

RESEARCH

REPORTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

# VOLUNTEERING ABROAD IN POLAND AND GERMANY

ITS IMPLICATIONS ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
THE RESPECTIVE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRY,  
AND ITS EFFECTS ON IMAGES OF EUROPE

EDITED BY  
SILKE MARZLUFF  
FILIP PAZDERSKI

INSTYTUT SPRAW  
PUBLICZNYCH



Zentrum für  
zivilgesellschaftliche  
Entwicklung



# **VOLUNTEERING ABROAD IN POLAND AND GERMANY**

ITS IMPLICATIONS ON  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE  
RESPECTIVE NEIGHBOURING  
COUNTRY, AND ITS EFFECTS  
ON IMAGES OF EUROPE

EDITED BY  
SILKE MARZLUFF  
FILIP PAZDERSKI

Centre for Developments in Civil Society/ Zentrum für zivilgesellschaftliche Entwicklung im FIVE e.V., Germany

Institute of Public Affairs Foundation/ Fundacja Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Poland

The report originates from the project “Volunteering abroad in Poland and Germany, its implications on attitudes towards the respective neighbouring country, and its effects on images of Europe” which was realised by the Centre for Developments in Civil Society / Zentrum für zivilgesellschaftliche Entwicklung (zze) from Germany and the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) / Instytut Spraw Publicznych (ISP) from Poland. Funded by Deutsch-Polnische Wissenschaftsstiftung (DPWS) and Stiftung für deutsch-polnische Zusammenarbeit (SdpZ).



Research team: *Beata Charycka, Sabine Kakuie, Grzegorz Makowski, Silke Marzluff, Filip Pazderski, Lena Föll, David Kühner*  
Project Leader (zze): *Prof. Dr. Thomas Klie*

Whole research team is responsible for the content of the report, however its particular chapters have following main contributors:

1. How volunteering matters for Europe and Polish-German relations – introductory remarks – Silke Marzluff, Filip Pazderski
2. Research methodology – Beata Charycka
3. Description of the sample and general experience of the volunteers who participated in the study – Sabine Kakuie, Silke Marzluff
4. Programmes and conditions for doing an international voluntary service – Sabine Kakuie, Silke Marzluff, Filip Pazderski
5. Long-term volunteering’s potential in influencing Polish-German relations – Beata Charycka, Filip Pazderski
6. The volunteers’ perceptions about Europe – Silke Marzluff, Sabine Kakuie
7. Recommendations – Silke Marzluff, Filip Pazderski

Editors: *Silke Marzluff, Filip Pazderski*

Proofreading: *Hayden Berry*

Typesetting: *OWP SIM*

© Copyright by Centre for Developments in Civil Society in FIVE e.V., Freiburg 2014

© Copyright for design and typesetting by the Institute of Public Affairs Foundation, Warsaw 2014

This paper may not be reproduced, in whole or in part without written permission from Centre for Developments in Civil Society. If you would like to use parts of this text or empirical data, you must quote the source.

Publisher:

Zentrum für zivilgesellschaftliche Entwicklung

Bugginger Str. 38

79114 Freiburg im Breisgau

Tel.: (0049) 0761 47812 14, Fax: (0049) 0761 47812 699

info@zze-freiburg.de, www.zze-freiburg.de



<b>Foreword</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Why volunteering matters for Europe and Polish-German relations – introductory remarks</b>	<b>7</b>
Why we need volunteering	7
The structure of the report and its research questions	9
<b>2. Research methodology</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3. Description of the sample and general experience of the volunteers who participated in the study</b>	<b>15</b>
Description of the sample	15
General experiences during voluntary service	19
<b>4. Programmes and conditions for doing international voluntary service</b>	<b>23</b>
Origins of the European Voluntary Service (EVS)	23
Youth in Action and the European Voluntary Service (EVS)	24
National programmes	26
Summary	31
<b>5. Long-term volunteering's potential in influencing Polish-German relations</b>	<b>33</b>
5.1. A glance at the theory as an introduction	33
5.2. The situation before doing voluntary service	38
5.3. Poles and Germans' mutual stereotypes according to the surveys	47
5.4. Volunteers' evaluation of Polish-German relations	49
5.5. Circumstances of volunteers' intercultural contact and their influence on Poles'/Germans' adaptation in the hosting society	53
5.6. Image of the neighbouring country and mutual relations after voluntary service	55
5.7. Summary: Volunteers as bridge builders between societies	60
<b>6. Volunteers' perceptions about Europe</b>	<b>63</b>
6.1 Perceptions and connectivity with the European Union. A theoretical view	63
6.2 What do Polish and German volunteers know about Europe, and how do they identify with Europe and the European Union before doing voluntary service?	69
6.3 How does voluntary service change identification with Europe and the volunteers' European identity?	70
6.4 What concepts of Europe do volunteers have before taking up voluntary service?	73
6.5 Concepts of Europe at the end of voluntary service	75
6.6 Summary	81

<b>7. Recommendations: How to improve Polish-German perceptions and how to develop images of Europe through volunteering</b>	<b>83</b>
Policy Level	83
Programme Level	85
General Comments	87
<b>8. Bibliography</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>9. List of Figures and Tables</b>	<b>95</b>



The development of a good neighbourhood and the setting up of trustworthy ways of cooperation are linked both to the process of reconciliation between Germans and Poles, and form the main aims and interests of cooperation of the two countries, which can be said to have considerable historic relevance.

In a joint declaration by the governments of Poland and Germany, their good neighbourhood and success of cordial cooperation over the past twenty years are being acknowledged, and it has been consented by the two governments that this aim should be decisively pursued in the future.

Prominent aspects of the programme for joint cooperation dating back to 2011 consist of dialogue involving citizens in both countries, with a specific focus on the younger generation, fostering exchange, mobility of volunteers, and cooperation in the field of science.

The project “Volunteering abroad in Poland and Germany, its implications on attitudes towards the respective neighbouring country, and its effects on images of Europe” makes a valuable contribution to the fields of action the programme for joint cooperation wants to tackle, such as the establishment of dialogue between young volunteers and staff or other volunteers of their hosting organisation at the beginning of voluntary service, who mostly meet each other openly without direct personal memories of the past and of war between the two countries. International voluntary service fosters the mobility of volunteers between European countries, among them Germany and Poland, which would not take place in the same way without specific funding. In the field of cooperation in research and science this study contributes to intense exchange, the creation of new professional cooperation, and the setting up of scientific networks in the field of civil society.

The project that studies the results of volunteering in Poland and Germany has led to new insights on the topic of voluntary work and its effect on attitudes towards the respective neighbouring country. Differences between German and Polish volunteers become visible, e.g., regarding their age, their professional as well as social background, and their motives for doing voluntary service. The image of self and the other by Polish and German volunteers are especially important, as through voluntary service, this can be adapted to the reality they face in the other country, and thus be altered or expanded.

Volunteers also learn about the issue of a unified Europe by getting to know daily life in another country and by meeting volunteers from many different countries – inside or outside of the European Union.

One highly relevant insight of this research project is that in times of international mobility, which has become the norm for many young people, the aims of the joint declaration of Germany and Poland's governments for fostering bilateral dialogue and opportunities for exchange in the field of volunteering, in particular, have been put into practice.

The recommendations that are given at the end of the study build upon the diversity of young people, the need to foster language and professional skills, and to evaluate and thus increase the knowledge base of the respective neighbouring country. The latter can be seen as a central field of the action for youth as well as Polish and German society in general.



The two of us, the heads of the Institute of the Centre for Developments in Civil Society and the Institute of Public Affairs can look back on a trustworthy, cooperative, and efficient joint research project, which will hopefully be continued in the future.

We would like to thank our employees Beata Charycka, Grzegorz Makowski, Filip Pazderski, Lena Föll, David Kühner, Sabine Kakuie, and Silke Marzluff for their implementation of the study and hope that the results will receive the political meaning they deserve, if attempts at following the aims of Polish-German cooperation are pursued with determination in the future, as has been declared by the two governments.

Jacek Kucharczyk, PhD

and

Prof. Dr. Thomas Klie



## 1. Why volunteering matters for Europe and Polish-German relations – introductory remarks



You may have noticed people being active in Polish Second World War historical sites (places of memory) or helping out in urban gardening in Germany. It might also happen that a person with a foreign accent answers your phone call to an NGO working in the field of youth education or culture in one of these countries. These are random examples of volunteers from Poland or Germany serving in their neighbouring state. Different motivations and aims can lead to the decision to do voluntary service. Regardless of what the original motivation was, volunteers end up acquiring a great deal of knowledge and skills, which are useful in their daily lives as well as their professional career. However, they gain more than just these practical skills: they get to know a foreign country's realities and face the stereotypes they might have had prior to their arrival. Moreover, while learning about and experiencing the diversity of European societies they might become more acquainted with the European Union (EU) and the European idea as a whole.

The influence of international voluntary service on the attitudes towards the host country and its impact on thoughts about Europe were the main aspects taken into consideration within the research project implemented by the German Zentrum für zivilgesellschaftliche Entwicklung (zze)/ Centre for Developments in Civil Society and the Polish Instytut Spraw Publicznych (ISP) / Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) entitled "Volunteering abroad in Poland and Germany, its implications on attitudes towards the respective neighbouring country, and its effects on the images of Europe".

Before presenting the assumptions of this research and elaborating more on its findings, some facts on volunteering and voluntary service will be presented in order to highlight the different starting points in Germany and Poland regarding this type of societal involvement. Additionally, the manifold benefits of voluntary service shall be briefly introduced.

### **Why we need volunteering**

Ten years after new member states from Central Europe joined the EU and 25 years after democratic transition in the region, the level of integration between neighbouring countries in Central Europe might be considered as improvable, at least when it comes to knowledge about and attitudes towards respective neighbouring countries. This is also still the case in Poland and Germany, even though a lot has been accomplished in order to bring



both countries closer together. The most recent “Polish-German Barometer 2013” (Łada 2013) by IPA shows continuous improvement in the level of both countries’ recognition amongst their inhabitants. However, this trend is rather slow and there are still many people with little and stereotypical knowledge of the neighbouring country.

In addition, Europe has faced difficult moments in its development for several years. In times of economic depression, when the conditions related to the quality of life for many Europeans are deteriorating, people lose their belief in representative democracy and the concept of an integrated Europe. According to the most recent European comparative research from 2013, there are less people between 15-30 years old declaring an interest in taking part in elections (TNS Political & Social 2013), which might be considered the main act of democratic participation. In Poland, the number of youth declaring participation in elections in the three years prior to the survey has decreased by up to 22% compared to the research in 2011 (Gallup Organisation 2011).

Moreover, this year being the year of the European Parliament elections, it is worth observing that young people in Poland in particular do not understand the proceedings and relevance of this institution. As a result, they tend to not think about voting for their representatives in the European Parliament (Dudkiewicz, Fuksiewicz, Kucharczyk, Łada 2013).

The above-mentioned situation is related to the still difficult situation of civil society in Central European countries, such as Poland. It manifests itself in little involvement in community affairs at both a local and national level. The involvement of Poles in NGO activities is one of the lowest in Europe. However, the involvement of Poles in volunteering activities has remained stable for several years, although nevertheless at a very low level– around 14% (see i.e. Przewłocka 2011; Przewłocka, Adamiak, Herbst 2013). Indifference towards public affairs is also confirmed by the low voting turnout in Poland, reaching around 25% in the European Parliament elections and wavering around 45-50% in various national elections.

Thus, new efforts need to be undertaken that bring members of European states closer together and which manifest why being in the EU matters. In order to counteract mutual stereotypes and the lack of knowledge, and to overcome the difficult past of countries such as Poland and Germany, practical activities should be undertaken to bring the citizens of Europe closer together, especially those from neighbouring countries. Starting with this assumption, this report argues that voluntary service can be an answer to the above-mentioned economic and social needs of European societies, to enable people to be involved in gaining new skills which will be useful in their private and professional lives.

One of the goals of the European Voluntary Service (EVS), the largest long-term volunteering service programme supported by the EU (for more about its content see chapter 4 in this report), consists of the promotion of European

identity among EU citizens. EVS offers an opportunity for people to get to know other member states, their culture and language. But volunteers also represent their own country and culture, and might share their experiences while cooperating with citizens from other parts of Europe.

Volunteering for the good of the community is considered a relevant factor when it comes to creating social capital. Among other effects, it can also be a foundation for building efficient NGOs, which are rooted in society, especially in the countries that have accessed the EU in recent years. In effect, it also can lead to the development of social trust.<sup>1</sup> Reaching the same result is also possible through bilateral relations between neighbouring societies. This can happen through the magnitude of roles volunteers play, considering the variety of occasions they have to become involved in activities leading to building bonds with different social group members and solving diversified social needs. Young people from Poland and Germany are involved in a wide range of activities, including education, culture, reconciliation, youth oriented work, and cultural heritage protection (more general information on Polish-German volunteering see chapter 4).

Volunteering is also regarded as an important element of the lifelong learning (LLL) concept (Commission of the European Communities 2000) in the EU. Involvement in such activity enables volunteers to achieve social as well as civic competencies, which all are crucial for effective operation of contemporary societies and labour markets. With respect to these aspects, there is an on-going debate in the EU concerning the development of a joint European framework for the recognition of skills and competencies acquired by volunteers. Through volunteering, people can achieve not only a better knowledge and understanding of people from different social groups within their own society, but also learn more about the societies of other EU member states, including their respective neighbouring ones. It is especially the latter aspect that is the focus of this research, as it has not been specifically dealt with in other studies on voluntary service, which have mostly focused on social skills or the general gaining of informal competencies.

## **The structure of the report and its research questions**

Two topics were the focal points of our research: the first was to explore the effects voluntary service undertaken by Polish and German young adults have on images about the respective neighbouring country. The second was whether and how a voluntary service affects thoughts and attitudes about Europe and the EU on a meta level. The positive results of voluntary service are often declared to be related to the attitudes towards host country

---

**1** For more observations on the policies of the role of volunteering in the EU, see Kucharczyk, Łada, Pazderski 2011.

improvement and raising European awareness, although they have rarely been evaluated.

This research was based on an online-questionnaire completed by 59 Poles and Germans doing long-term voluntary service in their respective neighbouring country in 2013, as well as on 19 in-depth interviews, which were conducted with people chosen amongst the group taking part in the online questionnaire.

While trying to compare volunteering in general and voluntary service specifically in the context of Poland and Germany, one has to consider the socio-legal context that distinguishes them. There are differences in Poland and Germany regarding the legal status of volunteering and its place within national policies. In addition, the intensity and societal acknowledgement of volunteering differs in both countries. These aspects are elaborated in the fourth chapter of this report.

After describing the methodology of the research presenting the background situation in both societies related to volunteering, the findings of the research will be presented. At the beginning of this section, general information about the sample of volunteers taking part in the study will be given as well as the activities they carried out.

Following on from this, there is a chapter on the influence of voluntary service regarding attitudes and knowledge of the respective neighbouring country, as well as a chapter on changes in attitude regarding the EU.

To conclude the study, recommendations that have been developed by the members of the research team from both institutes based on the research findings will be discussed.

The recommendations are addressed to decision makers on both a European and national level, who shape the organisation of voluntary service programmes, as well as practitioners in sending or hosting organisations in Poland and Germany. However, these conclusions might also be interesting for people involved in trans-border volunteering in the context of other countries. Moreover, some of the observations can also be adjusted to the context of other bilateral relations between neighbouring countries struggling with the legacy of a difficult past.

## 2. Research methodology



In order to explore the topic of Polish-German volunteering, its impact on Polish-German relations, and volunteers' perceptions of Europe, a three-stage research project was realised.

In the first step, desk research was carried out. Researchers from IPA and zze analysed Polish and German research documents on volunteering in each country, both theoretical and empirical, as well as reports and policy documents with a focus on youth volunteering, volunteering exchanges with neighbouring countries, materials on Polish-German volunteering programmes, and projects from sending and hosting organisations. This stage of the research helped to gain a deeper understanding about the topic of Polish-German volunteering, and thus contributed to the design of the research tools which were prepared for the subsequent steps of the research.

The second stage of the research consisted of a quantitative survey realised by an online questionnaire. Prepared in two languages, it was sent to Polish and German volunteers who had just begun their volunteer service in the respective neighbouring country. As the main focus of the research was put on long-term volunteering, at least six-month volunteering projects were the main criterion for participation. Other aspects, for example the topic of the voluntary service were not considered.

The questionnaire consisted of four main blocks, with both open and closed questions, which gathered information about the volunteers in terms of their motivation for realising the project and expectations concerning the project; Polish-German relations and their mutual perception of Poles and Germans; Europe and European identity; the demographics of respondents and general information about the project. The volunteers could abandon filling in the form at any stage of the questionnaire, which resulted in a different size of the sample for different questions.<sup>1</sup>

As there is no joint database of volunteers taking part in international voluntary services within the different programmes and funding sources, the only way of contacting the target group was via the sending organisations. Due to data protection regulations, these organisations were not able to reveal the contact details of their volunteers. Therefore, the sending organisations themselves have become our link to the volunteers. Researchers from both organisations had to identify and contact sending/hosting organisations involved in Polish-German volunteering projects. As there is also no place in which data of all such entities from each of the countries is stored, this was

---

**1** The online questionnaire is available at the project's website: <http://www.isp.org.pl/site.php?id=887&lang=2>.

extremely challenging (i.e. with respect to Poland around 150 organisations involved in long-term international volunteering were identified and contacted to find out whether they were receiving or sending volunteers from/to Poland/Germany). Each organisation was contacted via e-mail and phone in order to attract their interest and readiness to help us with reaching volunteers who would meet the criteria. The organisations' support for the project varied, but, in general, their cooperation resulted in the largest amount of the respondents in the research. In order to foster their motivation, we have offered to include additional questions that are relevant for their work. However, none of the sending organisations made use of this opportunity. The link to the online survey was sent to the German sending organisations on 22 October 2012 and to the Polish sending organisations on 9 November 2012.

Additionally, Facebook groups of participants in international voluntary services were contacted and information on the research was given in order to find alternative ways of reaching the volunteers directly, which proved to be successful.

Twenty organisations and institutions from Germany were identified as sending organisations for volunteers that went to Poland. They sent a total of 79 volunteers from Germany to Poland in 2012/2013. Thirty-one volunteers,<sup>2</sup> thus 39 per cent of the total number of volunteers who went to Poland in this period of time, participated in the online survey in November and December 2012. This rate of participation is satisfying considering the fact that we were not able to contact the volunteers directly.

Regarding Poland, 17 sending organisations sending 30 volunteers to Germany in 2012/2013 were identified. Seventeen volunteers filled in the form,<sup>3</sup> thus the quota of participation in the online survey at this stage was 57 per cent. In addition, the Polish Foundation for the Development of the Education System, which is the national agency coordinating the EVS in Poland, was also contacted. Based on its data, 100 volunteers went to Germany in 2012 and 2013 for EVS, which is the most common way of realising long-term volunteering projects among Poles (not all of them could participate in the research project, because of the time and length of their stay). With the help of the Foundation and its engagement in contacting the volunteers, 11 new responses to the online survey were obtained. Reaching 28 volunteers is considered quite a good result, but it is hard to establish the number of volunteers that realised their projects at the time of conducting this research.<sup>4</sup>

---

**2** Only valid cases are counted here.

**3** Only valid cases are counted here.

**4** According to the Polish Foundation for the Development of the Education System, in 2012 and 2013 100 young Poles realised volunteering projects within EVS in Germany. Germany is the second most popular destination for Poles within EVS, just after Ukraine. The above-mentioned data was given to IPA informally, since the Foundation publishes data without referring to the countries in which Polish youth do their EVS.

The main period of data collection was November-December 2012. Due to difficulties we faced in getting access to volunteers, IPA launched a second wave with new volunteers that went to Germany in March- April 2013.

A total of 59 valid cases were obtained and formed the basis of the quantitative analysis.

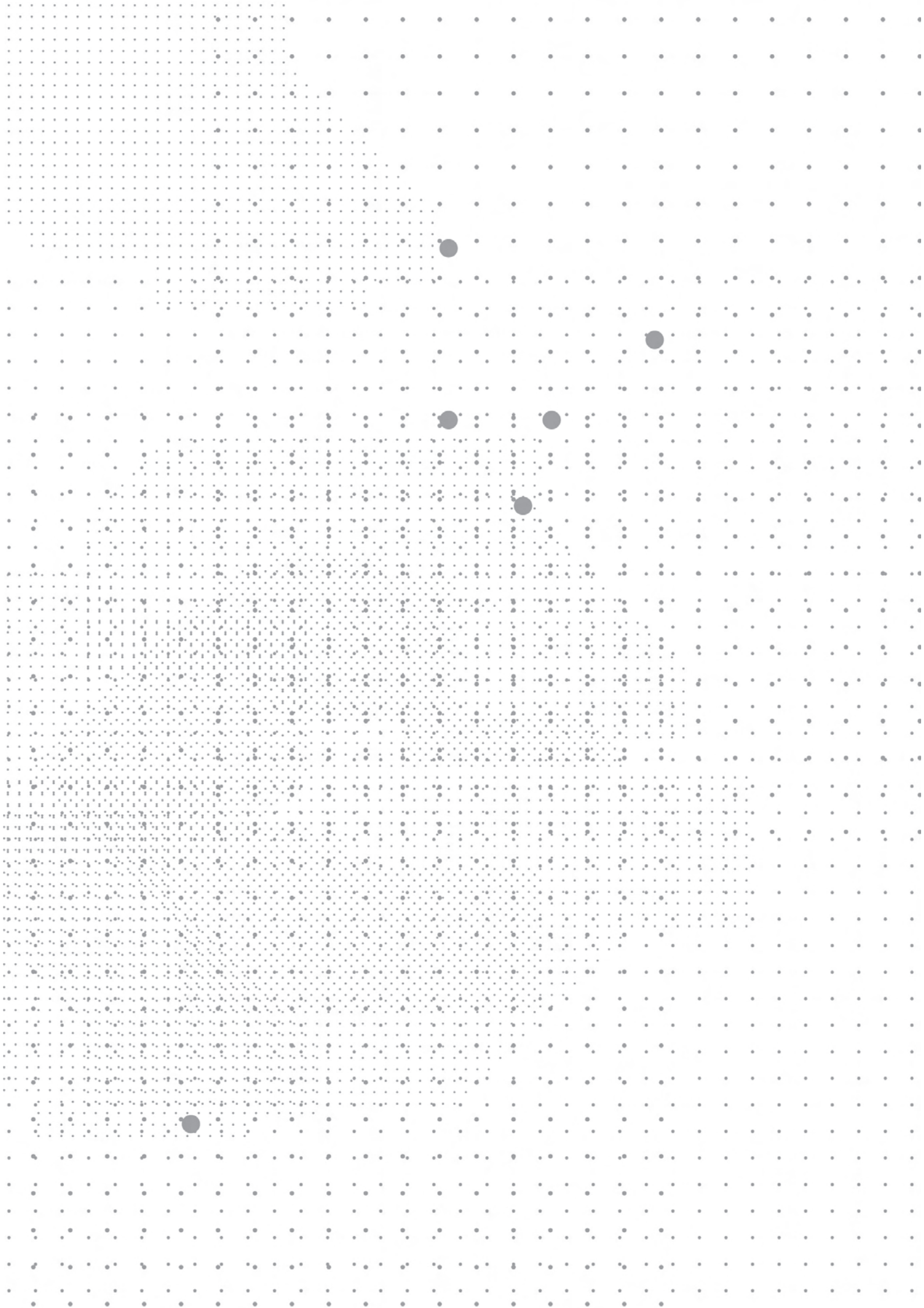
The qualitative study formed the third stage of the research. At the beginning of this part the results of the quantitative research were collected and analysed. Based on this research, questions for the next stage of the research were developed by the German-Polish research team. All these steps were taken during a meeting of the research team organised in Freiburg in March 2013, resulting in a questionnaire of the qualitative interviews.<sup>5</sup> As a result, in-depth interviews were conducted in May and June 2013 with those volunteers who agreed to be contacted for an individual interview in the online questionnaire. Out of 20 planned interviews, 19 were realised (ten with volunteers from Poland and nine with volunteers from Germany). A pre-test was also implemented before the interviews, which allowed some improvements of the questionnaire for the qualitative interviews. Due to the fact that the volunteers were still active in their projects in either Poland or Germany and the occasion for personal contact with them was limited, almost all of the interviews were carried out online with the use of video communication. All the conversations were recorded. The semi-structured interviews covered topics including the volunteers' experiences from the programme, attitudes towards the neighbouring country and its inhabitants, the perception of Polish-German relations, and attitudes towards Europe and European identifications. The idea was to speak with the volunteers at the final stage of their projects in order to observe possible changes in their opinions. However, all the data was analysed collectively. Case studies of changes in volunteers' opinion were not realised.

Although the data gathered through both the quantitative and qualitative studies is valuable, its limitation has to be taken into consideration. The size of the sample in the quantitative research is too small to be representative. Therefore, we cannot generalise the results on a statistical basis. Also, we cannot guarantee having reached all the volunteers that went to Germany or Poland in that period of time. However, the research has reached a considerable percentage of Polish and German volunteers who do their voluntary service within the EVS programme in either Germany or Poland. Another limitation concerns the fact that the period of time between filling in the form and participation in the individual interview was not identical for all the volunteers, even though this diversification was minimised. We consider these limitations in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

The data offers valuable insights into the development and effects of voluntary services regarding gaining knowledge and a change of attitudes towards the neighbouring country and Europe on a qualitative level.

---

<sup>5</sup> The questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews is available at the project's website: <http://www.isp.org.pl/site.php?id=887&lang=2>.



### 3. Description of the sample and general experience of the volunteers who participated in the study



In this chapter, the essential features of the volunteers who took part in the study will be described as well as general experiences of the volunteers. All answers relating to either Polish-German relations or Europe will be dealt with in the respective chapters.

#### Description of the sample

Twenty-eight Polish and 31 German volunteers answered the online questionnaire. Most of them were female, as can be seen in Figure 1.

Thereby, the rate of female and male participants is equal in both countries: seven male persons answered the questionnaire in German, whereas in Poland this number was five. In both countries 21 women took part in voluntary service.

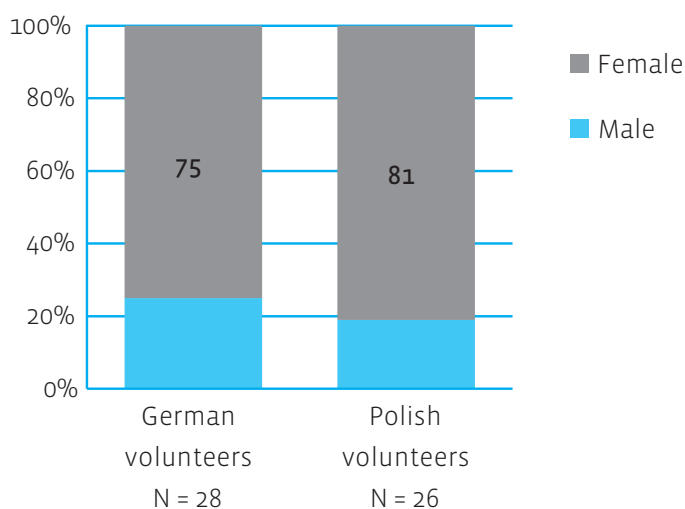


Figure 1: Volunteers' gender

The age differences of the Polish volunteers are higher than those in the German sample. Most of the Polish volunteers are older than 23 years. In comparison, the German volunteers are younger and not aged more than 23 years. This leads to different biographical situations of the volunteers. With regards to their age, the volunteers may not only have different professional and personal skills and knowledge, but also varying expectations regarding voluntary service. Figure 2 shows the age distribution:





Figure 2:  
Volunteers' age

Nearly every German volunteer (25) had finished high school before doing voluntary service; one volunteer had finished higher education. The situation of the Polish volunteers is almost the other way round: 15 had completed higher education, with two having finished high school. The level of education of the volunteers can be seen in Figure 3.

