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Volunteering in Eastern Europe: one of the missing links?

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Introduction

Post communist transformations affect simultaneously all the subsystems of the social system: the economic and political changes are the most visible, but they are underlain by the changes of the social structure and of the social values, which prove to have a deeper and longer impact (Sztompka, 1999b, Illner, 1999; etc.)

The new political institutions (parties, parliament, elections etc.) as well as the economic ones (private business, banks, markets, stock exchange, etc.) can not efficiently work if they lack the support of and they do not express adequate cultural patterns. Lack of participative values, mistrust in democracy and governments, as well as less developed entrepreneurial values, self responsibility, autonomy, and individual planning were identified as being the main discontinuities between the Western capitalism and the Eastern cultures (Sztompka, 1993, 1999b; Nodia, 1996; Verdery, 2003; Rose, 2001; Voicu, 2001).

Our paper focuses on volunteering behaviors, as an expression of a participative culture. We are interested in the cultural and social determinants of volunteering both at individual level, but mainly at aggregate (country) level. We notice that the phenomenon has a lower incidence in the ex-communist space than in the occidental democracies, and we try to explain the discrepancies through cultural traditions, globalization and the economic background.

Volunteering and associative values (as well as other related concepts, such as community development – see Precupețu, 2003) are quite new realities for the ex-communist societies. They come as part of a globalizing Western culture, and are frequently imposed by the international agencies (such as the World Bank and EU), or imported through the activity of transnational NGOs (like Soros' OSF, child care organizations such as World Vision, ecological organizations such as Green Peace, professional organizations such as Médecins sans Frontières).

They start to exist in a world without participative traditions. Communist rulers tended to sink civil society by a diversity of means: state control over any type of association, including by example labor unions, women associations and even chess clubs; full control over media; few and unattractive opening hours for the restaurants, pubs and any other place where people could meet and chat; state control of the time of the citizens through mandatory unpaid supplementary work – sometimes called voluntary or patriotic, through the obligation to participate in party ritual meetings (local party organization meetings, parades, etc.), through the huge amount of time spent queuing etc. (Ekiert, 1992; Rose, 1999; M. & B. Voicu, 2003; Verdery, 2003).

Public space was perceived as the room of lying, of the official fake reality (Nodia, 1996; Verdery, 2003; Platonova, 2003; etc.), with deep consequences on the post-communist lack of trust in any public activity. Adding the rather non participative pre-communist tradition, one might have the cultural explanation for the lower volunteering of ex-communist countries.

On the opposite, the different proximity and influence of the western globalizing culture provide the cultural reasons for the differences among the countries within the region: volunteering decreases from West to East and from North to South.

At the individual level, the profile of the Eastern European volunteer is similar with the Western one. Volunteers have a dominant status: younger, well educated, wealthier, displaying

higher levels of trust (M. & B. Voicu, 2003). This is another argument for lower volunteering in the poorer East, also marked by higher mistrust (Sztompka, 1999a).

The structure of the paper follows our aims. We start with a short review of the existing literature on volunteering. Then, the analysis of the individual level determinants of volunteering precedes the investigation of the differences in volunteering between the European countries. In the end we focus on explaining why the ex-communist countries volunteer lower. The data used is provided by the 1999 European Values Survey.

The typical volunteer: theoretical background and main hypothesis

The term volunteerism is a complex one and it is used in a variety of meanings. Different authors emphasize different characteristics and different meanings of the voluntarism and of the volunteer activity. Wuthnow (1991) points out that altruism is the main trait of the volunteer work, while other authors stress the un-altruistic character. Wilson and Musick (1997) consider the informal help a kind of volunteer work, while Shead (1995) emphasizes the formal character of the volunteer activity. Tilly and Tilly (1994) stress the uncommodified character of the volunteering, but other authors consider it to be commodified.

This paper considers the volunteer work as a formal, nonaltruistic and uncommodified activity. We define volunteering as an activity through which the individual spends a part of his time, without any wage, by free choice, in a formal way, within an organization, working for the benefit of the others or of the entire community.

The social scientists have developed two main approaches in order to find the reasons for the people involvement into the volunteering activity. One of them is focused on the individual and local resources and points out that people who have more resources (in terms of income, social and human capital) are much implicated in the volunteering work, because they have much to share with the others, and second, because they are more attractive for the volunteer organizations. The second approach is paying attention to the beliefs and values of the people who are volunteers and points out that the cultural dimension is much more important for the volunteer work.

The studies which can be included in the first approach have focused on several types of societal or individual resources, like social capital, human capital, incomes etc. The social capital is very important for volunteering, because volunteering means participation and cooperation and requires trust in other people. Pearce (1993) indicates that voluntary organization used to recruit new members by the social network of their members; therefore people who have a large social network have a higher probability to be in contact with a voluntary organization and to work for it (Wilson, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1997). On the other hand, participation in voluntary organization contributes to increase the social capital of the members and increase the probability to get in contact with other voluntary organizations (Smith, 1994, Wilson & Musick, 1997, Putnam, 2001).

