



VOLPOWER |



Volunteering in South Tyrol

General framework and results of an
online survey among the youth

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Eurac Research

**VOLPOWER: VOLUNTEER AND EMPOWER: ENHANCING COMMUNITY BUILDING AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION
THROUGH DIALOGUE AND COLLABORATION AMONGST YOUNG EUROPEANS AND THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS**

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Executive Summary

This report presents some of the VOLPOWER's research project results in South Tyrol. The project explores the role of volunteering in enhancing community building and social integration among EU nationals and third-country national youth.

The research reveals South Tyrol, an autonomous Italian province with a German, Italian and Ladin native-speaking population and a growing migrant population, has a long tradition of volunteering. There are thousands of volunteering associations (and other types of organisations) supported by a complex legal and institutional structure as well as provincial and local measures. Many South Tyroleans volunteer, although there are differences in age, education, fields, and domicile (in a city or countryside). Volunteering plays an important role in many sectors of South Tyrol's society, including challenges posed by migration. The recent influx of asylum seekers has further highlighted the extent of support provided by volunteers and volunteering associations to the migrant and asylum seeker population for accommodation and integration processes, among others.

The report presents the results of a non-representative survey that gives some insights into the attitudes, impressions, experiences, and opinions of young South Tyrolean volunteers. It highlights how the connection with the territory in which they live is a strong motivational factor; furthermore, volunteers do so because they enjoy it and expect to gain employment experience and skills. Respondents with or without a migration background confirm that volunteering has various positive effects on individuals: learning through hands-on experience, gaining new social contacts, making new friendships, and learning about the local area. Volunteering also intersects with perceptions on social wellbeing and sense of belonging. The report highlights the importance of supporting volunteering activities through, for example, formal recognition, as suggested by respondents.

Overall, the research highlights volunteering's critical role in society in general and in South Tyrol in particular, asking us to reflect on how volunteering interplays with migration challenges. Considering the constant increase of people with a migration background, active volunteering might become an important tool to foster inclusion and empowerment processes among South Tyrolean youth.

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Introduction

This report is one of the outcomes of VOLPOWER, an interactive research project supported by the AMIF (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund). The project lasts two years and focuses on leveraging volunteering activities in the fields of sport and creative arts/culture among EU national- (EUN) and third-country national- (TCN) youth, aged 18-27, living in Scotland, Austria, Croatia, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and the Italian province of South-Tyrol. Volunteering is known to foster social, human, and cultural capital. The VOLPOWER project aims to analyse the impact and study future developments of youth volunteering by investigating different contexts and European areas. Among its tasks, the project carries out and publishes an extensive survey, the Youth Involvement and Community Survey (YCIS1). It is designed by the project consortium and distributed in the project's countries: it provides a snapshot of volunteering among local youth and youth with a migration background. While not statistically representative, it enables us to learn about the characteristics of youth volunteering and its impact on the individual and the community in the different geographical areas analysed. Furthermore, VOLPOWER explores and facilitates innovative pathways of cooperation among local organisations and stakeholders from the social, cultural, and sports sector; it also supports a group of selected young EUN and TCN volunteers with a set of tasks and training initiatives. The project consortium looks at whether and how this experience helps create a sense of belonging, empowerment, and social cohesion among participants while enhancing their social and personal skills.

South Tyrol is one of the VOLPOWER project's seven case studies. It is an autonomous province with a German, Italian and Ladin native-speaking population and a growing migrant population. The province has a long tradition of volunteering, which plays a key role in society. This report aims to present some of the results of VOLPOWER activities in South Tyrol: the context of volunteering, the evermore diversifying province, and the Youth Involvement and Community Survey (YCIS1) carried out in South Tyrol. The report will thus contribute to existing studies on volunteering and its interaction with migration, in Italy in general and more specifically in South Tyrol. There is little research which has analysed in detail the province's volunteering landscape (e.g. Schock and Atz, 2011). In 2020, researchers conducted a survey on volunteers with a migrant background in Italy and analysed their experience. However, the research did not include South Tyrol (Ambrosini and Erminio, 2020). This report contributes to those previous works.

The report is organised in two parts. The first part presents background information on South Tyrol (Italy), starting with some insights into the province's past ethnic conflicts and its present development with regards to the integration of migrants. It describes the network of associations in South Tyrol that has developed over the years in connection with volunteering, and the focus that today's provincial volunteering sector is giving to challenges posed by migration. The reader will find political, cultural, and socio-economic data, data on migratory flows and migrant populations as well as on the existing legal framework related to volunteering activities. The report's second part provides information and analysis regarding the results of the Youth Involvement and Community Survey (YCIS1). It outlines the survey's methodology and discusses the specific distribution strategy used in South Tyrol. It explains the problems encountered during the process and shows the achieved results upon completion of the online survey. The data collected through the survey provide information on the respondents while giving an overview

on the world of volunteering, the reasons for and effects of volunteering, some notions on what hinders volunteering, and how volunteering activities could be improved in future. The survey's final analysis focuses on some of the project's main topics, including self-perception and personal relations as well as social wellbeing and sense of belonging.

PART 1: Background information on volunteering¹

1 South Tyrol: from ethnic conflict to migrant integration

South Tyrol is an Italian province bordering Austria and Switzerland characterised by the presence of a German native-speaking population and a Ladin native-speaking minority. It is a small, mainly mountainous territory of 7,398 km², counting 531,178 inhabitants at the end of 2018 (ASTAT 2019a). The province has few urban areas, including the capital, Bolzano/Bozen. After having experienced ethnic tensions in the 1960s and 1970s, South Tyrol today is an exemplary model in relation to national minorities thanks to a complex power-sharing system which protects its specific cultural characteristics. Such a system, composed of an extensive political autonomy, several consociational measures, and linguistic rights, has fostered a peaceful relationship among South Tyrolean linguistic groups, although some separation still persists in some aspects of their social and political life. At the same time, in the last three decades, South Tyrol has had a noteworthy economic growth, both absolutely and in comparison with the rest of Italy. In 2016, the provincial GDP per capita was €42,456 and the unemployment rate was 3.7% (Italy registered €27,719 and 11.7% respectively), putting South Tyrol among the wealthiest areas of the European Union (ISTAT nd; ASTAT 2018a, p. 34). The service industry (including tourism) represents the largest share of the local economy, followed by manufacturing, while the agricultural sector (dominated by apples and wine) is also significant.

Thanks to ethnic peace and economic growth, South Tyrol is no longer a major area of emigration (particularly of German native-speakers towards German-speaking countries) like in the 1970s (ASTAT 2018b, p. 89).² Instead, in the last fifteen years, South Tyrol has witnessed the arrival of many migrants from foreign (EU and non-EU) countries. This development interplays with old South Tyrolean politics of sub-state nationalism and the presence of the historical German and Ladin native-speaking minorities, which in 2011 respectively represented 69.4% and 4.5% of the population. The Italian-speaking group represented 26.1% of the population, mainly concentrated in the urban areas (ASTAT 2018b, p. 119). Within the national framework, the provincial government is responsible for the inclusion and integration processes of foreign migrants. However, the Italian Government has exclusive power over immigration

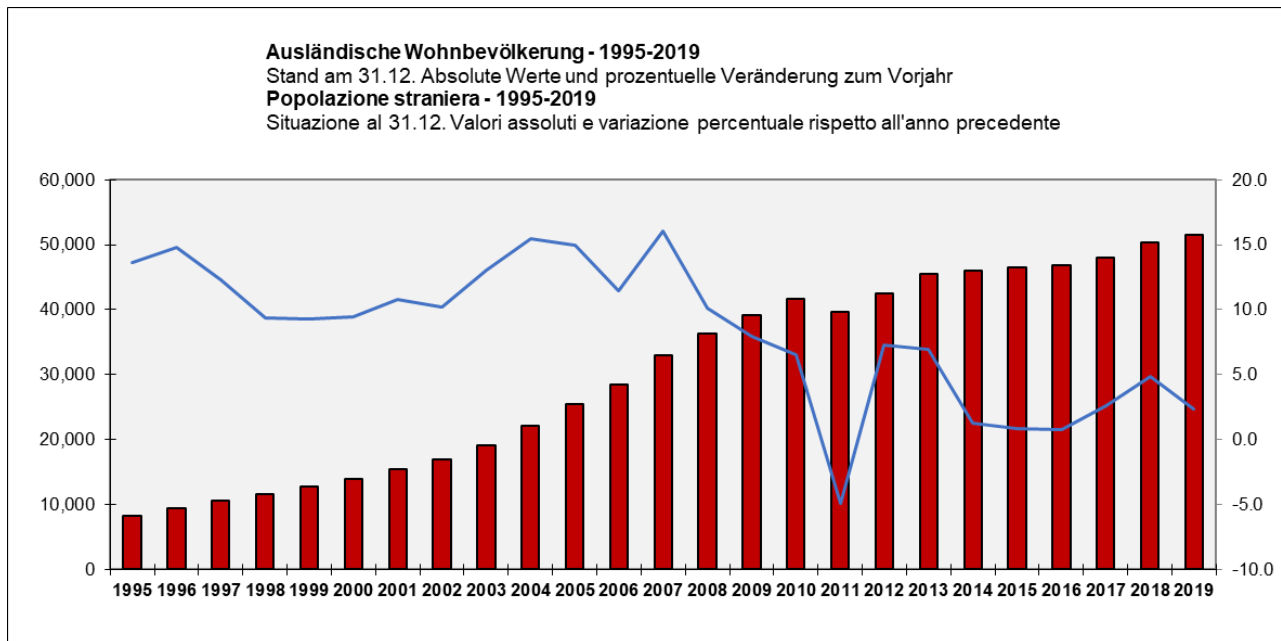
¹ Part 1 of this report was written in May 2019.

² Recent research confirms that South Tyrol today has a positive migratory balance; however, there is a relevant brain drain, since emigrants have a higher level of education than immigrants. Between 2012 and 2017, a significant number of South Tyroleans (around 800 persons) with tertiary education left the province (Mattioli 2019).

policies regarding aspects such as border control, entry requirements, expulsion, citizenship, asylum and refugee status.

As highlighted by Carlà and Medda-Windischer (2018), compared to other European and Italian regions, foreign migration in South Tyrol is a recent phenomenon, even though today migrants are a stable and important component of South Tyrolean society. In 1990, the migrant population amounted to 5,099 units, mostly from Germany and Austria. Since 1993-1994, the migrant population has quickly increased, initially with the settlement of persons from south-eastern Europe (mainly former Yugoslavia and Albania). Since the 2000s, South Tyrol has experienced migration from all over the world, including a large influx from eastern European countries – especially Romania and Slovakia since 2007. An increasing number of long-term migrants has complemented the traditional influx of seasonal workers, mostly employed in agriculture and tourism.

Figure 1: Resident foreign population in South Tyrol 1995-2019 (on 31 December) - absolute number and % variation compared to previous year



Source: Graph provided in an email exchanged with ASTAT's responsible for official data on demography (4.12.2020).