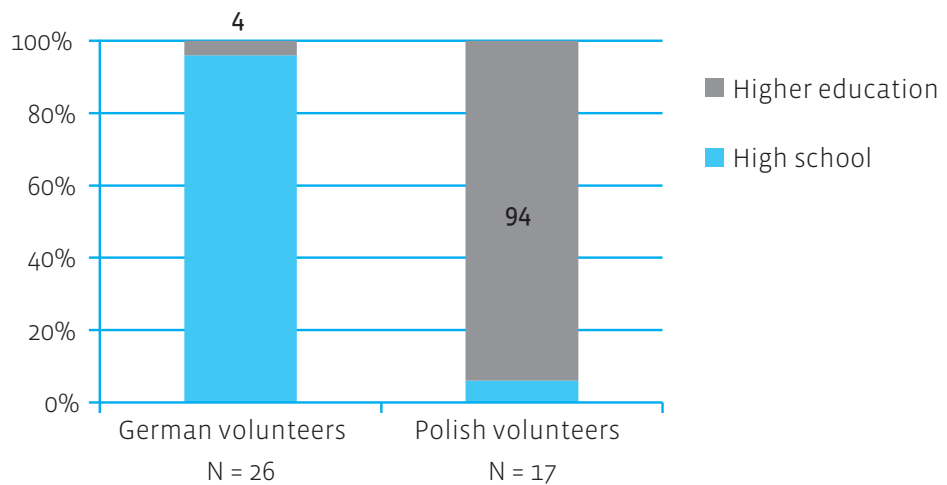


Figure 3:  
Volunteers' education

The duration of the voluntary service was mostly 11 or 12 months.<sup>1</sup> There seems to be a tendency for Polish volunteers on average to fulfil a longer service period than the German volunteers:

<sup>1</sup> Persons who were invited to take part in this research had to be registered for so-called "long-term voluntary service", which means not less than six months.

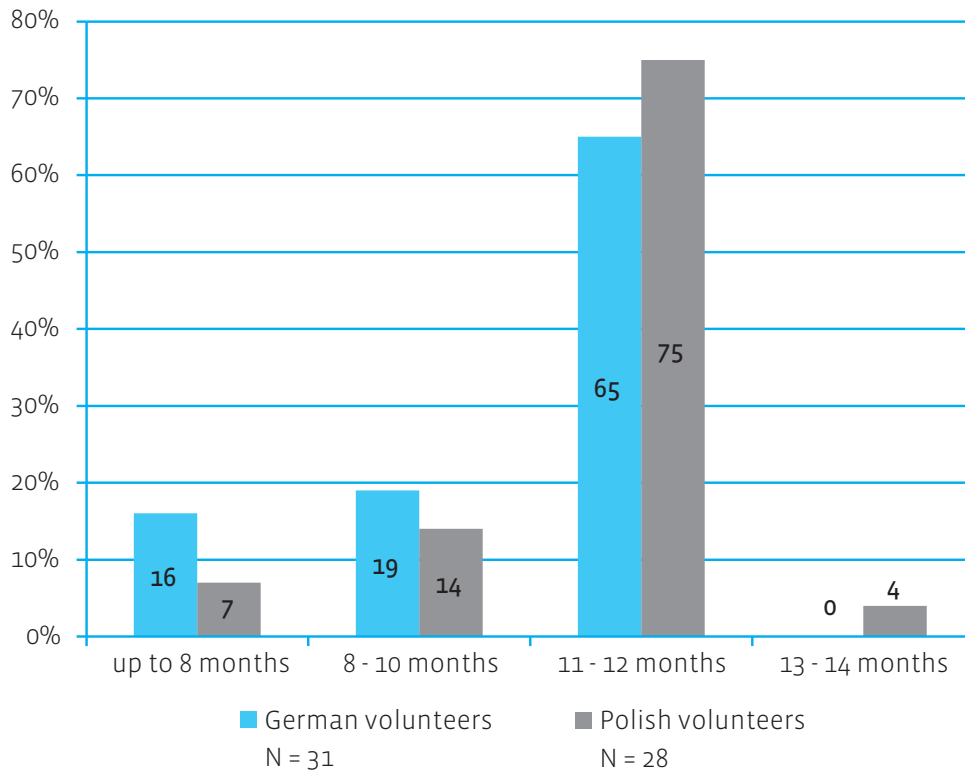


Figure 4:  
Length of voluntary service

Before starting their voluntary service, the area in which young adults lived differed. In both countries, the greatest number of study participants had either lived in a city with more than 250,000 inhabitants or in villages/countryside:

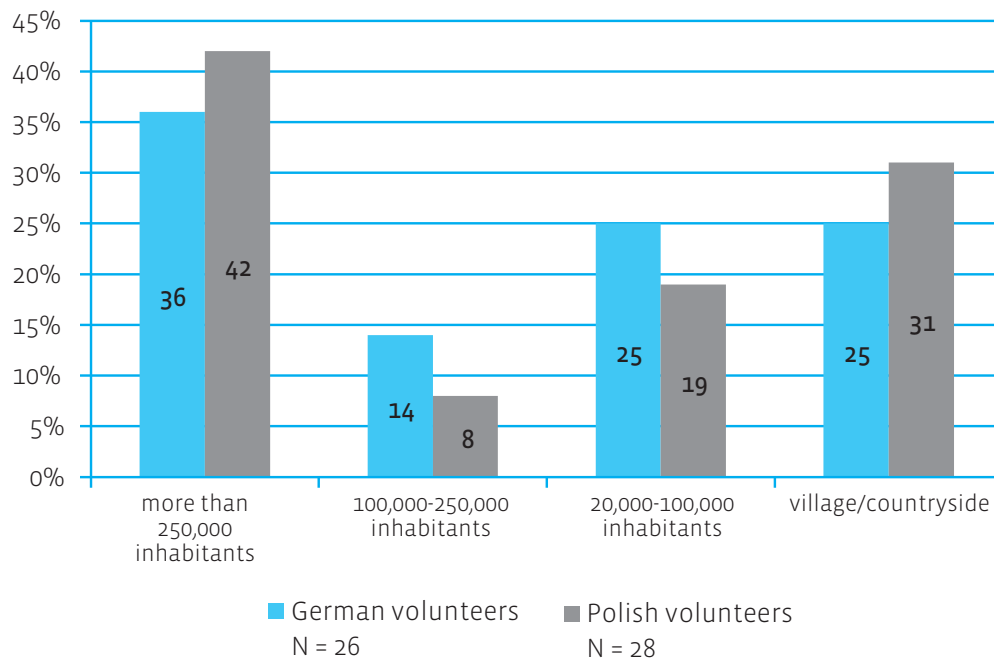


Figure 5:  
Region of living before  
voluntary service

In addition, voluntary service mostly takes place within a city. There are only three Polish and one German volunteer who remained in the countryside.

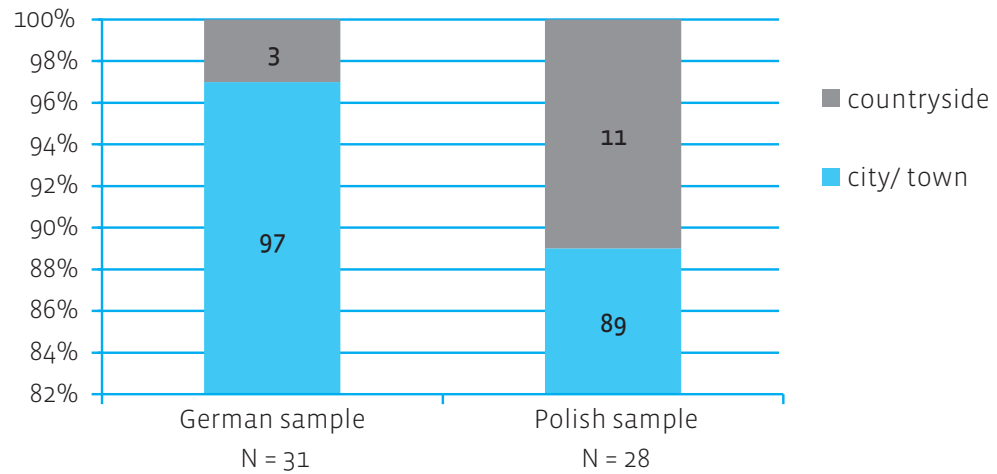


Figure 6: Where voluntary service takes place

The tasks of the volunteers within their voluntary service were manifold. Most of the volunteers worked in child and youth related areas, such as education (33) and youth-oriented work (30). While more Poles implemented tasks in the field of art and culture (11), working in the field of inter-ethnic, inter-cultural, and inter-religious dialogue was named more often by the German volunteers (10). Community work and environmental protection were only carried out by Polish volunteers, while sport was only named by two German volunteers. The next figure provides an overview of all the tasks that were mentioned by the volunteers in the online questionnaire:

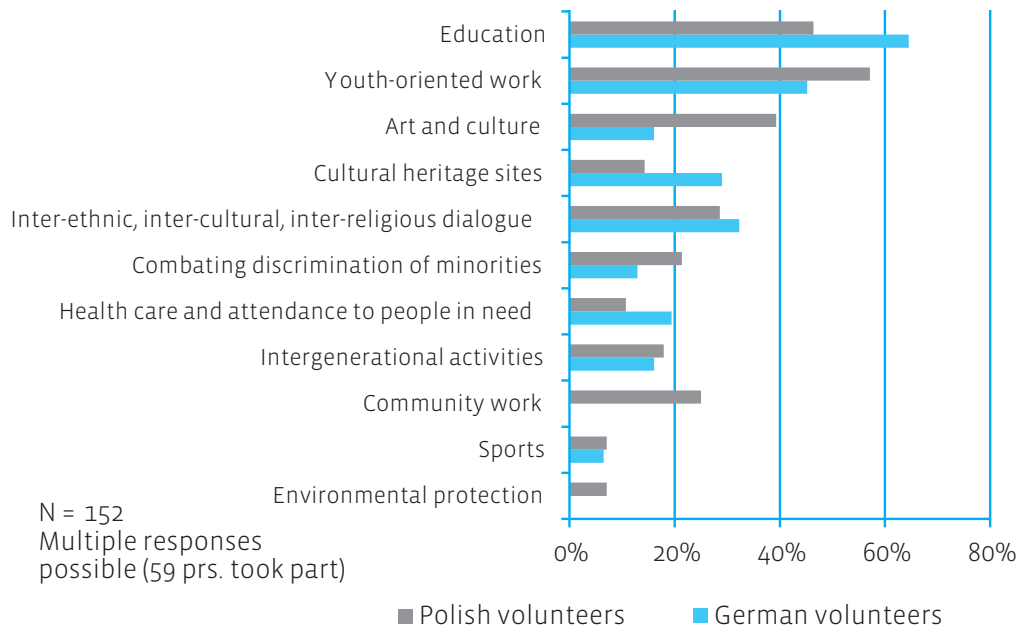


Figure 7: Volunteers' tasks

## General experiences during voluntary service

After familiarising themselves with the work place, volunteers took on more tasks, which they could carry out independently. Furthermore, learning the language was an important aspect for some volunteers, as it was constitutive for particular tasks. It seems that the first *impressions of the work place depended on the contacts* volunteers established there. For the German volunteers, in particular, it seemed to be important that there were other young people in their work place. Although volunteers talk about the friendly colleagues they had, those who had no peers at work felt lonelier compared to volunteers who were in touch with people of the same age, as they had no one to share their first experiences within and outside of work. Polish volunteers considered the first days to be difficult when they didn't have adequate language skills or they only encountered little interest from their new colleagues.

The *support in acclimatisation from sending and hosting organisations* is evaluated differently. Some of the German volunteers reported about fast and uncomplicated support when it was needed. Two other volunteers faced difficulties getting support, or the support they received was not sufficient. Some of the German volunteers appreciated the preparation courses which took place mostly in Germany. Other courses that took place in Poland were part of a traditional tandem project, for which German and Ukrainian volunteers did an exchange in Poland working in a team. From the Polish side, the support in acclimatisation depended on the experience of the organisation. Some volunteers were well prepared, others rather little – the hosting organisations did not have time to adequately deal with a new person and to introduce him or her to the tasks to be carried out.

In the case of a volunteer who did not know the German language, the support from the organisation did not match their current needs. None of the volunteers asked the sending organisation for their support, although they felt that, if necessary, they could do so. One of the sending organisations organised a pre-departure meeting, which was considered to be very useful.

Evaluation of *life in the other country* was, apart from the work, influenced by many aspects. This includes the accommodation, as well as personal contacts. Most of the Polish volunteers lived in a flat with other foreign volunteers, which is why they often spoke English in their leisure time. This situation was assessed differently: some volunteers were glad to have the opportunity to improve their English; others would have preferred to practise their German language skills. Organisations who provided housing was seen as a huge convenience (unfortunately not all volunteers experienced this, and one girl had to find an apartment on her own, which was difficult). However, having such amenity may be also related to some unfavorable results. Living with other foreigners can create drawbacks in volunteers' adaptation in

the host society (more about the concept of “adaptation”, see the report in chapter 5), as volunteers will have less opportunities and incentives to interact with locals. Thus, the volunteers learn the culture (including the way of living), language, and other features of the hosting societies more slowly. In particular, volunteering in very small towns, where all the volunteers live in one house, was seen as a difficult experience; a kind of “prison” for the people who felt “condemned” to the sole company of the other volunteers (all day long – in work and during free time). Due to the age gap between the Polish and other volunteers, these were not seen as possible friends. A lack of possibilities to meet other peers also constituted a problem in rural areas. Some volunteers wanted to escape from this “being closed in an isolated environment” and they didn’t want to live with other volunteers.

Most of the German volunteers lived in shared flats with one to four or more persons, who were mostly volunteers from other countries such as Hungary, France, and Ukraine. When the volunteers lived alone or when other flat mates arrived much later, they experienced their first days in a more negative way. Volunteers, who had immediate contact with other volunteers, reported more positive first impressions.

The leisure activities of the German volunteers in Poland seem to resemble their activities in Germany: Everything they would also do in Germany was part of their free time activities in Poland. Regarding the Poles volunteering in Germany, their behaviour during free time was partly determined by the nature of the place of residence (not many possible activities were in small towns and rural areas) and their language knowledge.

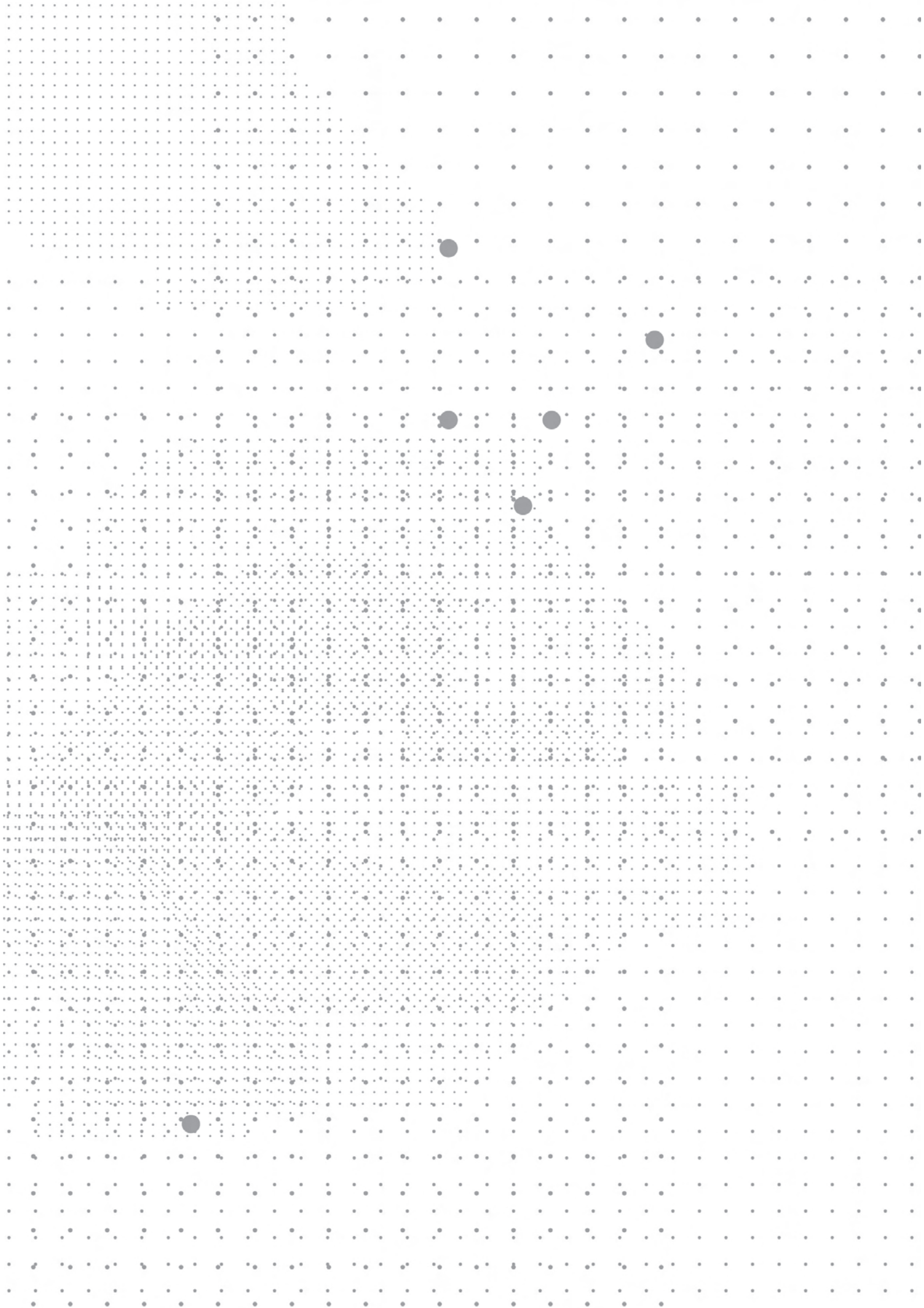
For volunteers of both nationalities, the language was one of the biggest *problems they faced*. In addition, the field of volunteering included difficulties such as needing to look for further tasks oneself as well as a lack of appreciation for the work done by the volunteer and a lack of support by colleagues or the organisation. Having no Internet access at the beginning when they needed it most to keep in touch with friends and family and to get support, was also a problem some of the volunteers were faced with. Other difficulties included: having no knowledge about the city, being sick during the winter season, a lack of contacts outside of work, living alone, and speaking in front of a group. In difficult situations, the German volunteers received support from the other volunteers, Polish friends, and their mentors. Referring to the support by their family, the volunteers emphasised that they listen to them, but practical help was not possible due to the distance. For the Polish volunteers, it was often difficult to live together with younger Germans who had no experience of living away from the family home. In addition, one person mentioned difficulties related to obtaining health-care and insurance.

Two German volunteers considered *quitting voluntary service* ahead of time. In both cases, the reasons were related to the work place. Thus, one volunteer was overstrained with his tasks; the other had general problems

with the work place. Both volunteers shifted their focus from work to private life and experienced new aspects, which positively influenced their decisions to continue voluntary service. One Polish volunteer finished their voluntary service after four months due to dissatisfaction with the work culture in the organisation and problems in communication with other members of staff. It was a “waste of time” for the volunteer, who felt as if he was not learning anything. Another person resigned two months before the formal end of the programme, as she was offered a job in Poland. One volunteer who had problems with her roommates seriously considered ending voluntary service, and even did research on the formalities needed in order to quit the programme. However, finally she decided to finish her voluntary service. The other volunteers, even if they encountered temporary crises, did not think seriously about quitting voluntary service.

All German volunteers would *recommend doing voluntary service* (in Poland). They advise to be open, to be interested in history, and to have fun learning a new language. They consider the time right after graduation from school as a suitable period for voluntary service or other experience in another country. Most of the German volunteers also recommend learning at least some language basics before voluntary service starts. This is helpful to be flexible and adaptable. Two female volunteers thought that voluntary service should be made more public. One male volunteer would like a better explanation of the application process.

When it comes to the Polish volunteers, their opinions about the values of volunteering were a little more diverse. In general, travel abroad itself is seen as a very valuable experience. However, Germany as a place of volunteering is recommended only for those who are interested in the country and its culture. One volunteer admitted that it should mostly be recommended to young people, who have finished high school, as it can give them a new perspective on studying. Learning the language before leaving for voluntary service was also pointed out as important. Particular volunteers’ various assessment of their service, ranging from full enthusiasm to disappointment, depends on the responsibility they were given within their service and whether they were in line with expectations or not. Another positive aspect of voluntary service should be mentioned here that was described by one of the interviewees. This person has observed that even having “the minimum of social security secured is the best thing volunteering provides”. This means that volunteers are happy with the assistance they obtain, such as the pocket money and accommodation, and as a result they have the most essential needs safeguarded and don’t need to think about it anymore. In addition, as one of the volunteers admitted, while not having to worry about finances, it was possible “during this year to learn about another country and develop in a different direction, beyond the professional field”.



## 4. Programmes and conditions for doing international voluntary service



Due to the many benefits they bring, voluntary activities are supported both internationally (by the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the EU) and nationally. There are differences in Poland and Germany regarding the legal status of volunteering and its place within national policies. In addition, the intensity and social recognition of volunteering differs in both countries. However, within this study only a certain kind of volunteering, namely international voluntary service is of interest. Therefore, we will shortly present the framework of the volunteering exchange programmes that are important with respect to Germany and Poland. We start by discussing the European Voluntary Service (EVS), an important programme for the youth of both countries to do voluntary service. However, before going in depth with the programme content, the origins of EVS will be described. Subsequently, several programmes enabling long-term international volunteering existing (or not) at national level in both respective countries will be presented.

### **Origins of the European Voluntary Service (EVS)**

The EU has addressed the issue of voluntary activity in many of its documents. The first was the 1983 resolution of the European Parliament on volunteering, which explained the nature of voluntary activity and the role of developing an adequate infrastructure for effective policies in this sphere. It also called for a “statute for voluntary work”, which would regulate the issue of reimbursement of expenses and social insurance for volunteers (European Parliament 1984: 288-291). In 1997, Declaration 38 was added to the Treaty of Amsterdam; this was a document which recognised the contribution that voluntary activity made to the development of social solidarity, mostly via exchange of information and experiences. It also emphasised the role of voluntary work in different social groups, mainly the young and the elderly.

Volunteering was also addressed in the 2001 Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 10 July 2001 on mobility within the student community, and persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers, and trainers, which recommended facilitating access to information about studying, training, and volunteering opportunities in member states. The proposals set out in the Resolution of the Council and by the member states governments’ representatives, meeting within the Council of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field were



similarly oriented. The document also set out the “Common Objectives” regarding voluntary activities of young people. It also defined the way volunteering is understood by this social group, and introduced the notions of voluntary activity and voluntary service. With the adoption of these documents, the Council and member states reaffirmed the central role of volunteering, mainly in youth policies. This direction of EU policies was later reasserted in other documents (listed below).

In 2008, the European Parliament adopted a report on the role of volunteering in enhancing socio-economic cohesion – the European Parliament Resolution of 22 April 2008 on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion. The document calls for a system of satellite accounts based on UN standards<sup>1</sup> to be introduced by member states to assess the value of voluntary work.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the European Year of Volunteering 2011, three important documents were adopted by European bodies or affiliated entities, showing their understanding to the role volunteering plays in Europe (Council of the European Union 2011), (European Commission 2011a), (European Year of Volunteering Alliance 2012).

Moreover, volunteering has also been incorporated in EU strategic documents which outline the development directions for European societies and represent a tool for achieving the goals set out in these strategies. Its role is enshrined both in the “Renewed Social Agenda” (European Commission 2008) and the Lisbon Strategy (Lisabon European Council 2000). Volunteering can also be used to implement the assumptions underpinning the follow-up to the final document of the EUROPE 2020 Strategy (European Commission 2010), in particular its appeal to develop knowledge-based and innovation-based inclusive European societies and economies.

## Youth in Action and the European Voluntary Service (EVS)

The most important opportunity for young Poles to go to Germany is through the *Youth in Action Programme* (more about that below, in the section on volunteering service opportunities for Poles). This is an EU programme which promotes participation in non-formal education and is primarily

---

**1** A system of satellite accounts for volunteers is a register used to assess the value of the product generated through voluntary work.

**2** Other relevant documents on volunteering also include: Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 13 December 2006 on Voluntary activity: its role in European society and its impact (OJ 325 of 30.12.2006); Opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 7 February 2008 on The contribution of volunteering to Economic and Social Cohesion (OJ 105 of 25.04.2008); Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 2 July 2008: “Renewed social agenda: Opportunities, access and solidarity in 21st century Europe” (COM(2008) 412 final); Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 27 April 2009: An EU strategy for youth: Investing and empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities (COM(2009) 200 final); Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) (OJ 311 of 19.12.2009); Council Decision of 27 November 2009 on the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship (2011); Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council of 23 November 2010 on how to express EU citizen's solidarity through volunteering.

addressed to young people between the age of 13 and 30, as well as those working with the young. The programme encourages international contacts and the exchange of experiences. It also funds various activities serving local communities, which also support individual development, and promotes the idea of a unified Europe.<sup>3</sup> The Programme's main objectives include *inter alia* promoting active citizenship among young people, fostering tolerance and mutual understanding among young people in different countries, and developing structures to support activities of young people and organisations working in the youth field. The programme provides funding to projects and activities which aim to support individual development of young people and help them acquire new skills. It was established by a decision adopted by the European Parliament and the European Council in 2006 as a follow-up to the Youth Programme 2000-2006.<sup>4</sup> Since 2014, the new EU programme that will basically follow the same aims has been named Erasmus+. It will last until 2020. However, in this programme the fields of education, youth, and sport will also be integrated, and the spending will be much higher than in the previous edition of the respective EU programme dedicated to youth and education. EVS remains part of the Youth in Action programme which will be summarised together with all EU mobility programmes to Erasmus+.

One of the initiatives of the Youth in Action programme was the *European Voluntary Service (EVS)*, aimed at supporting volunteer exchange between member states. As Action 2 (one of the five actions of the Youth in Action programme), it facilitates volunteers or groups of volunteers to start voluntary work in all the programme countries and the neighbouring partner countries.<sup>5</sup> Also the volunteers from the latter group of states can enter EU countries within the EVS scheme. The aim of EVS is to allow volunteers to acquire competences and skills strengthening their personal and professional development through experiences in non-formal education (it is important to consider this aim while deliberating upon the research results analysed in this report). All young people between the ages of 18 and 30 (and those aged 16-17 in exceptional cases) may participate in EVS. The stay in a foreign organisation lasts between two and twelve months.<sup>6</sup> Altogether, some 30,000 volunteers participated in the European Voluntary Service in the first decade of the programme (1996-2006). In 2007-2011, 30,972 young people participated in EVS.<sup>7</sup>

---

**3** For general information on the programme – visit: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/programme/about\\_youth\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/programme/about_youth_en.php) [accessed: 31.01.2014].

**4** For more on this initiative visit: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/funding/2000\\_2006/documents/guide05\\_en.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/funding/2000_2006/documents/guide05_en.pdf) [accessed: 31.01.2014].

**5** Apart from countries which are members of the EU, it is possible to go to programme countries Iceland, Liechtenstein, Macedonia, Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey, or to the neighbouring partner countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, and the Russian Federation. Also see: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/programme/action2\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/programme/action2_en.php) [accessed: 31.01.2014].