Several authors (see Smith, 1994; Wilson, 2000) emphasize the relation between volunteering and human capital. The better educated persons are more likely to do volunteer work

because their knowledge can be used in order to help the organization. On the other hand, a higher level of education is usually associated with increased aspiration and interest in fulfilling superior needs, like gratification from non-material rewards. In addition, a quite good level of health is required in order to be involved in a volunteer work.

A positive relation between volunteering and income is also reported (Smith, 1994; Wilson, 2000). Better off people find more time and display more willingness to perform voluntary activities. At societal level, Inglehart (2003:70) notes that “economic development tends to produce rising levels of volunteering”.

The relation between volunteering and age is a controversial one. Some authors like Wilson & Musick (1994) and Wilson (2000) show that women are much involved in the volunteer work because they score higher on altruism and empathy and are less involved on the labour market. Dekker and van den Broek (1996) and Pearce (1993) indicate that men are more inclined to volunteer because they are better educated and they have more resources to share.

There is no consensus with the respect to the relation between volunteering and age. Some authors point out that the level of volunteering is higher among the teenagers, is decreasing among young people and is the highest for the adult people (40 – 55 years old). However, Wilson (2000) shows that “rational choice theory predicts an increase in volunteering at retirement age because more free time become available” (p. 226).

The social environment is another type of resource which can influence the level of involvement into the volunteer activity. We already have discussed impact of the level of education, of social capital and of the material capital in the area, on the volunteering. However, there are other characteristics of the locality, which can determine the level of volunteering in the area. The dimension of the locality is one of them. Sundeen (1988) indicates that the level of volunteering is higher in smaller cities because they provide many opportunities for face-to-face interaction and for finding mutual solutions for common problems. On the other side, bigger cities have higher needs for public good and services, and therefore, they offer many opportunities for volunteering.

The second approach with the respect to the motivation of the volunteering emphasizes the role of values in determining the participation in voluntary activity. Kendall and Knapp (1995) point out that the volunteer sector has an expressive function, which expresses mainly the social, philosophical, moral and religious values of those who support the volunteer sector. The sociological literature (Wilson & Musick, 1997; Wuthnow, 1994) on this topic stresses the role of religious values in determining the volunteerism.

Discussing the motivation of volunteerism, Pearce (1993), Cnaan and Amrofel (1994) emphasize the role of social connections opportunities, internal qualifications, or contextual rewards and they completely reject the altruistic motivation as incentive for volunteering. Therefore, the determinants of volunteerism can be reduced to a set of social resources and socio-economic status indicator.

The literature dedicated to volunteering being focused on the western societies, the above characteristics picture up the portrait of the western volunteering. We aim to show that the eastern European one is no different in its main features: a well educated person, with a large social network, who have a good material position and who search to fulfill some superior needs. In addition, we expect to find a higher level of volunteerism among younger people, with a higher

religious practice and who reside in urban areas. We do not expect further differences in volunteering neither for man nor women, nor depending on locality size (apart from those between urban and rural areas). Due to the data constrains, we opted for a resource oriented approach, and, following Pearce (1993) or Cnaan and Amrofel (1994), we do not pay much attention to the individual cultural or psychological factors determining volunteering behaviors. However, we show that there are important cultural traits that determine the country variation in the incidence of volunteering.

Eastern and Western volunteers: similar portraits

As we have showed in a previous paper (M. and B. Voicu, 2003), the Romanian volunteer displays similar features with those reported for the western one. This section aims to extend the analysis to the entire European area. We focus on individual (factual) determinants of volunteering, but we also consider that bloc and national culture have a significant impact on the phenomenon¹.

In order to identify the volunteers, we have constructed two different indexes, each of them having two versions. Both are based on individual declarations of performing voluntary work in several types of organizations (Table 1).

Table 1. The incidence of performing voluntary work for different types of organizations in Europe

<i>Do you work unpaid for...</i>	Western Europe	Former communist countries	Turkey & Malta
Welfare organization	6%	2%	2%
Religious organization	7%	4%	6%
Cultural activities	7%	3%	2%
Trade unions	3%	4%	1%
Political parties/groups	2%	2%	4%
Local community action	2%	2%	2%
Third world-development/human rights	3%	0%	1%
Environment	3%	1%	1%
Professional associations	3%	2%	1%
Youth work	4%	2%	2%
Sports/recreation	10%	5%	3%
Women groups	2%	1%	1%
Peace movement	1%	0%	0%
Voluntary health organizations	3%	1%	1%
Other groups	5%	3%	2%

Note: the figures are computed using the EVS'99 database, weighted according to the individual countries populations.

