VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT – SWEDEN

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1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

Most of the data for this report was provided by the Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet), either during interviews with relevant staff members (e.g. individuals with responsibility for statistics, EU issues and funding) or via their publications, articles and reports, which can be found on their website (http://www.rf.se/). Where information was obtained from other sources, this is indicated in the footnotes.

1.1 Tradition and contextual background

Sweden is “one of the world’s most sporting nations” and around one third of Swedish citizens are members of a sports club. These clubs, which rely on the efforts of volunteers, are the foundation of the Swedish sports movement and can be found in almost every Swedish village. They are considered to be popular movements since they were formed at grassroots level by people wishing to practise their chosen sport.

In the early 19th century, volunteers in sport were mostly men who had been educated in the military. A number of school teachers were also volunteers and when the Swedish sport movement became organised in the beginning of the 20th century, many of them started sport clubs. In the 1940s, the sport movement had become a mass movement for young people and included recreational sport. The Swedish Sports Confederation began to offer more education to sport volunteers in the 1970s. As the sport clubs grew, the profile of sport volunteers changed and in the 1980s more women became sport volunteers.

Today, the key characteristics of the Swedish sport movement are: independency; the not-for-profit character of the sector; the democracy of sport organisations, based on voluntary leadership and voluntary work; open for all; and an important factor for the development of the society as whole.

1.2 Definitions

There is no official definition of volunteering in sport in Sweden. However, the generally accepted definition of volunteering (in general) is: ‘Time and effort that is freely given; unforced and unremunerated, by individuals to voluntary and public organisations’. Although the definition makes reference to volunteering being unremunerated, there may however be a ‘symbolic’ compensation or payment for voluntary work¹. Furthermore, voluntary activities can be carried out within or outside voluntary organisations².

Volunteers in sport in Sweden are known as ‘leaders’, regardless of the role they undertake. The Swedish Sports Confederation defines voluntary leaders in two groups, namely ‘Organisation Leaders’ and ‘Activity Leaders’. The distinction between ‘Organisation Leader’ and ‘Activity Leader’ is that an ‘Organisation Leader’ is for example a member of the board at a sport club and an ‘Activity Leader’ is a coach, trainer, or other practical leadership role.

The literature review has also identified a number of characteristics of sport organisations engaging volunteers. Firstly, the organisations should be separate from the government

¹ Information from interviews with a representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, and from an Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
² Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009.
and state by being private bodies. Secondly, sport organisations engaging volunteers must be separated from the private (commercial) sector, by being a non-profit organisation. Thirdly, they must be separated from the civil society by having a structured organisation³. Voluntary organisations in Sweden are based on the principle of democracy and are structured and managed accordingly, through for example annual general meetings, executives, election committees etc.

1.3 Number and profile of volunteers in sport

There are no exact statistics on the number of volunteers in the Swedish sport sector. However, according to a survey carried out by Statistics Sweden, there were 615 000 sport leaders in Sweden in 2008. Most of these sport leaders are volunteers. This is the best available estimate on the number of Swedish people volunteering in sport and it implies that approximately 8-10% of adults are engaged in voluntary work in this field.

It is a slightly lower figure than the number put forward by other surveys on volunteering in Sweden. As shown by Table 1 below, Swedish surveys on volunteering have concluded that the largest share of voluntary activities is carried out in the sport and recreation sector. The most recent survey (2009) found that every fifth adult aged 16-74 was engaged in voluntary work in the sport and recreation sector in the previous year. This figure has been stable for the past decade, as shown in the table below, and represents a slight increase on the 1992 figure.

Table 1: Voluntary work in Sweden in 1992, 1998, 2005 and 2009. Percentage of the adult population (16-74 years) involved in specific subsectors in the previous year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports and recreation</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare⁴</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing cooperation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Unions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Trend

The number of volunteers, at around 600 000, has remained stable for the last decade or so.

Volume of voluntary work

Survey findings from 2008 on the total number of hours invested by volunteers in sport found that volunteers devote from 3.9 to 6.8 hours of their time per week. Members of sport clubs devote the highest number of hours per week (6.8), followed by those involved as leaders / coaches (5.8) and volunteers in steering committees (3.9).

Table 2: Time dedicated on volunteering in sport, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer Role</th>
<th>Hours per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steering committees</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴ For example, organisations working with social causes such as children at risk, the disabled, substance abuse, offenders and victims of domestic abuse, as well as humanitarian organisations and those for retired persons.
According to the Swedish Sports Confederation, leaders and trainers and other volunteers are active approximately 40 weeks per year. This means that volunteering in sport has a seasonal dimension.