**6** Voluntary service in the form of short-term stays were not included in this study. Volunteers who were questioned stayed in the other country for at least six months.

**7** See at [http://www.cimo.fi/instancedata/prime\\_product\\_julkaisu/cimo/embeds/cimowwwstructure/28559\\_25ansFlyer01.doc](http://www.cimo.fi/instancedata/prime_product_julkaisu/cimo/embeds/cimowwwstructure/28559_25ansFlyer01.doc) [accessed: 31.01.2014].

Despite its steady development, the programme itself and the opportunities it provides are not widely known, at least from the Polish perspective (Moskwiak, Olszówka, 2011). It still needs more promotion among the wider public. However, as information collected from the employees of the Polish EVS contact point show, in 2012 and 2013, 99 volunteers from Poland went to Germany for their EVS (for projects granted for both Polish and German institutions). There are no official numbers for Germans who moved to Poland. In 2012 and 2013, 108 Germans got approval to go to Poland. At the same time, 106 volunteers from Germany started voluntary service in Poland within the framework of EVS (JUGEND für Europa 2014). Unfortunately there is no centralised database that keeps records of all incoming and outgoing volunteers by different funding schemes, even though the European Commission, unsuccessfully, tried to launch one.<sup>8</sup>

When it comes to Germany, there are also several other possibilities besides EVS, including national programmes where young people are supported (also financially) to go abroad for long-term volunteering.<sup>9</sup> They will be presented in the next part of this chapter. This will be followed by a description of the possibility to do voluntary service in Poland outside of EVS.

## National programmes

In Germany there are different possibilities to take part in voluntary community service. Doing voluntary service is subject to different frameworks and conditions, e.g., the elderly have also had access to do voluntary service for several years now.

Voluntary service in Germany has a long tradition. In 1920 the first service of an initiative which later became Service Civil International (SCI) took place near Verdun in order to reconstruct a village which was destroyed during the First World War. Apart from Germans, people from France, Great Britain, and Switzerland were involved, which aimed at showing that even though their countries had been at war against each other, they were aimed at cooperation and reconciliation.

In Germany, some reports about voluntary service in the 1920s and 1930s exist, although many documents were destroyed by the National Socialists.<sup>10</sup>

New opportunities were established mainly due to the causes of the Second World War. In answer to many problems the German population was faced with, in 1954 Hermann Dietzfelbinger, a German pastor, called young

---

**8** The only information that can be found is the list of organisations accredited to the programme that are visible on the European Voluntary Service organisation database – see: [http://europa.eu/youth/evs\\_database](http://europa.eu/youth/evs_database) [accessed: 31.01.2014]. However, there is no information on how many volunteers they have sent or accepted and so on.

**9** While elaborating on German volunteering schemes, it is important to note that access to them is also open for Poles going to Germany, even though only one example of such volunteer has been accessed during our research (§18 Aufenthaltsgesetz).

**10** For more information visit <http://www.archives.sciint.org/history/germany/history-sci-germany/die-entwicklungen-bis-1933.html> [accessed: 31.01.2014].

people to spend a year for service to the community. To distinguish these activities from the so-called “Reichsarbeitsdienst”, an obligatory service that was carried out by young Germans during National Socialism, the aspect of voluntarism was stressed. In 1958 other organisations such as Catholic Youth and non-state welfare bodies joined this appeal. The Action Reconciliation/Service for Peace (ARSP) was also founded in this year.<sup>11</sup> In addition, social peace actions were established by this organisation in the 1960s, abroad as well as within Germany.

To protect volunteers regarding possible discrimination, the first law to foster a Voluntary Service Year was established in 1964. It includes model frame conditions for voluntary service and is still relevant today.<sup>12</sup> Since the 1990s, there seems to have been an extension of voluntary service, with programmes in various sectors being established (e.g., the protection of environment). With time, voluntary service programmes focused more on the “youth” and “education” target groups, which can be seen in the educational guidance for young people, who mostly do a voluntary service as a transition from adolescence to adulthood, emancipating themselves from their parental home and questioning their future plans, among others. Therefore, the importance of voluntary service was discussed on a political level in two ways: on the one hand, it seems to be a possibility to train active citizenship, on the other hand the expansion of voluntary service was a reaction against the abolition of military service (Jakob 2002). This was associated with an increase of five million euros for programmes such as voluntary social year (Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr) and the voluntary ecological year (Freiwilliges Ökologisches Jahr), and more flexible frameworks (BMFSFJ 2004).

The following table gives an overview of the different German programmes which enable Germans to do voluntary service abroad. Societies benefit from these programmes, as they, for example, “can contribute to more justice, peace, and preservation of the natural environment”.<sup>13</sup> In addition, volunteers gain practical knowledge and skills, such as social skills and intercultural competencies.

---

**11** For more information visit <http://www.asf-ev.de/> [accessed: 31.01.2014].

**12** See at <http://www.eos-fsj.de/assets/files/fsj/Geschichte%20der%20Freiwilligendienste.pdf> [accessed: 31.01.2014].

**13** See at <http://www.friedensdienst.de/internationale-freiwil.34.0.html>, [accessed: 31.01.2014].

Table 1:  
Programmes  
for voluntary  
service in  
Germany<sup>14</sup>

Foreign services <sup>15</sup>	Field	Duration	Criteria for participation	Education programme	Regulated by
FSJ abroad	Welfare work, child and youth welfare, health care, culture, monument preservation, sport	6-12 months, after extension up to 18 months	17-27 years	25 days of compulsory seminars	JFDG <sup>16</sup>
FÖJ abroad	Environment and nature protection				
Anderer Dienst im Ausland (ADIA) (Alternative Service Abroad)	Aims: international understanding and reconciliation	Normally lasts for 12 months	End of compulsory schooling	Not regulated in a uniform manner	§5 BFDG <sup>17</sup>
European Voluntary Service (EVS)	Non-profit organisations within EVS-programme countries, EU partner countries and Latin America	6-12 months (young people with fewer opportunities: 2 weeks to 6 months)	18-25 years (in special cases also 16 and 17, as well as from 25 up to 30 years)	Not less than 22 days of seminars	Decision N° 1719/2006/EG of the Council of the European Union
Voluntary service abroad under private law	Non-profit organisations	1-36 months (mostly 6-24 months)	Not less than 18 years, partly specific language skills or qualifications are assumed	Not regulated in a uniform manner. Normally, an introductory and concluding seminar	-
<b>Model Programmes</b>					
Weltwärts	Development cooperation within developing countries (in conformity with OECD)	6-24 months (normally 12-18 months)	18-28 years	Language courses, as well as at least 25 days of compulsory seminars	-
Kulturweit (special form of FSJ)	Field of cultural relations and education policy	6 or 12 months	18-26	20 days of seminars	JFDG

<sup>14</sup> Based on Stemmer 2009.

<sup>15</sup> As part of these programmes doing voluntary service in Poland is possible.

<sup>16</sup> "Gesetz zur Förderung von Jugendfreiwilligendiensten" / law for promoting young people's voluntary service. Based on this law, voluntary service is fostered if certain conditions are satisfied. Thus, it is not allowed that a volunteer pursues purchase intentions while carrying out voluntary service. Working as a volunteer happens fulltime, without interruptions to service. The volunteer has to be educationally accompanied in the form of educational seminars also within the work place and be educationally guided while doing his or her service. This means training measures of at least five weeks when doing voluntary service for one year. An organisation can become a hosting organisation if it prepares such a stay abroad and sends as well as accompanies volunteers with educational seminars. Corresponding organisations have to ensure that they are able to fulfil these tasks on the basis of their experiences and in compliance with the legal basis. Furthermore, they have to be domiciled in Germany.

<sup>17</sup> Bundesfreiwilligendienstgesetz / Law for Federal Voluntary Service.

In all of these programmes, volunteers receive pocket money for the voluntary work they do. In addition, accommodation, food, and work wear are provided or relevant financial compensation as necessary.

Differences can be found in the fields of work, which are linked to the skills the volunteers can gain, the duration of the service, the criteria for participation, and the educational programme. These aspects are normally regulated by the different laws which form the basis of the programmes.

Regarding Poland, practically the only possibility for volunteering abroad in another EU country is within the EVS framework. There is no corresponding national volunteering service scheme which could be compared to the respective German programmes presented above. Only two Polish initiatives might be considered similar. One of these is the Polish Aid Volunteering Programme,<sup>18</sup> under which organisations are chosen for sending young people to projects in various places around the world, but mostly to developing countries. Moreover, the scale of the programme is rather small, as in 2013 only 35 volunteers were sent under this scheme to 14 countries (mainly in Africa and South America).<sup>19</sup> The second scheme is the National Volunteering Programme, which has already been through its pilot stage in 2012-2013, and is financed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. However, only one edition of the project has already been granted and the voluntary service under this scheme was only limited to the territory of Poland (in general, volunteers were expected to move for a period of couple of months to a location more than 100 km from their home). Moreover, since the pilot stage finished, there have been no activities carried out in order to establish a stable continuation of the scheme.

The absence of national programmes supporting volunteering on a larger scale might reflect the general weak recognition of the role of volunteering in Poland. As the results of the main research from this sphere show, the percentage of Poles declaring commitment to volunteering over the years is invariably rather small and amounts to between 14.5 to 24% (Przewłocka 2011; Przewłocka, Adamiak, Herbst 2013; Hipsz, Wądołowska 2011), depending on the methodology of the survey. Moreover, the institution of volunteering has rather low recognition in society. This dates back to the era of the communist regime, but is also a result of the recent development of the market economy with its individualistic values. There is no tradition of volunteering in society and low engagement in civil society activities, in general. This is a reality even though formal volunteering (serving within structured institutions or organisations) since 2003 has been regulated in Polish law.<sup>20</sup>

---

**18** See: <http://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/Volunteering,Programme,810.html> [accessed: 05.02.2014].

**19** See: <http://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/Lista,projektow,,ktorym,przyznano,dotacje,w,wyniku,rozstrzygnięcia,konkursu,,„Wolontariat,polska,pomoc,2013,1755.html> [accessed: 05.02.2014].

**20** See: Public Benefit and Volunteer Work Act, April 24, 2003 (Dz.U. 2003 Nr 96 poz. 873 – an English version can be accessed at: <http://www.pozytek.gov.pl/Public,Benefit,and,Volunteer,Work,Act,567.html> [accessed: 05.02.2014].

Thus, in the situation of a lack of volunteering culture in the country, Poles might be really motivated to look for the opportunity to volunteer, especially in a trans-border perspective. This might be the case regarding young people from Poland trying to do voluntary service under foreign country schemes, which is possible with respect to German volunteering service programmes. Two such projects enabling foreigners to participate in German national programmes and their legal base are presented below.

As German compulsory military service was abolished in 2011, and in course also the military replacement service, too the “Bundesfreiwilligendienst” (Federal Voluntary service) was set up as a successor. It aims to “create a new culture of voluntariness in Germany” in different fields of work, as can be seen in the table above. Participation in this service is also possible for foreign volunteers. Therefore – and also to participate in other German national voluntary service programmes – volunteers need a residence permit, including the right to employment, only if they come from a non-European country. Additionally, volunteers must be able to pay for their living expenses. It is possible to get a special residence permit for doing such voluntary service in Germany, as it is written in §18 Aufenthaltsgesetz. Usually, doing such voluntary service means working for one year, but in general it can last for 6 to 18 months (with a special extension up to 24 months). The volunteers work in non-profit organisations and can get pocket money up to 357 euros a month (in 2014). In addition, or instead of this, their accommodation, food, work wear, and adequate financial compensation can be covered by the hosting organisation.

The “Gesetz zur Förderung von Jugendfreiwilligendiensten (Jugendfreiwilligendienstgesetz-JFDG)” (the law for promoting young people’s voluntary service) includes legal requirements for another form of voluntary activity on a legal level. Voluntary service is fostered if certain conditions are given. Thus, a volunteer is not allowed to pursue commercial interests while doing his or her voluntary service. Obligation to such a service has to include a time period of between 6 and 24 months. An allowance is granted in the form of accommodation, food, work wear, and adequate pocket money/ financial compensation.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore full-time education must have been fulfilled and the age of the volunteer must not exceed 27 years. Working as a volunteer happens full-time, without interruptions to the service. Educational guidance must be offered to the volunteers in the form of educational seminars within the work place and volunteers must be supervised while carrying out the service. This means training measures of at least five weeks when doing voluntary service for a one-year period should be offered. Legally acknowledged organisations can become a sending organisation if they can fulfil these requirements. They must ensure that they are capable of implementing these tasks on the basis of their experience and in compliance

---

**21** See: <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bundesrecht/jfdg/gesamt.pdf> §2 [accessed: 31.01.2014].

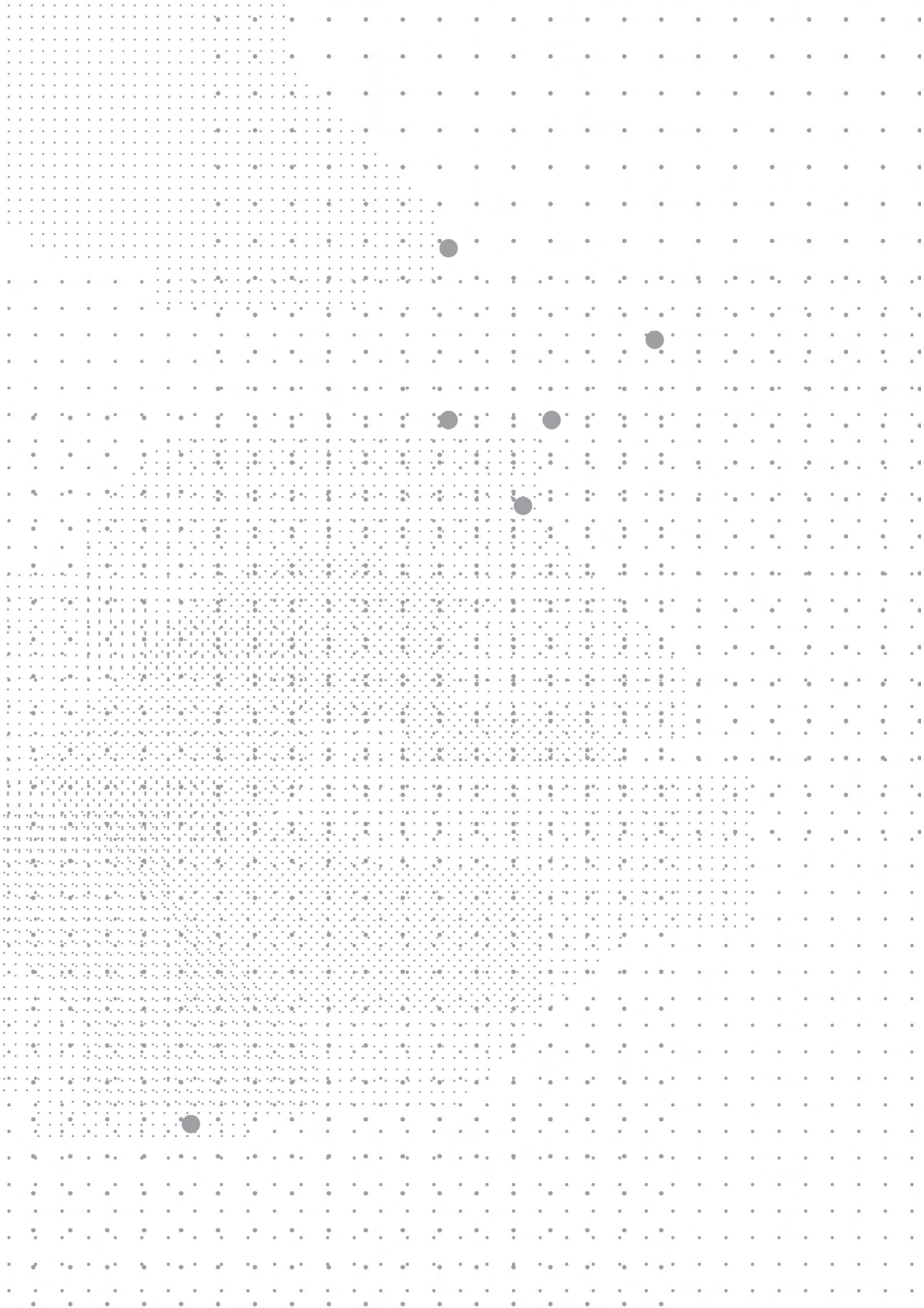
with the legal framework. Furthermore, the organisations must be located in Germany.

## Summary

Volunteering for quite a long time is an important issue in the European Union. It is seen as the possibility to support active citizenship and increase social solidarity. With the *Youth in Action* programme the EU offers the possibility to do voluntary service abroad. For the Polish volunteers, in particular, this is the most used opportunity to do such service, as compared to Germany there are no national programmes providing such a possibility. This is accompanied with relatively poor recognition of volunteering itself in a society recovering from the effects of a communist regime and the fast introduction of a market economy.

In Germany, spending a year for the good of society became an important activity, promoted by public opinion, at the latest in 1954, facing the impacts and causes of the Second World War. Unlike the obligatory services under National Socialism, the aspect of voluntarism has been emphasised. Over the years, laws have been introduced protecting and supporting the rights of volunteers. Today, there are different national programmes offering possibilities to do national voluntary service or to go abroad. This is a feature of the national programmes that also foreigners can take part. Therefore, citizens from EU member states can apply for these programmes without constraints. This can be an interesting option for people from countries such as Poland, which doesn't have its own national volunteering service schemes, to go abroad. Having such a possibility is worth considering, especially if one takes into account the manifold positive aspects of long-term voluntary services, which will be discussed in the further parts of this report.





## 5. Long-term volunteering's potential in influencing Polish-German relations



### 5.1. A glance at the theory as an introduction

#### 5.1.1. International volunteers as a special example of foreigners entering the receiving society

Volunteering is often treated as a tool enabling the different outcomes of the current challenges of our societies to be reached. Amongst other results, this also includes skills related to living in a civic society composed of people of different cultural and ethnical affiliations that can be gained through volunteering. Moreover, when the programmes of international long-term volunteering are considered in the framework of cooperation between neighbouring states, we might ask ourselves whether engagement in such activity can influence the mutual perception of the members of both nations. As a result, it can also affect the relations between them. However, once we focus on nations with such a complicated common past as Poland and Germany, several obstacles and important features influencing such relations need to be considered.

Thus, in order to analyse the possible impact of Polish-German volunteering on relations between both countries, we should consider the situation of any volunteer from another country as similar to the status of a foreigner in the hosting society. In effect, the theories related to the intercultural contact might be adopted and the comprehensive group of factors important in such a situation have to be considered. We can observe that while learning new cultural patterns and becoming acquainted with the receiving society, such a person undergoes a process of acculturation. What is interesting in this perspective is a theory by Canadian social psychologist, J. W. Berry, who suggests distinguishing between two main levels of such interaction. The first happens from the single person/group point of view, while the second shows the influence on attitudes of the whole society. Berry introduces this framework in order to present the complicated process of acculturation, meaning the interchange of cultural patterns of individuals' behaviour between different cultural groups that live together. When completed in a positive way, this cultural exchange should provide long-term, relatively stable outcomes. Namely, adaptation to living in a new situation can be attained (i.e. after the process of immigration),<sup>1</sup> or at least new knowledge/skills are obtained (i.e. as an effect of volunteering or in the case of students staying abroad). In Berry's opinion, such cultural change happens not only on

---

**1** For more precise description of how this final stage of intercultural contact (adaptation to the new cultural circumstances) is reached and what the factors and obstacles influencing it are – see Berry 2003: 369-371.

the level of newcomers, but also regarding the hosting society, which adopts some new patterns of behaviour and culture from foreigners.<sup>2</sup> Naturally, the longer such situation of contact is, the more sophisticated and complex the cultural patterns that might be adopted on both sides are, thus by foreigners as well as receiving society members.

However, Berry points out that such a process never occurs calmly and produces certain levels of stress that people have to undergo (Berry calls this *acculturative stress*, having psychosomatic and psychological symptoms; Berry 2003: 345). An important fact is that such feeling is shared by both groups. Thus, both newcomers and members of the receiving society might feel a lack of security related to being confronted with something new and culturally different, which demand a change in the previously accepted ways of behaving, and so on. As a result, cultural exchange is an intense process. It depends on many factors that are not the subject of this text (for more comprehensive information – see Berry 2003: 360-371). There is also no space for presentation of some critics to Berry's theory (Rudmin 2006: 52-73; Boski 2009: 537-539), especially as we are interested rather in the general framework than the exact features and observations coming from his research with relation to acculturation processes.

In his studies, Berry recognises two different attitudes between which members of each ethnic group must choose once being confronted with the reality of intercultural contact. First, members of such groups have to choose whether they want to maintain their own culture (at least most of its elements) or not. Once they do this, they must decide whether to adopt patterns of behaviour from the culture of the receiving society or not. Taking all these things into consideration, we obtain four main ideal optional attitudes of foreigners towards the receiving society. We have to remember that they are only "ideal" attitudes, which means that in the real world we find mixtures of the elements of each of these models within each group of migrants (or other foreigners). When it comes to long-term volunteers we have to remember that their stay in the receiving society is too short to undergo comprehensive change in the way they live and think. However, they still can learn many new features of the receiving society, as well as they changing some of the ways in which they behave.

Moreover, depending on different factors, including their personal individual features, cognitive capacities, their attitudes to the receiving society brought from the family house, and so on, volunteers may react to the new culture of the hosting society in various ways. This means their reaction might be consistent with the four main models of Berry's acculturation strategies (integration, assimilation, separation/segregation, and marginalisation).<sup>3</sup> The

---

**2** As Berry states: "In principle each culture could influence the other equally, but in practice, one tends to dominate the other, leading to a distinction between dominant and non-dominant groups," so there is always "culture receiving the greater influence" – see Berry 2003: 352.

**3** For a complex diagram of these interdependent categories – see Berry 1997: 10.

latter are defined by this author as patterns of behaviour towards elements of new culture taken up by the person confronted with the foreign society. They might give us an interesting analytical perspective, even though Berry's theory is constructed in relation to the situation of migrants rather than people who know their period of stay in foreign country is limited (as it is with long-term volunteers). However, even the volunteers' attitudes might vary from being open for learning new elements of the receiving country's culture (which is the case in integration strategy) up to presenting resistance to it (as in separation strategy). In addition, a volunteer's way of behaviour in the intercultural contact situation might also be influenced by a number of the possibilities they have to enter into interactions with the receiving society. Likewise, the receiving society's members' attitudes towards such newcomers (long-term volunteers) play an important role, similarly to migrants' acculturation strategies according to Berry's theory (Berry 2003: 355-356).

In addition, in the process of newcomers (including long-term volunteers) entering the new, socio-cultural situation, a more comprehensive scheme of acculturation, developed by Berry, should also be considered.<sup>4</sup> This scheme shows that before reaching (if would be successful) final adaptation in the receiving society, several steps have to be passed by the foreigner (and the receiving society), if the mutual contact is long enough. The perspectives for gaining successful results in the whole process of acculturation are dependent on a wide range of factors, located on both the newcomers and receiving society's sides. Amongst the latter, very important are attitudes in the receiving society towards ethnic/national groups from which a particular newcomer came (including stereotypes and prejudices) and the level of cultural distance between both groups (Berry 2003: 371-375; Berry et al 1987: 496-508; Malewska-Peyre 1992: 45; Malewska-Peyre: 2001: 10-11), as well as features of local policy towards foreigners (i.e. multiculturalism, assimilation, etc.), including the way in which volunteers (as special kind of such newcomers) are located in the social structures of that society.

When it comes to foreigners (including volunteers), we must consider their individual features that have been already discussed above. However, an important thing to be remembered here is also the fact that adaptation/adjustment to the conditions that are given by the new cultural environment can be observed as a cycle of several steps to be overcome. Each of these stages has its specific features and is related to the different psychosomatic changes on the person undergoing such adaptation. As an example we can take a 5-stage cycle developed by Paul D. Coverdell, who describes the following steps: 1. initial enthusiasm ("the honeymoon"); 2. initial country and culture shock; 3. initial adaptation/adjustment; 4. further culture shock; 5. further adaptation/adjustment (Peace Corps 1997). The most important thing we have to consider from this cycle is its fourth stage. *Culture shock*, which might be understood

---

<sup>4</sup> For a comprehensive discussion on this – see Berry 2003: 361-371.

in compliance with Berry's *acculturative stress* discussed above, occurs in the first few months after settling in a new country. This means that some of the volunteers who were approached with the online questionnaire, as well as interviewed within the research discussed in this report, might have been in the middle of this stage of the cycle. Important for us are also some of the main characteristics of the person including: symptoms of withdrawal from the programme and the realisation of being on your own in a foreign country, the signs of which might be observed through the volunteers' statements cited in various parts of this report.

### **5.1.2. Socio-cultural features influencing Polish-German volunteers' change of attitudes to the neighbouring country**

While considering the situation of Poles/Germans arriving in their neighbouring state, we should also bear in mind some special aspects related to the history and present features regarding both countries' relations. Moreover, as we can see from the analysis shown above, the factors influencing the process of intercultural contact of the members of different national groups can be observed from different dimensions, including individual, primal group (consisting of families, close friends, etc.) and wider society dimensions.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding the individual dimension, two categories of *communicative* and *cultural memory* introduced by Jan Assmann (Assmann 2008: 64-71) fit perfectly. A big role in shaping the former (*communicative memory*) is related to belonging to specific social groups, such as the community of the village or particular ethnic group within it. As a result of the interaction between individuals belonging to these specific social groups, the transfer and storage of selected content of such memory occurs, which leads, among others, to the formation of bonds between people participating in such relationship. This allows them to build group identification based on cultural unity (Traba 2008: 14).

Information stored in the communicative memory also affects the formation of the individuals' attitudes, which will then be used in the process of acculturation (while being confronted with the cultural difference of the receiving society). In particular, it is related to the factors influencing its course and occurring before the start of intercultural contact (thus, all the knowledge and experiences gathered by volunteers before they go to the neighbouring state). Communicative memory may lead to the formation of expectations for such meeting. It can also affect the occurrence of a certain level of cultural distance that a foreigner (volunteer) will need to undergo while entering the receiving country. From these memory resources particular individuals or groups also derive information used to determine the way of

---

**5** For a different division, where private and public dimensions are only distinguished – see Boski 2009: 544.

their conduct in a situation of such intercultural contact – choosing one of Berry’s acculturation strategies (Berry 1997: 10). The memory of prior contact with representatives of the same other culture, transmitted by members of one of the primal social groups of that individual (thus, the stories from the volunteer’s family members or their friends) may be significant.

While examining traces of these processes in communicative memory we should also consider and assess the level of cultural distance between the groups that meet each other (through their members). It is particularly important in the situation of contact between representatives of neighbouring ethnic/national groups resulting in the following cultural exchange between their members. Such cultural proximity results in problems at the symbolic level, associated with the history of conflicts occurring between neighbours (Boski 2009: 550). No less important in this context is Klaus Zernack’s so-called “history of mutual interactions” (ger. *Beziehungsgeschichte*; Fritze, Zernack 1976: 3-41). According to this author, an exchange of cultural patterns has occurred during centuries of bilateral relations between the nations and ethnic groups (their members) (Traba 2014). An additional transnational dimension of these observations is added by Moritz Csáky of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. While observing acculturation processes taking place in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in the area of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, Csáky redefined the Pierre Nora category of “realms of memory” (*lieux de mémoire*) (Traba 2006: 23-40). Treating culture as “communicative space” he draws attention to the processes of diffusion of the different layers of endogenous and exogenous cultures that influence individuals’ behaviours and ways of thinking (Henning-Hahn, Traba, Górny, Kończal 2009: 17-19; Csáky 2012: 146-154).