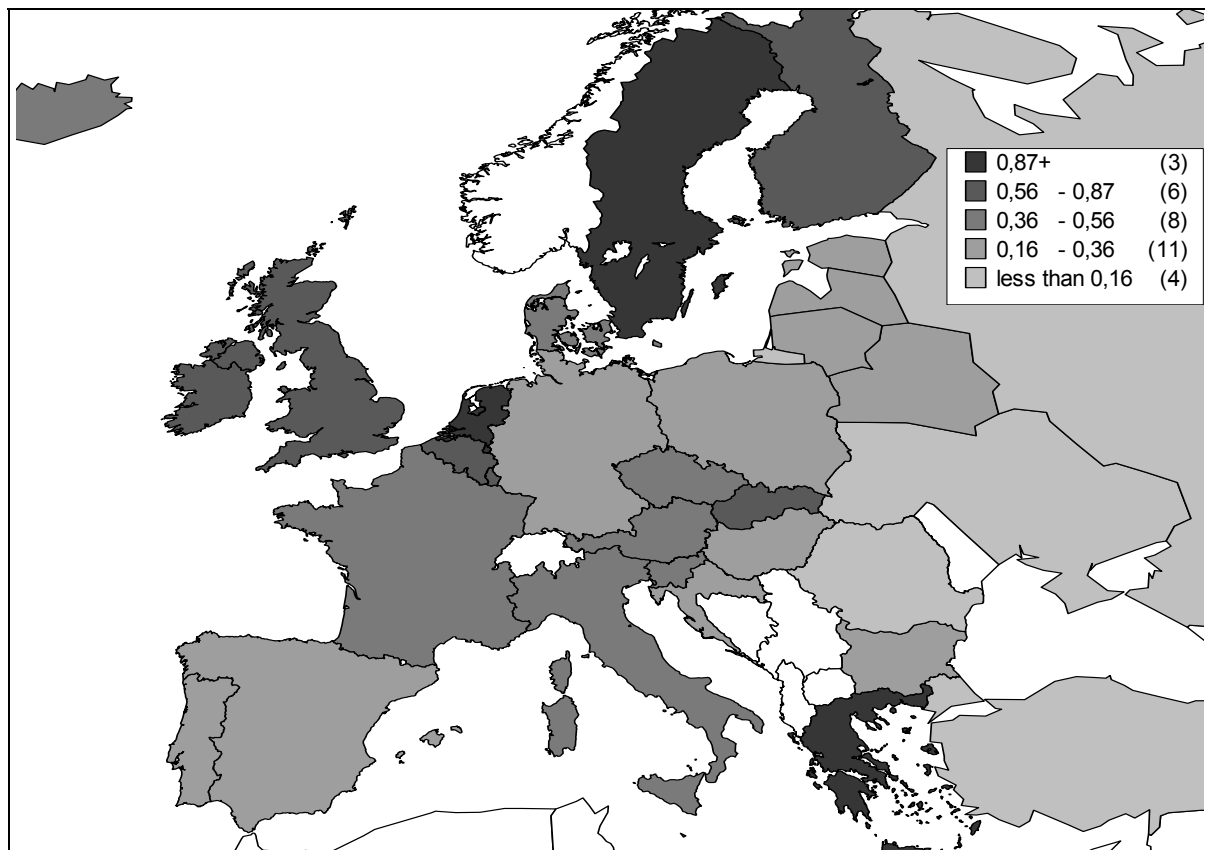
The first index taps for performing voluntary activities in any kind of organization except for political parties and labor union. The excluding of the two types of organizations is based on the

¹ Sztompka (1999b) argued that the ex-communist societies share two types of cultural sources: a bloc culture, determined by the common inclusion within the communist bloc, featuring command economy and state control over society and social thinking; a western (globalizing) cultural influence, due to the contagion with the occidental societies, with which the respective countries share in different degrees a common history, common religious denominations, and common ways to do. In addition, the third important cultural source finds its roots within the national traditions.

Romanian example: in the sectors where there is a labor union, almost everyone belong to it as a matter of fact, not by ones own will; the meaning of voluntary work for labor unions became confusing, as many people tend to answer with ‘yes’ by the simple fact that they are member in a union, pay contributions, and participate in strikes when they happen (or mime to participate in order to gain some extra free-time). For the political parties, the problems are more complex. It is difficult to define what the responders defined as voluntary work in this case: simply chatting with others in the siege of the local organization, really doing unpaid work for the party (distributing promotional materials, posting posters, answering to the phone etc.) or doing the same work, but for modicum money. The index could be computed in two different ways: as a continuous variable (the number of types of performed voluntary activities), or a dichotomous one (if the individual performs or not any volunteer activity).

The second index is identical with the first one, but we have excluded the religious associations too, in order to check if the effect of religious practice might have deeper roots on volunteering.

Figure 1. The average number of types of organizations in which one volunteer, except for political parties and trade unions



Notes: The white spots mark countries which were not investigated through the EVS 1999. Slovakia’s volunteering is probably overestimated due to collecting errors.

A first look at the Table 1, Figure 1 and Table 2 suggests that western Europeans volunteer more often than the eastern ones. For all types of associations the east-west differences depicted in Table 1 are significant at $p < 0,0005$, western Europeans volunteering more, except for the trade unions, where, as expected, the ex-communist citizens are more displaying a volunteering behavior.