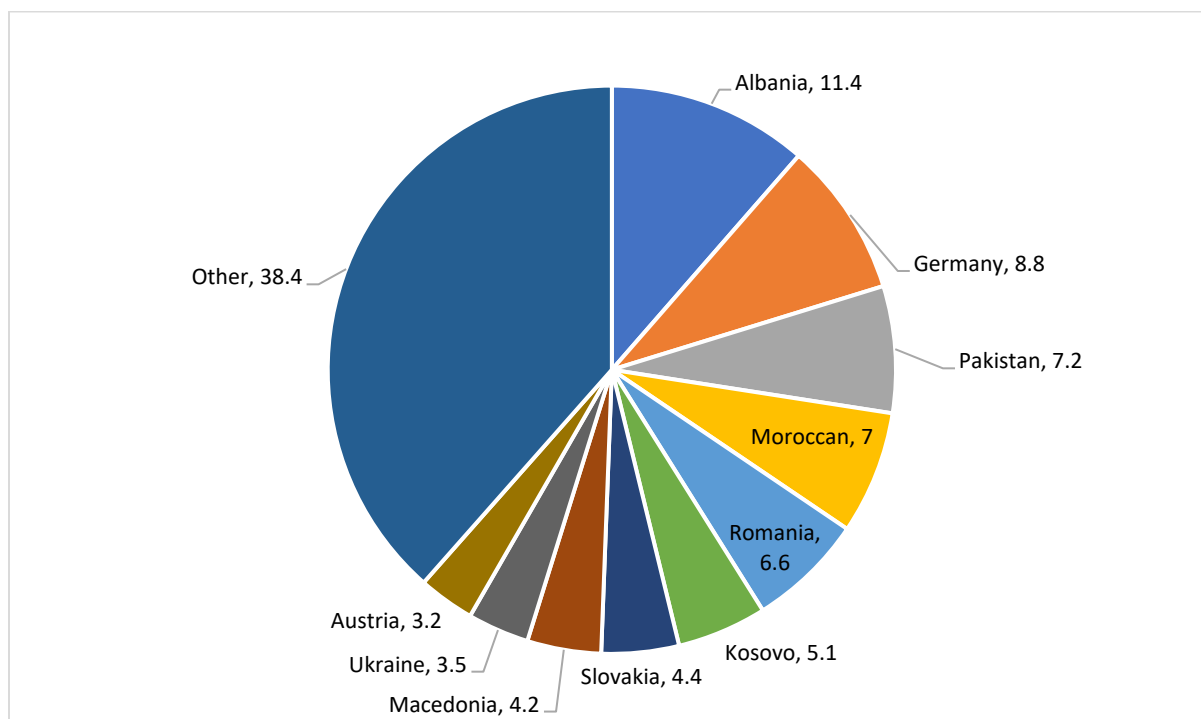
In the past twenty years, the number of migrants has increased by about 500%. At the end of 2018, there were 50,333 migrants from more than 130 countries representing 9.5% of the total population. One third of these migrants came from European Union countries, another 30% from other European countries, 19.3% from Asia, and 14.1% from Africa. The main nationalities were Albanian (5,767 / 11.4%), German (4,500 / 8.8%), and Moroccan (3,650 / 7.2%), followed by Pakistani (3,550 / 7.0%), and Romanian (6.6%) (ASTAT 2019b).

Figure 2: Resident population in South Tyrol by citizenship 2018, macro categories (on 31 December) – absolute numbers

Total resident population	Foreign resident population	Resident population with Italian citizenship
531,178	50,333	480,845

Source: ASTAT 2019a

Figure 3: Resident foreign population in South Tyrol by citizenship 2018 (on 31 December) in %



Source: ASTAT 2019b

Since 2014, South Tyrol, just as the rest of Italy and other EU countries, has witnessed an increase in the arrival of asylum seekers, mostly from countries in Central Africa as well as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Whereas in 2013 there were 58 asylum seekers in the province, in 2017 there were between 1,400 and 1,650 persons; the number decreased to 1,350 at the beginning of 2019 (Saltarelli and Weissenstainer, 2016, p. 131; Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano and EURAC Research, 2017; Dalla Pria, 2019). Since 2014, asylum seekers in Italy have been distributed among its regions, and South Tyrol receives 0.9% of asylum seekers. South Tyrol receives persons who submit their asylum claim directly in the province and those who arrive via the national redistribution system (Saltarelli and Weissenstainer, 2016, p. 131). Moreover, South Tyrol is along the path of many people in transit attempting to reach Central and Northern Europe countries through the Brenner Pass. In their attempt to cross the border,

some have settled in Bolzano/Bozen, South Tyrol's main city. At the same time some asylum seekers have reached South Tyrol/Italy from Austria. It is estimated that in 2016 hundreds of migrants transited every day in the train stations of Bolzano/Bozen and Brennero/Brenner; however, since 2017 the number has decreased to a few dozen or less (Rabini, 2018).

The migrant population mainly lives in urban areas (60%), a third of whom live in Bolzano/Bozen. Migrants are generally young (60% is less than 40 years old). In Bolzano/Bozen there are slightly more girls and women (52.4%), although this varies greatly within each migrant community. Second-generation migrants (children born in Italy to foreign parents who reveal the level of settlement of the migrant population in society) represent 14.3% of the migrant population. Over the last twenty years, about 18,000 foreign-born nationals in South Tyrol have been granted Italian citizenship (ASTAT 2019b). The percentage of foreign students out of the total student population in South Tyrol is 11.4% (ASTAT 2017b).

In South Tyrol, migration intersects with language issues. In this regard, it is estimated that more than half of the migrant population in South Tyrol knows Italian, whereas only 15% speaks German well (Medda-Windischer *et al.*, 2011, pp. 76-77). Finally, it should be noted that in 2017 the average salary of the foreign working population in South Tyrol was €1,192 a month, while an Italian citizen residing in South Tyrol earned an average of €1,465 (IDOS, 2018).

2 Volunteering in South Tyrol: the land of associations

Volunteering in South Tyrol and in Italy is well-structured both legally and institutionally: several laws and measures structure and support volunteering activities. The main legal point of reference is Provincial Law no. 11/1993 "Disciplina del volontariato e della promozione sociale", which provides definitions, specific rules, and funding opportunities for volunteering associations. The Provincial Law was based on National Law no. 266/1991 "Legge quadro sul volontariato" but registers some discrepancies compared to a recent national reform of the third sector, enacted in 2017, which has changed the institutional framework for Italian volunteering associations.³ Although the Provincial Law has been modified following the national reform,⁴ at the time of writing this report, South Tyrolean volunteering associations were trapped between the provincial and the national legislation and struggling to adapt to the new national reform (Amministrazione Provincia Bolzano, 2017). The "Centro servizi per il volontariato Alto Adige" was created following the reform in January 2019. This type of infrastructure had already been foreseen by the 1991 National Law and exists in many Italian regions and provinces. The Centro aims to become the main point of reference for providing support and counselling to South Tyrolean volunteering associations as well as for managing public funds (Volontariato, dal 1° febbraio apertura del centro servizi, 2019).

The provincial law defines volunteering activities as actions taken spontaneously and free of charge throughout an association for solidarity and social commitment goals. The law does not consider informal

³ See Law Decree 3 July 2017, n. 117, "Codice del Terzo settore."

⁴ See Provincial Law 7 August 2018, n. 181 - Modifiche della legge provinciale 1° luglio 1993, n. 11, "Disciplina del volontariato e della promozione sociale."

volunteering activities, namely helping friends, family members, and acquaintances in a private capacity. According to the law, volunteering associations must be non-profit and have a democratic structure. The law distinguishes between volunteering activities and “activities of social promotion”.⁵ The former target the entire community, whereas activities of social promotion (and social promotion associations) work in favour of their members and their families in specific sectors like health and social services, culture and education, sport and leisure. The law established the provincial register of volunteering associations.⁶ By enrolling in the register, associations enjoy fiscal benefits and other advantages and have access to the funds of the “Fondo speciale per il volontariato” to carry out volunteering activities. Public funds play a key role for sustaining the activities of volunteering associations, especially those providing social and health services (Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano - Alto Adige, 2015, p. 51). The register is organised in four sectors: social and health services; cultural, educational, and training activities; sport and leisure; and civil defence and environmental protection.⁷ According to a research conducted in 2004, at the time 1,309 associations were registered, of which 40% in the cultural, educational and training sector, 25.7% in the civil defence and environmental protection sector, 21.2% in sport and leisure, and 10.2% in social and health services. Most associations were in the Val Pusteria valley (22.3%), followed by the city of Merano/Meran (16.1%) and the city of Bolzano/Bozen (14.1%). The capital city of South Tyrol was the province’s only area where associations in the social and health services sector prevailed, probably reflecting the needs of a bigger city (ASTAT, 2005). Since then, the number of volunteering associations has notably increased. In March 2019, the register counted 2,195 associations, mostly operating in the cultural, educational and training sector (1,315), followed by civil defence and environmental protection (451), sport and leisure (426), and social and health services (262).⁸ As highlighted in a 2011 report, musical bands and choirs as well as theatrical and folklore groups play a main role in the cultural, educational and training sector; youth organisations and youth centres also feature in this sector (Schock and Atz 2011, pp. 58, 63).⁹ Musical bands and the folklore “Südtiroler Schützenbund”, a former para-military entity that today aims to protect local culture and customs, have a long historical tradition. Furthermore, the South Tyrolean firefighting service has traditionally consisted of volunteers.

South Tyrolean volunteering associations receive support in several ways from the province: the “Osservatorio provinciale del volontariato”, a provincial department, provides support and counselling to volunteering associations;¹⁰ a provincial website provides a wealth of information; free access to a management software; and the possibility to award certificates to volunteers which prove their skills and experiences. In recent years, a volunteering fair has been organised in the city of Bolzano/Bozen by the

⁵ The concept of social promotion activity (and association) was introduced by the national legislation 383/2000. In 2003, the provincial law was amended in this regard.

⁶ Social promotion associations have their own distinct register. Volunteers are active not only in registered volunteering associations, but also in other types of associations, organisations or groups. This great variety of volunteering fields adds a layer of complexity when collecting and interpreting related data.

⁷ Associations can indicate more than one sector.

⁸ Data from <http://www.provincia.bz.it/famiglia-sociale-comunita/terzo-settore/organizzazioni-volontariato/ricerca-registro.asp>

⁹ Although the report refers to data in 2011, this observation may still be valid.

¹⁰ Following the national reform of the third sector, the Osservatorio was abolished since many of its tasks are carried out by the new provincial Centro servizi per il volontariato (Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano - Alto Adige 2018).

Province, the Municipality, and various associations. It offers the opportunity to learn about the range of volunteering possibilities in the social sector.¹¹ Moreover, specific entities in the South Tyrolean third sector sustain volunteering associations, such as the “Servizio per il Volontariato sociale” within the “Federazione per il sociale e la sanità”, which provides counselling and cooperation opportunities to associations in the social sectors;¹² the “Centro Servizi Cultura e Volontariato” which, since 2016, has been providing support to associations concerning youth and culture.¹³ Many South Tyrolean municipalities and local, specific initiatives sustain volunteering in various ways. Take the “borsa del volontariato”, an online platform created by Caritas Bolzano which matches potential volunteers with volunteering associations.¹⁴ Finally, specific volunteering related actions have also spread to South Tyrol: the “Banche del tempo” (time bank), where people can help each other by offering their time;¹⁵ corporate volunteering, which enables local businesses to promote volunteering activities, like the Orto Salewa – an integration project promoted by a company specialised in mountain sporting goods where asylum seekers manage a vegetable patch; and self-help groups, associations whose members help each other, which in 2014 amounted to 188 groups in the social-health sector (Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano - Alto Adige, 2015, p. 53).

There are other specific forms of volunteering backed by national, provincial, and European programmes. The national level features a volunteering Universal Civil Service, initially created as an alternative option to the once compulsory military service. It allows people between 18 and 29 to collaborate and receive a monthly bursary with non-profit associations in specific sectors, such as health and social services and education, in Italy or abroad. In South Tyrol, Provincial Law no. 7/2004 “Disposizioni per la valorizzazione del servizio civile volontario in Provincia di Bolzano” has introduced a similar provincial programme, the “Servizio civile provinciale volontario”: volunteering activities are carried out in the province to provide training experiences and foster a sense of social responsibility among citizens. In addition, the law introduced a similar opportunity, the “Servizio sociale volontario” for adults, including the elderly, for volunteering activities lasting up to 32 months. High school students benefit from the “Servizio volontario estivo per giovani”, which allows students to carry out a brief volunteering experience during the summer break; this experience can be recognised as part of a compulsory school internship programme. In this regard, Italian schools are involved in supporting volunteering. National Law no. 107/2015 introduced work and volunteering experiences as part of the school curricula, which give students points that contribute towards their final grade.¹⁶ The European level boasts the European Voluntary Service, where young people (18-30) can carry out a volunteering activity abroad for 2-12 months to gain intercultural experience at a European dimension. The German-speaking provincial youth services provide support for those interested in this European programme.¹⁷ Considering they provide partial reimbursement and/or other specific personal benefits, these types of activities might not be considered proper forms of volunteering (Schock and Atz, 2011, p. 52).