The process of acculturation is also influenced by information and attitudes transmitted in the above-mentioned *cultural memory*. In this sphere, determinants of the acculturation process occurring at the group level, on the side of both contacting societies, are visible. Their observation allows mutual attitudes of both societies (including knowledge about themselves, functioning intergroup stereotypes) to be studied, and the level of cultural distance between both groups to be estimated. Contact of culturally different receiving groups may also result in introducing new content to the cultural memory of a particular individual, or rediscovering the parts of this memory that have already been transmitted to the sphere of oblivion (for example from the history of past relationships between the two groups). On the other hand, other motifs/information can end up in the area of particular social group’s forgetting as they lose importance in the new cultural context. As a result, the process of acculturation may affect the transmission of certain content among categories, as described by Aleida Assmann, of *functional* and *storage memory* (Assmann 2009 [1999]: 128-139).

### **5.1.3. Intersections of theory and research - content of the chapter**

All of the above-mentioned aspects of the relations between Poland and Germany, as well as the countries' inhabitants, occurring in the framework of volunteering can be used in order to analyse the results of long-term volunteering on Polish-German mutual perception modification. Thus, firstly, the expectations and knowledge of the volunteers taking part in the research, prior to starting their volunteering programme are observed. Within this dimension, it is also interesting to observe what picture of the neighbouring state has been transmitted to the volunteers by their relatives and friends. Secondly, first experiences related to entering the foreign society will be analysed. Here, also the framework in which this contact occurred will be considered, i.e. how hospitable and well prepared the environment was for the volunteers. Later, we will try to observe what change in the picture of the neighbouring country and its inhabitants has occurred during the period of voluntary service.

We will not only focus on the modifications amongst volunteers themselves, but we will also observe how their presence in the neighbouring country changed the perception of the country of their origin in the people they contacted in the receiving state. Moreover, we will see what changes in attitudes towards the neighbouring country occurred amongst their relatives that stayed home. This will lead us to final conclusions related to the way in which the studied volunteering programmes can influence change in mutual perception between Poland and Germany.

## **5.2. The situation before doing voluntary service**

The attitude towards a country is not always a permanent feature, but rather a process. It changes with time, being influenced by new personal experiences, meetings with citizens of the particular country, acquired information, and opinions about it. The latter information comes from different directions that all shape the volunteers' relation towards the neighbouring country, which is the point of interest in the project discussed within this report. Its main aim was to study how, if so, long-term voluntary service in Poland and Germany influences the perception of the neighbouring country and, in the longer perspective, how it could affect Polish-German relations, starting from a micro-level.

To observe a change in attitude towards the neighbouring country, first the volunteers' initial image of it should be firstly discussed. This image is shaped by various experiences, both personal and indirect ones – transmitted by friends, family members, and teachers at school, as well as media coverage and all other ways of expressing public opinion. In addition, the level of knowledge about the neighbouring country and desirability of choosing it as a place for long-term

voluntary service will complete the features influencing the initial attitude, which characterised Poles and Germans before doing voluntary service abroad.

All of the above-mentioned issues are discussed in the two following subsections of chapter 5. They should be read in conjunction with the initial part of the same chapter, dealt with selected theories on how the picture of the other country's inhabitants is created and how it influences interactions between members of different nations. Subsequently, the third subsection presents how attitudes towards the receiving country have changed amongst people involved in Polish-German long-term volunteering. Last but not least, we try to conclude with some general recommendations on how programmes of such Polish-German exchanges can be developed in order to extend their influence on the quality of relations between both countries.

### **5.2.1. Why Poland? / Why Germany? – the role of motivation in going to the respective country**

This question was posed not only by the volunteers themselves, but also by their parents and friends. Sometimes it was asked out of curiosity, surprise, but sometimes with disapproval and disbelief. The decision about going to a certain country, together with choosing the topic of the project, is very important, as it will “tie” the volunteer to this particular culture, environment, and tradition for quite a long time (minimum six months). Desirability in going to Poland and Germany for voluntary service shows expectations connected with this stay. But was going to the neighbouring country always an intentional choice?

It turned out that for German volunteers, Poland was not often like this. Most (81%) also applied for another country. Poland was not a priority destination, but was often proposed by the sending organisation. Volunteers' choices were rather more “exotic” than neighbouring Poland, so, among others, there were plenty of African and Balkan states, as well as Western European countries, such as the United Kingdom and Spain. But even though many volunteers did not choose Poland in first place, they realised that it could be a good opportunity to learn more about a country that is so close, just behind the border, but which still remains a white spot in Germans' perceptions.

*DE<sup>6</sup>: I couldn't decide on choosing a particular country. A position in Poland was proposed to me and I said “yes”.*

The selection of a “country-wish-list” was much longer for German than for Polish volunteers. The latter were more concentrated on German-speaking

---

**6** All the quotes cited in this report are taken from the interviews with volunteers made within the zze/IPA research. Opinions of German volunteers are marked with the letters DE in front of them and from Polish ones with letters PL.



countries, and only one-third of Poles (31%) applied to volunteer somewhere else other than in Germany. This could suggest that Polish volunteers were more oriented towards the specific results of voluntary experience, which could be connected with language skills (some further reasons for Poles choosing to go to Germany are discussed below). Additionally, prior to voluntary service, Polish volunteers were more often in Germany than the other way round.

After being asked (in the online questionnaire) on previous stays in the neighbouring country for more than one week, 63% of Poles answered positively, while this percentage for Germans was much lower – 41%. Therefore, Poles had a much larger direct contact to Germany and revealed a greater interest in going there for voluntary service, than Germans did to Poland.

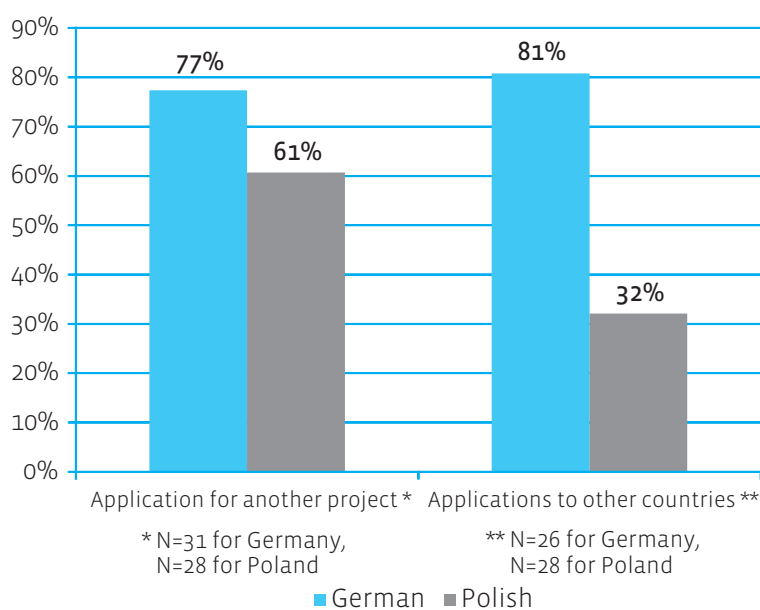


Figure 8  
Volunteers' interest in other countries and projects

Thus, the initial desirability to go to the neighbouring country differentiates Polish and German volunteers. While the former wanted to go to the country they ended up in, it was opposite regarding Germans. Therefore, the latter must have been more surprised with the place of their long-term volunteering. As a result, they were also less prepared for living in the receiving country they went to (in this case Poland). In effect, the level of their insecurity and potential acculturative stress might have been higher in comparison with their Polish peers doing voluntary service in Germany. However, the way in which both Poles and Germans were able to adjust themselves in the receiving societies, as it was elaborated above, is also connected with their initial knowledge about the neighbouring country.

### 5.2.2. Known or unknown – initial knowledge of the neighbouring country

At first glance, the focus on a certain country as a hosting one and previous visits to that country could be treated as a factor suggesting broad interest and knowledge about the country. This is only partly true for Polish volunteers. Many volunteers had been particularly interested in Germany for a long time. They had studied the German language and had German friends. Direct and frequent contact (even though it had a touristic character) with the neighbours was a chance to gain some knowledge about German culture. At the same time, many Polish volunteers, as it was declared, did not know much about their western neighbour and treated voluntary service as an opportunity to change this. Generally, Germany and its history are to some extent present in Polish perception, especially at school and in public discourse. Thus, the western neighbouring country is not a white spot for Poles. However, little direct contact with Germans on a regular basis leaves Poles with a not very deep knowledge about them.

*PL: Germany was a country that was actually neutral for me. I had nothing against Germans, but there are other nations that I had bigger contact with and also such great experiences, and because of that, I was more likely to go there.*

Of course, not only are personal meetings the source of knowledge about other cultures and countries. As Polish volunteers admit, while learning about Germany, they mostly relied on information from the media, books, and other people's experiences. However, even the volunteers themselves confess that they followed many common and stereotypical opinions about Germany, which were mostly connected with the standard of living and economics (Germans as clean, ordered, punctual, reserved, rich, and hard-working nation). Poles counted on verification of these common statements through direct contact with Germans.

*PL: These two countries are connecting a deep past – I chose to do voluntary service in Germany to learn the language, culture, and development of this country... to eliminate stereotypes...*

Despite Poles' different level of initial knowledge about Germany, the country did not appear to them as totally unknown, as many German volunteers regarded Poland. Most German volunteers had not been to Poland for a long stay (at least one week) before voluntary service. Unlike their homeland for Poles, Poland is not a popular tourist destination for Germans, and thus German volunteers did not have many opportunities for personal experiences with Poles. However, some of the German volunteers had Polish

roots, family that came from or who are still living in Poland. In addition, they had some knowledge about Poland, e.g., due to the visits of family members living there, and thus aimed to go to Poland to learn the language and get to know the culture better.

*DE: I have Polish roots, which means my grandfather is a Pole, my grandmother comes from Lower Silesia – [...]. Some of my relatives only speak Polish, which motivated me to learn Polish. Where could I do it better than in Poland itself?*

In general, German volunteers' initial knowledge about Poland was very low, mostly based on common opinion from newspapers and other media. According to research by the Centre for International Relations in Warsaw, which was conducted in 2011 and covered representative samples of Poles and Germans over 16 years, the mutual interest between Poland and Germany is rather low, and at a similar level for both countries. Accordingly, only 4 per cent and per cent, respectively, of the respondents declared having a high interest in the neighbouring country, as well as 47 per cent and 43 per cent of them who reveal no interest at all (Centre for International Relations 2011). Based on volunteers' declarations, it seems that Polish volunteers are characterised by a greater interest and knowledge in the neighbouring country than German volunteers. However, the awareness of such ignorance towards a country, which is so close geographically, stimulates German volunteers to overcome this lack of knowledge.

*DE: Poland is a neighbouring country of Germany, but before my voluntary service I knew little about Poland. I want to change that during this year. I want to learn the language, get to know its culture and people. I don't necessarily have to go to another continent, if I don't even know the countries right at my front door.*

*DE: I have to say that I only had a little knowledge. Almost everything that I linked to the East I linked to the GDR or to the Soviets, so I have to say quite honestly that I didn't have a real picture of Poland.*

Before their stay in Poland, the German volunteers had very little knowledge about the country. Thus, Polish volunteers admitted that they were somehow disappointed how little Germans knew about their Eastern neighbours, especially as Polish volunteers felt that Poles are more interested in the situation of Germany. This opinion of the Polish volunteers seemed to be confirmed by the Germans that were interviewed, who admitted that while most of their family members or friends did not have any knowledge about Poland, the Poles they met while doing voluntary service had often visited Germany before, and thus had some knowledge about their country.

In addition, their colleagues from the hosting organisations in Poland also had some knowledge about Germany gathered due to contacts with former German volunteers. But there were also a few volunteers who said they tried to change the idealistic picture that some Poles have about Germany. They tried to explain that not every German is wealthy and not every place in Germany is well developed and modern. On the other hand, these German volunteers also wanted to show Poles how well developed their own country or city is.

*DE: Regarding my colleagues, all of them know Germany, speak a little bit of German, and have worked with German volunteers for some years. So it was difficult to show them another picture of Germany.*

*DE: ... I do not think that my stay in Poland has changed the image of Germany of any Poles. But Germany is quite close to where I live at the moment. That means that many people went there anyway or learned German at school, and know Germany and Germans quite well already.*

*DE: In [the city] there are places, buildings, parts of town which have technology, institutes, companies which don't exist in Germany or which aren't so well developed in Germany ... Polish people can therefore be more proud about their country and its economic achievements and stop feeling inadequate compared to Germany.*

*PL: In my opinion, their [Germans'] knowledge [about Poland] is rather superficial, although I have also met some people who had been to Poland, and did sightseeing there. I hope that thanks to the contacts with Poles, because I'm not the only Polish volunteer in Germany, these mutual contacts will be tighter and more people will decide to visit our country and explore our culture.*

*PL: I was thinking that Germans know a little bit more about Poland, or at least are interested in Poland a bit, but it's not this way at all. We're neighbours, but we, Poles, know a lot about Germany, and they know nothing about us. It was disappointing for me that my flatmate thought that we use the Cyrillic alphabet. They don't try to change this, they don't care about knowing Poland.*

Therefore, taking into account the initial knowledge about the neighbouring country, the starting point for German and Polish volunteers was different. For the former, Poland seemed to be perceived as an unknown and distant country, but they were willing to change this situation, learn the culture, and the language. Polish volunteers, however, were more oriented and had decided to go to Germany from the beginning, as well as because of their current knowledge about the country. Germany was not totally unfamiliar, but still the level of information about the country was not satisfactory for Polish volunteers.

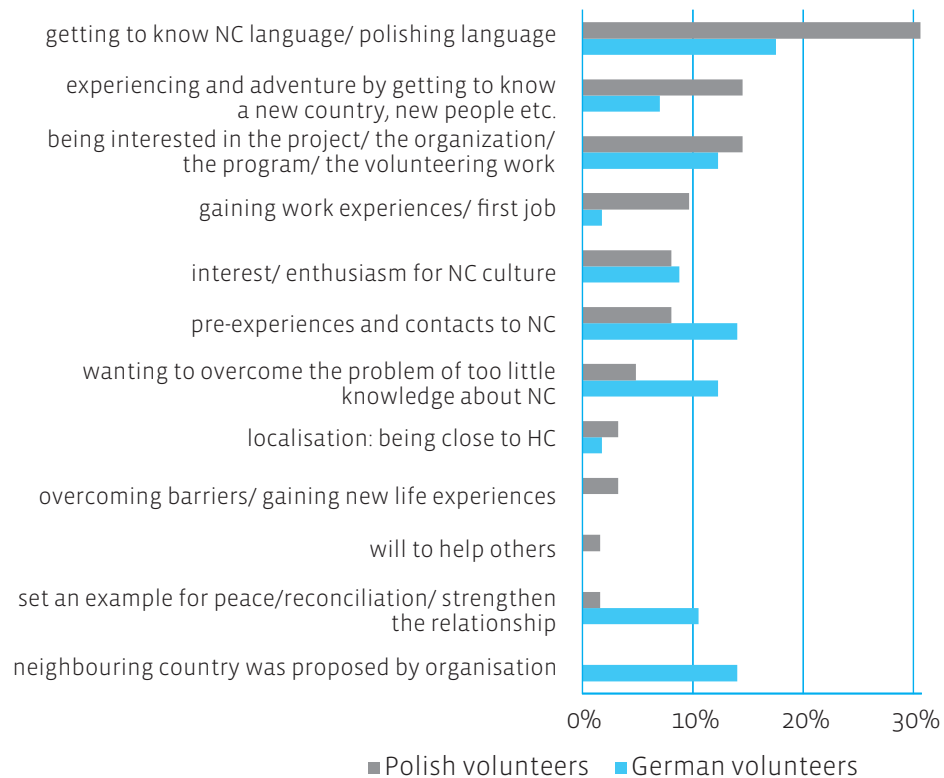


Figure 9  
Motivation for choosing to volunteer in the neighbouring country

\* Multiple responses for an open question to 29 volunteers from Germany and 27 volunteers from Poland

### 5.2.3. Indirect contact with the neighbouring country

Since attitude to the neighbouring country does not exist in a vacuum, not only direct experiences of volunteers, but also those of the volunteers' peers and family members should be taken into consideration. Both can influence volunteers' attitudes towards the receiving society and determine their possibilities for adaption into new cultural circumstances. Intuition suggests here that older generations could still reveal stereotypical opinions about the neighbouring country and its inhabitants, which refers to our long and complicated history, while young people should be open-minded and free from this stereotypical way of thinking. The latter attitude is formed thanks to many intercultural and international exchanges, as well as knowledge drawn from the media and other texts of the culture. However, this statement does not explain the full perspective of the situation of the volunteers' environment.

It often happened that the grandparents of Polish volunteers did not approve of their choice of going to Germany. Experiences from the Second World War were still alive in their memory and associations with the Nazis came automatically. For example, such a way of thinking was presented by a grandmother of one of the volunteers, although the opportunity to meet

her grandson's young German friends (he met during voluntary service in Germany), who visited Poland, allowed her to find out that her associations were wrong and unfair. This enabled her to change her general attitude towards Germans.

*PL: (...) It is still common to associate Germans with the Nazis, until now. For example, I have a grandmother that is very nationalistic-conservative. Once, my friends from Germany visited me and she [grandmother] even presented a positive attitude towards them, that they were not the result of Nazism. It is also important for me, as before my departure she had warned me that the friends [I will make in Germany] would hate me and would fight against me until the end of my life. And then, it turned out, that it was not as bad as she expected.*

The attitude of the generation of the volunteers' parents was diverse. Many Polish volunteers admitted that their parents still had "out-dated information" and thought about Germany in relation to the GDR (German Democratic Republic). However, most parents were positively oriented towards Germany. Some were also trying to learn the language, although their knowledge about their neighbours was still rather small.

Similarly, parents of the German volunteers were mostly positive about going to Poland for voluntary service, even though it was an unknown and mysterious country for them.

*DE: At first my family did not understand my decision to go to Poland. But then my parents were glad that the country is close to Germany. If I had gone to Africa, they would have been more scared. However, you see that nobody knows much about Poland, everyone shakes their heads and comes up with clichés, when I tell them I will go to Poland.*

*DE: My mother (...) has never been to Poland, but she was so excited about it, and when she told the neighbours, who asked why Poland and not England or America, she always defended it, saying that it was great that I was going to Poland (...) and that she is so proud of me. And then the other reactions were very positive (...).*

Finally, the youngest generation, thus the volunteers' peers, seemed to have the most sceptical attitude towards their friends' idea about going to Poland. German volunteers' friends enthusiastically approved of the idea of taking a gap year and working as a volunteer. This decision was never questioned. However, they were rather surprised that Poland was chosen as the hosting country. Negative reactions and a stereotypical image of drunken Poles and Poles who steal cars were quite common among them.

DE: *My family's reaction was great and they always supported me. At first I wanted to go to Italy, but it did not work out, and it finally turned out to be Wrocław, which they all found much better in the end. With my friends, it was a bit different, of course they said that EVS is great, but their reactions about Poland were strange; why don't you go to a real country for a real exchange year, such as India, Australia, or in Europe like Spain or Italy... but Poland was always strange.*

DE: *The Polish part of my family was glad about my decision to go to Poland, they thought I was coming back to the home country. The German part of my family thought that I am brave to go to a country without knowing the language. They talked in typical stereotypes such as don't let people steal your stuff, don't drink too much.*

DE: *Most people found it strange and asked why Poland? Don't you want to go to a nice country? Very often you also can hear stupid jokes about stealing cars and cutting asparagus, you know, all these prejudices. But there were people who found it cool, because to go to Poland is something different (...) my family and friends support me anyway.*

The situation among peers of the Polish volunteers was similar. Some were negatively surprised about choosing Germany and made jokes about Germans and their language. Their peers' opinions about Germany were also related to their general worldview. Negative associations of the country and its inhabitants were especially popular of the people with conservative beliefs.

PL: *They [my classmates, peers] made jokes about me, that I'm going to Germany. It is generally known, what Poles think about Germans. – You're going to Germany?! And you would speak this language?! My classmates asked.*

PL: *In my historical studies there were plenty of people with right-wing views and this reductionism of Germans to Nazis still exists. It is stupid, but this is how it is.*

But there were also very positive reactions, which respected the high level of development of Germany and the suggestion that the volunteers' friends were even a bit jealous of this decision.

PL: *I can see, that many people, also my close friends, let's say, envy me for this experience and sometimes they regret that they didn't do voluntary service themselves.*

PL: *I have an impression, I even think about certain people here, that they would like to, but in a way they are afraid of leaving the job market to do*

*voluntary service, because it's not a real job. I've heard such an opinion quite often, that it's not a job that it's easier to work and earn money than be a volunteer. (...) I think differently, voluntary service is for me a great and valuable experience, but I understand, that somebody can have a different attitude.*

### 5.3. Poles and Germans' mutual stereotypes according to the surveys

Stereotypical opinions, which are the result of a complicated history, long-lasting limited contact, and often increased further by media coverage, still influence the public discourse in both countries and, as a result, individual opinions. Common or stereotypical statements about Poland and Germany are the subject of several research studies and analyses. While discussing the potential influence of long-term bilateral volunteering between Poland and Germany, it seems important to step back for a while from further analysis of the interviews with volunteers in order to elaborate for a moment on how these mutual stereotypes look like.

The report by the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach (IfD-A) for the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation (FWPN/SdpZ), explored the topic of mutual perception through stereotypical opinions between Poles and Germans as well as mutual associations between members of both countries. IfD-A conducted research in 2011 on representative samples of Poles and Germans and, to find some trends, analysed previous studies on the topic of mutual perceptions of Poles and Germans (Allensbach Institute 2011: 1). Among the analysed studies, was one by Falkowski and Popko in 2006. According to their research, 41 per cent of Germans associate Poland with something negative, most commonly with crime, poverty, backwardness, unemployment, and cheap labour. Almost one in five German respondents (18%) could not mention any association with Poland, and only 30 per cent have positive connotations with their Eastern neighbours. Comparing this data to the authors' earlier research from 2000, a general, rather positive and promising trend in the way Germans see Poles can be observed – the percentage of positive associations is increasing, while negative connotations are becoming more rare. For example, Germans considered Poles more hardworking (38%), tolerant (31%), disciplined (30%) and modern (26%) than six years previously (the results were respectively 30%, 27%, 23%, 21% at that time). When it comes to negative stereotypes, Germans tend to see Poles as less backwards (in 2006 – 32%, in 2000 – 44%), less dishonest (30%-37%), less arrogant (22%-31%), and less lazy (14%-25%).

IfD-A's survey from 2006 partly confirms the results from the research mentioned above. Negative stereotypes concerning Poles are still dominant among Germans – high poverty (75%), high level of alcohol consumption (67%),



and corruption (62%), although some positive associations are also quite common – great landscapes (57%) and hospitality (50%) (Allensbach Institute 2011: 24-28). Looking at the most recent research on this topic carried out by IfD-A in 2011, continuous growth of the positive image of Poland and Poles can be observed. However, the change is rather evolutionary than revolutionary. A high crime rate (52%) and corruption (47%) are still strongly tied to Poland, but rather positive connotations with values such as religion (74%), family (60%), and tradition (57%) tend to dominate the image (Allensbach Institute 2011: 61-62). A comparison of this data with the information concerning volunteers is presented in a further part of this chapter.

The image of Germans and Germany from the perspective of Poles has been, compared to the Germans' image of Poland, more formed and stable over the 10-15 years, and is confirmed by different research. In IfD-A's 1996 survey, Poles answered that they mostly associate Germany with economic attributes, good organisation of work and welfare state, more specifically with economic power (69%), high technological development (68%), prosperity (66%), and diligence (66%). Poles link similar characteristics to the Germans as a nation: according to the research of Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) from 2005 – they are perceived as well organised (82%), enterprising (78%), well educated (66%), and hardworking (61%), but also arrogant (53%) (Allensbach Institute 2011: 29-31). The latest study by IfD-A from 2011 confirms that Poles connect their western neighbours mainly with economic and development categories, such as good shape of the economy (67%), high standard of living (60%), modernity (50%), and self-confident people (52%). Again, this recent research is treated as background for the data on volunteers, which is presented below.

A periodical survey on the mutual attitude and sympathy between both countries was conducted by IPA (surveys in 2000, 2005 and 2008). Poles reveal a rather positive trend in their relationship towards Germans, although distance is still the predominant attitude – almost half of all Poles (48% in 2008) consider their western neighbours to be different from themselves; however, this percentage is decreasing, while the share of the supporters of opposite opinion has increased (16% in 2008). Moreover, the share of the neutral emotion increased over the years (44% in 2008) at the expense of declining antipathy (22% in 2008), although the sympathy emotion has a sinusoidal shape; at first it increased, but later the percentage of Poles feeling sympathy towards Germans decreased to 29 per cent in 2008. Looking at the distance between Germans and Poles from the Germans' perspective, the results are similar to the Polish ones. In 2008, 42 per cent of Germans perceived these two nations as rather distant, while only 17 per cent mostly saw similarities. The trend is also rather positive – a feeling of distance has decreased over the years. The neutral emotion towards Poles became more and more common (57% in 2008), while sympathy and antipathy decreased (respectively 23% and 16% in 2008) (Allensbach Institute 2011: 31-36).

The latest data showing the Poles' attitudes towards Germany and Germans can be observed in the IPA's "Polish-German Barometer 2013" (Łada 2013). This research proves the continuous increase in the quality of relations between both societies (47% of Poles surveyed in 2013 feel sympathy for Germans). However, at the same time it shows that there still is work to be accomplished in order to overcome this mutual difficult past. The most common associations Poles have with the word "Germans" are related to history, mainly with the Second World War (25% of all declared associations).

To sum up, a not very optimistic but consequently changing image of the mutual perception and attitude comes from all of the discussed studies in the subchapter. Stereotypical opinions still seem to be quite strong, although the "normalisation" of Polish-German relations at this micro-level has appeared, which now gravitates towards neutrality. Working on Polish-German relations at the micro-level seems to be an effective and available method of change. Cross-national projects and mutual cooperation give the opportunity to get know each other better and verify common opinions, which are mostly the result of the lack of direct contact. In this perspective, voluntary service appears to be a chance for redefining these mutual relations.

#### **5.4. Volunteers' evaluation of Polish-German relations**

Similarities with the mutual opinions of Poles and Germans presented above in the results of various surveys might be also observed in the statements of the volunteers taking part in the zze/IPA research. In order to elaborate on the potential modifications of the volunteers' knowledge due to doing their service in the neighbouring country, it is important to present their initial knowledge. Thus, before starting voluntary service volunteers perceived relations between Poland and Germany in a similar way than the majority of Poles and Germans. Neutral characteristic of these relations were dominant, although with a shift towards a more negative evaluation. Some differences could be observed between volunteers from Poland and Germany. While the positive evaluation of Polish-German relations was at almost the same level (13-15%), Germans tended to be a little bit more critical – 28 per cent of them assessed these relations as bad, while this rate for Poles amounted to 22 per cent. We can try to compare these results to the Institute of Public Affairs' research from 2008. Similar aspects were considered there, but without possibility of choosing the answer "neither good, nor bad". However, Germans also appeared more sceptical than Poles with a smaller share of positive evaluations of these relations (respectively 48% and 6%) and a greater percentage of negative ones (respectively 35% and 21%) (Allensbach Institute 2011: 23).