Table 2. Volunteering incidence by country/region

<i>Country/region</i>	Volunteering in any type of organization except for trade unions and political parties		Volunteering in any type of organization except for trade unions, political parties and religious organizations	
	Volunteer in at least one association (%)	average number of types of associations in which an individual is involved	Volunteer in at least one association (%)	average number of types of associations in which an individual is involved
Ukraine	9%	0,10	7%	0,08
Sweden	54%	1,00	43%	0,77
Russia	5%	0,06	4%	0,05
Netherlands	49%	0,89	46%	0,77
Slovakia	47%	0,70	40%	0,57
Great Britain	43%	0,79	42%	0,73
Turkey	4%	0,06	3%	0,06
Greece	38%	0,87	36%	0,80
Finland	36%	0,58	33%	0,50
Denmark	36%	0,51	34%	0,48
Belgium	35%	0,61	33%	0,56
Luxembourg	30%	0,58	29%	0,52
Iceland	30%	0,46	29%	0,42
Czech Republic	30%	0,45	29%	0,42
Ireland	29%	0,53	27%	0,46
Austria	29%	0,41	25%	0,34
Slovenia	27%	0,50	25%	0,45
Malta	26%	0,44	18%	0,31
France	25%	0,35	24%	0,32
Italy	24%	0,41	21%	0,35
Northern Ireland	21%	0,35	17%	0,25
Germany	21%	0,26	17%	0,20
Latvia	21%	0,26	18%	0,22
Croatia	20%	0,30	18%	0,25
Estonia	17%	0,26	15%	0,24
Spain	17%	0,25	15%	0,21
Hungary	15%	0,24	11%	0,18
Belarus	14%	0,19	11%	0,15
Portugal	13%	0,17	12%	0,14
Bulgaria	12%	0,18	11%	0,16
Poland	12%	0,17	10%	0,13
Lithuania	12%	0,14	8%	0,10
Romania	10%	0,13	7%	0,10
Western Europe	31%	0,51	28%	0,45
Ex-communist countries	18%	0,26	15%	0,22
Turkey & Malta	14%	0,23	10%	0,17

When analyzing the country variation of volunteering, one could easily notice that former communist societies do not declare volunteering behavior as often as the western ones, with as few exceptions, notably the ones of Slovak and Czech Republik. However, as we will show in the following sections, Slovakia is an outlier among the other European countries and probably the data set is affected by collecting errors.

On the other hand, mapping the incidence of volunteering (Figure 1), the West-East and North-South decrease of volunteering is consistently followed. The exceptions are (the same)

Slovakians, as well as the Greeks. For the last ones, it is probably that the European Union membership during the Cold War worked such as it increased the volunteerism.

Within this framework, we have focused on the individual determinants of volunteering. We have used the dichotomous versions of the two indexes and run logistic regression analysis on each country, as well as on the entire data set. Table 3 presents the main results. The model fits well the data in all countries, and brings valuable information. The main predictors are the same in the majority of the countries: education, religious practice, social network, income and age. People with dominant status tend to volunteer more often in all of the European societies.

Table 3. Results of (country level) logistic regressions on volunteering

Predictors	Effect/level of significance
Education	Significant positive effect at $p < 0,05$, except for Great Britain, Denmark, Iceland, Romania, Greece. For Sweden the effect is significant at $p < 0,10$.
Frequency of social contacts (spending time with friends)	Significant positive effect at $p < 0,05$, except for Romania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Russia, Latvia, Slovenia, Great Britain, Northern Ireland, Hungary, Estonia
Income	Significant positive effect at $p < 0,05$, except for Austria, Netherlands, Poland, Bulgaria, Russia, Northern Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Finland, and Belarus. For Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, the effect is significant at $p < 0,10$.
Religious practice	Significant positive effect at $p < 0,05$, except for Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Croatia, Greece. For Czech Republic, Slovakia, Russia, Slovenia, Ukraine the effect is significant at $p < 0,10$.
Age	Positive effect significant at $p < 0,05$ for Germany, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria, Spain, Belgium, Finland, Iceland, and Russia.
Gender (male)	Positive effect significant at $p < 0,05$ for, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Poland. For Italy and Iceland the effect is significant at $p < 0,10$.
Trusting people	Positive effect significant at $p < 0,05$ for UK, Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Croatia.
Size of locality	Negative effect significant at $p < 0,05$ for Italy, France, Iceland, Estonia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Russia, Luxembourg, Ukraine, Austria.
Number of children within the household	No significant effect at $p < 0,05$, except for Croatia. For $p < 0,10$, there is a positive significant effect too, for Germany, Slovakia and Iceland.
Fit	The model adequately fit the data for each country ($p < 0,005$ for the Omnibus test, while for the Hosmer and Lemeshow test $p > 0,05$, except for Austria and Slovakia).
Nagelkerke pseudo- R^2	The models explains in average 10,2% of the volunteering variation when excluding the volunteering in religious organizations. Belarus, Greece and France have the lowest explained variation (4-5%), while for UK (27%), Bulgaria (18%), Croatia, Luxemburg, Romania and Spain (14-15%) the R^2 has the highest values. The average explained variance for the western countries is 10,6%, while for the ex-communist societies is 9,8%. If religious volunteering is included, the explained variation increases up to an average of 13,2% in Western Europe and 10,1% in the rest of the countries. For 19 out of 30 countries the explained variance is over 10%.