¹¹ See the fair’s website: <http://www.fieradelvolontariato.bz.it/it/Home>.

¹² See the Servizio per il Volontariato sociale’s website: <https://www.fss.bz.it/volontari.html>

¹³ See the Centro Servizi Cultura e Volontariato’s website: <http://www.cscv.it/>

¹⁴ See: <https://www.caritas.bz.it/it/nc/partecipare/borsa-del-volontariato.html>

¹⁵ In 2017 South Tyrol counted 15 “Banche del tempo,” involving about 8,000 people (Martinello, 2017).

¹⁶ For further information on these national and provincial programmes see: “Servizi volontari”,

<http://www.provincia.bz.it/famiglia-sociale-comunita/terzo-settore/servizi-volontari.asp>

¹⁷ See “Servizio Volontario Europeo (Cultura tedesca),” <https://civis.bz.it/it/servizi/servizio.html?id=1007520>

Given the great variety of volunteering opportunities and different definitions of volunteering, it is complicated to provide a clear picture of its landscape in South Tyrol. As highlighted in a 2011 report, data and statistics on volunteers in South Tyrol are fragmented (Schock and Atz, 2011, p. 51). However, the report confirms the definition of South Tyrol as the “land of associations,” with participation in volunteering associations double that of the national average, in line with the average in Germany and Austria (Schock and Atz, 2011, p. 40). Summarising various types of data, the report concludes that a large part (about one quarter – between 110,000 and 120,000 people) of the South Tyrolean population volunteers with an association – informal volunteering was not included.¹⁸ According to the report, volunteers are mainly men, people with higher education, inhabitants of rural areas, and German native speakers. The report’s author writes that the language prevalence is strongly related to geographical factors, since Italian native speakers mainly live in urban areas. However, German native speakers are more involved in associations in general. Women feature heavily in social service volunteering activities. The situation has remained stable in the last ten years, and the gender gap has shrunk (Schock and Atz, 2011, pp. 44, 51-52).

Further information on the structural features of volunteers in South Tyrol emerges from more recent survey data from 2018, the “Indagine multiscope sulle famiglie 2018” devised by N. Colletti for ASTAT, the South Tyrolean statistics office. The data concern: 1) membership of associations and volunteering groups; 2) people who have carried out unpaid activities for associations or volunteering groups; 3) and those who carried out unpaid activity for non-volunteering associations.¹⁹

- 1) In 2018, 15.2% of the South Tyrolean population aged 14 years and above (which amounts to 444,146 people) were members of associations or volunteering groups, more men (17.3%) than women (13.2%) and living more in rural areas (16.7%) than in urban areas (13.3%) (Colletti, 2019). Another study shows that participation in volunteering associations is particularly high among young people. In the 2015-2017 period, 18.7% of young people aged 15-34 were members of similar associations (ASTAT, 2018c, p. 4).²⁰
- 2) In 2018, 19.0% of South Tyroleans older than 13 declared that they had carried out unpaid activities for associations or voluntary groups in the last 12 months. There is a greater inclination to do so among young people, those who have more years of schooling, and those who live in rural areas. While the gap between women (18.7%) and men (19.4%) has narrowed in recent years, there still are differences in age. The propensity to engage in volunteering is lower among those over 65, who declare engaging

¹⁸ More recently, media and public statements speak of 150,000 volunteers (one every three South Tyroleans) and about 4,500 different types of associations (Alto Adige, 2020).

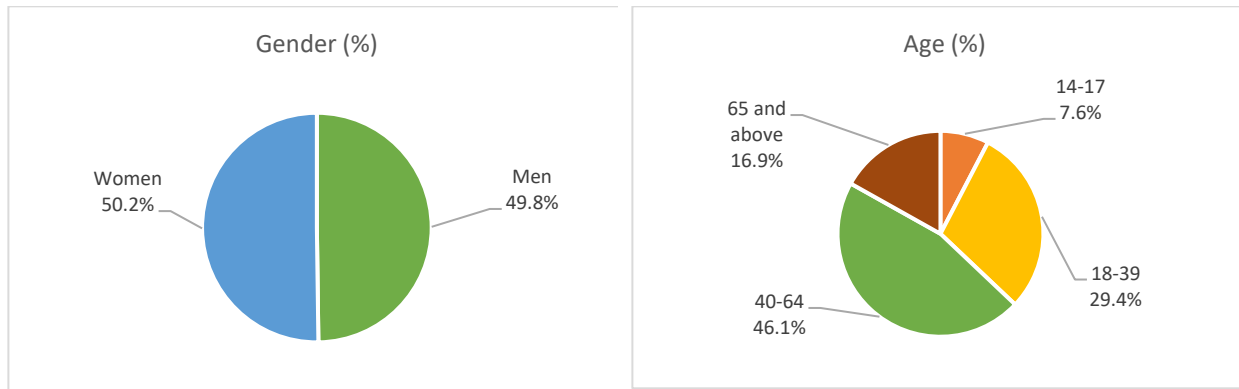
¹⁹ In the survey, the distinction between associations and volunteering groups and non-volunteering associations is not clear and is open to the interpretation of the interviewees. It is likely that not all interviewees knew whether the association in which they are involved should be considered an association and volunteering group or a non-volunteering association (Schock and Atz 2011, p. 38).

²⁰ South Tyrol registers a high participation rate among young people in associations in general. In 2016, 31.2% of young people (12-25 years old), especially German and Ladin native speakers and slightly more male respondents, was member of an association concerning culture, youth, civil defence, social or environmental issues. Associations in the culture and youth sector register the higher membership percentage; when including sport associations, the percentage increases to 56%. Young people become members of associations mainly for selfish interests, namely for fun, followed by the possibility of learning something useful (ASTAT, 2017a, pp. 110-113).

in unpaid activity only in 14.3% of cases against at least 20% of other age groups, with young people between 14 and 17 years having the highest affirmative response rate (22.2%). As far as the level of education of volunteers is concerned, those with primary school education register a particularly low rate (11.7%), while the percentage among those with secondary education (for example, a vocational or high school diploma) is 23.3%; 18.2% of people with a university degree (or similar) have carried out an unpaid activity for volunteering groups or associations. As already noted in previous years, it is the inhabitants of rural areas who have a greater propensity for this type of activity: 20.7% declared that they had carried out these activities in the last 12 months compared to 16.8% in urban areas (Colletti, 2019).

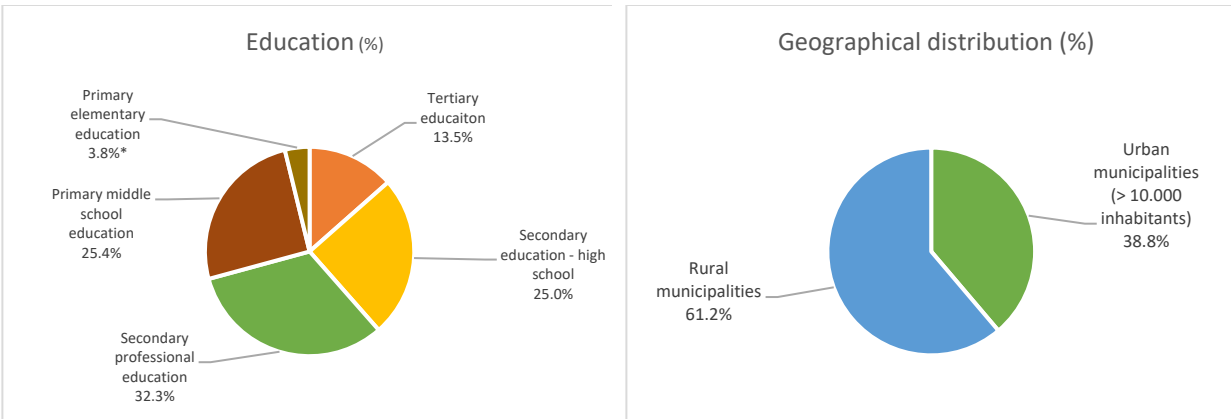
An analysis of the features of people who have carried out unpaid activities for associations or volunteering groups in the previous year requires some attention because of the different numerical consistency of each population segment in the graph (see Figure 4). Bearing this caveat in mind, there is an almost identical percentage of men and women. Furthermore, 46.1% are 40-64 years old, 29.4% are 18-39, whereas young people aged 14-17 and the elderly (over 65) represent respectively 7.6% and 16.9% of volunteers. Concerning the level of education, the higher percentage, i.e. 32.3%, has a secondary vocational degree, whereas 25% has a secondary (high school) diploma, and 13.5% completed tertiary education. Finally, 61.2% live in rural areas.²¹

Figure 4: People in South Tyrol (14 years and older) who carried out unpaid activities for associations or voluntary groups by gender, age, level of education, and geographical distribution in %



²¹ Data from 2018 elaborated by the authors based on Colletti, 2019.

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Source: Data from 2018 elaborated by the authors based on Colletti, 2019.

3) Volunteering work takes place not only in associations and volunteering groups, but also in associations that are not purely dedicated to voluntary work. In 2018, 14.0% of South Tyroleans that were at least 14 years old declared they had done free work for non-volunteering associations in the last 12 months. Even in this case, elderly people aged 65 or older and persons with primary education are less likely to volunteer compared to other age groups and levels of education. As far as gender is concerned, males are more involved (14.9% vs. 13.1% of women). The gap between rural and urban inhabitants widens considerably, with 19.2% of inhabitants of rural municipalities and only 7.2% of people living in urban areas declaring to have carried out unpaid activity for non-volunteering associations (Colletti, 2019).

In regard to the specific characteristics of people who have carried out unpaid activities for a non-volunteering association in the previous year, men are present in a slightly higher percentage (52.1% compared to 47.9% of women), and 53.2% are aged 40-64. Most of these volunteers, i.e. 35.6%, have a secondary (vocational) education, whereas 22.7% completed high school, and 14.6% have completed tertiary education; 77.3% live in rural municipalities.²²

A direct comparison with the rest of Italy is not possible because this type of data is not available at the national level for the same time frame (at the time of writing this part of the report). However, the available data confirm that in the rest of Italy volunteering is less common. In Italy, in 2016, 13.2% of the population carried out unpaid activities in the last 12 months; this figure includes those who collaborated with volunteering associations, 10.7%, or other type of associations, 3.5% (ISTAT, 2018, pp. 196, 228).

The important role played by volunteering in South Tyrolean society emerges in research that focuses on specific topics, like non-profit associations. According to surveys of non-profit associations, this sector in South Tyrol heavily relies on volunteers, more than in the rest of Italy. In 2015, there were 156,476 volunteers active in 5,340 non-profit associations in South Tyrol, equivalent to 3,004 volunteers for every 10,000 inhabitants, more than three times the quota in the rest of Italy (901.4 per 10,000 people). More than half these volunteers (93,631) are involved in the culture, sport and leisure sector, followed by social service and civil defence (23,350), and labour relations (16,874) (ISTAT, 2017). The cultural sector also

²² Data from 2018 elaborated by the authors based on Colletti, 2019.

heavily relies on the involvement of volunteers. According to a 2011 survey, 87% of the people working in the 735 South Tyrolean cultural entities were volunteers (ASTAT, 2012, p. 7). Finally, volunteers are of particular importance in the South Tyrolean health and social system, enabling an increase in the supply of services provided to the population. At the end of 2017, 4,341 volunteers carried out activities in South Tyrolean social service structures, especially in retirement homes (Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano - Alto Adige, 2018b, pp. 250-251).

The data on volunteering do not mirror and provide a comprehensive insight into the population that spends time helping others. They do not include persons who provide free help in an informal and private capacity, for example within their family. To get an idea of the scope of the general phenomenon of unpaid help in South Tyrol, a 2016 survey highlights how among respondents who declared having helped someone else for free, only 6.4% helped via a volunteering association. (Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano - Alto Adige, 2018b, p. 254).