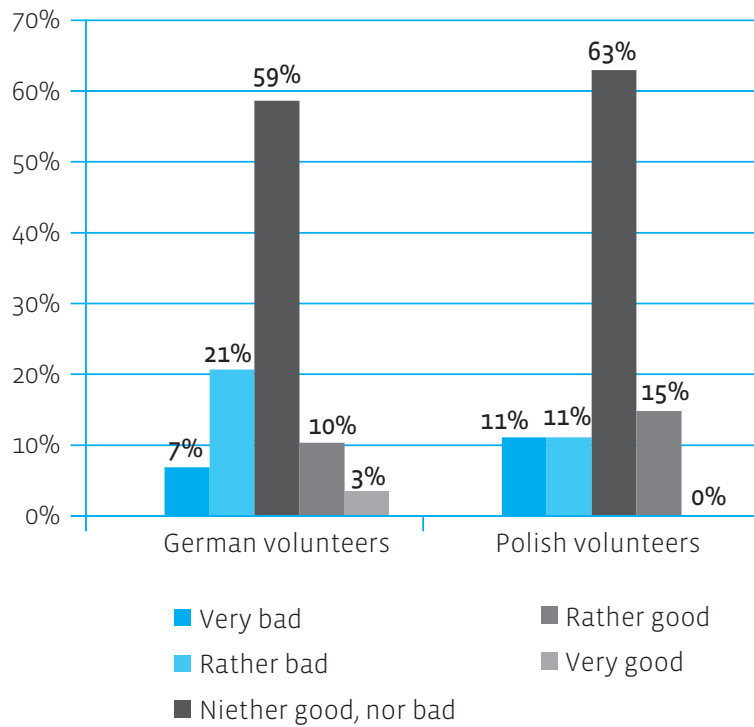


Figure 10  
Relations between  
Poland and Germany  
according to volunteers

\* N=29 for German volunteers, N=27 for Polish Volunteers

### 5.4.1. German Volunteers on Poland

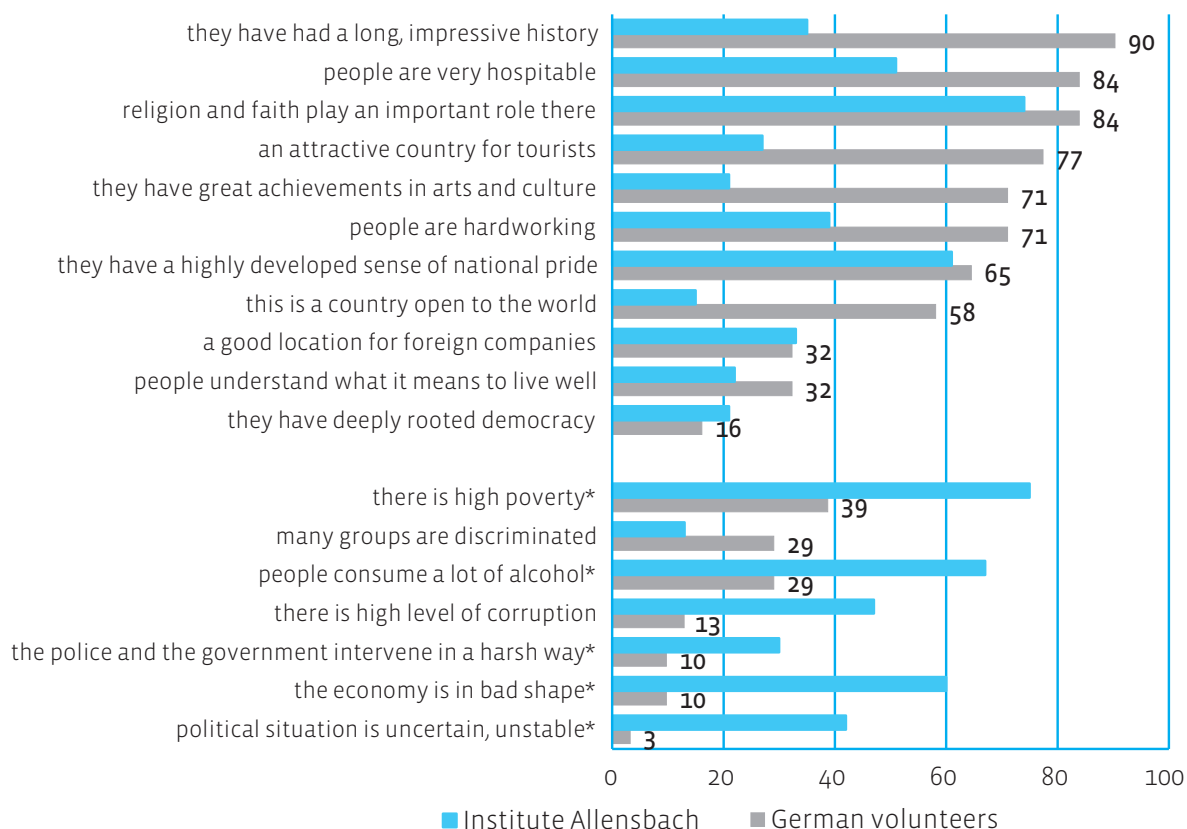


Figure 11  
Germans' attitude towards  
common opinions  
about Poles

German volunteers N=31

Allensbach Institute – representative sample of 10,067 Germans, 2011.

\* Data from research by the Institute Allensbach from 2006.

In the ISP/zze study, answers for each statement were given on 1-5 scale, where 1 meant complete disagreement, and 5, complete agreement. In order to obtain the number of agreement answers coming from this research, an aggregated number of choices 4 and 5 is presented.

As the surveys on representative samples of Germans show, there are still strong stereotypes and negative associations with Poles, which operate in the public awareness. IPA/zze research proved how influential direct contact could be. First of all, contrary to the opinion from the studies mentioned above, volunteers from Germany have a rather positive image of Poland. Positive associations, such as impressive history (90%), hospitality (84%), tourist attractiveness (77%), and diligence (71%), are the most common characteristic of the Eastern neighbours that German volunteers declared. At the same time, negative connotations are relatively rare among them. While 75% of Germans generally claimed that there is high poverty in Poland, only 39% volunteers agreed. A similar situation is observed in relation to high alcohol consumption

(respectively 67% and 29%) and corruption (respectively 47% and 13%). What is significant, in almost every aspect that can be considered as a favourable association (upper part of the chart), volunteers reveal a much more positive image of Poland than Germans in general. In addition, negative stereotypes are much weaker among the volunteers. Only the possibility of discrimination during day-to-day activities (i.e. while dealing with civil servants in the office) is more strongly emphasised among German volunteers than the German population in general. The latter observation can be somehow worrying, as it could reflect some negative personal experiences of the volunteers.<sup>7</sup>

#### **5.4.2. Polish volunteers on Germany**

Similarly to the representative sample of Poles that took part in the surveys discussed above, volunteers from Poland look at the western neighbours mainly through the economic perspective. Thus, Germany appears as a country highly technically developed (82%), rich (68%), and with great economic power (64%). Again, like the representative sample of Poles, Polish volunteers treat Germany as a politically stable country (61%) with great international influence (61%), but with rather bad relations with Eastern European countries, which generally Poles evaluate somehow better. Considering the personal characteristics of Germans, volunteers are also much more positive, for example 57 per cent of volunteers treat Germans as nice and helpful, while only 17 per cent of Poles in general admitted the same. It can be assumed, that indirect contact is, at least partly, responsible for this huge difference. The same reason probably explains why volunteers see Germans as less xenophobic and arrogant than Poles in general. Great differences can also be observed in evaluating Germany from the cultural perspective. While only 15 per cent of Poles saw Germany as a country tolerant and open to the world, 64 per cent of the Polish volunteers thought in this way. However, we have to bear in mind that some data, for example that which considers tolerance, comes from research carried out more than 10 years ago, when Poland was not a member of the EU, and the contact between these two nations was as close as it currently is.

---

**7** What should be taken into consideration here is the fact that in the IfD-A samples, the respondents were surveyed while in their homeland, and the volunteers in the IPA/zze study, while in the neighbouring country. Thus, not only direct contact, but also the place of residence of the respondent while being interviewed, could play a role here (however, these two factors are strongly connected with each other). So, while volunteers' experiences are "first hand", opinions of Germans taking part in the discussed opinion pools formulated their answers based on the assumptions/feelings they had or experiences mediated from others. This relates to subchapter 5.4.1. and 5.4.2.

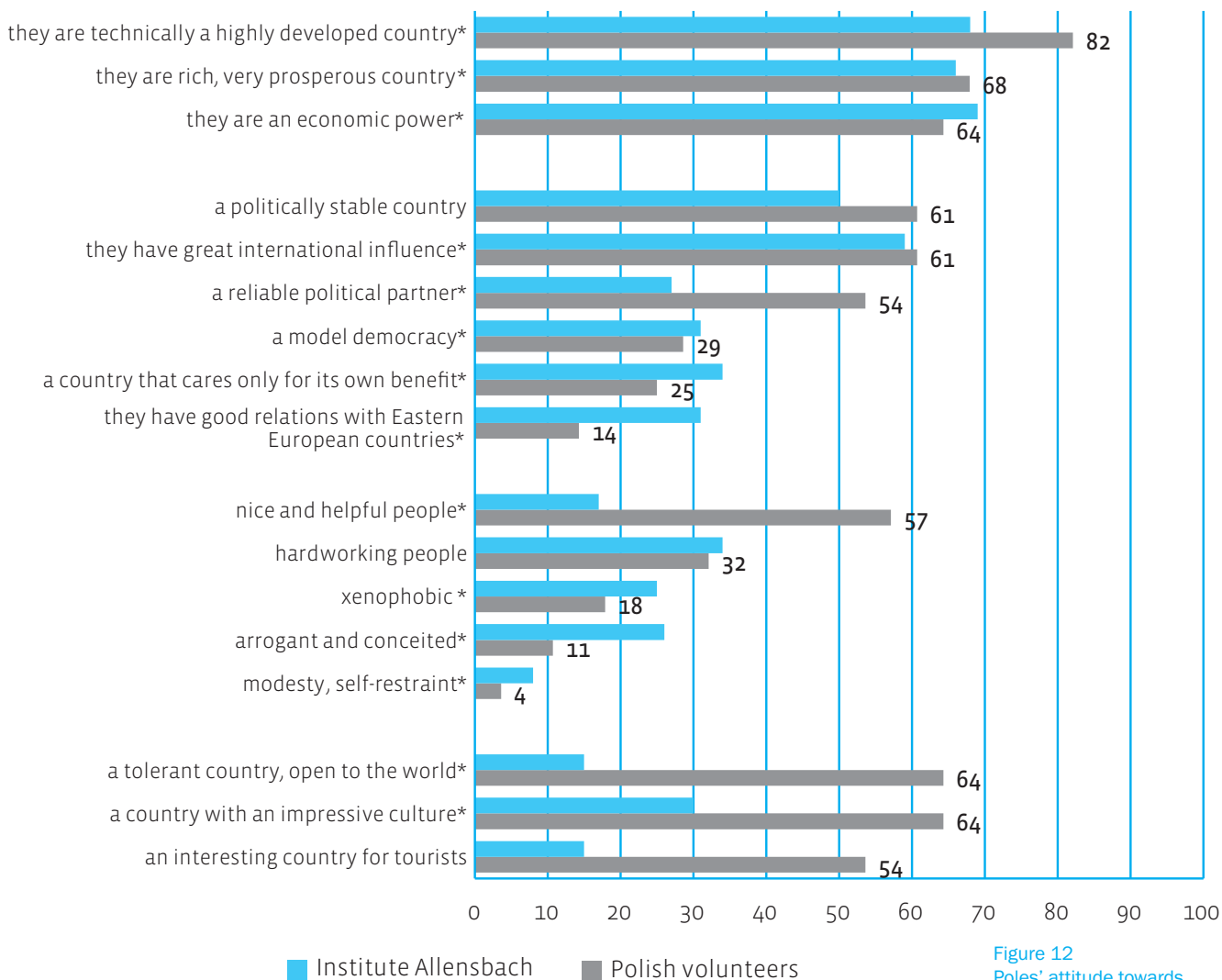


Figure 12  
Poles' attitude towards common opinions about Germans

Polish volunteers N=28

Allensbach Institute – representative sample of 6,214 Poles, 2011.

\* Data from research by the Institute Allensbach from 1996.

In the ISP/zze study, answers for each statement were on a 1-5 scale, where 1 meant complete disagreement, and 5, complete agreement. In order to obtain the number of agreement answers coming from this research, an aggregated number of choices 4 and 5 is presented.

### 5.5. Circumstances of volunteers' intercultural contact and their influence on Poles'/Germans' adaptation in the hosting society

As has been presented in the theoretical introduction to this part of the report, a very important aspect influencing the course of volunteers' adaptation in the hosting country and their learning about its culture are the conditions in which this process occurs. Similarly important are the attitudes of the receiving society members towards volunteers, especially during the

day-to-day activities. Several observations enabling us to elaborate on both aspects can be found in Polish and German volunteers' statements.

All volunteers stressed the importance of direct contact with Poles or Germans, especially with their peers, during voluntary service. However, this contact was often very limited, which was a big disappointment for the volunteers, who were counting on a vivid social life with local young people. With time, it turned out, that this wish was very idealistic and not so easy to realise. Polish volunteers described German society as rather distant and reserved towards foreigners. As a result, their contact with Germans had a professional character and mostly took place at work, while other volunteers, or, in general, people forming an international environment in the respective country, were their closest friends with who volunteers spent most of their free time. Of course, volunteers tried to make some "local" friends, for example through tandem meetings, but with rather little success.

A similar experience was also described by many German volunteers. If there were no other volunteers in the work place, the Germans were forced to search for activities that enabled them to meet other young people. Those who met other volunteers in their work place mostly spent their free time with them. Some explained that this was the reason they had problems finding Polish friends: going out with such a big group did not lead to getting to know other people.

On the other hand, one young man reported that young Poles did of course have their own circle of friends and were thus not very interested in getting to know new people. In this context, many German volunteers appreciated the help of their mentors who integrated them into their circle of friends. Despite this, volunteers admitted, the long stay was a great chance to build their own image of the neighbouring country and its people.

*DE: We [the volunteers and his volunteering friends] don't have SO many [Polish] people we meet, there are about four people ... in the first month there were more but they left the city to study ... and so we have four people we now meet regularly. It could be more but it is always difficult to enter an existing circle of friends, especially if we are a group and not individuals, so mostly we appear as a group.*

*PL: Frankly speaking, I still have no German friends, I mean close people. I have met a couple of Germans, but they are friends of other volunteers. (...) I was thinking that I would meet some young people here. Truly, I'm turning in the circle of volunteers, who are also from other countries; then – volunteers, who are from Germany, but who are in Poland now, I know several people like this, but we have mostly Internet contact. (...) I know them [become acquainted], but I don't have their phone numbers or they are not among my Facebook friends, so even if I would like to meet with them, I don't have such a possibility, because I'm not in touch with them.*

PL: *It was great for me to leave this volunteering ghetto and to have contact with people, who really live in Berlin. My flatmate, who lives here, has plenty of friends and therefore I have contact with Germans, for example.*

PL: *I would like to have more German friends, but I think I haven't looked at it from this perspective. I haven't even realised that I have more private contact with people from other countries than with Germans. Because most of the contact I have with Germans are with the people from my work.*

In addition, through the interviewed volunteers' statements we can observe that they might have been undergoing *acculturative stress/culture shock* around the time they were approached by the researchers. A number of volunteers reported thinking about leaving their voluntary service programme. In addition, feelings of being foreign appeared, which mostly happened due to poor language skills.

Some of the German volunteers also reported experiencing discomfort at work. One person shared her experience at a music school: when she presented herself at the school and mentioned that she was from Germany, she was confronted with the comment "from Hitler country", which she evaluated as a signal of being different. On the other hand, for the Polish volunteers it mostly depended on the city they lived in whether they felt like they were at home or not. Others felt good in Germany but not like they did at home. All of the German volunteers who visited Poland before voluntary service felt at home in Poland, whereas German volunteers who had never visited Poland before didn't. Even though they felt at home, they had problems in further acclimatisation, mainly due to their lack of language skills.

All these aspects (especially the moment of contact with the other culture) should be considered while analysing the volunteers' statements regarding their opinions on the hosting country. This is an important issue to be remembered while we move to elaborate on the change in Polish and German volunteers' perception of the respective country caused by their stay doing voluntary service in Poland or Germany.

## **5.6. Image of the neighbouring country and mutual relations after voluntary service**

### **5.6.1. Modifications among Polish and German volunteers**

Being in a country and having direct contact with its inhabitants, influences many initial attitudes and stereotypes, as can be seen above in the case of the volunteers. The quantitative part of our research was conducted at the beginning of the volunteers' stay. Coming back to them at the end of their



voluntary programme with in-depth interviews allowed the change in the perception of the neighbouring country and its inhabitants to be observed.

The volunteers admitted that their image of the neighbouring country was quite simple and was not based on previous personal experiences, but rather on common opinions. As a result, the neighbouring nation appeared, in a way, to be unknown, distant, different, and unreal. For many volunteers, long-term voluntary service was the first chance to get closer to the neighbouring nation's members and to verify stereotypes. Even if some negative opinions were confirmed, they allowed the neighbouring country to become more "real", because of this demythologisation. For example, one of the Polish volunteers, who was working with and sharing a house with other mostly German volunteers, was very sceptical about these negative opinions. Even though his private experiences were rather difficult, they just confirmed that Germany is not an idyllic country and is more similar to Poland than he had thought before. Nevertheless, he appreciated having this experience and still, according to his initial plans, wanted to stay in Germany after the programme (seeing working opportunities for himself there).

*PL: As it turns out now, I had plenty of stereotypes rooted. For example, that Germans are hardworking – it's one big myth. They are as hardworking as we are, so there are people who work hard, and there are also those who shirk and search for a corner where they can't be seen.*

Similarly, another Polish volunteer also admitted that she had a very stereotypical image of Germany as a well organised, disciplined, and clean country. Thanks to contact with German friends, she was able to deepen this uncomplicated image.

*PL: For sure, I now perceive Germans as people who are really active, engaged, and willing to participate in deciding about things, which concern them, in a positive sense.*

The German volunteers seemed to be more "neutral". They more often spoke about going to Poland without any preconceptions, but simply to get to know the people and the country when staying there:

*DE: My image before I went there [to Poland] for the first time, I would say was quite empty. I did not know anything about Poland. Of course these prejudices like stealing cars and so on, but I thought Poland would be poorer than it really was.*

At the end of their stay one volunteer explained changes concerning his image of Poland:

DE: *Before [doing the voluntary service there] Poland was a white paper for me, and now this has been filled with colour.*

Besides the change in the image of the neighbouring country, which was somehow predictable for them, volunteers also experienced another rather unexpected modification. This short “emigration” allowed them to look at their own countries from a distance and from a new, different perspective. Things that had been taken for granted so far, now started to be analysed, seen in a new way, and better understood. For example, Polish volunteers noticed the strengths of their own country, which they had not appreciated before, such as spontaneity, ease in establishing contacts, or sense of humour. They also realised the size of the technological gap that separates Poland and Germany, and how much is still needed to be done in Poland. This kind of reflexivity appears to be a very valuable result of voluntary service.

PL: *I've also learnt that perspective is important in one's life and that we should often change perspective to see something new. It works this way, for example, that when I'm in Germany, I see myself in many different situations I was in Poland and have some new reflections on them. And when I'm in Poland – I see myself as I was in Germany, who I'm there.*

PL: *I think that my stay in Germany has changed my way of thinking about Poles, because when you live in Poland all the time, you complain about many things and really don't pay attention to the advantages, both of Poland and the Poles. So, being here for a longer time, I've started to look differently at our mentality, and actually I've liked it, sometimes even more than the German one, because we're more open, more spontaneous, we establish contacts easier. In my opinion, to some extent, we are more interesting, and when I compare Poland to Magdeburg, where I currently live, I think, that we really have nothing to be ashamed of.*

This auto-reflection seems to rather describe Polish than German volunteers, as only a few of the latter group's members made such reflections concerning their own culture and society:

DE: *What am I going to miss? I will miss my freedom I think, because afterwards I'm going to study and there are more obligations than here; here I was more free in my decisions, being flexible, when I want to do my work here, there was less pressure here and I hope that I won't get back into the habits of this performance-society when going back to Germany.*

On the other hand, volunteers from both countries were able to observe the hosting society, which led to them feeling and understanding the differences there are between this society's culture and that of their home

country. For example, one German volunteer was surprised with the gender roles of men and women in Poland that she discovered:

*DE: This is really extreme; the guy, for example, sits at the table and asks why nothing happened, and asking [a woman] “bring me this or that...” At the beginning, I was just shocked.*

At the same time, for the Polish volunteers an equivalent discovery was related to the level of social activity within German society. This can also be treated as one of the aspects of warming up the image of Germany, understanding more of its positive features. In addition, it must also have enabled volunteers to make comparisons with their own society and to understand its disadvantages, i.e. the low level of social activity characterising Poland:

*PL: Definitely, I now perceive Germans as people who are very active, committed, they want to have a say in what happens to them, what’s going on with them... in a very positive sense.*

### **5.6.2. Modifications influenced by volunteers in their environment**

Volunteers’ stay in the neighbouring country had an impact not only on the volunteers themselves, but also on their closest environment – family and friends. Regular contact, mainly through Skype, was very important for the volunteers, who did not want to be cut off from their previous surroundings, but who at the same time wanted to concentrate more on establishing contact with local people. Besides Skype conversations and writing e-mails, some of the volunteers also wrote blogs to describe their experiences on the voluntary programme, as well as impressions from their travels.

*PL: I’m also writing a blog about my voluntary service in Germany, so if they [family and friends] read it, they know what’s going on with me, and I think that they partly envy me, because currently they have more routine, I guess. They have to work so they don’t have much time to do as many other things as I can do now. One of my high school friends mentioned that maybe she would consider going abroad and several people wrote to me asking about EVS.*

When Polish volunteers spoke about influencing the image of Germany among their friends and family members, they admitted that it was definitely not their main goal. They did not plan to convince their closest friends and family to change their image of Poland’s western neighbour, but throughout regular contact with the volunteer and sometimes visits to Germany, this

change happened. It is also worth mentioning that for some family members, voluntary service was their first chance to go to Germany.

*PL: I hope, I do [influence the image of Germany and Germans among my family and friends]. I often talk with my family and friends about voluntary service and my experiences. I always speak positively on this topic; therefore their picture of the German community is surely changing for the better.*

Contrary to the Polish volunteers, many Germans aimed to change the attitudes and opinions of family members and friends towards Poland. Because they were aware of the manifold existing stereotypes towards the neighbouring country, sometimes it was not easy for them to decide what stories to tell in order not to confirm such prejudices (“these are the first things they have learnt about Poland at all ... and because of this I try to tell them the nice things”). This “strategy” even led to the wish to promote Poland and present its positive image, and the volunteers talked very enthusiastic about the country and its people. To experience the country by oneself has a much stronger influence than listening to stories about it, which is something the volunteers realised. When a young woman told her friends about life in Poland, it seemed they did not really believe her, so she invited them to visit her. After this visit, their image of Poland became even more positive than those presented by their volunteer-friend.

### **5.6.3. Change in the neighbours’ image by inhabitants of the hosting country**

Doing voluntary service abroad is not only the opportunity to verify one’s own stereotypes on the neighbouring country, but also an occasion to influence the image of the homeland in the eyes of the hosting country’s inhabitants. Everyday contact and volunteers’ engagement in work for the local community of the hosting country allows for the neighbouring nation to be seen in a different light, or even to realise that previous stereotypical images were very unfair.

However, Polish volunteers stressed that being an “ambassador” of their homeland was not their aim, as they did not come to Germany with the mission of changing the stereotypical image of Poles, which, as they said, still existed. “Stealing cars” or “alcohol abuse” are the most common negative associations with Poles, which personal experiences with “normal Poles” verified.

*PL: There is a stereotype of the Pole-thief. On the one hand, Germans are brought up by society to be open and to like everyone, but on the other hand, this “something” is somewhere there ... that sometimes in these stupid jokes, racist Nazi stories occur. These are only jokes, but still.*

Thus, the situation corresponded with the circumstances of changing the image of the neighbouring country by volunteers' family and friends; the change was not intentional, but in a way additional, accompanying the normal Polish volunteers' behaviour during their service in Germany.

PL: (...) *This negative perception of Poles still exists, because sometimes when I meet Germans here, I often hear this image, that, for example, Poles steal cars. But when you speak with them, they can see that you are a completely normal person.*

PL: *There are too many Poles who really steal these cars, etc., for me to contribute to the change of this image in some specific way. But they could simply see, that those Poles, who steal cars, are not all Poles, but I don't think that this could have a big influence on their opinion of Poles.*

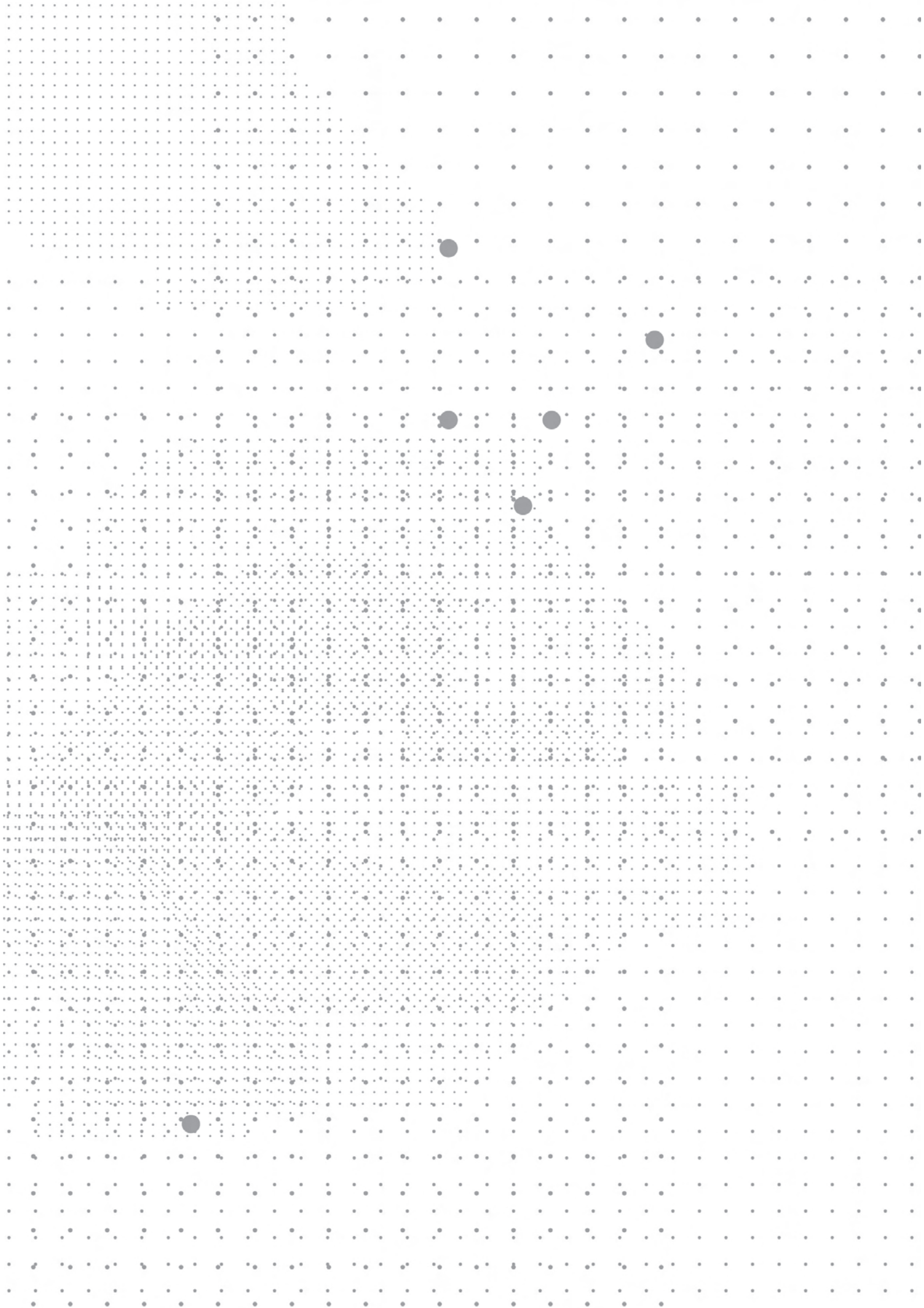
The German volunteers also admitted that they experienced a change in the way the Poles they met perceived Germans. This contact mostly took place at work. Even though their Polish co-workers had previous direct contact with Germans, some German volunteers experienced their local colleagues' surprise with the fact that they, as Germans, were such open and nice people. In other situations, the German volunteers were met with disbelief that Germans were willing to go to Poland, while in their own country "everything is somehow better". Some of the volunteers tried to correct the image held by the local people they met and explain that there is actually no difference between the living standards they experienced in Poland and Germany. As a result, we can observe that the German volunteers were able to "warm up" the image of their homeland during their voluntary service in Poland, but also by presenting a more realistic view of the country bring it a bit closer to the Poles they met.

