

Analyzing the Level of Involvement in Volunteering



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Abstract Nowadays, voluntary activity is an integral part of social life worldwide, including Russia. The nonprofit sector of the economy, including volunteering, significantly contributes to the increase in the value of the gross national product. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly dampened international cooperation and the exchange of volunteers, as well as the domestic situation and development in the field of volunteering. Therefore, to develop and update the state policy to support volunteering, it is vital to analyze the involvement in volunteering in Russia and its uniformity, as well as to study the role of awareness in involvement in the volunteer movement. The research aims to assess the even distribution of the involvement of the Russian population in volunteering based on verified data from the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation and the DOBRO.RU information platform. Moreover, the research aims to quantify the relationship between the level of awareness and the degree of involvement in volunteering. The research adds empirical data and contributes to the development of the concept of supporting volunteering at the macroeconomic level as an important component of state and corporate social responsibility, considering the risks of COVID-19.

Keywords Volunteering · Nonprofit sector of the economy · Involvement in volunteering · Regional economy · Awareness of volunteering

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1 Introduction

The contribution of volunteers to the gross domestic product in the conditions of the Russian Federation remains insignificant compared to European countries. For comparison, volunteering in the UK brought the country 1.5% of the country's GDP in 2012 [6]. At the state level, one of the goals of the socio-economic development of the Russian Federation is to increase the share of citizens of the Russian Federation engaged in volunteering and involved in the activities of volunteer organizations up to 15% by 2030.

To ensure systemic work on the development of volunteering in the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation is implementing an action plan to use the Concept for promoting the development of volunteering in the Russian Federation and initiating legislative initiatives to support volunteering. Ensuring a uniform and progressive increase in the involvement of citizens of the Russian Federation at the regional level is the potential to increase the contribution of volunteering to the Russian economy.

2 Methodology

The methodological basis of the research includes the provisions of micro- and macroeconomics. The substantiation of the main provisions of the work concerning the development of the volunteer movement in the region is carried out using the methods of deduction, induction, and systemic and integrated approaches. The empirical part of the work is based on monographic methods of information analysis.

An analytical review of information sources about volunteering and the criteria for its evaluation suggests that indicative analysis is the most appropriate method [1, 3–5, 7, 11]. According to this method, the diagnostics of volunteering is carried out based on a set of special indicators—indicators that make it possible to quantify the level of volunteering development and form a set of measures to support volunteering and directions for the prospective development of the country's economy and its regions through this movement.

As a result, we can state that the indicators of the development of volunteering are mainly quantitative.

An analysis of international experience makes it possible to identify indicators used by other countries to assess volunteering activity.

Statistics Canada conducts a study on volunteering as a supplementary module of the Labor Force Survey based on a random sample of Canadians. The volume of donations, the time worked by volunteers in the interests of charitable organizations and helping individuals, and membership in nonprofit volunteer organizations are assessed [8].

In Switzerland, the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) has been collecting data on voluntary work every three to four years since 1997 using the Unpaid Work module

of the Swiss Labor Force Survey. This survey considers organized and unorganized forms of work [8].

According to the approach used in Italy, data on voluntary work was developed based on the results of the census of nonprofit institutions. The 2011 census collected and analyzed data on the sex, age, education, and work of volunteers. It calculated the duration of work performed by volunteers. An attempt was made to include a specific set of indicators to measure the value and social impact of volunteer work (e.g., multiple memberships, years of volunteering, participation in the volunteer movement, and the impact of this activity on the volunteer), which was insisted on by non-governmental organizations [8].

The methodology for assessing the state of the volunteering sector, used in the vast majority of countries where this assessment is carried out, is based on the recommendations of the International Labor Organization (ILO) [5]. These recommendations are set out in the published and recommended Guidelines for Measuring Volunteering. Management recommends using the replacement cost method. This approach involves calculating replacement costs for the beneficiary of volunteering and, therefore, for society. In fact, this is a calculation of the cost of volunteer work that a volunteer does for free.

To properly conduct an assessment, the Guide provides the following set of data elements as a minimum necessary to reflect the economic scale of volunteering:

- Number of volunteers;
- Number of hours spent by volunteers;
- Type of work performed (i.e., occupation);
- The institutional conditions of the work performed (if any);
- The area (industry) where volunteer work is carried out.

Data on the number of volunteers and the number of hours spent by volunteers are recommended to be collected in the framework of statistical surveys of the labor force conducted by the authorized bodies of state statistics. Meanwhile, such types of surveys as general or isolated sociological studies and studies of the costs of working time (time use survey) are not excluded.

Asking questions, it is found out whether the respondents were engaged in volunteer work during the last four weeks, in which industry this work was carried out, and whether it was carried out directly or through any organization. If the respondent indicates that volunteer work was carried out through an organization, then it is additionally specified in which of the following four types of organizations this work was carried out:

- Charity, nonprofit organization, NGO, union, or religious organization;
- Business;
- Government;
- Other, including the community.

After determining the number of volunteers, it is advisable to determine the proportion of volunteers in the workforce. This indicator is calculated as the ratio of the number of volunteers to the country's labor force.