**Age**

The table below shows the number of volunteers in each age group, the share of volunteers in sport by age group and the proportion of the age group which is engaged in volunteering in sport. It illustrates that adults in their forties are most active, followed by adults in their thirties. This is also supported by anecdotal evidence that parents whose children are engaged in sport are most likely to volunteer in this field. It has also been suggested that in relation to other sectors, sport has a relatively high percentage of volunteers, regardless of age.

**Table 3: Volunteering in sport by age group, 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Total number of Swedish people who volunteer in sport</th>
<th>Share of all volunteers in sport</th>
<th>Share of the age group engaged in volunteering in sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-14</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>62,000</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>76,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>172,000</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>87,000</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-70</td>
<td>68,000</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>615,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Sweden, 2008

**Gender**

Men are more involved in volunteering in sport than women. In 2008, 62% of volunteers in sport were men and 38% were women. However the difference is not as great as it was during the 20th century.5

**Table 4: Volunteering in sport by age group, 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number of men who volunteer in sport</th>
<th>Men - Share of the age group engaged in volunteering in sport</th>
<th>Number of Swedish women who volunteer in sport</th>
<th>Women - Share of the age group engaged in volunteering in sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-14</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>49,000</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>87,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>39,000</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>105,000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>67,000</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>53,000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-70</td>
<td>62,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>380,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>235,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Sweden, 2008

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5 Sköndalsinstitutet (2005) Medborgarnas insatser och engagemang i civilsamhället
In terms of decision-making, women make up only 31.5% of the executives of specialised sport federations, although they do make up 43% of the executives of the district federations.

An action plan for gender equality in sport was agreed in 1989. The plan set out the aim to give women of all ages the opportunity to take part in activities and decision-making in the sport movement. The action plan was revised in 2005 and quantified targets were attributed to the aims. For example, there is a target for women and men to represent at least 40% of the membership of decision-making bodies on all levels and at least 30% of the senior positions in federations must be held by women. The plan also requested equality plans from all of the federations.

There have also been some projects addressing gender equality in sport. For example, between 2001 and 2003, a project was run entitled "3R", about how power and resources is given to men and to women in sports. Both employed workers and volunteers from three federations, three special district federations and three sport clubs took part in the project. Furthermore, the governmental initiatives Handslaget (2003-2007) and Idrottlyftet (2007-2011), addressing the whole sports movement, aim to concentrate on the participation of children and young people. These initiatives include an equality perspective. Furthermore, sport clubs run equality projects all over the country.

**Level of education**

Table 5 shows the level of education of Swedish volunteers in sport in 2008. It shows that volunteers in sport are relatively well educated: just under half of all volunteers (49%) were classified as ‘medium skilled’ in 2008, followed by high skilled (26%) and low skilled (25%). Thirty percent of male volunteers were classified as ‘high skilled’, as opposed to 24% of female volunteers.

**Table 5: Volunteering in sport by skill level, 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill group</th>
<th>Number of Swedish men who volunteer in sport</th>
<th>% of all Swedish men per skills group who volunteer in sport</th>
<th>Number of Swedish women who volunteer in sport</th>
<th>% of all Swedish women per skills group who volunteer in sport</th>
<th>Total number of volunteers in sport per skills group</th>
<th>Total % of skills group who volunteer in sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low skilled</td>
<td>92,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>61,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>153,000</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium skilled</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>104,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>304,000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High skilled</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>71,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>161,000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Sweden, 2008

**Socio-professional status**

Data on the profile of volunteers by employment status is not available, according to the Swedish Sports Confederation. Anecdotal evidence however suggests that the majority of volunteers in sport are likely to be employed, as is the case for volunteers in general in Sweden.

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6 Exchange of good practices, identification of main issues to be developed by further action in the field of sport at Member State level with the support of the European Commission: Summary of data received from the Member States. Internet: [http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/doc/c5/doc354_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/doc/c5/doc354_en.pdf)
1.4 Number and types of sport organisations engaging volunteers

Organisations must be voluntary in order to become a member of the Swedish sport movement. These voluntary organisations are governed by democratic principles.

There are four different types of sport organisations in Sweden. The Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet) is the main body at national level which oversees volunteering in sport.

