratuitous, they can be

also considered volunteering in the broad sense of this term⁴⁰.

Yet another classification is proposed by Górecki who believes that the main criterion for division of volunteering should be the number of persons engaged in the activity. The first type (individual) usually involves the work of one volunteer for the benefit of private individuals at their homes, the elderly, the disabled, etc. The volunteer is usually not connected with any institutions (to which he/she would be accountable for the performed tasks) and his/her direct superior is the person in need or a family member of that person. The other type refers to a social group, local community and acting as part of public benefit organisations⁴¹.

Understanding this issue in detail requires a precise definition of the above variants of volunteering. It must be emphasised that subject-related literature presents many forms and types of those. However, for the purpose of this article, we will take a closer look at and discuss the basic and best known types of volunteering.

Table 2. Selected types of volunteering - general approach

| Volunteering type | Conditions |
|---------------------|--|
| School volunteering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all education levels - school volunteering clubs created - activities within the school area and school community - activities outside the school possible - support of local institutions or non-governmental organisational possible⁴². |

³⁷ Volunteering, Institution of the Lesser Poland Voivodship, Voivodship Labour Office in Kraków, Lesser Poland, Kraków 2017, pp. 8- 12.

³⁸ M. Załuska, (1996). Społeczne uwarunkowania angażowania się w działalność organizacji pozarządowych (*Social Conditions of Involvement in Activities of Non-Governmental Organisations*), Warsaw, pp. 95- 97.

³⁹ M. Górecki, (2013). Wolontariat – idea – organizacja, doświadczenia... (*Volunteering - Idea - Organisation, Experiences...*) op. cit., p. 84.

⁴⁰ D. Moroń, (2009), Wolontariat w trzecim sektorze. Prawo i praktyka (*Volunteering in the Third Sector. Law and Practice*). Publishing House of the University of Wrocław, Wrocław, after: M.

Boguszewicz-Kreft, M. Małecki, (2018). Czynniki motywujące do wstąpienia do studenckich organizacji non-profit na przykładzie Board of European Students of Technology (BEST) (*Factors Motivating to Joining Non-Profit Student Organisations on the Example of the Board of European Students of Technology (BEST)*). *Handel Wewnętrzny (Internal Trade)*, Vol. 6 (377), p. 83.

⁴¹ M. Górecki, (2013). Wolontariat – idea – organizacja, doświadczenia... (*Volunteering - Idea - Organisation, Experiences...*) op. cit., pp. 94-95.

⁴² G. Całek, (2021). Wolontariat uczniów w szkole – problemy, terażniejszość, spojrzenie w przyszłość (*Students' Volunteering Work At School - Issues, Presence, Future Insight*). *Praca Socjalna (Social*

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|-------------------------|---|
| Sport volunteering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - including various types of organisation of sport or leisure-related competitions, contests or championships - the task is to provide assistance, for example, along a marathon route, to supervise the proper run of the competitors and to support them, - the volunteer can familiarise himself/herself with organisation of sport and leisure events⁴³. |
| Volunteering in NGO | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - activity as part of non-governmental organisations - long-term and action-based cooperation - performance of many tasks, starting from the simplest ones, like help in office or organisation works, ending on co-creation and participation in various types of campaigns and projects of the given organisation⁴⁴. |
| Hospice volunteering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - activity in hospitals or hospices - support in organisation of charity actions and support for the medical staff - active engagement in tasks, requiring appropriate training, e.g. helping a sick person or his/her family⁴⁵. |
| Employees' volunteering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supported by large international companies - falling within the framework of social corporate responsibility - the purpose is voluntary performance of work for the benefit of those in need by volunteers |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - within the limits of its capability, the company supports the activities by means of various types of funding granted to provide aid to the needy⁴⁶. |
| International volunteering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - takes place abroad - can last from several weeks to a year or longer - allows to develop life orientations - develops intercultural activity⁴⁷. |
| Action and long-term volunteering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - short-term, action-based, lasting from one to several days - assistance during a specific event, e.g. a marathon or festival, - long-term - lasting from several months to several years - based on regulations - systematic performance of assigned tasks required⁴⁸. |
| E-volunteering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pursued online - the volunteer performs his/her tasks remotely, from home - assistance in administration of a website, writing texts for a website, etc.⁴⁹. |
| Seniors' volunteering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - engaging older persons in social activity - use of the potential and experience of seniors - acting in the role of a social guide - practical use of the seniors' free time⁵⁰. |

Source: own study based on cited articles.