### **5.7. Summary: Volunteers as bridge builders between societies**

In fact, none of the volunteers interviewed within the zze/IPA research reported the negative influence of their service on the image of the neighbouring country. The situation was rather the opposite. Involvement in long-term volunteering in the neighbouring country influences the initial image of that country the volunteers have. They cannot only modify the stereotypes taken from the public discourse, popular in public opinion (*cultural memory* of their own society, we may say), or stories shared within their families (*communicative memory*). Sometimes they also feel the lack of knowledge with actual information, start to see the neighbouring country and its society as a normal social organism with its positives and negatives.

Moreover, volunteers also learn how the remains of the difficult past, which are still important in their own country, are seen by the local people (however, the last issue depends on the possibilities volunteers have to interact with the hosting society). As a result, they can also observe the attitudes of members of their own nation to the same issue from another perspective and start understanding them more from the history of the relations of both nations, and its complex implications for bilateral relations.

In addition, volunteers also influence the image of the neighbouring country within their own societies. An interesting aspect of this process is related to the fact that it can be caused simultaneously on both sides of the border by the same person. Volunteers modify the perception of the members of their primal social groups (families and friends) that stayed at home, as well as influencing the image of their own country in the eyes of the hosting society members they meet. The attitude towards playing such a role is different among Polish and German volunteers. The latter intentionally try to take such role of “ambassadors”, while in the former it happens in the course of their ordinary activities. Nevertheless, volunteers from both countries admit that they are aware to the fact they have such a role of mediators between both nations. The fact volunteers from Germany and Poland talked about having such role might be related to a higher level of reflexivity regarding the position in the hosting society they had (in comparison to other people that don’t have experience of a long-term stay abroad). This might have been caused by the introductory training (if a particular volunteer had training and somebody drew their attention to this fact), or due to realising the unique situation they are in. However, as a result, volunteers might be observed as kind of mediators, a link, facilitating building bridges between both societies.



## 6. Volunteers' perceptions about Europe



### **6.1 Perceptions and connectivity with the European Union. A theoretical view.**

A central interest of the research project lies not only on the change of attitudes regarding the neighbouring country, but also on attitudes related to the EU. In order to identify such changes, possibly caused by voluntary service, corresponding opinions were collected both at the beginning and at the end of the voluntary service and also compared to the data of the Eurobarometer.

“The European Union is made of its citizens and for its citizens!” (European Commission 2013a) proclaims the official homepage of the European Commission. To make this statement become reality many programmes and projects are funded where citizens can participate and thus actively take part in developing Europe. But how was this Union citizenship established and what are its most important characteristics?

The term itself was introduced by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. It was agreed that citizens of a country that is member of the EU will also automatically be citizens of the Union. Due to this step, it was aimed to increase and strengthen European identity “by greater involvement of the citizens in the Community integration process” (European Union 1995-2014). Being a citizen of the Union is linked to different rights and provisions which can be divided into four groups: freedom of movement and residence within member countries; to vote for or being candidate in municipal elections and those for the European Parliament; being protected by the diplomatic and consular authorities of other EU countries when staying in a country outside of the EU without its own national representation; the right to petition the European Parliament and apply to the Ombudsman.

After the failed referenda on a European constitution in France and the Netherlands in 2005 and the recent public critiques and reactions on the financial crisis, the question of the EU's legitimacy and acceptance has been drawing more attention. Tham states that a highly visible gap between EU policy and the citizens in Europe has appeared (Tham 2006: 1). The declining willingness by citizens to support the “European idea” creates problems, as political systems in general are, amongst others, based on so-called “diffused support” of their members. This kind of support relies on a fundamentally positive attitude towards the political system and the political authorities and has to be demarcated from direct assistance activities (Watermann 2005: 17). The trust-based and subjective emotional attitude of EU citizens, which makes



up the diffused support, is essential for the survival of a political system, particularly during a time of crisis (Watermann 2005: 17).

As a result, the issue of European identity is gaining importance. Within the scientific discourse in particular, the need to define a European identity has often been emphasised. Currently, it can only be described as being diffused in its form (Nida-Rümelin 2007). Mostly, it refers to the political dimension of an European Identity and the conformity of values of the EU's political system (Meyer 2007; Feldmann-Wojtachnia 2007). Items such as the European anthem and flag support and enable identification with the EU. However, it is apparent, that "these efforts to construct a European identity ... have not led to the development of a European feeling of togetherness that has a similar density level as the national identities" (Thalmaier 2006: 169). Here, the aim is not to build an European identity, which replaces the national ones of particular countries, but an identity enlargement, which means the simultaneous existence of various identities. (Thalmaier 2006: 181).

However, it is known that education is an important factor concerning identification with the EU. "Persons with foreign language skills or experience from staying abroad and those who discuss political issues and aim for a higher educational goal, feel significantly more closely connected to the European Union" (Feldmann-Wojtachnia 2007: 203). Despite such capabilities, for many people Europe remains abstract and displays a shape which is "rather lacking in content" (Feldmann-Wojtachnia 2007: 203).<sup>1</sup> Thus, identification with the European body of thought constitutes, in turn, a positive capability for coexistence within the nation-state. Feldmann-Wojtachnia states that "a strong European identity" contributes to more tolerance (Feldmann-Wojtachnia 2007: 204). The European idea offers general ideas of values and opinions regarding the political, social, and cultural realm as well as mobility and intercultural exchange. Through this, it can have unifying effects for its citizens. The "European idea" can be described as a construct that alludes to the common grounds of the community of values and life as well as the model of society shaped by the EU. Ideas such as freedom, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights are considered overarching values, which produce a feeling of togetherness amongst Europeans (Heit 2005). Furthermore, respect for cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity and the harmonious blend of tradition and progress are seen as important elements for the European community (Fontaine 2010). In the current context in particular, political decision-makers emphasise the participation of civil society actors in European development and decision-making processes as a chance for the stabilisation of legitimacy and deeper acceptance of the "Europe" project. One of the central target groups of European efforts regarding the field of involvement in civil society are young people. Voluntary services are seen as

---

**1** In their research, Fuss and Boehnke also come to the conclusion that for the interviewed young people, Europe is "primarily seen as an abstract business" (Fuss 2004: 10).

essential in raising European awareness and creating a sense of community (Otten 2004; Feldmann-Wojtachnia 2007). Thus, the European Voluntary Service aims at fostering solidarity, mutual understanding, and tolerance among young people (European Commission 2013b).

The attitudes of European citizens are regularly gathered, for example, by the European Commission through Eurobarometer surveys, the results of which are published twice a year<sup>2</sup>. Besides the attitudes towards the EU, Eurobarometer also compiles values and ideas regarding life, family, work, religion, politics, and society. According to the survey results, not only knowledge about, but also the connectivity to the EU is identified to ascertain the forms of identification and the degree of diffused support. Nevertheless, to what extent especially German-Polish voluntary services, in particular, contribute to a change in attitudes about Europe and its comprehensive values and aims has not yet been researched. In the subsequent paragraphs, the relevant results of the Eurobarometer survey from spring 2013 will be presented to give both an overview of the current pan-European attitudes, as well as of specific German and Polish attitudes. Questions that have the same or similar content, such as the quantitative and qualitative survey of this research project, will be focused upon.

Attitudes at the beginning and at the end of voluntary service will be compared, and a further distinction will be made between the two nationalities. Furthermore, the Eurobarometer survey, as well as other studies, such as the one of Becker *at al.*, will serve to verify the results of the research project with a disposition towards a broader European scale (Becker 2000).

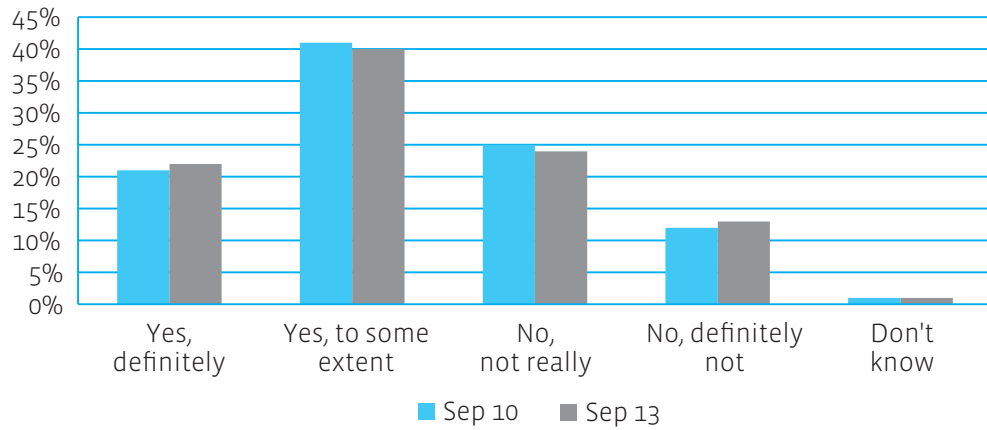
More than half of all European citizens feel, at least partly, “citizens of the EU” (TNS Opinion&Social 2013a: 6). Since spring 2010, the relevant data is quite stable; it fluctuates between 61 and 63 per cent. In September 2013, 22 per cent of the persons surveyed clearly felt themselves to be citizens of the EU, 40 per cent do so to some extent, and 37 per cent don’t or definitely don’t feel themselves to be European citizens. All of the answers can be seen in Figure 1:

---

<sup>2</sup> Since 1973, about 1,000 face-to-face interviews have been carried out in every member state in order to analyse opinions regarding various aspects of European citizenship.

Figure 13  
Do you feel  
a citizen of the EU?

Own graph based on the data from Eurobarometer 79 (TNS Opinion&Social 2013a: 22)

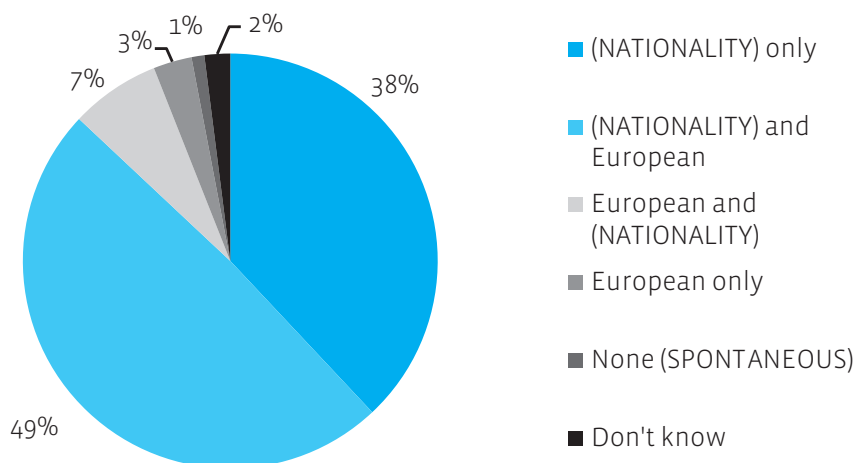


In Poland and Germany the level of identification with the EU is higher than the European average. The identification value for Poland is 70 per cent, while for Germany it is 73 per cent. The consent of the German and Polish youth and young adults concerning the feeling of being European is, as it is in other European countries, higher than the national average. Seventy-seven per cent of Polish people aged 15 to 24 years old and 79 per cent of their German peers consider themselves to be EU citizens.

Nevertheless, nationality still constitutes the primary element of the self-image of the population of EU member states. Regarding the question of whether persons interviewed for the Eurobarometer consider themselves, in the near future, to be citizens of the EU and/or of their country, 38 per cent exclusively relate to their own nationality, while 49 per cent also say that they are, besides their nationality, citizens of the EU. Fifty-six per cent (Poland) and 58 per cent (Germany) add to their national identity a European one and hence exceed the European average. Only 8 per cent and 9 per cent respectively define themselves primarily, and two per cent exclusively, as European citizens (TNS Opinion&Social 2013a: 22ff.).

Figure 14  
In the near future, do you  
see yourself as...

Own graph based on the data from Eurobarometer 79, round Sep 13 (TNS Opinion&Social 2013a: 26)



With 33 per cent of the Polish and 22 per cent of the German population relating themselves exclusively to their nationality, both groups are below the European average (with a decreasing tendency compared to the preceding year).

“The free movement of people, goods, and services within the EU” is an aspect from which all questioned Polish and German persons have benefited. “Cheaper calls when using a mobile phone in another EU country” is mentioned by more than half of Poles, but only by a third of Germans. While “working in another EU country” is named by 40 per cent of the Poles, only 6 per cent of Germans have benefited from this (TNS Opinion&Social 2013a: 20). Thus, even if there are similar tendencies, it seems that living, working or studying abroad in other European countries for a longer time is practiced more by Polish persons than by German ones. In the following graph, the answers of Poles and Germans of the EU27 are illustrated:

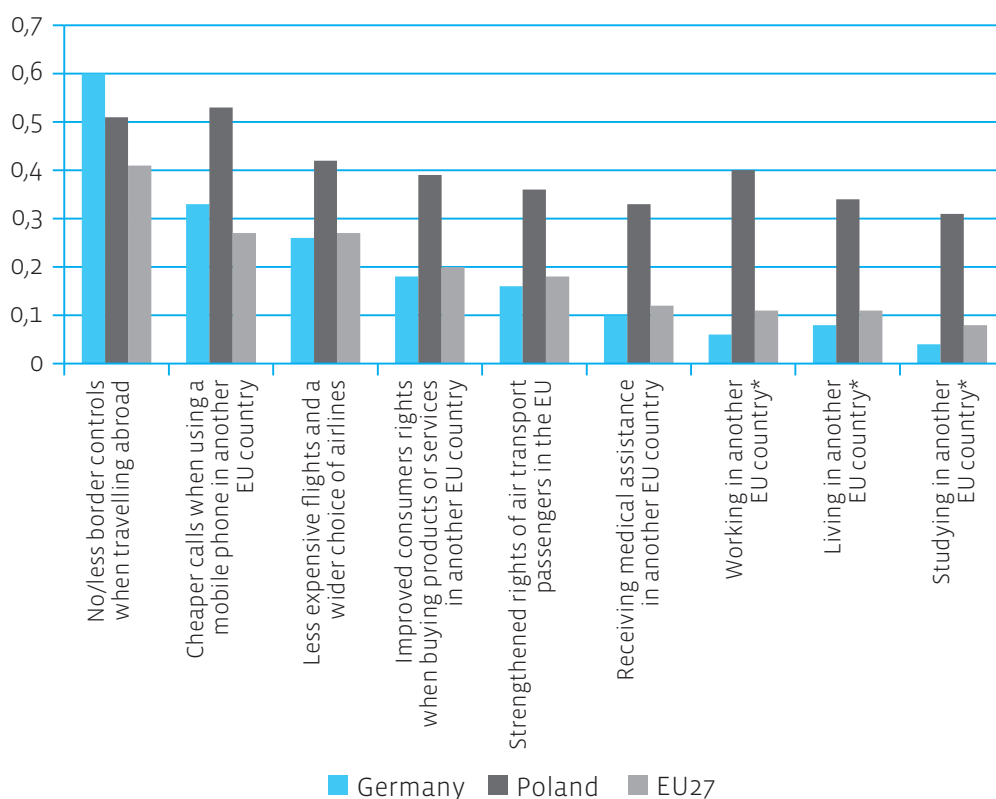


Figure 15  
For each of the following achievements of the EU; could you tell me whether you have benefited from it or not?

Own graph based on the data from Eurobarometer 79 (TNS Opinion&Social 2013a: 20)

\* not asked in Croatia, candidate countries and the Turkish Cypriot community

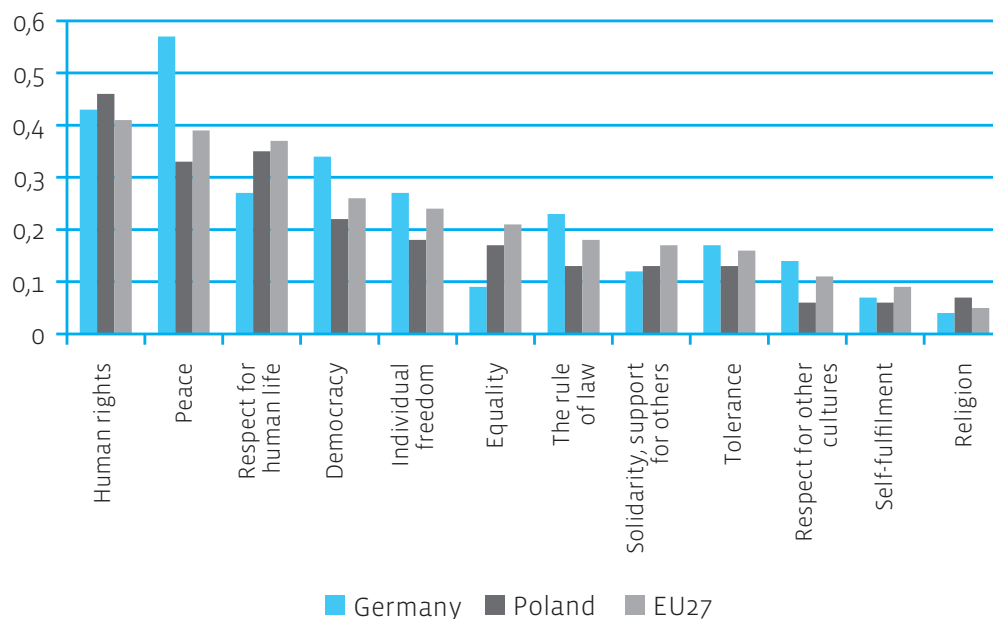
Regarding values, peace (57%), human rights (43%), democracy (34%), respect for human life (27%), and individual freedom (27%) are the most important for the German respondents. For 4 per cent of the persons surveyed, religion is one of the three most important aspects.

For Poles, human rights, in particular, are important (46%), followed by respect for human life (35%) and peace (33%). For 7 per cent, religion is one of

the three most important values. Respect for other cultures and self-fulfilment (6%) are values Polish respondents mention the least (TNS Opinion&Social 2013a: 48ff.).

Figure 16  
In the following list, which are the three most important values for you personally?

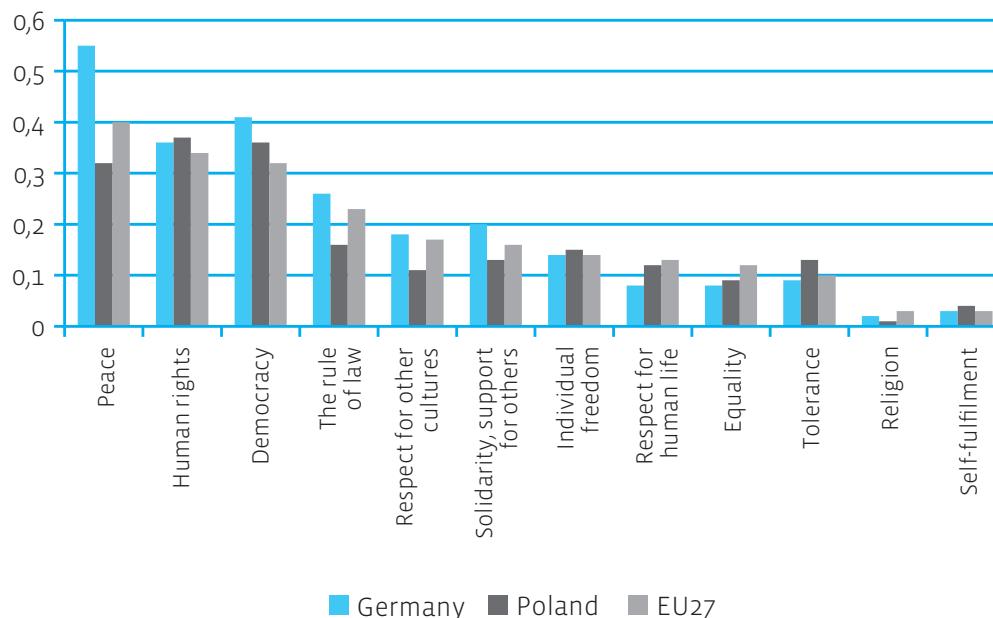
Own graph based on the data from Eurobarometer 79 (TNS Opinion&Social 2013a: 51)



In comparison to this, the next figure shows which values Poles, Germans, and citizens of the EU27 consider as the three values that best represent the EU:

Figure 17  
Which three of the following values best represent the EU?

Own graph based on the data from Eurobarometer 79 (TNS Opinion&Social 2013a: 54)



From a comparison of both graphs it can be seen that there are some gaps between values that are personally very important to people and those which represent the EU in the opinion of the people. Such differences can be mainly

found in the importance of human rights, which are not represented by the EU in an analogous manner, as they are crucial for the people personally. The same can be said regarding the respect for human life, individual freedom, equality, self-fulfilment, and religion. On the other hand, the questioned persons assess that democracy and respect for other cultures are important values of the EU, exceeding personal important ones. In comparing such data, gaps and identical aspects can be recognised. This can help to understand not only how the EU is comprehended by its citizens, but also what people might wish the Union to develop in the future.

## **6.2 What do Polish and German volunteers know about Europe, and how do they identify with Europe and the European Union before doing voluntary service?**

On the basis of the questionnaire, attitudes regarding the EU were observed at the beginning of voluntary service. These results serve as a source for comparison between the collected data of the qualitative part of the research at the end of voluntary service, and indicate whether changes take place during the stay in the neighbouring country. One of the topics deals with the opinion of the volunteers and aims at identifying to what extent these alterations are caused by voluntary service.

For most of the German volunteers, the meaning of being European at the start of voluntary service is mainly connected to open borders and thus the possibility to travel and to live in other European countries. They also mention the cultural diversity of Europe frequently and being connected to a great community.

*DE: Being able to travel, to get to know new cultures ... being unattached/ being unattached to a concrete location, being open towards new experiences, being at home everywhere.*

*DE: [being European] means to me having an affiliation to a community which is more than my own nationality and the great possibility to have exchange between other cultures and people of other nationalities.*

Only a few persons seem to have a high degree of European identification that is based on idealistic values.

*DE: My European consciousness exceeds my national German one; in the future I'd like to be professionally involved in advancing European integration, because for me, European integration is a great asset and worth supporting.*

DE: [For me being European means] *an attitude towards life. For me, the borders of countries are still too much fixed in the heads of the people, which unfortunately is connected with history that always was shaped by war. My dream is to create the United States of Europe according to the US American model. Nevertheless, we are still far away from this. Furthermore, free travelling, cultural heritage, pride.*

However, the Polish participants stress a more geographical, cultural, and historical community. They neither mention common values nor a common administration.<sup>3</sup> Compared to the German sample, engagement in the life of Europe plays a role. As can be seen in the Eurobarometer survey cited above, possibilities such as free travel are relatively important for the Polish sample. But they name them less frequently than the German volunteers. For the Poles, belonging to a cultural group is equally important. Although some of the Poles name common values as such, they do not specify them.

Being asked about the perception of Europe and European identity in the in-depth interviews, most of the Polish volunteers admitted that they had a rather blurred image of these concepts. Europe was something obvious, but was treated mainly in formal terms (geography, administration). This feeling of obviousness resulted in no reflection on Europe. When, during the interviews, volunteers went back to the time before their voluntary service, they said that at that time Europe and European identity was something abstract to them.

PL: *For sure, while being in Poland before voluntary service I didn't think that I was European, I didn't think of such a perspective. (...) [I've started to think of being European], because during voluntary service you meet people from different countries, of different nationalities, and then you start to realise, that you can find a common language with somebody who lives somewhere else, e.g. in Spain (...) who have a different attitude to life, but you have a lot in common with.*

PL: [Before taking up voluntary service] *Poland was simply in Europe for me. It was something abstract. I don't think that it meant a lot to me then.*

### **6.3 How does voluntary service change identification with Europe and the volunteers' European identity?**

Based on the interviews that were conducted at the end of the voluntary service, the extent to which the stay in either Germany or Poland has led to the integration of European ideas in one's self-image was analysed. In doing

---

**3** For more information regarding values that were mentioned when the volunteers were asked about them, see chapter 6.4.

so, not only can a comparison with data from the Eurobarometer be made, but also regarding the attitudes before taking up voluntary service.<sup>4</sup>

At the end of voluntary service the Polish volunteers were able to perceive a European identification especially when they could benefit from opportunities such as travelling or studying abroad. They also feel Polish because of religion, for example. An opinion that feeling European is in a way easier, while being in Germany, is widespread among them: living and working in an international environment, meeting other cultures and otherness allows reflection on the diversity that is associated with European identity.

Commonly, Polish identity is associated with something more homogenous, as according to the persons interviewed, Polish society is relatively homogenous in ethnic, religious, language, and cultural terms. One of the volunteers admitted that due to voluntary service her European identity started to dominate her Polish identity:

*PL: I think that after this one year stay in Germany I can say that I feel European 100 per cent, and just now, after my departure from voluntary service, I've started to think that I'm European. I'm now living in Berlin; in a year I can live somewhere else. I'm not so tied to this feeling that I'm Polish and that I can only be and feel Polish. I think that I can feel Polish while living in Berlin or somewhere else; I don't see a problem here. I think that the feeling of being European is in the first place, while in the second is my Polish identity. This is my current feeling.*

The volunteers also specified that they experienced changes during their voluntary service. Thus, one Polish volunteer said that he voted against Polish access to the EU during the referendum, although he is now ashamed of it.

*PL: Something has changed, but I'm not sure, to what extent it's because of voluntary service, because [I have felt this way] for some time, but yes, something has changed. Now I'm rather euro-enthusiastically oriented.*

He appreciates all the comforts that the EU gives: freedom of travel or living in another country. He finds three pillars that define and refer to the values common in Europe: Christianity, ancient culture, and the French Revolution. And due to this, people in Europe share some patterns of thinking and cultural codes, which are not that obvious, for example in Turkey. Another volunteer seems to share a similar perspective – he finds the Christian religion a kind of European feature:

---

<sup>4</sup> It is possible that more widespread identification with Europe is the reason for doing voluntary service in Europe in the first place. Thus, if there were results that differ from the national average, they would not inevitably be caused by voluntary service.