3 Volunteering and migration in South Tyrol

Based on the data above, it is clear that volunteering is a well-established reality in South Tyrol and that many people are involved in volunteering activities although there are differences in age, education, fields, and domicile (in a city or countryside). Volunteering helps provide several services and activities for South Tyrolean inhabitants. This includes the migrant integration process and helping foreign migrants settling in their new country of residency.

As in the rest of the country, the third sector and volunteering activities play an important role in this context. Incidentally, the 2011 provincial law on the integration of foreign citizens in South Tyrol recognises the importance of associations which support the migrant population with linguistic and cultural integration. Two types of associations are relevant in this regard. One type is associations for migrants which provide reception and assistance to the migrant population and run initiatives which foster integration. The second type is associations of migrants which, based on the voluntary work of their members, predominantly aim to promote the migrants' culture of origin and provide support when dealing with public administration.

Concerning the former, migrants who arrive in South Tyrol can benefit from an extended network of associations and institutes, like the "Associazione Donne Nissà", in Bolzano/Bozen or the "Casa della Solidarietà" in the city of Bressanone/Brixen. They provide various types of services, from counselling to information and support when addressing administrative procedures (Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano - Alto Adige, 2015, 176). There are also several migrant associations in South Tyrol. In March 2019, the provincial administration's website listed 23 entities, of which 13 in Bolzano/Bozen (15 on the Bolzano municipality website).²³ According to Girotto (2011, pp. 87-88), most migrant associations in South Tyrol are mono-national and pluri-national (namely composed of people belonging to diverse foreign

²³ See <http://www.provincia.bz.it/cultura/temi/2175.asp>; and https://www.comune.bolzano.it/servizi_context02.jsp?ID_LINK=2501&area=51.

nationalities). There are also mixed pluri-national associations that are composed of Italian and foreign citizens, as well as youth groups representing second-generation residents living in South Tyrol (Giroto, 2011, pp. 87-88; *La nuova generazione dell'Alto Adige*, 2018). As argued by Giroto (2011, pp. 87-88), most associations represent migrants from Latin-America, West Africa, the Balkans, and the Indian subcontinent. Migrant associations mainly focus on the promotion of migrants' culture of origin to foster integration and encounters with local cultures, whereas religious aspects seem less relevant. Furthermore, many associations provide information for dealing with public administration, especially concerning regular permits and job hunting. In some cases, associations provide support for learning local languages, promoting migrants' language of origin, and supporting the country of origin.

There are not many data available concerning the participation of foreign migrants in volunteering activities in South Tyrol, nor data that distinguish between EU national volunteers and third-country national volunteers. However, it would seem migrants are less involved than Italian citizens. For example, according to the only available data referring to South Tyrol in 2018, 95.4% of foreigners were not members of associations or volunteering groups, 93.8% did not carry out unpaid activities for associations or voluntary groups in the last 12 months, and 96.9% had not done free work for non-volunteering associations in the last 12 months, compared to respectively 83.8%, 79.8% and 85.1% of Italian citizens (Colletti, 2019). Looking at data on youth, membership in an association concerning culture, youth, civil defence, social or environmental issues is less prevalent among foreign youth (11.5%) than youth with Italian citizenship (32.8%) (ASTAT, 2017a, p. 110).

In this regard, in July 2015, in line with a national policy, the "Commissariato di governo" (the office representing the Italian state in South Tyrol) signed an agreement in collaboration with the Province, the city of Bolzano/Bozen, and various associations, to allow asylum seekers in the province to undertake volunteering activities. The goal of the programme is to foster their social and economic integration while they wait for their asylum request to be processed (Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano - Alto Adige, 2018b, p. 250).

The refugee crisis and its local impact in South Tyrol has increasingly contributed to migration's visibility in the province, while also stressing the role played by volunteering associations and volunteers in addressing migration issues. The latter compensate for the shortcomings of public/provincial policies. In this regard, the autonomous status of the province of South Tyrol means it independently manages the reception of asylum seekers and refugees within its borders. For many years, the province did not subscribe to the national reception system for asylum seekers and refugees, the "SPRAR system"; the system is managed by local entities and is based on diffused reception in small-sized accommodations. The system guarantees the provision of several services, such as legal, linguistic, and information services. The Province delegated the provision of support and assistance to asylum seekers to a few associations (for many years, only Caritas, the Volontarios/River Equipe volunteering association and, at a later stage, Spes Srl and the Red Cross were selected).

However, the Province was slow in taking proper measures to manage the arrival of asylum seekers. Its approach mostly followed a contingency logic, with extraordinary measures aimed to contain the problem rather than providing comprehensive solutions (Weissensteiner, 2016; Fondazione Alexander Langer *et al.*, 2017; Rabini, 2018). At the beginning, the South Tyrol reception system was characterised by the presence

of big reception structures concentrated in the city of Bolzano/Bozen; many necessary services, like legal assistance, were not guaranteed. Furthermore, many people (in 2017 an average of 180-200 persons) were excluded from the system, sleeping in parks and under bridges, especially in the city of Bolzano/Bozen. Saltarelli interpreted this as a precarious and dissuasive reception model used so that people would not settle in South Tyrol (Saltarelli, 2017).²⁴

Many South Tyrolean inhabitants began to compensate for the public/provincial reception system's shortcomings and organise new "independent" volunteer groups, such as "Binario 1" and "Bozen accoglie" to provide humanitarian help to migrants and asylum seekers (Saltarelli and Weissensteiner, 2016, p. 132). These volunteering groups and other local associations, like "Fondazione Alexander Langer", have played an important role in providing accommodation and various services to asylum seekers, as well as highlighting weaknesses of the South Tyrolean reception system, raising awareness, promoting advocacy, promoting a welcoming culture, monitoring developments along the Brennero/Brenner route (Saltarelli, 2017; Rabini, 2018). They also contributed towards the Province adhering to the SPRAR system and encouraged South Tyrolean municipalities and local entities to subscribe to it – which happened in 2018.²⁵ In this regard, Dalla Pria highlights how, since the city of Bolzano/Bozen has not adhered to the SPRAR system, there is a distinction between the mostly German-speaking mountain areas and valleys featuring a diffused reception system, and the city of Bolzano/Bozen, where most of the Italian-speaking population lives, where large reception structures persist (Dalla Pria, 2019, p. 148).

The outcomes of these events concerning asylum seekers in the past years can be divided according to their short-term and medium-to-long term effects. In the short-term, both formal groups and informal initiatives mobilised to aid and support individuals crossing the province and heading towards Northern Europe. Relief efforts have been complemented by monitoring activities aiming to raise awareness on the situation along the Brennero/Brenner route²⁶. These initiatives have, among other things, favoured the establishment of new synergies and the consolidation of pre-existent ties among groups of volunteers active in different areas. Once the number of arrivals decreased, some of these groups transformed their efforts from emergency relief to activities aimed to support the integration of newcomers, while others have ceased their activities.

In a medium-to-long term perspective, the increased visibility of migration has fostered a renewed awareness for the need of targeted public policies and efforts in support of integration. While new emphasis has been placed on pre-existing efforts for integration (Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, Servizio coordinamento per l'integrazione and EURAC Research, 2018), municipalities in South Tyrol have emerged as important actors at the local level for asylum seekers' reception, accommodation, and integration services (Marcher *et al.*, 2019). Various sectors of local civil society and volunteers have started to pay

²⁴ In this regard it is noteworthy to mention how in September 2016 the Province enacted a rule, the "circolare Critelli," that excluded some vulnerable people (those who were previously present in other EU countries and Italian regions) from accessing reception services (see Fondazione Alexander Langer *et al.*, 2017).

²⁵ Unfortunately, in 2018 the Italian Government restricted the access criteria to the SPRAR system (now called Siproimi, designed only for those who have acquired refugee status, thus excluding asylum seekers). The province and other South Tyrolean local entities declared they oppose this change (Dalla Pria, 2019, p. 113).

²⁶ See for example the work of Antenne migranti at: <https://antennemigranti.it/>

attention to migration and diversity. Furthermore, migration became a fully-fledged topic in the agenda of cultural organisations and associations active in South Tyrol, not least because of the high visibility and intense debate that accompanied the introduction of controls at the Brennero/Brenner Pass (Zamponi, 2018). Reacting to the need to tackle xenophobic attitudes and to advocate for solidarity, both volunteering associations and the third sector have included migration and diversity among the topics to be addressed. This has resulted in increased opportunities for cultural encounters, events tackling diversity as well as consequent challenges and opportunities.

Nowadays, migration is undoubtedly a central topic in the activities of volunteers and third sector organisations in South Tyrol. The challenge ahead is to innovate the types of activities in order to create inclusive initiatives which can link migration to other social challenges affecting this region as well as to fully incorporate the migrants' organizations into this debate.

PART 2: Youth Involvement and Community Survey (YCIS1)

Considering the relevance that volunteering has in South Tyrol and across Europe as a whole, also in regard to immigration issues, VOLPOWER conducted the Youth Involvement and Community Survey (YCIS1). It aimed to provide a more comprehensive picture of young volunteers (including people with a migration background).

By investigating aspects such as reasons for and effects of volunteering, the YCIS1 wanted to contribute to previous surveys and studies on South Tyrol which tended to focus on the volunteers' demographics. Specifically, YCIS1 explored the following five aspects: the respondents' demographic characteristics, volunteering experiences, people's sense of belonging, interpersonal relations, and wellbeing.

However, as will be explained below, the data collected in South Tyrol did not fully allow for the planned analysis. Due to the COVID pandemic, data collection was interrupted despite still not having reached an ideal sample of respondents. The reason for this decision is the belief that the pandemic and the lockdown experience would have markedly influenced the responses. However, the analysis provides some precious insights to better understand South Tyrol's volunteering landscape.

1 Methodology

VOLPOWER conducted the Youth Involvement and Community Survey in the form of an anonymous online survey. Snowball sampling, based on institutional and personal contacts, social media, and mailing lists was used to distribute the survey link. **The survey's sample is not statistically representative and generalisations on the total population cannot be based on this data. Results only reflect the respondents' attitudes, impressions, experiences, and opinions.**

The YCIS1 online questionnaire was active for data collection in the 7 territorial units investigated by the VOLPOWER partners from 7 January 2020 to 22 March 2020. The questionnaire was circulated in South Tyrol, Austria, Croatia, Malta, Scotland, Slovenia, and The Netherlands. The target population were residents between the age of 18 and 27. Cookies were enabled to avoid surveys being completed multiple times by the same respondent. The online software “Opinio Survey” was used to conduct the survey. The questionnaire was entirely anonymous and was translated from English into Arabic, Croatian, Dutch, German, French, Italian, Slovenian, and Turkish.

The questionnaire had been originally developed in English and after an intense testing phase, translations were carried out. A testing phase was also carried out for all other languages.

For the purposes of VOLPOWER research questions, the survey focussed on formal volunteering, clearly defined in the questionnaire as “an activity carried out through an association or organization willingly and without being forced or paid to do it (reimbursements are not considered payment).” Informal volunteering (like helping friends or family members, or every activity not carried out through an organisation or association) should not have been considered by respondents.²⁷

1.1 Specific distribution strategy used in South Tyrol and problems encountered

To increase the possibility of successful snowballing, all associations and personal contacts were contacted by phone²⁸. After the phone call, an exhaustive email with further information on the project was sent; based on what had been defined during the phone call, a bilingual (German and Italian) text to be published in the association’s newsletter, a WhatsApp link, and the access link to the survey were sent.

Two major interconnected problems emerged during the snowballing process. First, reaching young people living in South Tyrol without any volunteering experience or who do not volunteer at present proved to be difficult. Once a good relationship had been established with South Tyrol’s main volunteering associations (the Association of Firefighters, the White Cross, the Young Caritas etc.) and with smaller associations whose entire board often consists of volunteers, the snowballing process within the group of young volunteers proceeded with great success. Finding people who had never volunteered before was a challenge; this is probably due to the fact that a high percentage of South Tyrolean youth is active in voluntary work. Furthermore, there was no direct way of contacting a high number of young residents and motivate them to invest their time in filling out a questionnaire on topics such as sense of belonging,

²⁷ To access an open version of the questionnaire [click here](#). For references on the development of the questions please [click here](#).