The characterised types of volunteering focus on various areas of aid-related

Work) no. 4(36) pp. 193–204, DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0015.3567 [retrieved: 08.06.2022].

⁴³ Volunteering, Institution of the Lesser Poland Voivodship ... op. cit., pp. 11-12.

⁴⁴ M. Sabljak-Olędzka, (2014). Wolontariat Europejski jako forma współpracy Muzeum Budownictwa Ludowego – Parku Etnograficznego w Olsztynku z NGO (*European Volunteering as a Form of Cooperation of the Folklore Building Museum - Ethnographic Park in Olsztynnek with NOGs*). Annales of the Masovian Countryside Museum in Sierpc 5, 73-83.

⁴⁵ L. Pawłowski, M. Lichodziejewska-Niemierko, (2010). Wolontariat w opiece paliatywnej i hospicyjnej w Polsce - aspekty prawne (*Volunteering in Palliative and Hospice Care in Poland - Legal Aspects*). Medycyna Paliatywna w Praktyce (*Palliative Medicine in Practice*), Vol. 4(3), pp. 125-132.

⁴⁶ A. Dylus, K. Matyjaszczyk, (2018). Wolontariat pracowniczy. Istota, formy, przykłady (*Employee Volunteer Work. Essence, Forms, Examples*). Annales. Etyka w Życiu Gospodarczym (*Ethics in Economic Life*). Annales. Ethics in Economic Life, Vol. 21 (2), pp. 7–28. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18778/1899-2226.21.2.01> [retrieved: 08.06.2022].

⁴⁷ A. Szczurek-Boruta, (2016). Wolontariat międzynarodowy w perspektywie edukacji międzykulturowej (*International Volunteering in the Perspective of Intercultural Education*). Edukacja Międzykulturowa (*Intercultural Education*), No. 5, p. 19-33.

⁴⁸ M. Ochman, P. Jordan, (1997). Volunteers: a valuable resource, The Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies. Baltimore, Maryland, USA, pp. 18-24.

⁴⁹ Volunteering, Institution of the Lesser Poland Voivodship ... op. cit., pp. 11-12.

⁵⁰ J. Jachimowicz, (2017). Wolontariat szansą społecznego wykorzystania społecznego potencjału seniorów i ich rozwoju osobowego (*Volunteering as a Chance for Social Utilisation of the Social Potential of Seniors and Their Personal Development*). [in:] W. Borczyk (ed.), Wolontariat seniorów i dla seniorów – potrzeby, bariery, praktyka (*Seniors' Volunteering and Volunteering for Seniors - Needs, Barriers, Practice*). Conference materials. Publisher Ogólnopolska Federacja Stowarzyszeń Uniwersytetów Trzeciego Wieku (*Polish Federation of Third Age University Associations*). Nowy Sącz, pp. 10-26.

activity and offer various types of support, but the central figure for each of them is the volunteer as the symbol of value of one person for another, and whose activity shapes pro-social attitudes of society members.

Social Dimension of Volunteering

The volunteering activities discussed in the context of philanthropy, social service, volunteering work influence the shape of the social structure and welfare system⁵¹. However, A. Roguska believes that volunteering work cannot make up for professional activity. It is rather a source of social value thanks to its social and cultural goals. She is of the opinion that volunteering is a form of help, but also a component of education and upbringing, a set of a specific type of values⁵². Thus, following the signalled social value, one could refer to volunteering as engagement. This exact concept is presented by A. Grabowski as he points out to: firstly, the general pro-social (pro-community) attitude; secondly, relation of this fact with readiness to act (agency), especially for the benefit of others; thirdly, high ethical level⁵³. Combining these components into a single social dimension of volunteering, one can say, agreement with Roguska, that it provides convenient conditions for development of various forms of social support. It contributes to raising educational awareness of the social nature of an individual and the need for showing support, at the same time remaining open to social initiatives, "sensitive" to the needs of others, supporting those who sacrifice themselves for others and what to feel needed.⁵⁴ This social effect in

the volunteering structures coincides with development of many aid-related competences of the young generation. The engagement of young people in aid-related activities, many a times resulting from the need of the moment, undergoes (during performance of tasks *pro publico bono*) full transformation and becomes, along with the experience gain, an individual need of the person, satisfied by taking of further activities of this type.