There are two different types of sport federations. Sweden is divided into 21 district sport federations. These federations work on much the same matters as the Swedish Sports Confederation (see section 2.1) within their respective geographical areas; public opinion; representing regional sports in relation to politicians and public authorities; allocating grants and assisting with legal advice. The district federations are also concerned with anti-doping measures and matters of gender equality and thus act as the Swedish Sports Confederation’s extended arm across the country.

In addition to the district federations, there are 67 specialised sports federations which work on behalf of a particular sport discipline and coordinate activities such as competitions and training for youth sports and lower divisions (from 2010 this number will rise to 70).

There are around 22,000 sport clubs in Sweden, plus 7,000 clubs attached to companies. Most volunteers are active in these clubs.

There are also private organisations which involve volunteers in sport activities. These organisations are active for example in running gyms, football academies for children and large sporting events.

Share of volunteers and paid staff in the sport sector

The Swedish Sports movement only accepts voluntary organisations as members. Almost all sports volunteers fulfil their positions without any financial compensation. The Swedish sports movement therefore remains reliant on the work of volunteers and only a few paid employees. Figures for 2005 show that among non-profit sport organisations, paid employees made up 10% of the workforce, while volunteers accounted for around 90%.

Large sport clubs may have one or more employees to carry out administrative tasks, for example in relation to the club’s finances but small clubs are less likely to have any paid employees.

All of the staff (around 85 employees) at the Swedish Sports Confederation are paid employees and in the federations, administrative staff are paid, while board members are volunteers.

1.5 Main voluntary activities

Level of volunteering in different sport segments

Most people are active in the voluntary sport branch of the sport sector as most volunteer in local sport clubs. However, as previously mentioned, there are also private organisations...

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which involve volunteers in sport activities. These organisations are active for example in running gyms, football academies for children and large sporting events.

Level of volunteering in different sport disciplines

The Swedish Sports Confederation indicated that this information is not available in Sweden, although it was suggested that the proportion of volunteers in each discipline is about the same. However, data is available from 2000 on the sport federations with the highest turnover. Football had the highest turnover, followed by ice hockey, golf, equestrian sports and ski sports.

Type of activities carried out by volunteers

Volunteers in sport in Sweden carry out a variety of activities, depending on the sport. They take part in executive committees, as trainers, youth leaders, officials, team leaders, etc. Most of the volunteers are trainers, or youth leaders. Volunteers are also responsible for arranging and running events and competitions.

2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

2.1 Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering in sport

The Ministry of Culture has responsibility for sport issues (which are part of the popular movement policy)9. The objectives of the national sports policy, as outlined by the Ministry are to:

- Give girls and boys and women and men opportunities to take part in physical exercise and sports in order to promote good public health,
- Support a free and independent sports movement, based on voluntary effort, and
- Give women and men positive experiences of sports as entertainment.
- Support only child and youth activities that are run with a child rights perspective in accordance with the UN convention of the rights of the child.
- Strengthen the international competitiveness of sportsmen and sportswomen.

The latter two objectives were introduced in the 2009 Government Bill, State Support for sport (2008/09:126), which was approved in May of this year.

Furthermore, the overall aims of the state contribution are to support activities that:

- help to develop girls’ and boys’ interest in and inclination to participate in physical exercise and sports as well as their opportunities to have an influence on and take responsibility for their sporting activities,
- make it possible for all girls, boys, women and men to engage in sports and physical exercise,
- are intended to give women and men equal access to participation in sports activities,
- promote integration and good ethics, and

9 Swedish Ministry of Culture website: http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/8371
help to arouse a lifelong interest in physical exercise, thereby promoting good health for everyone.

The Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet) is the main body at national level which oversees volunteering in sport. The role of the Confederation is to:

• Represent the united sports movement with politicians, government and other institutions;

• Argue for the social value of sport;

• Lead the way in future policy matters;

• Coordinate the sport movement in conducting research and development, and prepare statistics;

• Build the competences of the sector, for example there is an anti-doping agency in the Confederation;

• Distributing government funding to sport organisations and deciding how to distribute the funding;

• Coordinate the Swedish sport movement’s international activities.

One of the Confederation’s main tasks is to provide strategic leadership on matters relating to finance, organisation and communications. The Confederation provides support in areas where individual federations are not able to, such as IT services, finance, research, legal matters and international collaboration.

The Swedish Sports Confederation is an active member of the European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO). It also participates in EU conferences and meetings on matters relating to sport.

In addition, the Confederation’s partner organisation Sports Education (SISU) is responsible for the education of volunteers. It aims to support clubs and federations through training for leaders, coaches, instructors, officials and referees. It also acts as an internal consultant for member federations and clubs on issues such as organisational development and process management.

