

VALUE: Turkey National Report
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This document covers the interaction between University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) and volunteering in Turkey.

1. Overview of volunteering – university interaction

1.1 Volunteering in Turkey

The activities of civil society in Turkey is thought as less developed in terms of volunteering compared with other western countries (1). Since, there are few professional volunteer organizations and adequate research on this area volunteering in Turkey is not totally developed and remained at individual level for many years (2). However, the recent foundations and associations concerning volunteering is aiming to enhance the volunteering in Turkey and Turkish society. For instance, 189 of the foundations, which involve voluntary actions in various subjects such as education, environment, health, etc., in Turkey are related with the university and academy (3). Most often this relation only covers the efforts of university students and individual actions.

1.2 University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) in Turkey

In Turkey, lifelong learning is mainly supported by the government organizations. In general the term Lifelong Learning (LLL) involves vocational education and personal development courses that are organized mainly by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor and Local Government offices. In University Continuing Education Centers (UCEC), on the other hand, this term refers to part-time, non-credit-bearing adult education courses.

In most of the universities lifelong learning courses are planned by Continuing Education Centers, which is a unit different from academic departments. However, sometimes delivery of the courses, such as language courses, depends on the related academic departments. The instructors of the courses are academics of the university, not the CECs employ.

1.3 The political and legislative context in Turkey

Professional volunteering is a developing context in Turkey. The interaction between the volunteering organizations and universities are limited since the regulations in Turkey do not support social responsibility activities because of

being reluctant to seem as political. Only some of the private universities develop their own regulations that cover university and NGOs.

1.4 The volunteering – university interaction in Turkey

Volunteering can be described as to attend or support the activities within the scope of a Non Governmental Organization or social attempt in order to improve the quality of life without expecting something in return (4). Therefore, volunteering has a significant role in improving the skills of being citizen. Also, it helps to construct a bridge between the communities and volunteering organizations. However, most of the university-volunteering interactions in Turkey is focused around university students. Moreover, the interaction between the universities and volunteering organizations is not well developed in Turkey because of some political, bureaucratic and personal reasons which are mentioned in section 3.1.

The recent foundations and associations about volunteering, on the other hand, are trying to improve the voluntary action and interaction between volunteering organizations and universities in Turkey by providing training programs for the volunteers. For instance, the foundation of Community Society conducts several projects with different aims in order to involve youth through social responsibility projects, and tries to educate their volunteers to have a better voluntary action.

Research held by “Third Sector Foundation for Turkey” (5) on 743 participants from different regions of Turkey indicates that 33,1 percent of them attended a voluntary action while the rest of them did not attend any voluntary activity

2. Good practice examples and effectiveness of the interaction

2.1 Successes and challenges

University Lifelong Learning courses that are provided by Continuing Education Centers in Turkey may have a significant influence on volunteering in terms of providing opportunities for the volunteers to improve themselves for a better volunteering action. Furthermore, the interaction between the universities and volunteering organizations may allow the organization to develop additional administrative and institutional skills.

There may also be some challenges that effect the interaction between these two sectors. One of the challenges is finding financial sources to provide seminars and courses for the development of volunteers. When a voluntary organization applies for a ULLL course, agreement on financial issues may be difficult. For example, the budget of voluntary organization for such kind of issues may not fulfill the demand of the university.

2.2 Good practice examples and principles

2.2.1 Examples of good practice

a. Community Volunteers:

Community Volunteers Foundation (CVF) was founded in 2002 in order to enhance the youth to become socially aware and self-esteem, to transform their energy toward social benefit, and to improve various social service projects.

In the direction of this aim, they provide “key courses” for the young volunteers from different regions of Turkey. By means of these courses the young have the chance of meeting with the volunteers from different areas and share their ideas in addition to improve their knowledge concerning civil society, projects and being volunteer.

b. Erciyes University-Communication Faculty:

Association of Journalists and Communication Faculty of Erciyes University has a collective “Wednesday Conversation Project”. The aim of this project is to make the university students and experienced members of local press come together and allow these members to share their professional knowledge and experiences with the students.

c. Sakarya University:

An elective course called “Non Governmental Organizations” is offered in the Engineering Faculty of Sakarya University. By means of this course the students attend the activities of various voluntary organizations.

Sakarya University and the Lions Club works together to provide vocational courses for unqualified young graduated from high school, in collaboration with Continuing Education Center of Sakarya University. Some of the students, who attend “Non Governmental Organizations” course, educated 10 high school graduate young about the basic computer skills voluntarily, and the Lions Club tries to offer training for the high school graduates. Certificate for the trainees and certificate of appreciation for the instructors will be given.