*PL: I wouldn't search for a big meaning here. I was just born in Europe and that is why I'm European. It's a specific cultural sphere. I can say that I'm European simply because we don't pray towards Mecca every day. There is some cultural base, which has shaped this continent and because of that I feel this distinction.*

For the German volunteers, national identity seems to become more important during their voluntary service. The volunteers not only learn more about the differences regarding culture and mentality, which leads them to a more intense national self-classification, but there are also often attributions from others, such as the punctuality of the volunteers that is identified as “typically German”. On the other hand, most of the volunteers also speak about a coexisting national and European identity. In comparison to the data from the Eurobarometer survey, there is a similar level of connective feelings with the EU, taking into consideration the results of young people aged from 15 to 24 years.

*DE: However, funnily I feel more German in Poland than I do in Germany. Because I'm again and again confronted with situations where I present my culture and my language, and I have to explain why it is how it is.*

*DE: I would like to feel European, but Poles, at least those I have got to know and who still don't treat me normally, consider me German ... so I don't walk around saying I'm European if somebody asks where I am from, because Poland is also part of Europe.*

*DE: If you are further away [than in Poland/Europe], it makes no difference which country you are from; and then I feel more European.*

The feeling of being a European citizen has been described and explained in very different ways by the German volunteers. They speak of feeling connected to persons from other European countries and observe a decline of importance of borders. Also opportunities such as freedom to travel, study, or live in another European country are named. Partly, feeling European is rather connected to Europe as a geographical area than a political union. Some also mentioned that they have gained knowledge about other European countries at school, be it in history or language lessons.

*DE: My picture of Europe was mainly extended because I got to know new people and new things, and that is mainly what has been changed, thus extended.*

DE: *With regard to other continents I would say yes, I'm European, definitely.*

DE: *Because we do not only learn our own history at school. We also learn about the history of other countries; that I have learned English and French; that there are just so many possibilities.*

Language and (lacking) language skills, in particular, lead sometimes to a (stronger) feeling of being German:

DE: *Regarding languages, that it is still ... the easiest to communicate in one's native language and that ... some things can only be expressed in your native language, too.*

#### 6.4 What concepts of Europe do volunteers have before taking up voluntary service?

Compared to previous chapters, identification with Europe will not be focused on in the following part, but rather descriptions of the EU as a political system in order to identify the degrees of abstractness regarding the EU.

At the beginning of voluntary service, Europe is associated with the possibilities that are offered by the EU. This includes the right to move freely across the borders of European countries and the right to work and study in other European countries. There are only slight variations between the answers of the Polish and German respondents. Figure 18 shows the answers referring to associations with Europe:

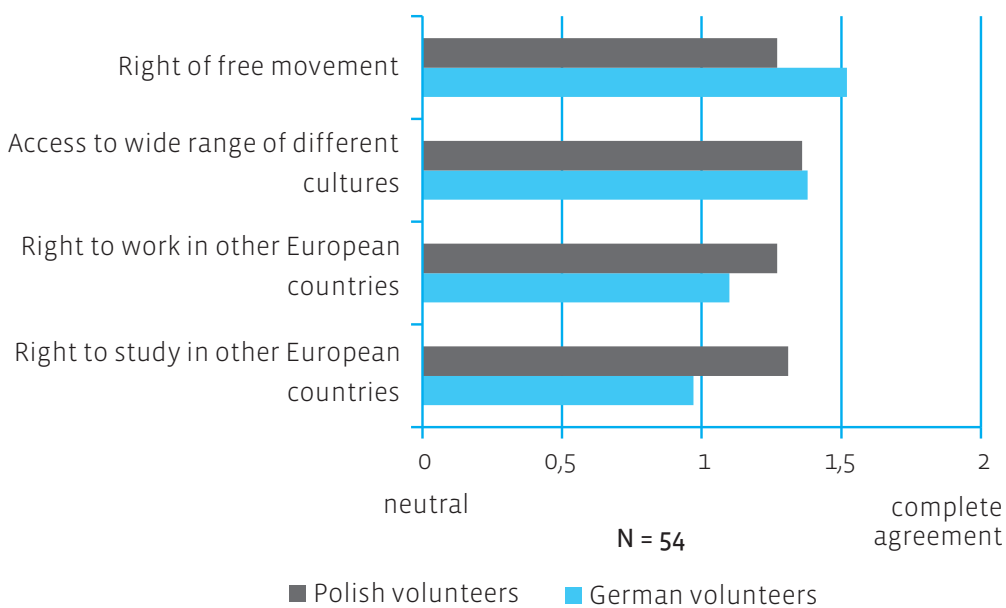
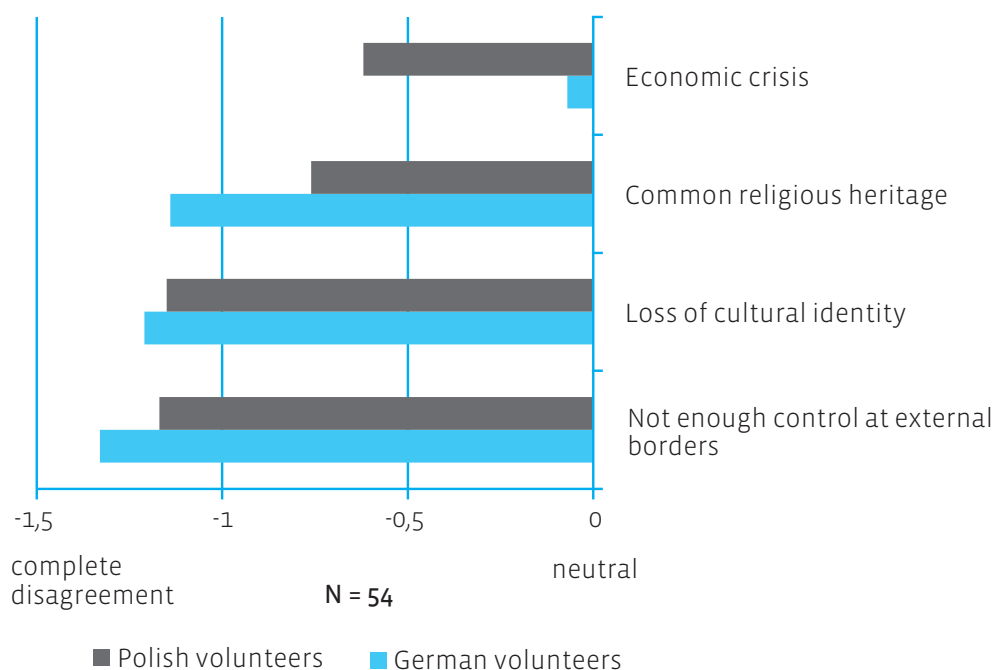


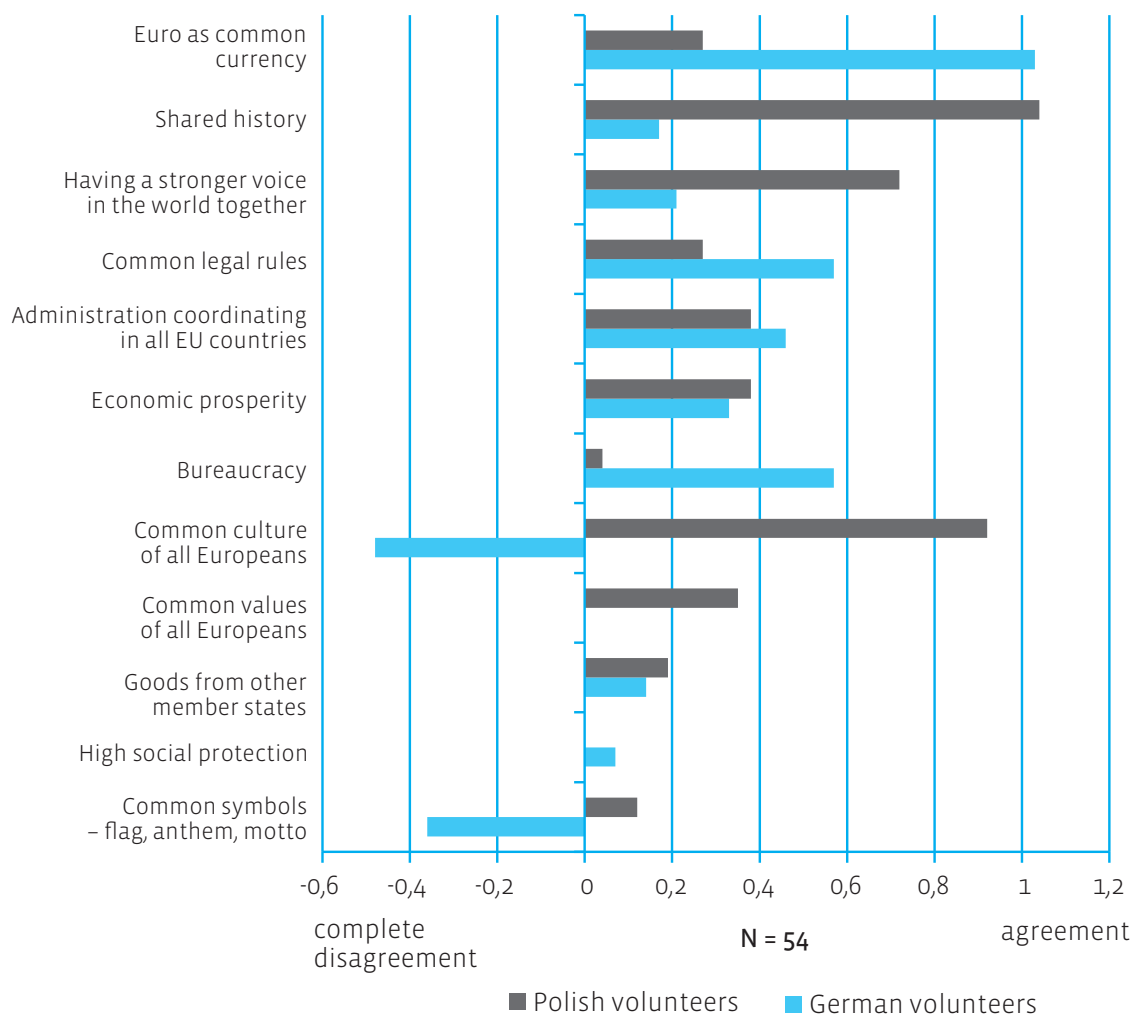
Figure 18  
Associations with Europe (a)

However, having insufficient level of control at external borders, a loss of cultural identity, common religious heritage, and the economic crisis are items the questioned persons of both countries do not associate with Europe. Differences referring to the degree of rejection are small as can be seen in Figure 19. However, the economic crisis is of much higher importance for Polish than German volunteers.



Different answers of the members of both countries mainly refer to the euro as the common currency, a common culture of all Europeans, and a shared history. While the euro is more present for the German participants, the Polish questioned volunteers agree more with a common culture of all Europeans and a shared history. An overview can be found in Figure 20 Associations with Europe (c).

At the beginning of voluntary service, the basic European commonalities seem to be recognised especially on a political level. Many Germans demand countries that might become EU members in the future “to have a solid and true democracy”. Respect for human rights, peace, tolerance, and focusing on a European sense of community are mentioned occasionally. Some German volunteers specify that they have too little knowledge concerning the separate countries, respectively a lack of political education. For others, the location of countries within Europe is a sufficient condition to gain EU membership. Contrary to the often-postulated democracy as a minimum condition for accession to the EU, one questioned German believes that demands on the political level are counterproductive. On the one hand, everybody deserves “getting the same rights”, while on the other hand, the control of countries in which



a greater need to catch up regarding political and/or legal items is assumed, is only possible if they are members of the EU.

Figure 20  
Associations with Europe (c)

### 6.5 Concepts of Europe at the end of voluntary service

In the interviews conducted at the end of the voluntary service, the respondents were asked to give their own description of Europe. The answers given to these questions will not only be compared with the answers of other specific questions of the interview concerning Europe and European politics, but also with the descriptions of Europe at the beginning of the voluntary service. Therefore, the general attitude as well as the descriptions will be further looked at. Here, the focus of interest refers to the degree of abstraction that might be hidden behind detailed replies.

## Europe vs. the European Union

The Polish participants still define Europe mainly from a geographical perspective, as a continent, which is quite diverse, but at the same time is coherent, and forms a unity. In contrast to the Germans, the Polish volunteers separate Europe from the EU. This association appears almost automatically, but with an indication that these terms are not identical. The EU is regarded as a multitude of possibilities, but “Europe is just a continent”. The distinction between Europe and the EU is also captured in this statement:

*PL: Europe is a continent where people of different nations live. What I dislike is saying that Europe is the European Union, because it's much more than the EU. There are countries that are not in the European Union and are very different from the Eastern countries, from France or Germany, such as Bosnia and Albania, for example. So [Europe] is for sure a cultural melting-pot.*

*Freedom:* Many German volunteers relate Europe with a large degree of freedom and the corresponding possibility to travel, so that “any kind of border can be crossed without problems”. But such kind of freedom can also be described in another way with a more general basis: the freedom to make decisions about one’s life – where to live, where to work, where and what to study. Many volunteers from Poland appreciate this, especially when they observe other inhabitants of Europe (treated geographically), who do not have such comforts.

*PL: [European identity] is for me some kind of freedom – I can go to any country and live there not being observed by society, I can stay there anonymously.*

*PL: [My European identity reveals in], that when I cross the border nobody controls me, and in the fact, that in most of the countries I can pay with euros. And in that, from the legal perspective I'm treated like a German here. After a three-month stay I'm treated like a German citizen. This is a great discovery.*

*PL: For me, it is this freedom, in a way, that I can go to any country and live there and not be observed by the society, to be anonymous there.*

The Eurobarometer results are similar to the ones collected by IPA/zze. Sixty per cent of the questioned persons mention the freedom of travel as a benefit enabled by the EU. It is also a key element for the young persons questioned by Fuss and Boehnke (Fuss 2004: 21). In comparison, it seems that doing voluntary service does not change this sensation. So the EU is still

connected to the benefits it offers, especially with those experienced while doing voluntary service. But it can be seen that Polish participants also reflect these benefits on a meta level, for example when stressing aspects that are linked to freedom in general that is granted by the EU.

### **Homogeneity vs. Heterogeneity**

*Diversity:* Many German volunteers tend to stress the positive differences of the European nation states. But on the other hand they also mention being afraid of the standardisation of all these different cultures due to the EU. This is a sometimes a difficult aspect regarding the role of the EU. As it was mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the EU aims at building a European identity while not replacing the national one. But being united without displacing differences is not always easy, especially if demarcations to the “outside” of the EU need to be avoided.

*DE: Europe is a continent with many different languages, many different cultures, people, and religions; and for me the most high-contrast continent we have in the world, and the most exciting one, too.*

*DE: But the countries are very different and I think ... less of them want to be interfered with ... they want to do their own politics and retain a certain independence.*

*DE: I think that the countries in Europe ... are more different, in a positive sense more different, and there are more differences between the several countries than we are aware of.*

Polish volunteers also speak about diversity in Europe, with one arguing, as it was said above, its geographical reference.

*PL: Europe is just a continent, which is very small, but quite diverse; but at the same time countries that are located there are in a way similar to each other.*

In addition, the difficulties in providing equal rights and the possibilities to all Europeans as a consequence of such large diversity in Europe are also recognised.

*PL: Europe is a small continent, but very diverse, where many different cultures meet, which coexist in some way with each other. When it comes to the European Union I would say for sure that not all the countries have equal opportunities, especially when it comes to the visas issue.*

Cultural diversity is also mentioned by the participants of the study “Lern- und Bildungsprozesse im Europäischen Freiwilligendienst” (Learning and educational processes within the European Voluntary Service) (Fuss 2004). Thus, the volunteers stress the danger of “a too strong standardisation and a potential loss of cultural/national identity because of European integration” (Fuss 2004: 50).

*Homogeneity:* Almost all of the Polish volunteers think that besides all of the differences between Europeans, there are more things that keep Europeans together. The statement of one of the volunteers expresses this attitude:

PL: [During voluntary service] *you meet people from different countries, you become open to other people, e.g. girls from Turkey, who have a totally different attitude and values. And suddenly it turns out that you can talk to them and you have a lot in common. Then you start to think that there is simply a common denominator for all of that.*

Similar to this, some of the German volunteers mention homogeneity of European cultures:

DE: *In my opinion, Europe is more homogenous than one might think, for example compared to other continents, in Europe I find we have many commonalities.*

*Common future:* Some German volunteers stress a common future when describing Europe. It seems as “a more or less loose entity, which increasingly grows together and consists of very different and at the same time similar states”. In doing so, the countries are working towards “a common future” with a “vision ... that something can be made together”. This resembles the description of Fuss and Boehnke. In their study, Europe is often described by the youth that were interviewed as a process of more and more disappearing borders (Fuss 2004: 22).

For the Polish volunteers, their way of thinking about Europe changed during their voluntary service as they experienced the EU:

PL: *I realised such things that are possible only because the European Union exists; this very strong cooperation between its member states.*

The benefits of being a citizen of a European country were especially noticed by German volunteers who had contact with Ukrainian volunteers. To experience what to such people is not offered helps them to recognise what the EU makes possible to its inhabitants.

*DE: If I ... talk to an Ukrainian friend, who is desperately trying to gain access into an EU country, because he actually most of all wants to leave Ukraine, I realise that I benefit from many things that I have never been aware of before, because they just were normal for me. And if it is just normal, you don't realise that you profit from the EU.*

Most of the German volunteers specify that their image of Europe has changed due to or during their voluntary service. In particular, this is described by (more) processes of reflection. The motto of the EU, "United in diversity", best describes the direction of thinking. Thus, the EU has become more tangible for volunteers:

*DE: ...a nice idea, but ... for example stay in another country for one year, mention how well it is in fact that everything is growing together and that ... it really has many enriching aspects .... Due to this I think my awareness that [Europe] is really very, very positive has increased.*

But sometimes, volunteers did not experience changes but rather affirmations of their already existent image of Europe:

*DE: I also in fact [had] a relatively positive attitude towards Europe before... This has been... confirmed.*

Before leaving for voluntary service, the Poles did not analyse the "European topic" deeply; in fact, the volunteers did not think about it. Due to the programme, volunteers were able to experience how different Europe is and how many opportunities it provides. Their stay in another country stimulated thinking about Europe.

Regarding the "European Idea", shared values are of relevance. For the Polish volunteers peace, cooperation, family, and friends are values which are essential in every country, even outside Europe. Some volunteers also include Christian values, although others reject them, as they are not important in every country like they are in Poland. Democracy, freedom, equality, human rights, and fundamental rights are common European values, which were stated by two or more German volunteers at the end of their voluntary service. Furthermore, Europe offers the possibility to fulfil dreams. It comprises welfare states and states with similar ideas of wealth, tolerance, and acceptance, as stated by a few of the volunteers. One person wished, "that Europe could create more common values". However, two Germans could not name any common values.

One interview question was targeted at the idea of a common European president. Would such an office be imaginable for the volunteers, and if so, would it be wanted? With such a question, it was possible to question



the descriptions of Europe. While these questions tempt positive and stereotypical answers, thinking about a common European president requires more reflection on one's attitudes and beliefs regarding the EU.

Most of the German and almost all of the Polish volunteers cannot imagine having a powerful European president. The reasons given differ: some of the German volunteers argue that it is not feasible to hold direct elections. Another problem would be the president's inevitable country of origin and the difficulty of dissociating with his or her home country's national interests. In general, the existing national interests and differences would contradict the idea of one single representative of Europe. Even though the volunteers do not reject the general idea of the political integration of Europe, further critical aspects they mention are legitimacy and control mechanisms of one single president.

Two of the German volunteers wish to have a European president, a "person Europe can be identified with (...) and who is democratically legitimised". Nevertheless, both question the possibility to implement such an institution. It is interesting that only one of these volunteers stressed a European identity when being asked. The other primarily mentions a national and then a European self-conception.

The Polish volunteers cannot imagine a common president, as it could be difficult for one person to represent the manifold perspectives that exist in Europe; in addition, one president could endanger them.

*PL: When we are so diverse, we can learn a lot from each other, of course if we're open to the otherness. I think that it's worth working on that; that this diversity keeps us together, even though we're different and have many local identities.*

As a result, and mainly compared with the statements regarding heterogeneity in Europe that were mostly described in a positive way previously, it can be seen that such differences and possibilities to handle them are a big problem the EU is faced with. If such differences are more focused on than commonalities, it might become hard to deal with decisions of the EU that concern all countries.

On the other hand, the volunteers also seem to be able to be more critical, which also means being able to be more realistic.

## 6.6 Summary

The majority of the interviewed feel some identification with the EU. Only a few volunteers strongly identify themselves with Europe, with some of them already having this attitude before taking up voluntary service. Nevertheless, many volunteers speak about changes in perception and attitude.

It can be observed that the EU became an issue for the Polish volunteers while doing voluntary service for the first time. European issues seem to be more common in everyday life and in public discourse in Germany than in Poland. As European identity was not so present in the consciousness of Polish volunteers before voluntary service, the observed change among them is more significant. The opportunity to live in another environment has had considerable influence on the Polish volunteers, as European issues are still underrepresented in Poland.

At the same time, the volunteers in both countries benefited from the opportunities offered by the EU. Thus, this rather abstract body becomes more tangible. The German volunteers seem to have become aware of their belonging to the EU while having contact with volunteers who do not come from an EU country. They perceive how they benefit from the multiple advantages of being an EU citizen. Altogether they seem to have been more confronted with their national identity while doing voluntary service in Poland than with a European identity, it remains open whether they would have been more confronted with European identity if they had done voluntary service in a country which is not a member of the EU.

Apart from the benefits the EU offers to its citizen, the volunteers especially mention the tension between homogeneity and heterogeneity. Whereas the EU is seen as a hub of common aspects and community building, the interviewed also expressed being afraid of the equalising tendency of different cultures. They express a generally positive attitude towards the EU, while at the same time strive to maintain their national identity. It seems that at the end of voluntary service the differentiation of the cultures is gaining more relevance. These differences have possibly been more striking than the volunteers expected before going abroad.

Although most volunteers have a positive attitude towards the EU, a common president and thus a European nation are neither wanted nor considered as being feasible.

Becker *et al.* reason that “the belief the EVS adduces quasi automatically as an added value in the field of political education, especially with regards to the process of European integration, is undermined by [their] study” (Becker 2000: 55).

However, regarding this study, it can be said that during voluntary service in Germany or Poland, volunteers experience the EU in two ways. First, the volunteers benefit from the opportunities offered by the EU. Second, German

volunteers seem to notice cultural differences between Germany and Poland to a larger extent than Polish volunteers in Germany. However, Polish volunteers seem to be confronted with European issues while staying in Germany and start to reflect about the “European idea”. All of the questioned volunteers seemed to learn about the diversity of European societies, but also the similarities among them, especially in comparison to people from outside Europe. This is important for building a European citizenship where “others” are known.

## 7. Recommendations: How to improve Polish-German perceptions and how to develop images of Europe through volunteering



If voluntary service schemes received more political recognition and if practical modifications were implemented in the organisational part of the trans-border volunteering programmes, its effects regarding attitudes towards Europe and Polish-German relations would increase. In order to improve the organisational aspects of voluntary service and enhance opportunities for intercultural learning as well as reflection upon Europe and European identity, based on our research findings we recommend different actions at the policy level and regarding programmes implementation.

### **Policy Level**

#### **Creating a joint database to gather information on international voluntary programmes in Europe**

It is difficult to find data about volunteers in international programmes beyond the European Voluntary Service (EVS) and to continuously observe developments in international/European voluntary programmes. Therefore, the establishment of a joint database at the European level that gives an overview of outgoing and incoming volunteers doing voluntary service, either with EVS or national programmes, should be considered. The efforts dedicated to establishing such a database for EVS has already been taken up by the European Commission. Even though they failed, it is still worth considering trying again or finding out whether a similar tool could be established in the Polish-German perspective, fostering and easing the work of entities involved in Polish-German cooperation.

This would help researchers and policy-makers to gain better knowledge about the number of young people taking up voluntary service and to observe how the choice of destination is spread out over the different European member states and non-EU states that also take part in European voluntary programmes. Pooling this data would also enable evaluation beyond the level of specific programmes and simplify getting an overview of the various voluntary service programmes that are offered outside volunteers' own country within Europe.

### **Further research and training methods about European identity-building required**

Within our research project, it has been challenging to capture the topic of European identity building within voluntary service. A lot of attention is given to fostering the understanding of other countries' national cultures and on diversity/intercultural understanding in general. However, the civic perspective and national differences on being part of Europe or the EU seem to lack practical implementation as well as training tools that are implemented on a wider scale, especially focusing on European issues on a pan-national level. As voluntary service opens the horizon of volunteers and makes the advantages of Europe come alive, it forms a solid base to foster thinking in European dimensions and to build on the creation of a stronger European citizenship.

### **Expand national voluntary service programmes in Poland as well as specific Polish-German programmes**

Evaluating the status of volunteering in Germany and Poland shows considerable differences. In Germany there are many national programmes supporting different kinds of voluntary service. While some of them have been implemented for decades and are well recognised in society, there are no comparable structures in Poland. Civic engagement and volunteering itself is still relatively weak (e.g., in comparison with "old" EU member states) after years of communism and fast enforcement of the market economy, where most people think about their own career. Under such conditions, one cannot expect high societal recognition of volunteering in the Polish-German perspective. Thus, especially in Poland, a lot needs to be done to promote civic engagement. Moreover, some new schemes for trans-border volunteering are needed, enabling young Poles to do voluntary service in other European countries, besides the European Volunteering Service which forms the main scheme enabling Poles to volunteer abroad. This could be an important contribution to foster Polish-German cooperation. Good practice in German-French exchange scheme operation could be transferred to German-Polish cooperation.

### **Better recognition of foreign volunteers' roles at the national and European level**

More effort in order to support better recognition of foreign volunteers in any country participating in international volunteering programmes should be carried out. People volunteering in a foreign country, even a neighbouring one, quite often seem to be left alone in what they are doing. Volunteers staying in another country might be seen as ambassadors of their own state in the receiving society: they reconsidered the knowledge they had before and

share new experiences to their relatives and friends at home. The role they play in bringing different countries closer together might also be valued at the political level and reflected in the structure of the programmes that enable their activities abroad.

For example, an award for outstanding volunteers, perhaps even in the field of Polish-German dialogue, could be introduced. Apart from the recognition of volunteers that receive an award, it might help to promote voluntary programmes in countries such as Poland that do not have a long tradition of voluntary action.

### **Fostering knowledge and education about Europe and European countries**

As knowledge about Europe and European countries is rather limited, it might be advisable to include education about member countries of the EU as well as knowledge about Europe in school curricula to a larger extent. This could help to raise awareness of the diversity and commonalities of EU members.

## **Programme Level**

### **Diversity of motivations and skills of volunteers should be captured**

Comparison has shown that the biographical situation of Polish and German volunteers differs. Polish volunteers had often finished their studies and decided to take up voluntary service in Germany – or a German speaking country – with the interest of doing something towards their professional development and possibly finding a job in the host country. This implies different expectations towards the hosting organisation and life in Germany.

For Germans, it is common to start voluntary service directly after finishing school as a gap year. One important aim is to have new experiences and start living outside the parental home. Thus, the expectations for work and way of life differ. Even though it is challenging for hosting and sending organisations, these differences should be considered, especially when, in the new EVS programme era, the age limit is higher. In addition, past experience has shown that people from European countries suffering from the economic crisis often do international voluntary service.