The procedure for assessing the value of volunteer labor recommended in the Guide is the full replacement cost method (i.e., assignment of actual wages by occupation (according to ISCO-08) and branch of work performed (according to ISIC Rev. 4) to each volunteer hour).

A group of university scholars, brought together by the Johns Hopkins University Nonprofit Comparison Project, undertook the task of promoting the systemic collection of data on the nonprofit sector on a cross-country basis, including volunteering. Research conducted by J. Hopkins University under the leadership of Lester M. Salamon aims to reflect the scale and sources of income of the nonprofit sector in the 22 countries surveyed and later in 36 countries [9]. For this purpose, four key variables were identified: expenses, employment, number of volunteers, and income. Volunteering is seen as unpaid employment. This approach is implemented in the practice of the labor market of developed countries (especially during periods of decline in production), where there are bureaus for recruiting volunteers with whom labor contracts are drawn up.

The Gallup World Poll Service generates four indicators that, to some extent, characterize the state of volunteering in the world: the percentage of people who volunteer time for a particular organization, the percentage of people who bring their opinion to officials, the percentage of individuals who donate money to charitable causes, and the percentage of individuals who help others [5].

An objective assessment requires an integrated approach to the definition and interpretation of the system of indicators for developing the volunteer movement. This will make it possible to identify trends and determine the current model of volunteering in the Russian Federation, determine growth points and directions of support at the state level, and provide an opportunity for targeted management of developing the volunteer movement to balance it in the territorial and sectoral context.

3 Results

To assess the dynamics of volunteering, basic indicators are commonly applied in world practice when evaluating volunteering. According to the ILO recommendations, these indicators include the number of volunteers, the volume of hours worked by volunteers, and the share of volunteers in the total population (Table 1). The authors used data from the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation (Rosstat) as an information source because it is the most verified, and its list is close to the ILO methodology to assess volunteer work.

According to Rosstat data for 2016–2021, there was a steady increase in the number of people aged 15 and older participating in the volunteer movement. The number of those participating in the volunteer movement during the studied period increased by 24.3%; their share in the total permanent population of the country increased from 1 to 1.22%. The average number of hours worked per volunteer per month decreased from 9.4 to 7.5 h.

Table 1 The main indicators characterizing volunteering in the Russian Federation

Indicator	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Growth in 2021 compared to 2016 (%)
Population aged 15 and older working as volunteers during the last month, thousand people	1435	1471	1527	1797	1870	1784	+ 24.3
Hours worked per month, thousand hours	n/d	13,065	11,849	13,985	15,393	13,315	+ 1.9 (к 2017г.)
Including average per volunteer, hours	9.4	8.9	7.8	7.8	8.2	7.5	– 20.3
The number of residents on average per year in the Russian Federation, thousand people	146,675	146,842	146,831	146,765	146,460	145,864	– 0.6
The population of Russia of working age, thousand people	84,200	83,220	82,260	81,360	82,680	83,200	– 1.2
The share of volunteers in the total permanent population of Russia, %	1.00	1.00	1.04	1.22	1.27	1.22	+ 22
Share of volunteers in the labor force, %	1.70	1.77	1.86	2.21	2.26	2.14	+ 25.9

Source Compiled by the authors based on Rosstat [3]

The involvement of volunteers in the activities of public organizations is one of the forms of the targeted impact of an organized membership group on the socially active part of society, during which people sympathetic to public projects enter the process of implementing volunteer work with its subsequent consolidation in the status of a participant of the volunteer movement.

To assess the level of involvement in volunteering by region, the authors used Rosstat data obtained during a survey of citizens aged 15 years and older [3].

Table 2 shows the regions with a negative trend in the share of volunteers from 2016 to 2021.

In these regions, it is necessary to intensify work to involve citizens in volunteering. In other regions, the dynamics remain not very high (an increase of no more than 2%). Good growth rates (more than 2%) are shown by Primorye Territory and the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic.

Table 2 Change in the share of volunteers by regions of the Russian Federation

Regions with negative dynamics in the share of volunteers				Regions with the highest positive dynamics in the share of volunteers	
Region	Changes from 2021 to 2016 (%)	Region	Changes from 2021 to 2016 (%)	Region	Changes from 2021 to 2016 (%)
Ivanovo Region	− 0.78	Novgorod Region	− 1.22	Vladimir Region	+ 1.82
Yaroslavl Region	− 0.46	Penza Region	− 0.20	Kursk Region	+ 1.82
Komi Republic	− 0.36	Republic of Khakassia	− 0.10	Tver Region	+ 1.56
Saint Petersburg	− 1.73	Kemerovo Region	− 0.05	Republic of Dagestan	+ 1.58
Krasnodar Territory	− 0.13	Omsk Region	− 0.29	Kabardino-Balkarian Republic	+ 2.72
Sevastopol	− 3.21	Tomsk Region	− 0.58	Kurgan Region	+ 1.68
Chechen Republic	− 0.10	Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	− 4.18	Republic of Tuva	+ 1.59
Republic of Bashkortostan	− 0.91	Trans-Baikal Territory	− 0.37	Primorye Territory	+ 3.13
Republic of Mordovia	− 1.00	Kamchatka Territory	− 2.36	Magadan Region	+ 1.88
Udmurt Republic	− 2.73	Khabarovsk Region	− 0.03		
Kirov Region	− 0.79	Chukotka Autonomous Area	− 0.53		