However, the local culture has a great influence on volunteering incidence. We have built the same regression model and run it for the entire data set (the whole European population), except Turkey and Malta, both presenting particular specificities. We have added among predictors dummy variables for each country, keeping Italy as reference category (it is the median European country when ordering upon volunteering incidence).

Table 4. Logistic regression models for volunteering in Europe, including the country effect

dependent	Religious associations included			Religious associations excluded		
	b	Wald	sig.	b	Wald	sig.
religious practice	0,42	421,4	0,000	0,26	151,7	0,000
education	0,06	109,6	0,000	0,06	108,6	0,000
spending time with friends	0,27	69,3	0,000	0,29	74,2	0,000
income (deciles)	0,08	56,1	0,000	0,08	53,6	0,000
trusting people	0,25	22,9	0,000	0,24	20,3	0,000
size of locality	-0,04	17,7	0,000	-0,04	19,4	0,000
man	0,19	15,4	0,000	0,19	14,8	0,000
no. of children	0,00	0,0	0,876	0,00	0,0	0,986
(inverse of) age	0,16	0,0	0,948	1,24	0,2	0,618
COUNTRY		1159,8	0,000		1113,0	0,000
Sweden	1,68	77,7	0,000	1,12	34,3	0,000
Netherlands	1,30	94,3	0,000	1,16	75,2	0,000
Great Britain	1,27	140,9	0,000	1,26	139,2	0,000
<i>Slovakia</i>	1,17	34,6	0,000	1,03	27,0	0,000
Denmark	1,08	25,9	0,000	0,96	20,5	0,000
<i>Czech Republic</i>	1,06	40,7	0,000	0,97	33,3	0,000
Finland	0,99	20,6	0,000	0,80	13,1	0,000
Greece	0,90	27,5	0,000	0,90	27,0	0,000
Belgium	0,86	25,6	0,000	0,83	23,4	0,000
France	0,80	57,3	0,000	0,70	42,3	0,000
Germany	0,32	10,3	0,001	0,10	0,8	0,367
Austria	0,36	3,1	0,077	0,32	2,3	0,130
Luxembourg	0,53	0,3	0,577	0,52	0,3	0,581
Iceland	0,49	0,3	0,586	0,36	0,2	0,692
<i>Latvia</i>	0,48	1,9	0,168	0,28	0,6	0,448
<i>Slovenia</i>	0,42	1,1	0,303	0,39	0,9	0,340
<i>Hungary</i>	0,08	0,2	0,678	-0,21	0,9	0,338
Ireland	0,02	0,0	0,942	0,18	0,4	0,506
<i>Estonia</i>	0,01	0,0	0,986	-0,15	0,1	0,766
<i>Belarus</i>	-0,10	0,3	0,603	-0,39	3,1	0,076
Northern Ireland	-0,15	0,3	0,598	-0,18	0,4	0,550
Spain	-0,20	2,1	0,144	-0,26	3,4	0,065
<i>Croatia</i>	-0,21	0,7	0,403	-0,19	0,5	0,479
<i>Bulgaria</i>	-0,49	4,2	0,040	-0,55	5,0	0,025
<i>Ukraine</i>	-0,65	24,9	0,000	-0,85	37,2	0,000
<i>Lithuania</i>	-0,69	3,0	0,085	-0,91	4,2	0,041
<i>Poland</i>	-0,90	51,9	0,000	-0,84	39,4	0,000
<i>Romania</i>	-0,90	27,7	0,000	-1,05	30,7	0,000
<i>Russia</i>	-1,45	156,7	0,000	-1,56	169,7	0,000
Constant	-1,02	44,5	0,000	-1,71	113,5	0,000
Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients						
Chi-square	$\chi^2=2451,9$	df=38	p<0,0005	$\chi^2=2135,3$	df=38	p<0,0005
Hosmer and Lemeshow Test						
Chi-square	$\chi^2=2,0$	df=3	P=0,569	$\chi^2=1,4$	df=3	p=0,700
Pseudo R²						
Cox & Snell R Square	15,5%			13,7%		
Nagelkerke R Square	25,0%			22,9%		

* Malta and Turkey were not included within the analysis, as they have specific behaviors.

** Italy is the reference category, as its score is the median one.

*** The database was weighted according to the population of each country.

**** Portugal was not included as they did not apply the income question.

According to the regression model from Table 4, residence in the most ex-communist countries has a negative effect on volunteering, when compared with Italy. Only Czechs and Slovaks score volunteer more than Italians, when controlling for education, income, bridging social capital and the other selected predictors. Some other countries (Latvia, Slovenia, Hungary, Belarus and Croatia) do not significantly differ from Italy, while the rest are the only who bring a negative significant effect when compared with the reference category.

One should also note that Italy represent the median country for the whole set of countries, but when compared with other Western European countries, it is between the last three, along with Spain and Northern Ireland. Apparently, Germany also score low (see Table 1), but, if splat in the former DDR and BRD (Eastern and Western Germany), the situation change, former BRD volunteering in a similar measure as Italy does. This means that, except for the Czecks, all other former communist countries bring a negative effect to volunteering as compared with the western European average society.