### **Fostering access of wider societal groups**

Corresponding to the level of education and volunteering in general, most people doing voluntary service abroad have passed high school exams or have even finished university-level studies. Therefore, adopting new activities that would attract more people with lower school certificates to voluntary service

schemes should be considered. Activities such as fostering the exchange of professionals in the field of youth work in order to raise awareness for voluntary service and its opportunities can be seen as one step towards creating more openness towards not so well educated societal groups these multipliers are in touch with. Perhaps the good practice that takes place in Germany, which offers voluntary service in combination with a formal school education, could be transferred to the international level within a model programme.

### **Linguistic barriers should be overcome**

For many volunteers, their stay in the neighbouring country posed a challenge either due to a lack of language skills or a lack of opportunities to practise them. Therefore, it seems advisable to emphasise the importance of, at least, basic linguistic knowledge. Through this, communication with staff both at the workplace and outside of work might be easier and thus create more opportunities for volunteers to meet inhabitants of the receiving society and understand the hosting society's culture, including its way of living. This can also facilitate reflection on the stereotypes related to a society.

Sending a volunteer to another country without even basic knowledge of its language can strengthen the feeling of alienation.

On the other hand, volunteers arriving in the hosting organisation without proper language skills could be offered special assistance from a volunteer's coordinator at the hosting organisation. Having such function within the organisational structure together with respective procedures related to dealing with different kinds of volunteers should be an access criterion for joining a volunteers' exchange programme. Moreover, the implementation of such solutions within hosting organisations should be evaluated by the authorities supporting volunteer exchange.

### **Contact with peers contributes to the feeling of integration**

Getting in touch with peers from the hosting country was not always easy for the volunteers. Peers help volunteers feel more at home in the receiving country and also contribute to a better understanding that there is a pan-national youth culture, which forms the basis for mutual understanding. Thus, it seems worthwhile to support contact with peers.

For this reason, the idea of a peer-mentoring scheme where former volunteers act as mentors should be increased. In addition, local youth that have not done voluntary service could be enrolled as mentors to help volunteers become acquainted with local people more easily. For local youth this could be a way to make international contacts. Additionally, guidebooks to the different hosting countries could be prepared by former volunteers in

order to support future volunteers' preparation. They are already available in Germany, but could be disseminated more widely and could be introduced to Polish volunteer programmes. Stories and reports on special adventures that have happened to the volunteers could be collected via competitions and be used as the basis for guidebooks.

## **General Comments**

### **Fostering general interest about Poland in Germany**

Poland was not the country ranked first on the list of destinations for most of the volunteers. However, being in Poland has raised general interest in the country, about which volunteers' initial knowledge was rather limited.

As Germany is closely linked to Poland regarding history, there are many programmes and much effort to strengthen the ties between these two countries: in recent years, newly appointed German ministers of foreign affairs have all made their first official visits to Poland in order to stress the interest Germany has in having close relations with Poland.

Following the example of the foundation of the German-French Youth Office in 1964, the German-Polish Youth Office was established in 1991 in order to strengthen ties to former war opponents – especially among young people. There are several official initiatives (to some extent supported by the authorities of both states) fighting with the legacy of the difficult common past, which still interferes in relations between both countries. For example, the Joint Polish-German Schoolbooks Commission (Gemeinsamen Deutsch-Polnischen Schulbuchkommission), and activities funded and implemented by the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future foundation (EVZ Stiftung) in Germany and the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation (SDPZ) should be mentioned. Working on different levels, they are leading or supporting the activities aimed at fostering exchange of members of both countries.

However, with respect to Germany, the wider public does not seem to have a sound general knowledge of Poland. Therefore, more effort to raise awareness should be made. In recent years, humorous reports about the experiences of Germans living in Poland have been published – with some being bestsellers. New approaches on the issue of Polish-German understanding seem worthwhile exploring in order to attract a wider public.

### **Knowledge about Germany on the Polish side**

The level of Poles' knowledge of Germany could also be improved. The "Polish-German Barometer 2013", which proves the continuous increase in the quality of the relations between both societies (47% of Poles surveyed in 2013 feel sympathy towards Germans), shows at the same time that there still



is work to accomplish in order to overcome the mutual difficult past. Most common associations that Poles have with the word “Germans” are related to history, mainly the Second World War (25% of all declared associations). Family members and friends of Polish volunteers presented similar opinions. This was especially distinct amongst members of the “older generations” and peers who had a conservative worldview. Moreover, it seems that something needs to be done with respect to the image of the eastern part of Germany in Poland. In particular, the generation of the parents of Polish volunteers still associate this region with the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). They seem to think that Eastern Germany has not changed much since the era of the communist state in this part of the country. And the GDR itself was considered to be a worse socio-political system. This could be related to superiority towards Germans from the eastern part of the country, which could be an obstacle in strengthening mutual contact and fostering understanding.

Polish participants of voluntary service programmes saw that “everything is better” in Germany compared to the situation in Poland. Here, it is important to form a realistic picture about the diversity of life-situations in both countries. Seminars that prepare volunteers for voluntary service and evaluatory meetings could take up this issue more intensely.

### **Fostering the experience-exchange of sending and hosting organisations**

This project has shown that hosting and sending organisations are not always aware of hosting and sending organisations in other countries. Therefore, it would be helpful to foster an exchange of experience across borders. Perhaps the preparation of volunteers could become more international and capture the peculiarities of living and working in different countries.



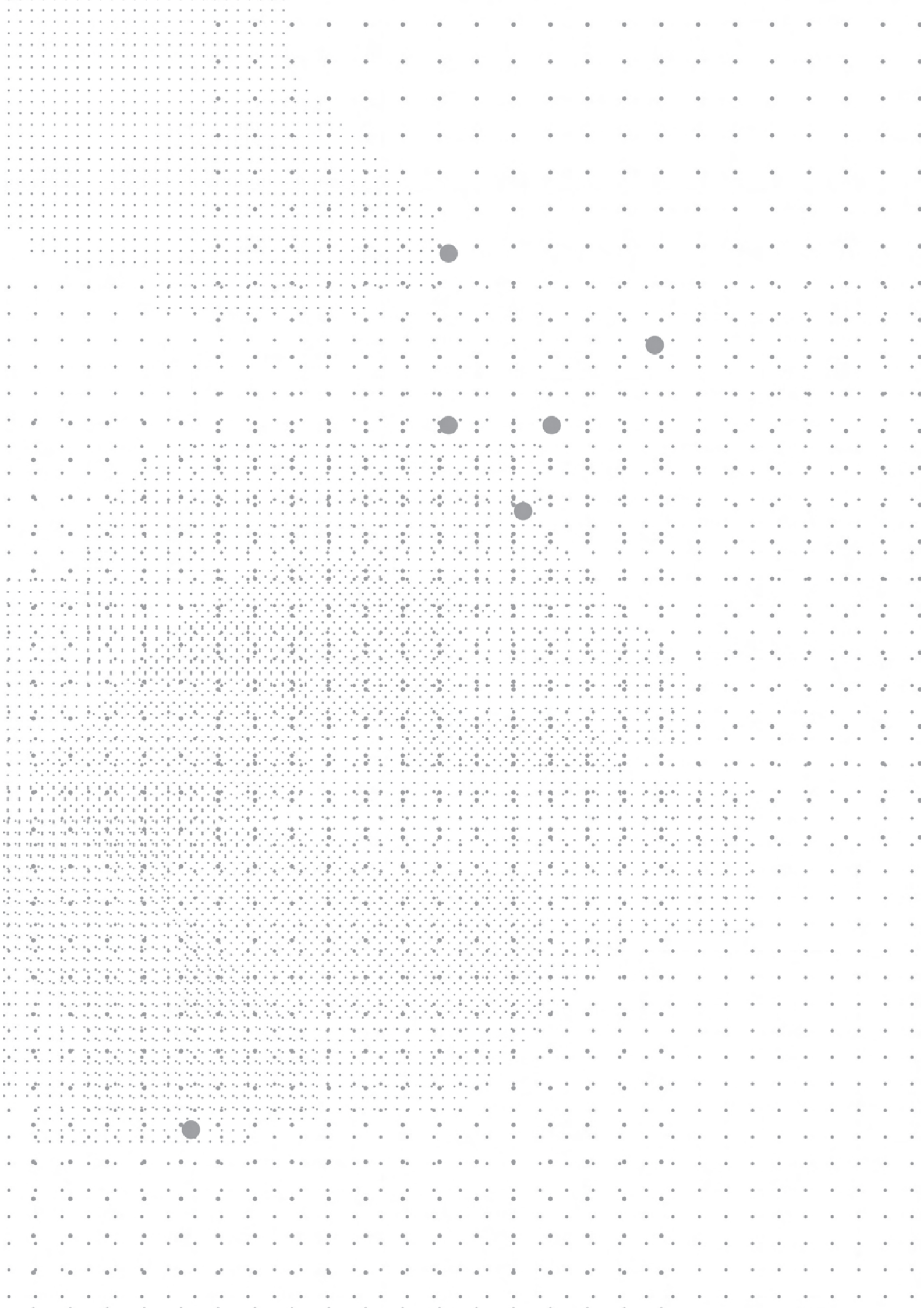
- Allensbach Demoskopie Institute (2011): Poważny krok w kierunku normalności: Wyniki reprezentatywnych badań opinii publicznej w Polsce i w Niemczech / Ein großer Schritt in Richtung Normalität: Der Stand der deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen, Stiftung für deutsch-polnische Zusammenarbeit, Allensbach: Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach (IfD).
- Assmann, Jan (2008): Communicative and cultural memory, in: Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning (eds.): Cultural memory studies. An international and interdisciplinary handbook, Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, pp. 109–118.
- Becker, Roland; Brandes, Heike; Bunjes, Ulrich; Wüstendörfer, Werner (2000): Lern- und Bildungsprozesse im Europäischen Freiwilligendienst, Bonn: Jugend für Europa.
- Berry, John W. (2003): Acculturation and intercultural relations, in: J.W. Berry (ed.), Cross-cultural Psychology: Research and Applications, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 345–383.
- Berry, John W. (1997): Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation, in: Applied Psychology: An International Review, 46 (1), pp. 5–68.
- Berry, John W.; Kim, Uichol; Minde, Thomas; Mok, Doris (1987): Comparative Studies of Acculturative Stress, in: International Migration Review, 21 (3), pp. 491–511.
- Boski, Paweł (2009): Kulturowe ramy zachowań społecznych. Podręcznik psychologii międzykulturowej [Cultural framework of social behaviour. Manual for cultural psychology], Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN; Academica Wydawnictwo SWPS.
- Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (BMFSFJ, ed.) (2004): Fakten zum Freiwilligen Sozialen Jahr und zum Freiwilligen Ökologischen Jahr, available online at <http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Pressestelle/Pdf-Anlagen/fsj-jubilaum-fakten> [accessed: 4.02.2014]
- Csáky, Moritz (2012): Memory – recollection – difference: Plurality and heterogeneity as the signature of Central Europe, Acta Poloniae Historica, 106, Warsaw, pp. 127–154.
- Centre for International Relations German Bulletin [CSM, Biuletyn Niemiecki] (2011), no. 18, 16.06.2011, Warsaw: Centre for International Relations.
- Commission of the European Communities (2000): A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, SEC(2000) 1832, Brussels.
- Commission of the European Communities, Directorate-General Communication (2013): Die öffentliche Meinung in der Europäischen Union. Erste Ergebnisse, Standard-Eurobarometer 79, spring 2013.
- Council of the European Union (2011): The role of voluntary activities in social policy. Council Conclusions, 14552/11, SOC 804, JEUN 53, CULT 66, Brussels,

- 3.10.2011, available at <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&t=PDF&gc=true&sc=false&f=ST%2014552%202011%20INIT> [accessed: 30.01.2014].
- Dudkiewicz, Marek; Fuksiewicz, Aleksander; Kucharczyk, Jacek; Łada, Agnieszka (2013): *Parlament Europejski. Społeczne zaufanie i (nie)wiedza* [European Parliament. Social trust and (not) knowledge], Warsaw: Institute of Public Affairs/Instytut Spraw Publicznych, available at <http://www.isp.org.pl/publikacje,25,610.html> [accessed: 4.02.2014].
- European Commission (2008): *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions. Renewed social agenda: Opportunities, access and solidarity in 21st century Europe*, COM(2008) 412 final, Brussels, 2.07.2008, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0412:FIN:EN:PDF> [accessed: 4.02.2014].
- European Commission (2010): *Communication from the Commission, EUROPE 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, COM(2010) 2020 final, Brussels, 3.03.2010, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF> [accessed: 2.02.2014].
- European Commission (2011): *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions. Communication on EU Policies and Volunteering: Recognising and Promoting Crossborder Voluntary Activities in the EU*, COM(2011) 568 final, Brussels, 20.09.2011, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/doc1311\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/doc1311_en.pdf) [accessed: 2.02.2014].
- European Commission (2013a): *Citizenship*, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index_en.htm) [last actualisation on 6.11.2013, accessed: 30.01.2014].
- European Commission (2013b): *Youth in Action. Programme guide*, Brussels: European Commission, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/tools/documents/guide13\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/tools/documents/guide13_en.pdf) [accessed: 30.01.2014].
- European Parliament (1984): *Resolution on voluntary work*, OJEC 010, Brussels, 16.01.1984.
- European Union (1995-2014): *Citizenship of the European Union*, in: *Summaries of EU legislation*, available at [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/institutional\\_affairs/treaties/amsterdam\\_treaty/a12000\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/treaties/amsterdam_treaty/a12000_en.htm) [accessed: 30.01.2014].
- European Year of Volunteering Alliance (2012): *Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe - P.A.V.E., EYV 2011 Alliance*, Brussels, available at [http://www.eyv2011.eu/images/stories/pdf/EYV2011Alliance\\_PAVE\\_copyfriendly.pdf](http://www.eyv2011.eu/images/stories/pdf/EYV2011Alliance_PAVE_copyfriendly.pdf) [accessed: 1.02.2014].
- Feldmann-Wojtachnia, Eva (2007): *Über die Rolle von Bildung und bürgerschaftlichem Engagement für eine europäische Identitätskonstruktion*, in: Julian Nida-Rümelin, Werner Weidenfeld (eds.): *Europäische Identität. Vo-*

- raussetzungen und Strategien. 1. Aufl. Baden-Baden, [München]: Nomos; CAP (Münchner Beiträge zur europäischen Einigung, 18), pp. 197–210.
- Fontaine, Pascal (2010): *Europe in 12 lessons*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Fritze, Wolfgang H.; Zernack, Klaus (eds.) (1976): *Grundfragen der geschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Deutschen, Polaben und Polen. Referate und Diskussionsbeiträge aus zwei wissenschaftlichen Tagungen*, Berlin: Colloquium Verlag.
- Fuss, Daniel; Boehnke, Klaus (2004): *Report über zusätzliche Erkenntnisse im Verständnis europäischer Identität auf der Grundlage qualitativer Interviews mit deutschen Jugendlichen. Arbeitsbericht 43. Orientations of Young Men and Women towards Citizenship and European Identity*, International University Bremen.
- Gallup Organisation (2011): *Youth on the move. Analytical report, Flash Eurobarometer 319a*, Brussels: European Commission, Directorate General Communication.
- Heit, Helmut (2005): *Die Werte Europas. Verfassungspatriotismus und Wertegemeinschaft in der EU?*, Münster: LIT.
- Henning Hahn, Hans; Traba, Robert, Górny, Maciej; Kończal, Kornelia (2009): *Deutsch-polnische Erinnerungsorte. Polsko-niemieckie miejsca pamięci. Reinterpretacje i nowa koncepcja badań [Polish-German realms of memory. Reinterpretations and new research concept]*, in: *Reader dla Autorów i Autorów artykułów na temat polsko-niemieckich miejsc pamięci [Reader for the authors of the articles on the Polish-German realms of memory]*, Berlin: CBH PAN, available at: [www.cbh.pan.pl/images/stories/pliki/pdf/PNMP/2009-10-16\\_Reader\\_PL\\_online.pdf](http://www.cbh.pan.pl/images/stories/pliki/pdf/PNMP/2009-10-16_Reader_PL_online.pdf) [accessed: 28.01.2014].
- Hipsz, Natalia; Wądołowska, Katarzyna (2011): *Potencjał społecznikowski i zaangażowanie Polaków w wolontariat. Komunikat z badań BS/62/2011*, Warsaw: CBOS/ISP/MPiPS, available at [http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2011/K\\_062\\_11.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2011/K_062_11.PDF) [accessed: 2.02.2014].
- Jakob, Gisela (2002): *Freiwilligendienste in der Bürgergesellschaft. Aktuelle Diskussion und politischer Handlungsbedarf*, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (2), pp. 22–30.
- JUGEND für Europa – Deutsche Agentur JUGEND IN AKTION (2014): *Statistische Erhebung YOUTHLINK II*, Stand 10.02.2014.
- Kucharczyk, Jacek; Łada, Agnieszka; Pazderski Filip (2011): *“European Partnership for Volunteering” - an opportunity for the Polish EU-Council Presidency, Analyses & Opinions No. 17/121*, Warsaw: Institute of Public Affairs/Instytut Spraw Publicznych, available at [www.isp.org.pl/uploads/analyses/1164308839.pdf](http://www.isp.org.pl/uploads/analyses/1164308839.pdf) [accessed: 24.01.2014].
- Lisabon European Council (2000): *Presidency Conclusions. Employment, Economic Reform and Social Cohesion. A Strategic Goal for the Next Decade*.

- Łada, Agnieszka (2013): Deutsch-Polnisches Barometer 2013. Das Bild Deutschlands und der Deutschen in der polnischen Gesellschaft nach zehn Jahren gemeinsamer EU-Mitgliedschaft, Warsaw: Institute of Public Affairs/Instytut Spraw Publicznych, available at <http://www.isp.org.pl/publikacje,25,641.html> [accessed: 30.01.2014].
- Malewska-Peyre, Hanna (1992): JA wśród swoich i obcych, in: Paweł Boski, Maria Jarymowicz and Hanna Malewska-Peyre (eds.): Tożsamość a odmienność kulturowa. [Identity and cultural distinctiveness], Warsaw: Instytut Psychologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, pp. 45–57.
- Malewska-Peyre, Hanna (2001): Swojskość i obcość. O akulturacji imigrantów w Polsce [Familiarity and strangeness. About the acculturation of immigrants in Poland], Warsaw: Wydawn. Instytutu Psychologii PAN, SWPS.
- Meyer, Thomas (2007): Die Stärkung der sozialen Dimension: Auf dem Weg zu einer politischen Identität der EU, in: Julian Nida-Rümelin, Werner Weidenfeld (eds.): Europäische Identität. Voraussetzungen und Strategien. 1. Aufl., Baden-Baden, [München]: Nomos; CAP (Münchner Beiträge zur europäischen Einigung, 18), pp. 153–168.
- Moskwiak, Agnieszka; Olszówka, Anna (2011): Wolontariat międzynarodowy w Unii Europejskiej i w Polsce - historia, rozwój, wyzwania [International volunteering in the European Union and Poland – history, development, challenges, Trzeci Sektor [Third Sector Quarterly], 23/2011, Warsaw: Institute of Public Affairs.
- Nida-Rümelin, Julian; Weidenfeld, Werner (eds.) (2007): Europäische Identität. Voraussetzungen und Strategien. 1. Aufl., (Münchner Beiträge zur europäischen Einigung, 18) Baden-Baden, [München]: Nomos; CAP.
- Otten, Hendrik (2004): Nicht-formale Bildung als ein Schlüsselement zur Entwicklung aktiver europäischer Staatsbürgerschaft, in: Jugendarbeit und Jugendpolitik in Europa. 1. Aufl., Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwissenschaften, pp. 129–150.
- Peace Corps (1997), *Culture Matters. Peace Corps' Cross-Cultural Workbook for Volunteers*, Washington: Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps, available at: <http://files.peacecorps.gov/wws/interactive/culturematters/Ch6/adjustment.html> [accessed: 28.01.2014].
- Przewłocka, Jadwiga; Adamiak, Piotr; Herbst, Jan (2013): Podstawowe fakty o organizacjach pozarządowych 2012 [Basic facts on the NGOs in Poland], Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor.
- Przewłocka, Jadwiga (2011): Zaangażowanie społeczne Polaków w roku 2010. Wolontariat, filantropia, 1%: raport z badań [Social involvement of Poles in 2010. Volunteering, philanthropy, 1 percent of the income tax mechanism: a research report], Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor.
- Rudmin, Floyd W. (2006), Debate in science: The case of acculturation, *Anthro-Globe Journal*, December 2006, available at: [http://malinowski.kent.ac.uk/docs/rudminf\\_acculturation\\_061204.pdf](http://malinowski.kent.ac.uk/docs/rudminf_acculturation_061204.pdf) [accessed: 15.01.2014].

- Stemmer, Philipp (2009): Freiwilligendienste in Deutschland. Eine Expertise zur aktuellen Landschaft der Inlands- und Auslandsfreiwilligendienste in Deutschland. Im Auftrag des Wissenschaftszentrums Berlin für Sozialforschung, Freiburg: Zentrum für zivilgesellschaftliche Entwicklung (zze).
- Thalmaier, Bettina (2006): Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer europäischen Identitätspolitik, CAP - Centrum für angewandte Politikforschung.
- Tham, Barbara (2006): Einstellungen, Erwartungen und Befürchtungen Jugendlicher gegenüber der Europäischen Union und ihrer Politik im Jahr 2005. Analyse, Bewertung und Perspektiven, CAP - Centrum für angewandte Politikforschung.
- TNS Opinion & Social, European Commission (2013a): European Citizenship. Report, Standard Eurobarometer 79, Spring 2013, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79\\_citizen\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79_citizen_en.pdf) [accessed: 30.01.2014].
- TNS Opinion & Social, European Commission (2013b): Public opinion in the European Union. Report, Standard Eurobarometer 79, Spring 2013, available online at [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79\\_publ\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79_publ_en.pdf) [accessed: 30.01.2014].
- TNS Political & Social (2013): European Youth: Participation in Democratic Life, Flash Eurobarometer 375, European Commission, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl\\_375\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_375_en.pdf) [accessed: 30.01.2014].
- Traba, Robert (2006): Pamięć zbiorowa: rozważania o historycznych możliwościach posługiwania się «nowoczesnymi» koncepcjami badania pamięci [Collective memory: reflections on the historical possibilities of using “modern” concepts of the memory research], in: Robert Traba, *Historia – przestrzeń dialogu* [History - a space for dialogue], Warsaw: ISP PAN, pp. 23–40.
- Traba, Robert (2008): Pamięć kulturowa – pamięć komunikatywna. Teoria i praktyka badawcza Jana Assmanna [Cultural memory - communicative memory. Theory and research practice of Jan Assmann], in: Jan Assmann, *Pamięć kulturowa. Pismo, zapamiętywanie i polityczna tożsamość w cywilizacjach starożytnych* [Scripture remembering and political identity in the ancient civilizations], Warsaw: Wydawnictwa UW, pp. 11–25.
- Traba, Robert (2014), *Historia stosowana jako subdyscyplina akademicka. Konteksty i propozycje* [Applied history as an academic sub-discipline. Contexts and proposals], in: Ewa Domańska, Rafał Stobiecki, Tomasz Wiślicz, *Historia – Dziś* [History - Today], Kraków: Universitas [in print].
- Watermann, Rainer (2005): Politische Sozialisation von Kindern und Jugendlichen, in: *APuZ* 2005 (41), pp. 16–24.
- Zernack, Klaus (1976): Das Jahrtausend deutsch-polnischer Beziehungsgeschichte als geschichtswissenschaftliches Problemfeld und Forschungsaufgabe, in: Wolfgang H. Fritze (ed.), *Grundfragen der geschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Deutschen, Polaben und Polen. Referate und Diskussionsbeiträge aus zwei wissenschaftlichen Tagungen*, Berlin, pp. 3-41.



## 9. List of Figures and Tables



Figure 1: Volunteers' gender.....	15
Figure 2: Volunteers' age.....	16
Figure 3: Volunteers' education .....	16
Figure 4: Length of voluntary service .....	17
Figure 5: Region of living before the voluntary service.....	17
Figure 6: Where voluntary service takes place.....	18
Figure 7: Volunteers' tasks.....	18
Figure 8: Volunteers' interest in other countries and projects.....	40
Figure 9: Motivation for choosing to volunteer in the neighbouring country .....	44
Figure 10: Relations between Poland and Germany .....	50
Figure 11: Germans' attitude towards common opinions about Poles.....	51
Figure 12: Poles' attitude towards common opinions about Germans.....	53
Figure 13: Do feel as being citizen of the EU? .....	66
Figure 14: In the near future, do you see yourself as.....	66
Figure 15: For each of the following achievements of the EU; could you tell me whether you have benefited from it or not?.....	67
Figure 16: In the following list, which are the three most important values for you personally? .....	68
Figure 17: Which three of the following values best represent the EU?.....	68
Figure 18: Associations with Europe (a).....	73
Figure 19: Associations with Europe (b).....	74
Figure 20: Associations with Europe (c).....	75
Table 1: Programmes for voluntary service in Germany.....	28



This report presents the main results of the research project implemented by the German Centre for Developments in Civil Society (zze) and the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) from Poland entitled „Volunteering abroad in Poland and Germany, its implications on attitudes towards the respective neighbouring country, and its effects on images of Europe”. It explores the effect voluntary service has on images about the country in which the voluntary service took place. Additionally, the report address the question of whether and how voluntary service affects thoughts and attitudes about Europe and the European Union.

The research findings may be of interest to decision-makers on a European and national level who shape the set up of voluntary programmes, as well as practitioners in sending or hosting organisations in Poland and Germany. In addition, the elaborated conclusions might also be of interest to people involved in trans-border volunteering in the context of other countries.

**THE CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENTS IN CIVIL SOCIETY (ZENTRUM FÜR ZIVILGESELLSCHAFTLICHE ENTWICKLUNG – ZZE)**, LOCATED IN FREIBURG, GERMANY, IS A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR TOPICS LIKE VOLUNTARY INVOLVEMENT, ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY. THE ZZE OFFERS INDEPENDENT RESEARCH, SCIENTIFIC POLICY ADVICE & QUALIFICATION TO SUPPORT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, INDIVIDUAL STATE GOVERNMENTS, REGIONS, LOCAL COMMUNITIES, THE THIRD SECTOR & OTHER ORGANISATIONS. THE INSTITUTE WAS FOUNDED BY PROF. DR. THOMAS KLIE IN 1996 AND HAS SINCE THEN EVOLVED TO BECOME A KNOWN RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN ITS FIELD OF EXPERTISE AND INCREASINGLY DEALS WITH ISSUES DERIVING FROM DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN MUNICIPALITIES.

**INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS (IPA)** IS A LEADING POLISH THINK TANK AND AN INDEPENDENT CENTRE FOR POLICY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS, ESTABLISHED IN 1995. OUR MISSION IS TO CONTRIBUTE TO INFORMED PUBLIC DEBATE ON KEY POLISH, EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL POLICY ISSUES. OUR MAIN AREAS OF STUDY INCLUDE EUROPEAN POLICY, SOCIAL POLICY, CIVIL SOCIETY, MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY AS WELL AS LAW AND DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. THE IPA HAS A TEAM OF IN-HOUSE RESEARCHERS/POLICY ANALYSTS AND AN EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF ASSOCIATE EXPERTS FROM ACADEMIA AND OTHER PATHS OF LIFE. WE PUBLISH THE RESULTS OF OUR PROJECTS IN RESEARCH REPORTS, POLICY PAPERS AND BOOKS, WHICH ARE BROADLY DISSEMINATED AMONG MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND CIVIL SERVANTS, ACADEMICS, JOURNALISTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISTS.