Involving volunteers into organization of big events – weaknesses and strengths -
description of the project

The organizers of the big events (sports and other) have been increasingly relying on the work
of volunteers. The systematic knowledge about the benefits of volunteering work for the big
events organizers and for volunteers themselves as well as the conditions of efficient use of
the voluntary work is scarce. From the organizers’ point of view the voluntary work can be a
method of decreasing the costs. Also under some circumstances it can be a precondition for an
event, which otherwise would be too expensive if the work was contracted in the market.
From the volunteers’ point of view, the voluntary work can be understood as a tool for
professional activation of people whose professional position is weak. The voluntary work
during big events can also contribute towards the formation of civic, non-governmental sector
(third sector). For volunteers, participation in big events is also a chance to gain unique
experience and an opportunity to take part in an important event or a chance to act help other
people.

Volunteers are involved in organizing big events, in Poland. Several cases can serve as
events: the United Nations Climate Conference (COP 14) which took place in December
2008 in Poznań, The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity – a money raising event which is
organized every year in whole Poland, also local events like Theatre Festival „Malta” which
takes place every year in June - July in Poznań, sports events and many more. In Poland a big
potential of experience in managing the work of the volunteers exists. However, the research
about that issues are almost nonexistent. The practical competences are owed by practitioners,
which are directly dealing with preparation of the events. The transfer of knowledge and good
practice is limited.

The aim of the research project: „Involving volunteers into organization of big events” is to
describe the voluntary work as a tool to acquire work for big events. The analysis will
concern:

a) the scale of involvement of volunteers (potential and in practice);

b) motivation (of the volunteers and non-volunteers);

c) the extent and character of experience achieved by volunteers;

d) benefits and costs bear people involved in the event;

The obtained information will allow to:

a) assess in what extent and under what conditions voluntary work can be the effective
alternative for other forms of employment

b) indicate social and cultural consequences of the choices made about realisation of big
events;

c) analyse of potential influence of the voluntary work at big events on local social and
cultural environment and local labour market.
The potential of voluntary work seems to be difficult to overestimate and its broadening can bring economical and social benefits – in the context of future events, such as EURO 2012.