SISU also runs study circles for sport clubs in Sweden. Study circles are based around a syllabus which is led by one of the participants. The group members use the syllabus to share their knowledge and experience. The SISU organises around 40 000 study circles every year, with around 450 000 participants.

2.2 Policies

Volunteering in sport is a priority on the political agenda in Sweden and has been for both the current and previous governments (the current government came to power in 2006).

This is evidenced by the fact that the Swedish Sports Confederation has been granted more money (to distribute to organisations within the sector) every year for the last five

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11 Ibid
years. For instance, in 2007, the government proposed to allocate 500 million SEK to Swedish sport in order to create new opportunities for Swedish sport organisations to develop their activities on their own terms and in their own contexts. Furthermore, volunteering is at the heart of the sport policy and relevant to the latter’s three pillars: public health; the idea of popular movement (which is based on voluntary effort); and entertainment. The government identifies goals which must be achieved in order to receive funding. The goals are outlined in an ordinance and a regulatory letter sent from the government to the Swedish Sports Confederation annually in December. The goals are quite broad and not normally related to volunteering but to sport in general. In the last year the government has decided introduce quantitative targets and these will be put in place next year.

The 2009 Government Bill State support for sport (2008/09:126), which was approved in May 2009, outlines the aims and objectives which will apply in the future to state support for sport. As explained above, two additional aims were added to the existing three. It also affirms the government’s commitment to the division of responsibility between the state and the sport movement. The parliament (Riksdag) and the Government “specify what the state wants to achieve through its support to the sports movement and what resource will be made available, and the sports movement has great freedom to decide how the aims and objectives are to be realised”.

2.3 Programmes

Generic Swedish policies in the field of volunteering focus on voluntary organisations rather than on individual volunteers. However, in the field of sport, the Swedish Government and local authorities support voluntary leadership and sport activities for children and young people. For example, every year some 550 000 volunteers participate in some form of educational training to become better volunteers or to develop their clubs. Most of this training is under the auspices of the sports movement’s own education association, Swedish Sport Education (SISU).

Some of the district sport federations run projects with EU funding relating to voluntary leadership.

3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

3.1 General legal framework

With regards to the generic legal framework on volunteering, in Sweden, it has been very important up to now not to regulate voluntary organisations and any attempt to formalise volunteering in law has always been abandoned. This is because the independence and autonomy of the sector are considered a priority by the government. Although the question of adopting legislation for non-profit associations has been raised several times in Parliament, there has been only small support for this. Legal conflicts relating to NGOs and volunteers are therefore solved through case law.

Thus, there is no specific legal framework with respect to volunteering or volunteering in sport. However, the right for every person to create and participate in any form of association, the freedom of association, is a constitutional right - the right to establish a club

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12 Swedish Ministry of Culture website:  http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/9352
or society (including a sport club or association), without outside interference, and to participate in clubs and societies, is guaranteed.\(^{14}\)

### 3.2 Legal framework for individual volunteers in sport

There are no specific legal provisions in Sweden for individual volunteers in sport. As with volunteers in other sectors, since there is no law to establish the legal status of volunteers, they have no legal right to social benefits. Their entitlement is determined on their legal status within other categories, such as students or the unemployed.

### 3.3 Legal framework for sport organisations engaging volunteers

As mentioned earlier, in Sweden there has been a reluctance to introduce legislation in relation to voluntary organisations because this is felt to be contrary to the principles of independence and autonomy which are promoted for the sector. There are however taxation advantages for sport clubs and the sector receives financial support from the government and local authorities. These are discussed further below.

Furthermore, the government has recognised the need to follow up the outcomes of activities funded through its grants. The government has given the Swedish National Centre for Research in Sports the responsibility for conducting regular and long-term follow up of state support to sport. Ongoing monitoring is therefore to be carried out, based on a number of indicators, in-depth analysis and supplementary research, and via monitoring of the research that is relevant to state support for sport.\(^{15}\)

### 4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

#### 4.1 Public financing of volunteering in sport

The Swedish government has recently changed its funding system for sport. Until 2009, sport has mainly been financed by the surplus from the State gaming company, AB Svenska Spel. From 2010 the funding will be sourced from taxes and the entire amount will be processed through the state budget. A general grant from gaming revenues will also be included in the government appropriation.

The government has introduced this change because the dependence on funding from the state lottery was not felt to be a stable source of income for the sector, making it difficult for sport organisations to plan their activities. It was also considered to be more appropriate to let resources to sport be allocated through the regulatory process of priorities in the state budget. Nevertheless, both before and after the change of the funding structure, the allocation of funding was and is decided by parliament.

From 2010, it is estimated that funding for the entire sector will be made up of the following:

- State grant – 1 854 million SEK\(^{16}\) (around 180 million EUR) for 2010
- Regional/Local funding – 510 million EUR for 2010
- EU Funding and private finance – 16 million EUR for the period 2000-2006 (from EU-programmes)

\(^{14}\) Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet) website: [http://www.rf.se/](http://www.rf.se/).


The total amount of funding from the state is in fact a slight decrease on the amount provided to the sector in 2009, from state grants and the lottery surplus\(^{17}\).

Government funding is administered by the Swedish Sports Confederation. The majority of the funding goes directly to sport in the form of grants to the specialised sport federations or direct support to clubs. A small proportion is allocated to the central administration of the Swedish Sports Confederation. Funding from the local authorities is provided for both maintaining facilities and direct financial support for activities. Funding is also obtained through sponsorship, as described below.

The main sources of funding for local sport clubs engaging volunteers in 2008 were member fees (31%), state grants including the funding from the national state lottery (16%), regional/local authority grants (13%), sponsorship (9%) and the voluntary organisations’ own lotteries (6%). Other funding sources make up the remaining quarter.

**Figure 2: The sources of funding for local sport clubs (2008 averages)**

![Source: the Swedish Sports Confederation, 2009](image)

4.2 Other support schemes and benefits

The Swedish sport model is entirely dependent on voluntary support as well as on financial support from the government, especially from local governments, and the widely spread club system. However, voluntary work is said to form the largest contribution to the sport sector.

4.3 Private financing and support schemes

Sponsorship accounts for nearly 50 million EUR of funding to Swedish sport. For clubs, local sponsorship is common and an important self-financing source. In addition, Swedish citizens spend just over 800 million EUR on their own sporting activities in the form of fees or equipment or for watching sport.

Sport clubs also run their own lotteries but funding from these has decreased in recent years.

The national lottery for voluntary organisations (75 organisations, in both sport and other sectors) is called **Bingolotto**. Representatives of sports clubs sell tickets for this lottery, which is marketed on television.

\(^{17}\) Interview: Representative of the Ministry of Culture
4.4 Specific issues: state aid, public service and general interest

There are no specific rules for voluntary sport associations, compared to other voluntary associations (ideell förening). They can be classed as allmännyttig (for the public good) and exempt from income tax and also from VAT. The only difference is that they are excluded from payroll taxes for salaries up to 21 400 SEK for 2009 (half of the basic amount). If the payment is higher they have to pay full payroll taxes.

Sport organisations in Sweden do not fall within the VAT system and do not currently pay VAT on their income, or on the rent of venues from local municipalities\(^\text{18}\). However, the current regulations relating to VAT for NGOs are being reviewed and a study on this subject is due to be submitted to the government in October. This is for two reasons. Firstly, the current advantages for Swedish voluntary organisations in relation to VAT might perhaps be considered not to meet the requirements of EU legislation. Secondly, it is hoped to simplify the administration requirements for the national tax office and the owners of venues and facilities, by making the VAT regulations the same for voluntary organisations and private entities. Although some sport clubs might benefit from a change in the regulations (i.e. by being able to claim back VAT on goods purchased), smaller clubs would be affected by an increased burden in terms of the cost of financial administration. This would have a particular impact on those smaller organisations which rely on volunteers to carry out administrative work (as treasurers for example). The introduction of more complex administrative tasks associated with VAT may also have a negative impact on volunteers’ motivations.

4.5 Economic value of volunteering in sport

The Swedish Sports Confederation estimated that the value of voluntary work was around SEK 20 billion (almost EUR 2 billion) a year in 2006. It is considered that the economic role of volunteers in sport is recognised by the state, since the state provides a significant amount of funding to the sector.

5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

5.1 Key benefits of volunteering for sport volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries

Volunteers in the sport sector have often been active in sport previously. Through volunteering, they are able to spread their knowledge further and give back to society. Individuals also benefit from the social life associated with volunteering in sport, the satisfaction of volunteering and they can develop skills such as leadership skills.

Voluntary work such as transportation or assistance at events is often provided by parents whose children are involved in sport. By helping out, the parents are able to spend more and better quality time with their child/children.