This social dimension of volunteering is not only a "fad" for being noticed in the community, but a certain type of maturity in the sense of perceiving the needs of other members of the society. It is a form of aware respecting of the need for mutuality that explains the need for presentation of pro-social attitudes towards people we have no ties with, assuming that others will treat us the same way we treat them⁵⁵. In this context, the volunteer means a selfless social activist who somewhat "infects" others with his/her behaviour, who proves that the benefits this activity yields are mutual (the volunteer improves and gains various types of skills, the person in need gains the support required for performance of his/her life tasks).

It must be also emphasised that volunteering is an exemplification of the thesis that "a person is a part of bigger, complex social system and human needs are both the basis for the phenomenon of volunteering and are satisfied or created in connection with it, thus influencing the formation of the society - attitudes and trends found in it"⁵⁶.

⁵¹ A. Roguska, (2010) . Wolontariat – działania na rzecz jednostki i społeczeństwa (*Volunteering - Actions for the Benefit of an Individual and Society*). [in:] M. Danielak-Chomać, B. Dobrowolska, A. Roguska, (ed.), Wolontariat w teorii i praktyce (*Volunteering in Theory and Practice*). Fundacja na rzecz dzieci i młodzieży Szansa (*Szansa Children and Youth Foundation*), Siedlce, pp. 13-14.

⁵² Ibidem, p. 45.

⁵³ A. Grabowski, (2020). Zaangażowanie w działalność wolontariatu, a sprawczość, wspólnotowość oraz etyka (*Involvement in Volunteering vs Agency, Community and Ethics*). Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze (*Educational and Upbringing Problems*), No. 1, pp. 27–38.

⁵⁴ A. Roguska, (2010) . Wolontariat – działania na rzecz jednostki... (*Volunteering - Actions for the Benefit of an Individual...*) op. cit., p. 40.

⁵⁵ K. Kanios, (2008). Społeczne kompetencje studentów... (*Students' Social Competences...*) op. cit., p. 22.

⁵⁶ E. Jurczak, (2011). Wolontariat w Polsce. Analiza socjologiczna działalności ochotniczej (*Volunteering in Poland. Sociological Activity of Volunteering*). Doctoral Thesis, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, p. 24.
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Instead of a Summary

The contemporary, still imperfect society, despite its many flaws is, however, open to human needs, although the scope of this openness varies. Thus, volunteering is one of the most desired forms of activity of an individual, developing sensitivity to the needs of another person, teaching empathy and creating situations where interpersonal contact gains a humane dimension, teaching to experience one's own humanity. In the new, digitalising and media-based world, this form of human activity is invaluable. It may be stated to volunteering is one of the challenges of the 21st century which, like a mirror, reflects the image of the society we live in, at the same time showing the society we would like to live in on the other side.

Research confirms that today scientists focus on one field of activity, such as volunteering, care or work, frequently ignoring the reality in which people get involved in many other activities, and the patterns of this social activity are probably better predictors of the results than singular actions, and the degree to which they are complementary or competitive may be important to understand the engagement of volunteers⁵⁷. These interactions, according to the principle of mutuality of R. Cialdini, awareness of benefits gained by the volunteer from the volunteering activity, are both in the interest of the volunteers themselves and the beneficiaries of their charity activity. The volunteer, aware of the benefits his/her volunteering actions give him, will be become more engaged, willing to take up new challenges and having a more optimistic and constructive evaluation of

his/her activity. Therefore, he/she will not be a "martyr" of the idea of volunteering, but its social distributor and beneficiary⁵⁸.

Referring to the presented material, one cannot omit the fact noted expressly by C. Rochester who claims that we should ask if the sector of volunteering is losing its soul nowadays due to more frequent conclusion of contracts, provision of services and adoption of corporate tendencies⁵⁹. It seems that may be so, but to find a full answer to this and many other important questions regarding volunteering and volunteers, we need research and consistent monitoring of this area of human activity.

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⁵⁹ C. Rochester, (2015). Critical thinking about voluntary action and its history. <http://www.vahs.org.uk/2015/02/critical-thinking-about-voluntary-action-and-its-history>; after: J. Dean, (2015). Volunteering, the market ... op. cit., pp. 139-148.

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