²⁸ A non-exhaustive list of the contacted associations and institutions: Associazione giovani musulmani Bolzano, Donne Nissà, *Associazione Agimi Bolzano* Onlus, Biblioteca del mondo Bolzano, Centro giovani La Vintola, HGJ Jugend, Young Caritas, Ufo bruneck, Juvenes, Jugenddienst, Jugendring, Südtiroler Freiheit, Young Green, Volontarius, La strada-der Weg, FUB Free University of Bolzano, major volunteering associations as Weißes Kreuz, Vereinigung Freiwilliger Feuerwehren (Association of Voluntary firefighters), Ufficio politiche giovanili Provincia di Bolzano, Netz Offene Jugendarbeit, Trait-Union, Arteviva.

interpersonal relations, and other aspects of their personal life; while young volunteers were highly motivated to fill out a questionnaire “on volunteering” often sent directly by their organisation. Although several cultural associations and many youth centres exhibited the flyer with the survey’s QR Code for weeks, and the Free University of Bolzano posted an online newsletter presenting the survey, the young population without any volunteering experience could not be reached.

The second main problem was that the survey did not reach two specific segments of the young population: the Italian native speakers (only two respondents filled out the questionnaire in Italian) and the population with a migration background. Regarding the latter, although there were contacts with and the involvement of the Albanian community’s representative (one of South Tyrol’s biggest immigrant communities) as well as several small and large associations that work (only or also) with first-generation or second-generation migrants (Young Caritas, Volontarius, Donne Nissá and others) and the representative of the Association of Young Muslims (Giovani musulmani Bolzano), the survey did not succeed in contacting South Tyrol’s young migrant population.

Despite the limitation of the respondent sample, the YCIS1 and the following analysis provides insights to better understand South Tyrol’s volunteering landscape. Moreover, the results of the study offer a few exploratory, comparative pieces of information on the respondents with/without a migration background and on volunteer/non-volunteer respondents. These aspects could be further investigated in future research.

2 The online survey’s results

2.1 Describing the respondents

In South Tyrol, a total of 547 valid questionnaires were collected, with a higher share of young women (57.8%). More than half the respondents have a high school degree or equivalent (60%), 18% have a university degree and 12% have concluded a trade, technical or vocational training. One interesting aspect is their domicile: 75% live in rural areas (farm or countryside village), 91% have been living in South Tyrol since they were born, and only a tiny minority does not have Italian citizenship (3.8%) or have some kind of migration background (5.3%)²⁹. When reading the responses, it is important to consider the age of respondents (18-27 years): 32% of respondents are students and 11% are working students, thus 43% of respondents are still studying, while 54% are employed (full time, part-time, self-employed, flexible).

Of the 547 respondents, only 28 (5%) have not been involved in volunteering, 61 (11%) have volunteered in the past, and the absolute majority, 458 persons (84%), is actually volunteering.

²⁹ Definition of a “migration background”: with a migration background (persons born abroad and/or with a foreign citizenship). This definition does not include internal migration from other Italian regions which concerns 26 respondents (5 %).

The respondents are mainly young German native-speaking South Tyroleans, who live in the countryside and are actually volunteering – as will be shown in the next section – in the healthcare sector, youth service, and in community work and social service. The interpretation of the results of respondents with a migration background and those without volunteering experience is particularly delicate. Given the small number of respondents for these groups, the results can only be viewed as a reason to carry out necessary further research.

Figure 5: Structure of respondents: Gender³⁰, education³¹, living environment³², length of residence³³ in South Tyrol, citizenship, country of birth, migration background, and employment status

Gender	Female	316	57.8%
	Male	226	41.3%
	Other/I prefer not to say	5	0.9%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>547</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Education	No schooling completed	5	0.9%
	Primary school	43	7.9%
	Trade/technical/vocational training	67	12.4%
	High school graduate, diploma or equivalent	328	60.6%
	University degree or higher tertiary education	98	18.1%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>541</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Living environment	A farm or home in the countryside	90	16.5%
	A country village	317	58.1%
	A town or a small city	116	21.2%
	The suburbs or outskirts of a big city	11	2.0%
	A big city	12	2.2%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>546</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Length of residence in South Tyrol	Since birth	498	91.0%
	Up to five years	26	4.8%
	More than 5 years	23	4.2%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>547</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Citizenship	Italian citizen	526	96.2%
	Other European citizen	13	2.4%
	I don't know/Stateless	3	0.5%
	Other Citizen	5	0.9%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>547</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Country of birth	Born in Italy	518	94.7%
	Born in other European country	13	2.4%
	I don't know/Stateless	2	0.4%
	Born in other country	14	2.6%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>547</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Migration background	no migration background	517	94.7%
	migration background	29	5.3%

³⁰ Question: Which gender do you identify with?

³¹ Question: What is your level of completed education? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.

³² Question: Which definition best describes the area where you live?

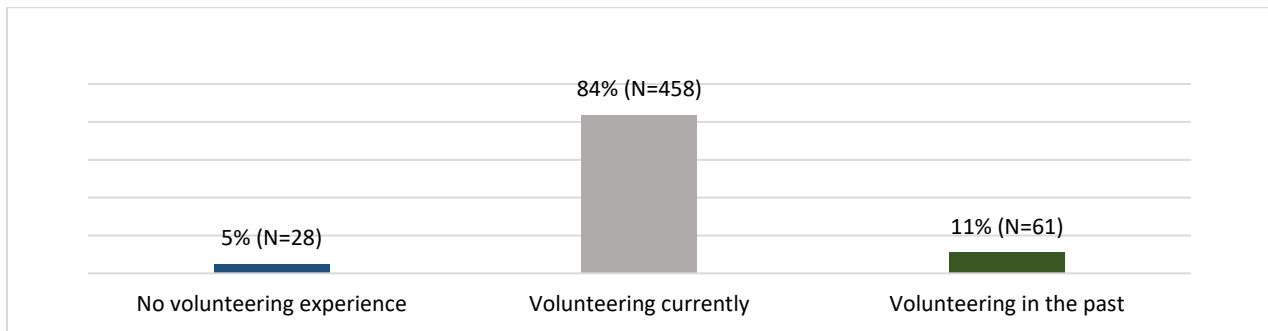
³³ Question: For how many years (approximately) have you lived in South Tyrol?

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	<i>Total</i>	546	100.0%
Employment status (3 categories)	Students only	173	31.6%
	Employed persons (full time, self-employed, part time, flexible, all combinations)	293	53.6%
	Working students	60	11.0%
	Other (missing, unemployed, unable to work)	21	3.8%
	<i>Total</i>	547	100.0%

Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project

Figure 6: Respondents' involvement in volunteering activities³⁴



Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project. Respondents: 547.

2.2 The world of volunteering

As shown above, most of the 547 respondents are actually volunteering (84%) or have volunteered in the past (11%). Despite the respondents' young age, a large number already has several years of volunteering experience: 23% have been involved for more than 10 years, 31% between 6 and 10 years, 26% between 3 and 5 years, 14% more than one year and only 6% of our volunteering respondents have accumulated less than one year of volunteering experience. The frequency of their involvement is also surprising: 6 out of 10 have volunteered at least once a week in the last 12 months (59%) and, when adding people who have volunteered at least once a month (36%), the percentage of regularly involved respondents reaches 96%.

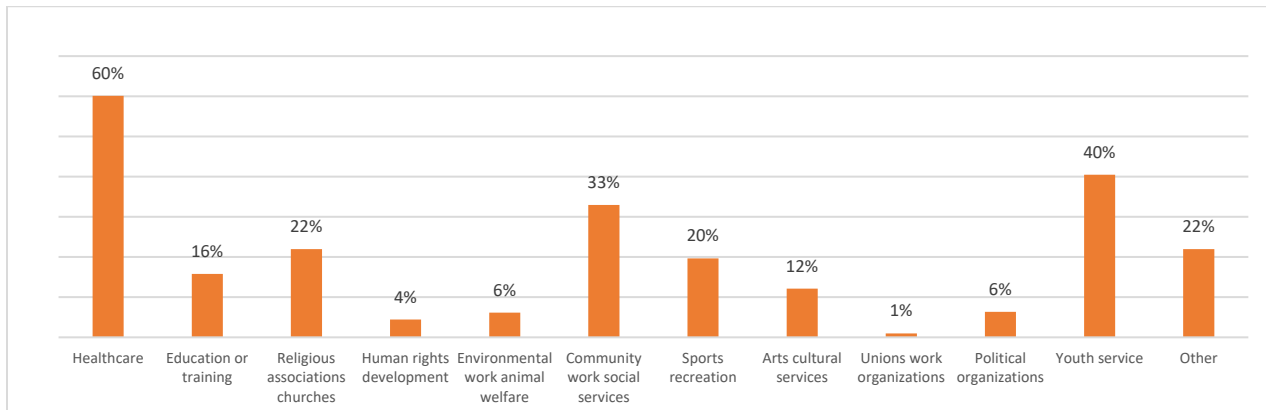
Among men, the share of respondents that are actually volunteering is slightly higher than among women and the involvement is lower for respondents who were not born in South Tyrol: while 87% of "local" respondents are actually volunteering, the percentage reaches 61% for those living in the province for at least the last 5 years, and drops to 42% for those who arrived less than 5 years ago.

³⁴ Question: Have you been involved in volunteering in your life until now? Options: No / Yes, I have volunteered in the past, but not anymore / Yes, I am currently volunteering.

These characteristics confirm official data on volunteering in South Tyrol (presented in PART 1, section 2: Volunteering in South Tyrol: the land of associations). The resident population has been greatly involved in volunteering activities since being teenagers, men are (slightly) more involved than women, the German native-speaking population is more involved and, overall, residents with a recent migration background are less involved in volunteering activities.

Respondents could indicate in how many and which sectors they were active in or had been active in as a volunteer in the past (without limitations regarding the duration of their involvement). The sector by far most represented is healthcare with 60% (312 persons) being active or having been active in the past in this sector (in the case of 96 respondents, exclusively in this sector; 216 respondents together with one or more other sectors). Of the respondents who indicated they were active or have been active in only one sector (31%), more than half (59%) selected the healthcare sector, while the rest is distributed widely within the other 11 categories.³⁵ The second most frequent sector is youth service, with 40% of respondents with volunteering experience in that sector (rarely exclusively); community work and social services are the third most important sector (33%, also rarely exclusively).³⁶

Figure 7: Respondents’ sectors of volunteering activity³⁷

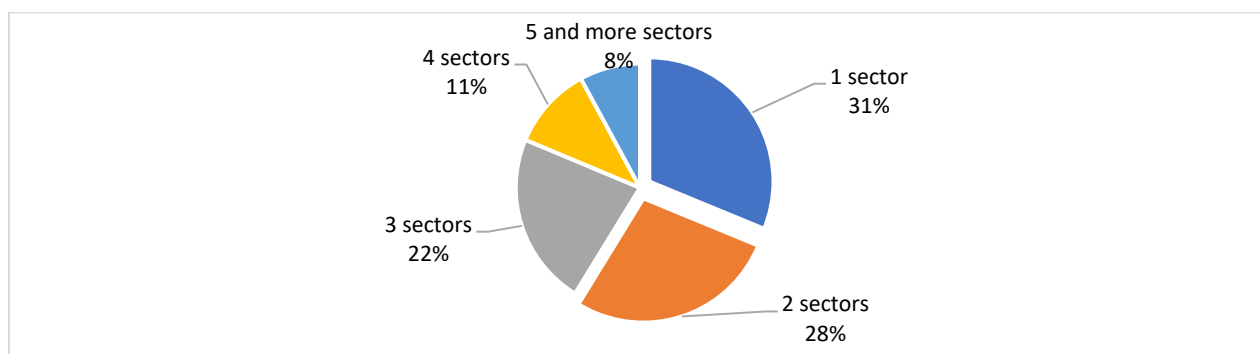


Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project, Respondents: 519 (current and former volunteers), responses: 1,261; more than one answer was possible.

³⁵ This clearly shows the risks of the snowball sampling strategy: the “Weißes Kreuz/Croce Bianca” is a very active, well-known and appreciated volunteering association in the healthcare sector. It boasts more than 3,300 volunteers and the call – promoted at our request by the association itself – to participate in our survey was taken up by a great number of their volunteers.

³⁶ A separate note is required for the high percentage of responses that indicate (mostly also) “other sector” (22%, 114 responses), despite the fact the choices within the 12 categories seemed to successfully cover the world of volunteering – or at least were a good compromise to find a categorisation suitable for all seven territorial units where the questionnaire circulated. One of the hypotheses concerning the high number of respondents who chose “other” is that the categories did not fit well for the volunteers of the “Landesverband der Freiwillige Feuerwehren Südtirols /Corpi dei Vigili del fuoco volontari dell’Alto Adige”. The association of voluntary firefighters trains and boasts several thousand firefighters of all ages. Following our request, they invited their members of age 18-27 to participate in our survey.

³⁷ Question: In which sector have you volunteered? More than one answer is possible.

Figure 8: Number of sectors respondent volunteers have been active in

Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project, Respondents: 519 (current and former volunteers).

There are differences in the indicated sectors between men and women. A higher percentage of female respondents indicated they were active in religious associations or churches (27%) and healthcare (64%); whereas men more often indicated sports and recreation (26%) and “other” (34%). The gender differences are less remarkable in all other sectors.

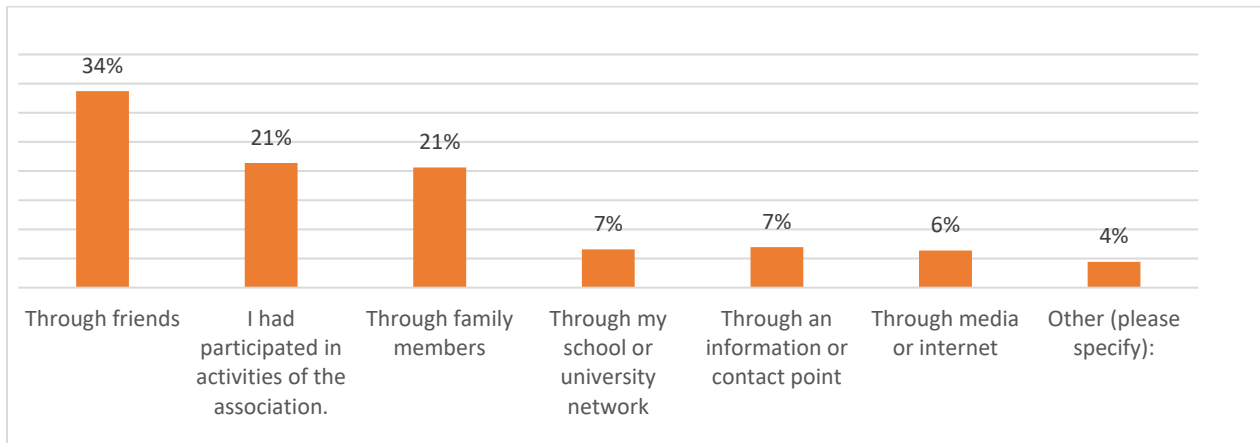
Looking at the responses on the basis of the respondents’ domicile – village or farmhouse and town or small city (the category “big city and suburbs” has too few respondents and cannot be used) – shows the rural areas are characterised by a higher percentage of respondents with volunteering experience in healthcare (63%) and youth service (44%). The urban areas have a higher percentage in education or training (24.5%) and human rights or development (10%).

One of the most interesting aspects is how young volunteers get involved in volunteering. The main factors behind their first involvement are as follows: 34% of respondents (one out of three) indicate having been involved through friends, 22% had taken part in the association’s activities before as customers or participants, and 21% had become involved through family members. The remaining quarter of respondents had been involved through an information or contact point, school or university network, media, the internet or another channel.

The very small number of respondents with a migration background that are involved or were involved in volunteering activities in the past (N=25) should be analysed with caution; however, the information on how they got involved at first could offer some interesting insights. Responses show that the role played by information or contact points, and media and the internet as a first channel could be higher within the young population with a migration background. However, even for these respondents, their peers are the most relevant channel for attracting new volunteers.³⁸

³⁸ Nothing is known about where the volunteering experiences of respondents with a migration background have taken place, i.e. if the major use of certain channels concerns their life in South Tyrol or their life before migration.

Figure 9: First involvement channels³⁹ of respondent volunteers



Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project. Respondents: 519 (current and former volunteers).

2.3 Reasons for and effects of volunteering

The reasons to become involved with volunteering are widely studied and the South Tyrolean respondents who currently volunteer confirm the role of the connection with the province as a strong motivational factor: 80% volunteer to help improve things and make a difference locally, followed by more personal aspects such as personal enjoyment (74%), and the development of employment experience and skills (72%). This last aspect seems more relevant for young volunteers with a migration background.

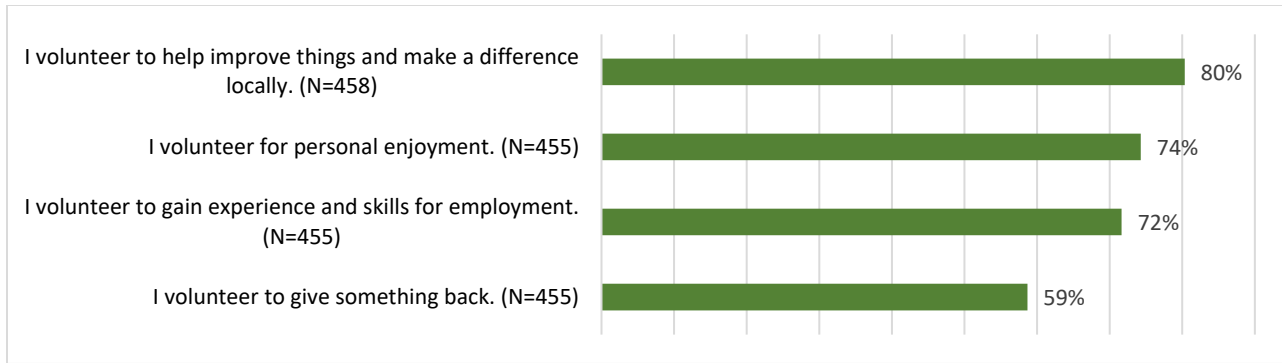
It is widely confirmed that volunteering offers ground and space for practical learning: nearly all respondents, i.e. 94%, state that the activity carried out during volunteering gives them a hands-on experience; 82% state that it is also useful to discover one’s own personal strengths. But, perhaps the most important aspect of all, most young volunteering respondents, i.e. 85%, said their activity makes them feel better about themselves. While respondents with a migration background and current volunteering experience (N=17) seem to seek improved skills and experience, particularly for employment reasons, fewer of them stated they gain practical experience and find out about their strengths through their volunteering activity.

Figure 10: Reasons for volunteering of actual volunteering respondents⁴⁰ (share of respondents that “agreed” or “totally agreed” on the following statements)

³⁹ Question: Thinking about when you started volunteering, how did you get involved? Please select the main factor.

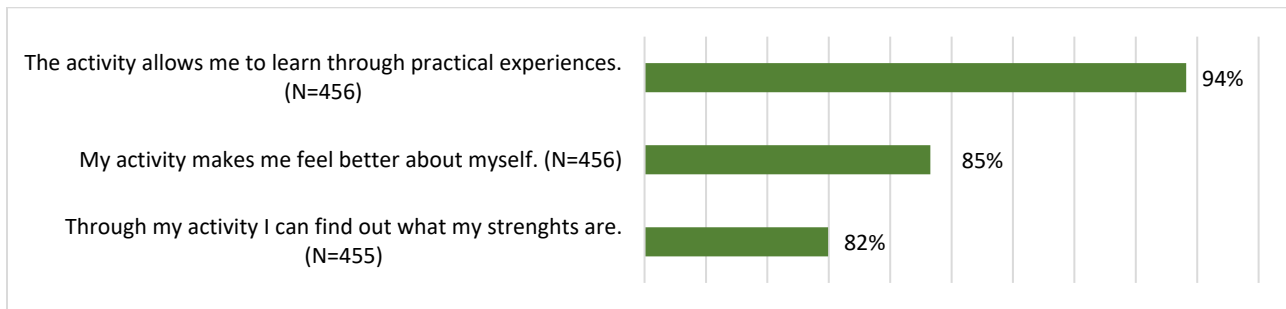
⁴⁰ Question: How much do you agree with the following statements on your volunteering activity?

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Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project.

Figure 11: Effects of volunteering on actually volunteering respondents⁴¹ (share of respondents that “agreed” or “totally agreed” on the following statements)



Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project.

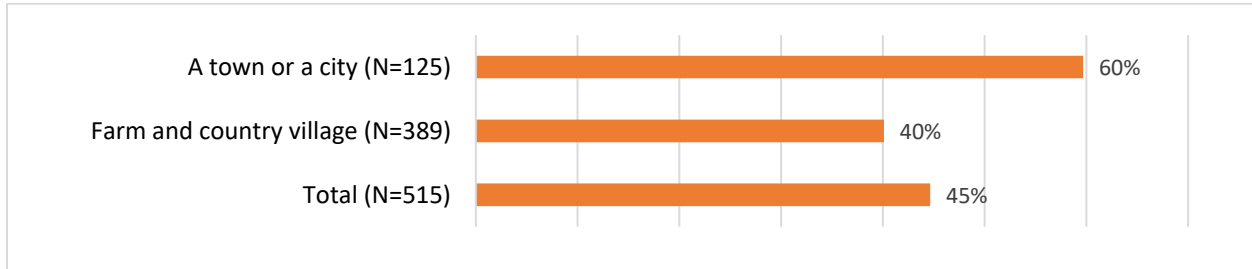
But volunteering can also result in contacts, collaboration, and exchanges with “others”. A vital research question was to see how far volunteering activities promote contact with other cultures and people from different backgrounds and, if so, how this influences understanding within groups. When interpreting these results, it is important to consider that most respondents are German native-speaking South Tyroleans born in the province and living in the countryside (where migrants and the Italian native-speaking population are scarce); and that respondents volunteer mostly in healthcare, youth service and community work, and social service sectors.

Two out of ten respondents who actually volunteer or had volunteering experiences in the past state that their volunteering had no relevant influence on contacts with and their understanding of people from different backgrounds and cultures (20% and 19%). However, more than one third of respondents say it created contact opportunities with people from different backgrounds or cultures (for 37% these contacts “increased” or “increased greatly”) as well as enabling a growth in the understanding of persons with a different background (for 45% their understanding of people from different backgrounds “increased” or

⁴¹ Question: How much do you agree with the following statements on your volunteering activity?

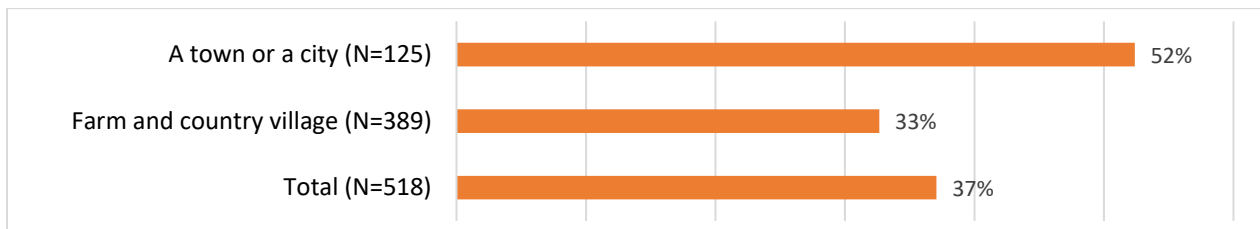
“increased greatly”). This last aspect seems more relevant for respondents living in a town or a city and for respondents with a migration background.⁴²

Figure 12: Effects of volunteering on intercultural understanding⁴³ of respondents with volunteering experience (share of respondents that indicate that their volunteering experience has “increased” or “increased greatly” their understanding of people from different backgrounds/cultures by living environment)



Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project.