This might be a good, even weak, indicator that the bloc culture plays an important role in determining volunteering. We have further tested this assumption by including within the regression models a dummy variable for belonging to the former communist bloc (Table 5). The results are also confirming the strong impact of education, religious practice, social capital and income, but they emphasize the important negative effect of ‘bloc’ membership.

Table 5. Logistic regression models for volunteering in Europe, including the ‘bloc’ effect

dependent	Religious associations included			Religious associations excluded		
predictors	b	Wald	sig.	b	Wald	sig.
religious practice	0,33	368,7	0,000	0,20	116,0	0,000
education	0,06	124,9	0,000	0,06	118,2	0,000
spending time with friends	0,32	110,9	0,000	-0,35	116,5	0,000
income (deciles)	0,06	44,5	0,000	0,07	47,7	0,000
trusting people	0,30	38,2	0,000	0,27	29,2	0,000
size of locality	-0,04	26,4	0,000	-0,05	33,8	0,000
man	0,16	12,2	0,000	0,17	12,7	0,000
no. of children	0,04	3,3	0,068	0,04	2,8	0,093
(inverse of) age	-3,71	2,5	0,111	-2,30	0,9	0,335
<i>ex-communist country</i>	-1,27	636,9	0,000	-1,31	617,7	0,000
Constant	-0,46	13,1	0,000	-1,13	70,2	0,000
Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients						
Chi-square	$\chi^2=1747,7$	df=10	p<0,0005	$\chi^2=1483,9$	df=10	p<0,0005
Hosmer and Lemeshow Test						
Chi-square	$\chi^2=2,0$	df=3	p=0,568	$\chi^2=1,4$	df=3	p=0,630
Pseudo R²						
Cox & Snell R Square	11,3%			9,7%		
Nagelkerke R Square	18,0%			16,3%		

* Malta and Turkey were not included within the analysis, as they have specific behaviors.

** The database was weighted according to the population of each country.

*** Portugal was not included as they did not apply the income question.

There are multiple reasons for which the former communist countries developed a non-volunteering culture. If one goes deep, in the interwar history, one might note the lack of democratic experience of the entire area, marked by merely rural populations, patriarchic in their

essence. People used to solve their problems informally, in daily face-to-face relations, not by volunteering in formal organizations. Communist modernization was a fake one (Sztompka, 1993; Voicu, 2001 etc.), not an emancipator project. The pervasive state power was promoted, while individuals were just unimportant particles of a mass. During at least several decades the state completely discouraged the civic society and individual initiative. The party planned everything, even the most intimate relations and time. On the other hand, public space was demonetized as it was the place where the lie reigned. The official reality was very often far beyond what the real socialism meant and the public activities were a mean to display fake attitudes and emotions. This led to the rejection of public life and, implicitly, of volunteering as a way to act on the behalf of the others. Generalized suspicion was the byproduct of the best communist industry: the one of producing files and frightened vassals, through the repression mechanisms of the political police. Moreover, the meaning of voluntarism was completely hollowed by labeling as voluntary work mandatory participation in party rituals and doing unpaid voluntary work at the state orders (M. and B. Voicu, 2003; Juknevičius, Savicka, 2003:132).

Explaining inter-country differences in volunteering

There is a question that still remains unanswered: why some ex-communist countries volunteer lower than others? In subsidiary, the question implies another one: from where the differences between the Western democracies? The answers rise from the assumptions about the individual determinants of volunteering: better educated, wealthier, more sociable societies will express a higher propensity for their citizens to perform voluntary work for the benefit of community or of the others. On the other hand, as Tocqueville noticed a long time ago, the cultural particularities of otherwise similar societies make their member to associate more or less and to develop different shapes for the public space relationships.

With other words, the distribution of resources (human, social, material, or symbolic capital in Bourdieu's terminology) within a society might as well determine the differences in volunteering. Table 6 illustrates this point. We have run a linear regression model, for the aggregate data set of European countries. The dependent variables were tapping for the proportion of individuals volunteering in each country, excepting those that declared performing voluntary work exclusively for political parties and labor unions. The predictors measured each of the four types of resources mentioned above and are similar with the ones used at individual level.

The results confirm the importance at societal level of all the predictors, except for the religious practice. Development has the strongest positive effect, followed by education and generalized trust. The explained variance is quite big, even for a small population, while predictions made by the regression model fits well the observed data. Sweden, Iceland, the Netherlands and Finland are predicted with the higher volunteering values. On the opposite corner, Hungary, Romania and Portugal are expected to volunteer the lowest, according to their resources. As Table 1 shows, this is consistent with the incidence of volunteering in the respective countries.

Table 6. (Country level) linear regression of volunteering in Europe.