Some of the other students become volunteer to educate the poor and failed students via an NGO and these volunteers attended the courses by joining to the "Starfish" project of this NGO.

d. Middle East Technical University (METU):

Sometimes, some of the instructors at METU want their students to produce instruments (e.g. posters about science, math, etc; tools to be used in experiments) for ILKYAR (Educational Funds for Elementary Schools) as their homework and give them to ILKYAR to be able use them in the schools that they visit. Also, some of the instructors at METU direct their students to attend the activities of ILKYAR and offer them bonus point in return to their participation.

In addition to these cases mentioned above, a mandatory course called "Community Service" was developed for the 3rd grade university students in education faculties of all of the Universities in Turkey, in 2008-2009 education

years. The aim of this course is to provide students an opportunity to involve in voluntary organizations serving for community and make them attend the activities as a volunteer, which increase responsibility for a better society. They are expected to work 28 hours in an NGO during one semester.

2.2.2 Principles of good practice

In order to improve interaction between ULLL and volunteering, some principles should be considered which are listed below:

- Some of the goals of the university and the voluntary organization should match with each other.
- Voluntary organization should provide all the necessary opportunities for the volunteers. Moreover, qualified volunteers should convey their experiences to the beginners.
- Voluntary organization should motivate the volunteers through enhancing their knowledge and skills not only for the volunteering actions but also for their personal development.

3. Barriers and opportunities for future development

3.1 Barriers

The main barrier that limits the interaction of universities with the volunteering organizations in Turkey is the national policy and limiting laws. In the past many organizations, including volunteering organizations, were oriented in the organization scheme of the public institutions but due to some misuses, either for political or individual uses, government decided to separate the volunteering organizations and other foundations from the public institutions. In 2004 a law, which concerns the interaction between the public institutions and associations-foundations (6), put in action. This law states that none of the NGOs can be established in the structure of a government institution. Even though they can work as partners this law makes the interaction of these foundations very difficult.

Another barrier is the confidence between foundations. People in Turkey are uneasy about the aims of the foundations and individuals since some groups have certain political ideas and these groups use some foundations as a screen behind which they would fulfill their aims.

In addition people in Turkey, even at higher education level, are not fully aware of the importance of volunteering and volunteering organizations. Also heads of volunteering organizations are usually result-oriented rather than process-oriented. This means that they usually work on their targets and put the other issues, like educating the volunteers and developing interactions between professionals with volunteering organizations, aside. Usually one or two individuals take the whole responsibility.

Financial issues are always the leading barrier for the universities. Since they should fund themselves they usually have little funds for volunteering works. Furthermore bureaucracy even limits the transfer of funds between organizations. If the other organization is a nongovernmental organization this transfer is even more difficult.

3.2 Opportunities

Turkey is a developing country with a relatively young population. Rather than adults, this young population is largely interested in volunteering actions but there is a lack of organizations that can provide opportunities for them. Directing this population towards volunteering action may lead a great potential for the development of both volunteering and society. Furthermore this population is open to educative actions. ULLL could provide the necessary connections and could direct these people.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Initial conclusions and summary

Both ULLL and volunteering organizations have a significant place in Turkey; however, the interaction between them is not improved sufficiently. The national policy, confidence, financial issues and inadequate researches on the interaction between these sectors affects the improvement of this interaction negatively.

The increasing number of people, who are sensitive toward volunteering and aware of its importance and voluntary foundations, may start to change this low interaction into higher interaction.

4.2 Recommendations

In order to improve the interaction between the volunteering organizations and ULLL centers, first of all communication between these sectors should be improved by informing them via organization of meetings and distributing bulletins through a leader organization. Continuing Education Centers' Network of Turkey, which is under establishment stage, can be a good candidate for this issue. Furthermore, these sectors should be aware of benefits of this interaction to each other and the importance of their interaction on the society. Also, they should have the opportunity to come together, share their ideas and knowledge by means of meetings.

5. Further information

5.1 Bibliography and references

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5.2 Further resources

5.2.1 Websites

METU CEC (www.sem.metu.edu.tr)

ILKYAR (www.ilkyar.org.tr)

Community volunteers (www.tog.org.tr)

Türkiye Eğitim Gönüllüleri Vakfı (<http://www.tegv.org/v4/en/>)

Türkiye Üçüncü Sektör Vakfı (www.tusev.org.tr)