Figure 13: Effects of volunteering on intercultural contacts of respondents with volunteering experience⁴⁴ (share of respondents that indicate that their volunteering experience has “increased” or “increased greatly” their contact with people from different backgrounds/cultures by living environment)



Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project.

The central role played by friends in entering the world of volunteering has already been discussed but friendship – and especially the creation of new friendships and contacts – is one of the main and most appreciated side effects of volunteering. Indeed, 86.5% of respondents who actually volunteer “agree” or “strongly agree” that they develop new friendships through their volunteering activities, and 85% say they gain new contacts and networks. But beside the great positive effects on a personal level and on social cohesion, 82% of respondents also indicate that their volunteering activity increases their knowledge of

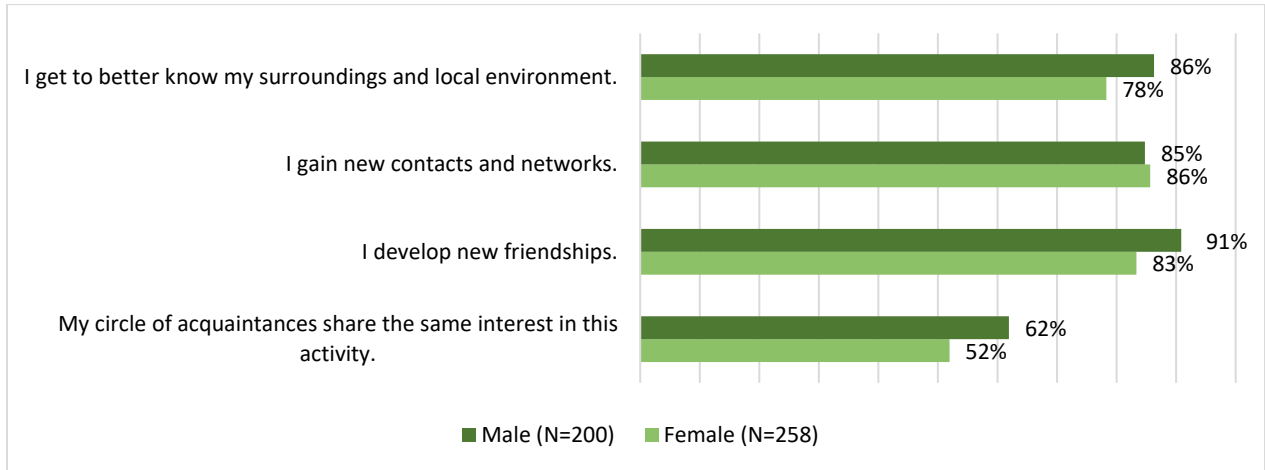
⁴² For respondents with a migration background who actually volunteer or had volunteering experiences, it is not known whether they refer to volunteering experiences in South Tyrol or in their life before settling in the province.

⁴³ Question: To what extent has your volunteering experience decreased or increased your understanding of people from different backgrounds/cultures?

⁴⁴ Question: To what extent has your volunteering experience decreased or increased your contact with people from different backgrounds/cultures?

their surroundings and the local area. The responses to this question do not vary considerably in terms of gender, migration background, and place of residence (urban/rural).

Figure 14: Effects of volunteering on actual volunteering respondents by gender⁴⁵ (share of respondents that “agreed” or “totally agreed” on the following statements)



Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project.

2.4 What hinders volunteering and how to improve volunteering activities

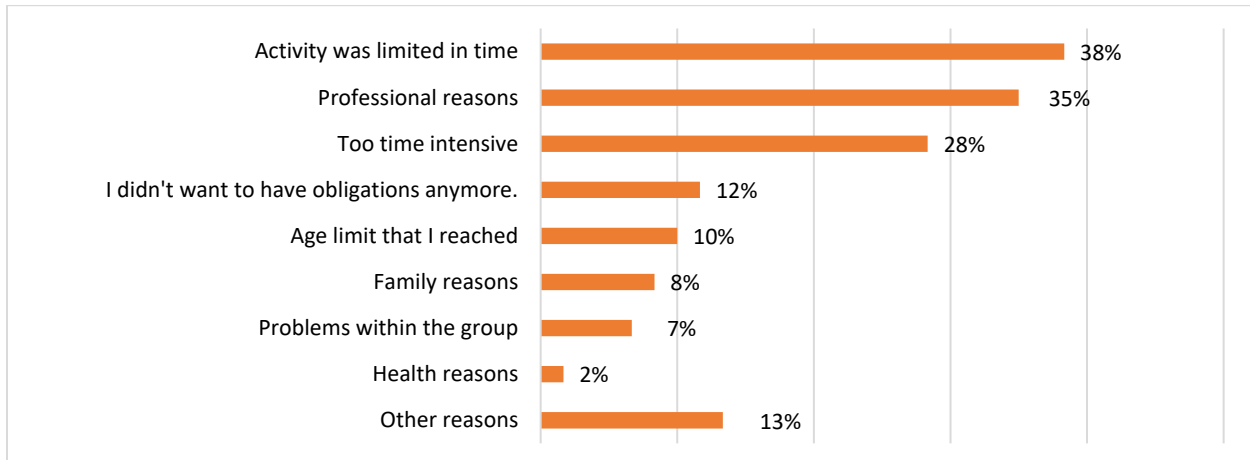
The number of respondents without a volunteering experience (5.1%, N=28) and those who volunteered in the past but not anymore (11.2%, N=61) is small. This is due to the age range of our respondents (18-27 years), the generally high share of volunteers among the South Tyrolean population, and the difficulties in motivating and reaching the young, resident population in general. Bearing this caveat in mind, the following results regard the questions about the reasons for ending their volunteering activity (asked only to former volunteers) and the possible reasons indicated by those who have never volunteered.

The main reasons (more than one answer was possible) for stopping volunteering were: the activity was limited in time to start with (38%); due to professional reasons (35%); and/or that the activity took up too much time (28%). Other reasons such as age limits, family or health reasons, and problems within the group seem less relevant for ending the activity.

Of the 28 young persons who answered the questionnaire and had never volunteered, more than half (16) indicated that they had not thought of volunteering because of time, and 8 indicated professional reasons. Family, a lack of interest or feeling inappropriate were less relevant.

⁴⁵ Question: How much do you agree with the following statements on your volunteering activity?

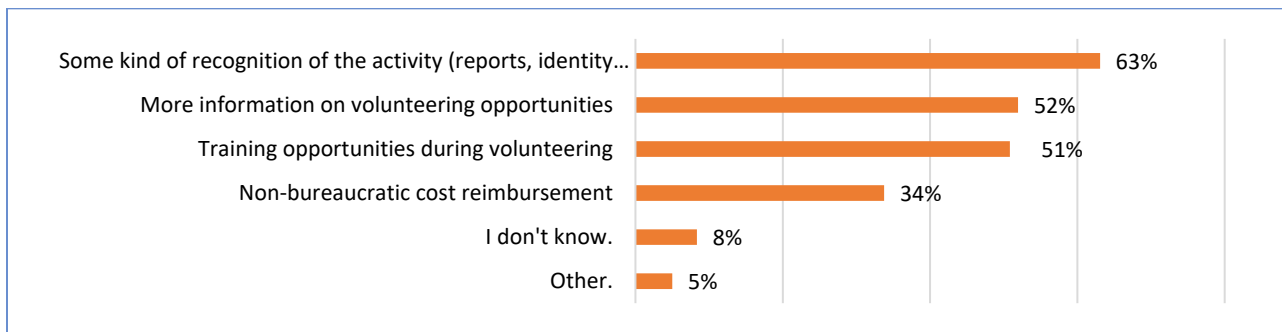
Figure 15: Reasons for ending volunteering activity indicated by former volunteers⁴⁶



Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project. Respondents: 60, responses: 62, more than one answer was possible.

The question on what could help promote volunteering among young people was asked to *all* respondents and the majority chose more than one option. Nearly two thirds (63%) indicate that offering some kind of recognition of the activity, a “volunteer identity card”, for example, would be helpful to motivate young people. However, half the respondents also considered offering more information on volunteering opportunities (52%) to be important as well as to plan training opportunities during the volunteering activity (51%). Streamlined cost reimbursement seems relevant to one third of respondents (34%). It is interesting to notice that for respondents with a migration background (N=29), the potential training opportunities offered during volunteering seem much more relevant for attracting young people than for the rest of the respondents, while there are no marked differences for the other options.

Figure 16: Measures that could help improve volunteering among young people⁴⁷



Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project. Respondents: 539, responses: 1,148, more than one answer was possible.

⁴⁶ Question: There is a range of possible reasons why a volunteering activity has ended. Why did you end your volunteering? More than one answer is possible.

⁴⁷ Question: In your opinion, would you say that improving one or more of the following points would help promote volunteering among young people? More than one answer is possible.

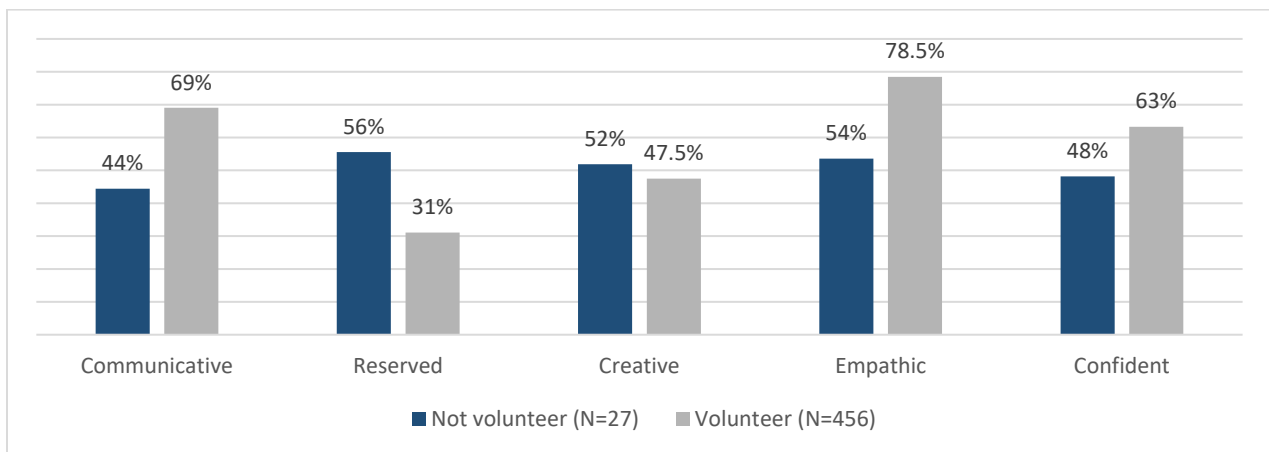
2.5 Do the respondents with or without a volunteering experience differ in their responses concerning personal characteristics, interpersonal relations, sense of belonging, and inclusivity of society?

2.5.1 Self-perception and personal relations

One part of the questionnaire aimed to find out how respondents describe themselves, and if there is a difference between the personal characteristics of volunteering and non-volunteering respondents. As already mentioned, unfortunately the number of respondents without volunteering experience is very low (N=28); however, the data does provide some indications and in part confirms existing research on volunteering and its effects.

Volunteering respondents generally describe themselves as more communicative, empathic, confident and possessing a stronger feeling of personal empowerment; non-volunteering respondents describe themselves as more reserved. The two groups respond similarly only about being creative.⁴⁸

Figure 17: Self-assessment of personal characteristics by actual volunteering respondents and respondents without volunteering experience⁴⁹ (share of respondents that “agreed” or “totally agreed” on the following statements).