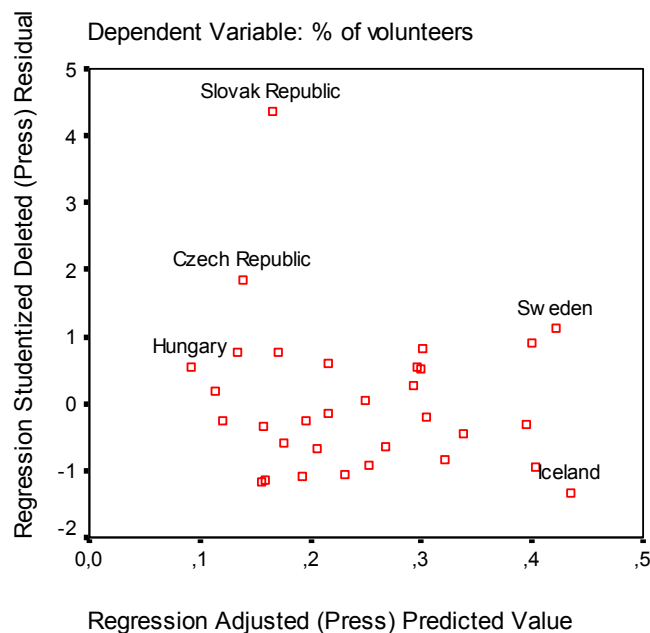
<i>dependent</i>	% of people within the country that volunteer in at least one organization, excepting the political parties and the trade unions					
	Religious associations included			Religious associations excluded		
<i>predictors</i>	B	Beta	Tolerance	B	Beta	Tolerance
GDP per capita 1999*	0,035	0,44	0,516	0,019	0,47	0,516
education (average school years)	0,002	0,34	0,682	0,002	0,31	0,682
trusting people	0,104	0,30	0,531	0,128	0,20	0,531
spending time with fiends	0,023	0,22	0,538	0,020	0,29	0,538
average religious practice	0,000	0,19	0,695	0,000	0,11	0,695
(Constant)	-0,549			-0,639		
Adjusted R Square	67,9%			69,2%		
Durbin-Watson	1,973			1,852		

Note: The cases are countries. Turkey and Slovak Republic were excluded from the analysis as they behave as outliers.

* Source: 1999 CIA World Factbook (http://www.photius.com/wfb1999/rankings/gdp_per_capita_1.html).

Slovakia has by far an outlier behavior. According to its level of material and human development, and to the declared trust and frequency of social relations, the country should score low on the volunteering scale, or, anyway, lower than Croatia, Slovenia, or even Belarus. However, as Table 1 and Figure 2 shows, Slovakia's volunteer index computed according to the EVS lies far above the predicted value². On the other hand, other comparative data (John Hopkins Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project) indicates that in 1995, the Slovak level of volunteering was similar with those with Hungary and Romania, and three times lower than in Italy and Austria, which had the lower volunteering propensity in Western Europe (Salamon, Sokolovsky, 2003: 74). It is unlikely that the changes were so sharp in five years time, so the Slovak data on volunteering within the EVS data set should be carefully used. For these reasons, we decided to exclude the country from some of the analyses that we have performed and reported within the present paper.

Figure 2. Residuals versus predicted values in the linear regression model: Slovakia's behavior as outlier



² The difference is more than four standard deviations from the mean on the standardized residual scale. All other cases are quite well predicted. Only Iceland's and Czech Republic's studentized residuals are between 1,5 and 2,0, the others being lower.

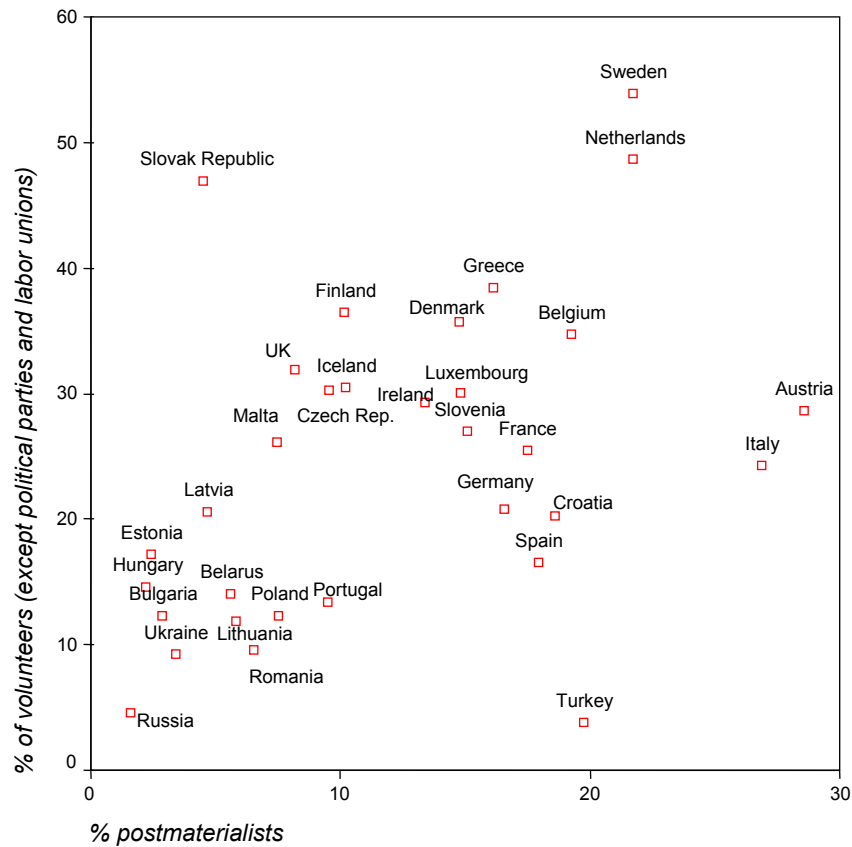
We have also wanted to test if the ‘bloc’ cultural heritage is stronger than the national disposal of resources. However, the indicators we had for two realities are quite well connected, so, we were not able to include the membership to communism among the selected predictors³.