The large number of volunteers in sport in Sweden benefits the community by improving access to sport activities. According to the Swedish Sports Confederation, volunteering in sport has to a large extent helped to create a platform where different generations and

\(^{18}\) Sport facilities and venues are generally provided by local municipalities. Where these are owned by private entities, the sport organisation is obliged to pay VAT.
persons from various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds can interact, thereby supporting the promotion of equality.

Furthermore, volunteering in sport helps to promote a mental and physical well-being. Individuals who engage in sport are less likely to experience stress, smoke or use alcohol. Sport helps to create a sense of community, provides entertainment and meaningful activities for millions of Swedish citizens.

Children and young people in particular benefit from volunteering in sport. In Sweden, more than 90 percent of Swedish children are or have been members of a sport club. Without voluntary efforts, the fees for the children or their parents would be much higher. Volunteers in sport also have a positive effect on the integration process for young Swedes with a foreign background.\(^\text{19}\)

The majority of volunteers in Swedish sport are motivated by the chance to work with young people and to share their interest with like-minded people. They are not motivated by financial reward or personal ambition. Some volunteers become involved through their children and continue with their voluntary activities in the long-term.\(^\text{20}\)

5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer

*Issues in relation motivations of volunteers are integrated in the general report on Volunteering.*

6 EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

EU policies, programmes and activities do have an impact on volunteering in the sport sector in Sweden. Volunteers benefit from, for example, the Rural Development Programme, the European Social Fund and the Youth Programme.

It is also thought that EU regulations will have an impact on the VAT regulations for Swedish voluntary sport organisations, as mentioned above.

Furthermore, there are tensions between EU Competition Law and the specificity structure of the sport sector. This is because Competition Law frees up the market for new providers, which can present a threat to voluntary organisations within the sector and to the costs of participating in sport, if competitors try to join the market.

7 MAIN OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

7.1 Main challenges

One of the biggest challenges for the voluntary sport sector is to recruit enough volunteers. Other needs for the sector are:

\(^{19}\) [frivillig.se]

\(^{20}\) Ibid.
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- Sustainable funding – even though the main source of funding will now be the state budget and the government has affirmed, through a proposition to Parliament, its commitment to maintaining stability in the funding for the sector, there has not been any long-term commitment in terms of the actual annual amount to be allocated to the sector and it is not known what the annual budget will be beyond this year.

- Respect for the specificity of sport – it is important to continue to recognise the value of the voluntary efforts in the sport sector and to maintain the privileges for voluntary organisations, such as advantages in terms of the payment of VAT. Sports clubs should not be subject to the same regulations as the private sector because of the value they bring to society, by providing social opportunities and bringing health benefits, among other things, for people from all backgrounds.

- Regulations and rules (for example taxation rules) that are easy to follow and administrate for volunteers;

- Sport facilities at a reasonable cost – generally facilities are owned by the municipalities but the charges for rent are not consistent across the different municipalities. The Swedish Sports Confederation feels that low cost venues and facilities should be available across the country.

According to the Swedish stakeholders, at national and European level, the specific need of the voluntary sport sector in terms of policy is for respect for the “specificity of sport” and recognition that “sport is more than a game”. Policy should recognise that sport is also about volunteering, social integration, promoting democracy, education, culture etc.

In order to address these challenges, the Swedish Sports Confederation and local federations continue dialogue with politicians.

7.2 Main opportunities

One of the main opportunities for the future is that many young people say they want to be volunteers in the sport sector. This means that they are interested in staying involved, either as volunteers or paid staff in the sector.

The government commitment to providing stable funding for the sector is also positive for the sector, since across the political spectrum there is commitment to supporting sport and an understanding of its benefits for society.

In addition, the collaboration between the Swedish Sports Confederation and the Swedish Lottery and Gaming Corporation makes it possible to develop the sport movement’s joint declaration of vision and values, which was decided upon at the General Assembly 2009:

- Vision: Swedish Sport - best in the world

- Values: Everyone’s right to participate, fair play, democracy and joy

The Swedish Sports Confederation is preparing a communication which aims to present and highlight the effects of grassroots sport in Sweden. This will include a DVD, with scenes from grassroots sport with connection to the values. The DVD will be sent to all sport clubs and will be used as a basis for discussions in their own work with value issues.

Further activities are planned for 2010-2011.
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Swedish Ministry of Culture website: [http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/8371](http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/8371)

Frivillig website: [http://www.frivillig.se/](http://www.frivillig.se/)