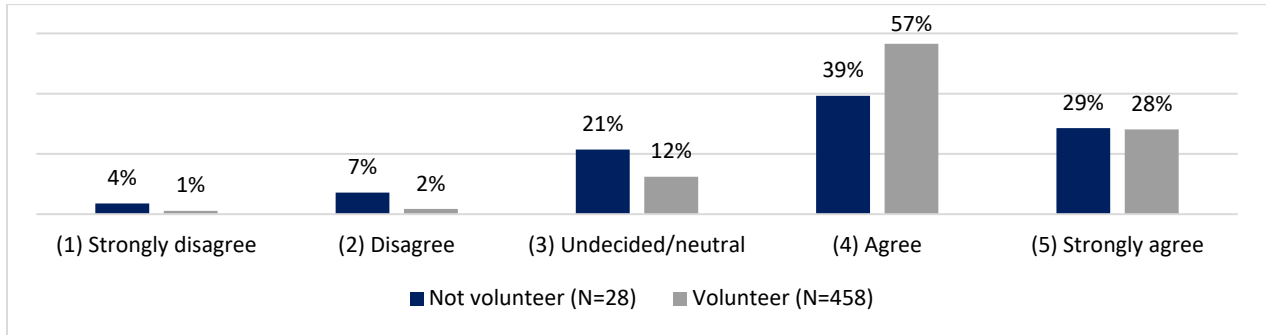


Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project.

⁴⁸ For a clearer representation of the results, the category “Volunteered in the past” has not been included in this section’s two graphs.

⁴⁹ Question: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements about yourself: I am ...”.

Figure 18: Personal feeling of empowerment of actual volunteering respondents and respondents without volunteering experience⁵⁰



Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project.

No marked differences are shown between respondents who actually volunteer and those who have no volunteering experience insofar as the frequency of interpersonal relations is concerned. More than half of both categories meet their friends, relatives or work colleagues at least once a week.

2.5.2 Social wellbeing and sense of belonging

Other aspects which were clarified were the perception of social wellbeing and sense of belonging to the area where the respondents live. While the respondents without volunteering experience are few (N=28) – and the data are not representative for the entire population –, this report still features the results graphs with a short description.

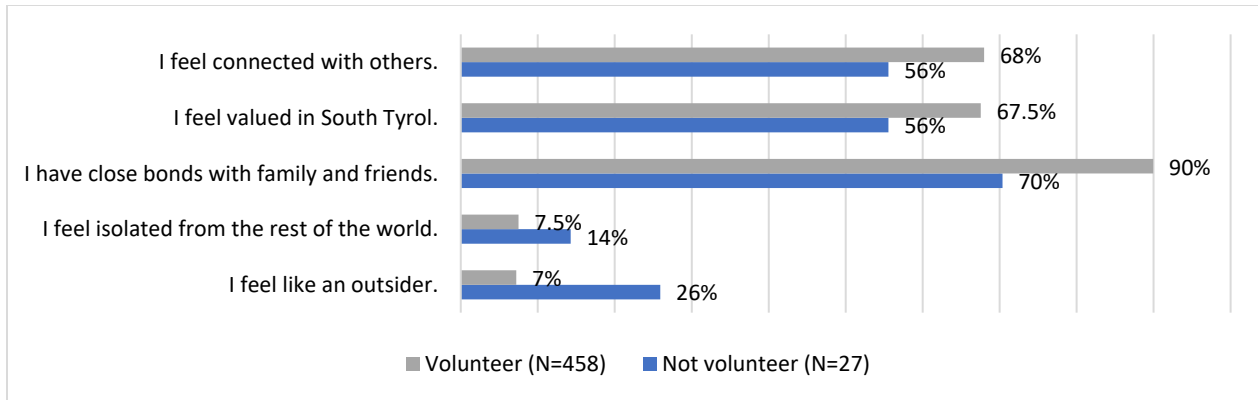
Respondents who are actually volunteering indicate a higher level in all measured positive aspects in relation to social wellbeing than respondents who have never volunteered. The former feel more connected with others, more valued in South Tyrol, and have much closer bonds with family and friends. Overall, the share of respondents who indicate they feel isolated from the world is low, but respondents without volunteering experience agree with this statement more often. One out of four respondents without volunteering experience indicates they feel like an outsider, while the percentage is lower among volunteering respondents.

Figure 19: Social wellbeing of respondents actually volunteering and respondents without volunteering experience⁵¹

⁵⁰ Question: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements about yourself: In general, I feel in charge of the situation in which I live.

⁵¹ Question: How much do you agree with the following statements? Share of responses in the categories “strongly agree” and “agree”.

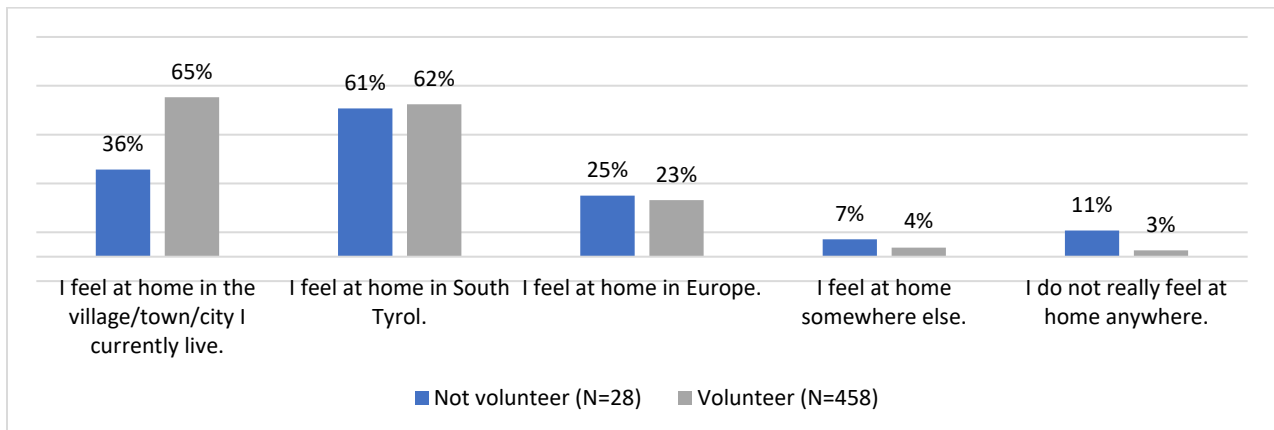
VOLPOWER – Country Report South Tyrol



Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project.

No marked difference is visible concerning the responses on the sense of belonging except for one aspect. Regardless of their volunteering status, six out of ten respondents say they feel at home in South Tyrol, one out of four feels at home in Europe, and only a few respondents say they feel at home somewhere else or do not feel at home anywhere. No marked difference emerges for all these categories. It is thus interesting to notice the variance in responses regarding the sense of belonging at the local level (village or town where respondents actually live): for respondents who actually volunteer, the sense of belonging to the place where they live is the strongest attachment they express (65%), while for respondents without volunteering experience the sense of belonging to where they live is less intense (36%).

Figure 20: Sense of belonging⁵² of actual volunteering respondents and respondents without volunteering experience.



Source: YCIS1 South Tyrol, Volpower Project. Respondents: 486 (current volunteers and respondents without volunteering experience), responses: 849.

⁵² Question: Which of the following statements best describes your sense of belonging? More than one answer is possible.

Conclusions

This report has provided an overview of volunteering activities in South Tyrol, which is one of the case studies of the VOLPOWER project. As shown in the report's first part, a complex legal and institutional structure supports volunteering in Italy and South Tyrol. Volunteering is ingrained in the province's cultural context and plays an important role in migration challenges. As the report highlights, the provincial law regulating the sector does not consider informal volunteering activities and it clearly distinguishes between *volunteering activities* and *activities of social promotion*. By enrolling in the provincial register of volunteering associations, South Tyrolean organisations benefit from fiscal benefits, including funds from the "Fondo speciale per il volontariato". The number of registered associations has nearly doubled in the past decade. Musical bands and choirs as well as theatrical and folklore groups as well as youth centres have been playing a main role in the province for a long time. From a policy perspective, South Tyrolean volunteering associations receive support in several ways. In general, volunteering in South Tyrol flourishes thanks to the support at the provincial level as well as that of local municipalities and through a variety of local initiatives. Volunteers prove to be of particular importance in the South Tyrolean health and social system and many people are involved in volunteering activities although there are differences in age, education, fields, and domicile (in a city or countryside).

In South Tyrol, as in other parts of Italy and Europe, volunteering intersects with migration challenges. The 2011 provincial law on the integration of foreign citizens in South Tyrol recognises the importance of associations which support the migrant population with linguistic and cultural integration. The refugee crisis and its local impact on South Tyrol has contributed to the visibility of migration in the province, while stressing the role played by volunteering associations and volunteers in addressing migration challenges and compensating for shortcomings of public and provincial policies. However, data concerning the participation of migrants in volunteering activities are scarce.

Having recognised the relevance of volunteering in South Tyrol, also in regard to migration challenges, the survey conducted in South Tyrol, while not statistically representative, broadens the knowledge about the world of young volunteers in the province. It gives insights into their attitudes, impressions, experiences, and opinions. Most of the 547 respondents turned out to be active in volunteering at the very moment of the survey or to have volunteered in the past. Despite their young age, many respondents have already accumulated several years of volunteering experience with a surprisingly high frequency of ongoing activities in that area. The most represented sector in which volunteers were active is healthcare. Among other details, the report shows that there are differences between male and female volunteers when choosing the sector in which to invest their volunteering hours; the domicile of respondents also play a role.

Overall, South Tyrolean respondents confirm that the connection with the province is a very strong motivational factor, followed by personal enjoyment, and the expectation to gain employment experience and skills. Respondents say their activity allows them to gain hands-on experience and to find out more

about their strengths. Nearly two thirds of all respondents consider that offering some kind of recognition of the activity, like a sort of “volunteer identity card” would be helpful to motivate young people in future. It is interesting to note that the few people with a migration background that took part in the survey appear to volunteer especially to gain employment experience and skills, and stress the importance of training opportunities to promote volunteering among young people.

From the analysis it emerges that volunteers describe themselves generally as more communicative, empathic, confident, and with a stronger feeling of personal empowerment, while the few respondents who are not volunteering are more reserved. Concerning the frequency of interpersonal interactions, there are no marked differences between respondents who volunteer and those without any volunteering experience at all. Respondents that are actually volunteering show a higher level in all measured aspects concerning social wellbeing than the few respondents who have never volunteered in their life. For nearly half of the respondents, their volunteering activity increased their understanding of people from different backgrounds or cultures, and four out of ten state that volunteering has increased their contact with diversity. Ultimately, the responses regarding their sense of belonging are different in relation to their feeling of attachment to the local area: volunteers have a stronger sense of belonging to the place they currently live in.

Overall, the research conducted in South Tyrol confirms the positive effects of volunteering and its important role in the Province. It pushes to further consider how volunteering interplays with migration challenges and the growing diversity of the South Tyrolean society. Volunteering groups and other local associations have been highlighting the weaknesses of the South Tyrolean migrant reception system while encouraging municipalities to act. On the other hand, official statistics estimate the number of foreign residents in the province will reach 107,464 units in 2030, which would represent a share of about 19% of the general estimated number of the resident population (nearly one out of five); the estimate of young foreign residents (0-14 years) would represent 30% of the general estimated number of the young population (ASTAT 2014, p. 65).⁵³ This demographic evolution should encourage a serious reflection on the growing (potential) pool of volunteers with a migration background in South Tyrol, especially in a context in which official statistics show foreign youth being less involved in volunteering (non-sport) associations than the rest of the youth (ASTAT 2017a, p. 110).

The important role of volunteering activity is (once more) confirmed by this research. Active volunteering should play a key role for processes of inclusion and empowerment in the future, especially for (all) South Tyrolean youth.

⁵³ Share calculated by the authors.

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