On the other hand, we could not introduce other two possible predictors within the data set, for the same colinearity reasons. Both taps for different aspects of the western culture, and strongly correlate both with volunteering indexes, but also with the country level resources, especially with the GDP per capita.

According to Inglehart (1997), the shift that currently occurs within the western societies is the one from materialism to postmaterialism. The Western globalizing culture could be seen as a ‘postmaterialist’ one as opposed to the materialist modernity. We have computed the percent of postmaterialists by country, using the classic Inglehart’s item. The connection between volunteering and the postmaterialist culture is a strong one, as the **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** pictures up. When excluding Slovakia and Turkey the correlation coefficient equals 0,616, respectively 0,613 if the volunteering index does not include religious association either. If instead of the percentage of postmaterialist we would have used the percentage of materialist, the correlation would be negative and the coefficient would increase up to -0,692, respectively -0,682. All ex-communist countries lay in a bottom left part of the graph, displaying both lower levels of volunteering and postmaterial culture.

³ Otherwise the model would have been affected by colinearity, as the east-west dummy strongly correlates both with the GDP per capita and with the social capital indicators.

Figure 3. The association between volunteering and postmaterialism in Europe (EVS'99 data set)



A similar pattern is present when studying the relation between volunteering and the value orientation toward individual responsibility for personal welfare. We have used the classic item from EVS which opposes the preference for “Individuals should take more responsibility providing for themselves” to the one for “The state should take more responsibility to ensure that for everyone is provided for”. The item was a 10 points scale. For each country we have computed the mean of the variable. The correlation coefficient between the new variable (with the countries as cases) and the level of volunteering is quite strong 0,482, respectively 0,479 when excluding the volunteering for the religious associations. Even weak, the propensity for individual responsibility is a measure for both individual autonomy (as part of the modern culture features, continued in the late modernity), and also taps for the current tendencies in western welfare states. Data shows that, at aggregate level, volunteering increases when statism decreases, providing another argument for including volunteering within the effects of the globalizing western culture. The relation is consistent with Paul Dekker’s and Loek Halman’s assumption that volunteering would be higher in more individualistic societies where charitable societies have more room to develop (2003: 7). ON the other hand, as the same authors points out, drawing on Putnam’s example of Southern Italy, the presence of volunteers within a more traditional area could also determine the development of a culture of volunteering.

Conclusions

Is the increasing number of NGOs and volunteers from the ex-communist space a sign of a globalizing world? Considering cultural westernization as a core element of the globalization, our answer is positive. In a more and more 'globalizing' world, the 'block' culture of ex-communist countries is confronting with the Western culture and the result is a new value pattern, which includes element from both cultures.

The volunteerism is a quite new phenomenon for the Eastern countries, being absent during the communist period, and one can say that it was 'imported' in Eastern Europe from the Western countries. The characteristics of the culture of volunteerism are different in the Eastern Europe from the Western one. These differences are due to the special cultural background of the ex-communist countries. In the Eastern Europe there was not a big tradition of the volunteer activity before 1989. The communist regime has produced a fake modernization and has inhibited the participation in civic organization and even discredits the concept of voluntary work. On the other hand, most of the East European societies were during the interwar period some tradition - patriarchal societies and theirs inhabitants were not used to be involved in the civic organization.

Our data indicate that the differences in the volunteering culture are still present between Eastern and Western countries in Europe. The level of volunteering is higher in Western countries than in Eastern ones, excepting Czech Republic and Slovakia. The residence in one ex-communist country has a negative impact on the level of volunteering. One can say that the lower level of volunteering is a characteristic of the communist 'block culture'. From this point of view, low volunteerism might be seen as another "missing link" on the road to European integration.

However, there is no a single Western culture of volunteering. There are significant differences in the level of volunteering among West European countries. Generally speaking, the volunteering is decreasing from North to South as well as is decreasing from East to West. Countries like Sweden and the Netherlands have the highest level of volunteering, while Italy and Spain have quite lower levels.

On the other hand, our explanation of the individual differences in volunteering is focused much on individual and environmental resources than on culture. The analyzed data support this approach. In almost all the countries included in the analysis the predictors for volunteering are the same: education, religious practice, social network, income and age. All around the Europe, the people with dominant status volunteer more than the others. At country level, the level of volunteering is higher in countries with higher levels of development, generalized trust citizens and with better educated citizens. Volunteering appears to be both a matter of culture, but also one of resources.

On long run, EU integration, globalization and economic detent will probably change the picture, determining a higher propensity to volunteering in Eastern Europe too.

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