Source Compiled by the authors based on Rosstat [3]

The dynamics of volunteer involvement in the context of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation were also assessed according to the data from the DOBRO.RU website [10]. Based on the average growth rate for 2017–2021, the leaders are the Republic of Adygea (a significant increase in registered volunteers in 2021) and the Sakhalin region. There are no negative dynamics in the share of volunteers. In almost all subjects, the share of volunteers in the region's total population does not exceed 1%.

Research conducted by the regions made it possible to find out that the lack of information about the ways of joining the movement is a significant barrier to the organization of the volunteer movement. From 40 to 50% of respondents in the Republic of Mari El, Vologda Region, Lipetsk Region, and Chelyabinsk Region indicated that they did not know about volunteering. In the Tyumen Region, their

share was only 11%. On the contrary, only 3.7% of the respondents in the Orenburg Region know nothing about volunteering. In the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, only 21.1% of respondents know about the activities of volunteer organizations [2].

The level of involvement in volunteering is greatly influenced by the degree of awareness of the population about the volunteer movement and opportunities for participation. To confirm this hypothesis, the relationship between the level of awareness and involvement in volunteering was assessed based on the analytics of the DOBRO.RU website. The number of vacancies posted on the DOBRO.RU website was used as the level of information activity; the volume of hours worked by volunteers was taken as an assessment of involvement [10]. The follow-up period was six years.

As a result of calculations, there is a strong direct relationship; the correlation coefficient is 0.847. To assess the statistical significance of the correlation, the value of the Student's criterion was calculated and compared with the critical value. The calculated value (3.19) is greater than the critical value (2.78). Therefore, the relationship is statistically significant.

To construct a regression equation based on the correlation field, a paired exponential function was chosen. The regression equation (empirical regression equation) is as follows: $y = 2904.08454e^{9.0E - 5x}$.

Since the calculated Student's *t*-test is less than the critical one ($0.9 < 3.495$), the statistical significance of the regression coefficient *b* is not confirmed. The significance of the regression coefficient *a* is confirmed because the calculated value of the Student's criterion is greater than the critical value ($4.84 > 3.495$). The statistical significance of the equation was verified using the coefficient of determination and Fisher's test. According to the determination index, the overall variability in the involvement of volunteers by 73.71% is explained by a change in the level of awareness of citizens about volunteering. The remaining 26.29% of the changes are due to factors not considered in the model. The accuracy of the selection of the regression equation is high. The actual value of the *F*-test (Fisher) was 11.213, which is more than the tabular test of 7.71. Thus, the coefficient of determination is statistically significant, and the resulting estimate of the regression equation is statistically reliable.

4 Conclusion

In today's conditions, volunteering is an important factor in the progress, cohesion, and stability of society. The scope and scale of volunteer activities are expanding annually. The Russian Federation makes a big bet on the economy of the third sector as well. At the national level, the goal of the development of the Russian Federation is to increase the share of citizens engaged in volunteering or involved in the activities of voluntary organizations by up to 15%.

To assess the state and development of volunteering, the authors used indicators recommended by the International Labor Organization. Calculations based on the

labor statistics of Rosstat for 2016–2021 show an increase in the number of people aged 15 and older participating in the volunteer movement. However, the mass character does not reflect the quality of the development of volunteering; the share of those involved in volunteering in the total population is only a little more than 1%, with a predominance of events, sports volunteering, and other popular areas. In the regions of the Russian Federation, work is underway to involve volunteering. Some subjects have made some progress in this. However, the share remains less than 1% in most subjects of the Russian Federation.

To stimulate involvement in the volunteer movement at the regional level, it is necessary to build and develop an infrastructure to support volunteering, which will make it more accessible and convenient for citizens. In addition to information support on the Internet, where the global platform DOBRO.RU has already been created, it is necessary to expand the information campaign to popularize volunteering using the available information resources. For greater coverage of the older generation (the so-called “silver age” volunteers), it is advisable to create volunteer centers that will attract people who care and want to help citizens. The format of such centers can be built on the “one window” principle, similar to state and municipal services in the system of multifunctional centers.

From our point of view, the government should actively stimulate professional volunteering when specialists in a certain industry can help nonprofit and charitable organizations free of charge. To activate volunteering on the part of the country, it is necessary to provide guarantees for payment for travel, food, and accommodation, as well as life and health insurance when volunteers are involved in especially hazardous types of work (i.e., emergencies or disaster medicine). Moreover, it is necessary to provide volunteers with access to medical organizations, think over a mechanism for including volunteer work in the insurance period, and provide preferential taxation to nonprofit organizations involved in volunteering.

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