

# Measuring Volunteering Across Countries

Italy and the Czech Republic in Comparison

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*In person in Prague (CZ) and online*



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Tania is a statistician specializing in official statistics on volunteering, unpaid work, and gender equality issues. She has been working at the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) since 2000 and is currently a Senior Researcher, coordinating both the Time Use Survey and the measurement of volunteer work. Her work combines methodological innovation with thematic research to provide comprehensive and policy-relevant insights on how people allocate their time, with a particular focus on the societal value of volunteering. Tania actively contributes to international initiatives on time use statistics as a member of UN and Eurostat expert groups and has conducted capacity-building projects for national statistical offices in the Caribbean and Mediterranean countries. She has authored numerous publications on volunteering and daily life, and is engaged in modernizing survey tools and enhancing data dissemination to support evidence-based policymaking.

# Who we are, what we did and why

- A joint collaboration of Charles University (Prague), ISTAT and CZSO
- Common reference: **ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work (2011)**
- Goal: To develop a **harmonised framework** for cross-country analysis
- Focus:
  1. participation, time commitment and forms of volunteering
  2. volunteers' general profile and the “core volunteer” identikit

**Combining statistical and academic expertise to understand volunteering  
across European countries**

# Data Sources

Different surveys, same ILO concept

Country	Survey source	Year	Target population
<b>Italy</b>	Time Use Survey – <i>Volunteer Work Module</i> (ILO)	2023 (annual data)	15+ population
<i>(previous edition)</i>	<i>Multipurpose survey</i> <i>“Aspects of daily life” –</i> <i>Volunteer Work Module</i> (ILO)	2013 (February)	15+ population
<b>Czech Republic</b>	Labour Force Sample Survey (LFSS) – <i>Add-on</i> <i>module on Volunteering</i>	2023 (2° half)	15+ population

**Common reference:** ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work (2011)

# Definition of volunteer work

A shared conceptual foundation (ILO [2011](#), [2021](#), [2023](#))

**“Unpaid, non-compulsory work performed for others outside one’s own household or family members, for the benefit of individuals, organisations or the community”**

- No wage or remuneration (not even in kind)
- Small form of support admitted, but below one third of local market wages
- Compulsory (e.g. to an employer, a school, etc.) or family-directed activities excluded

**A common conceptual basis allows comparability, but differences in implementation required harmonisation**

# Harmonisation process

From two national modules to one analytical framework

According to the ILO definition, only people who carry out volunteer work for **at least one hour** during a short reference period [**4 weeks / 30 days**] are considered volunteers.

## Main challenges:

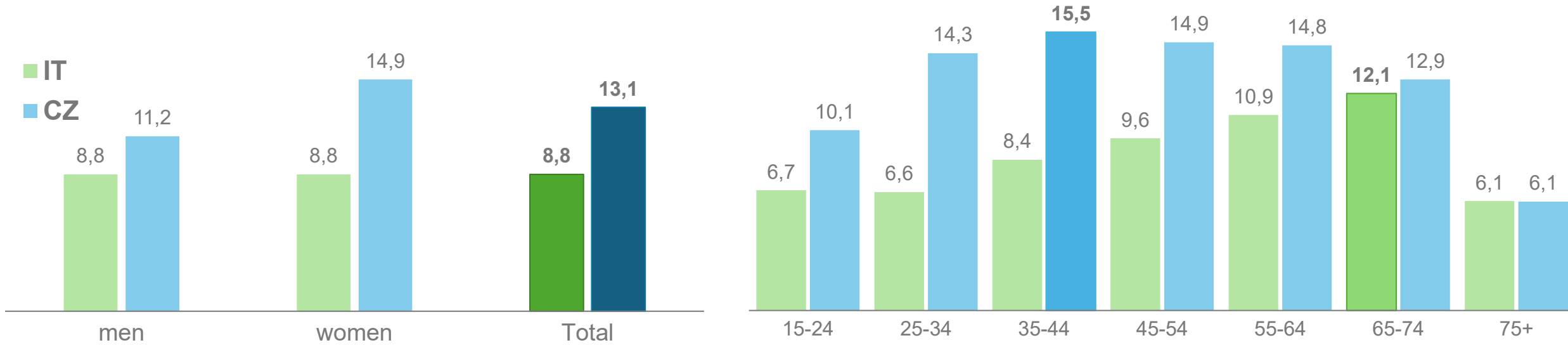
- **Reference period:** 12 months (CZ) vs 4 weeks (IT)
- **Questionnaire structure:** activity-first (CZ) vs organisation-first (IT)
- **Are blood donors volunteers?**  
Yes (IT) vs No (CZ)
- **Coverage** differences in organised vs non-organised volunteering

## Solutions:

- **Restrict CZ data to volunteers active in last 4 weeks**
- **Exclude blood donors from IT data**
- **Create common classifications**, by harmonising national variables (i.e. “**type of organisation**” and “**field of activity**”) using ILO and ICNPO standards

# Harmonised volunteer rates in IT & CZ

## by gender and age



Source: ISTAT (a) and CZSO (b), 2023 - Excluding (a) blood donors (Italy) and (b) volunteers who did not perform any activity in the last 4 weeks (Czech Republic).

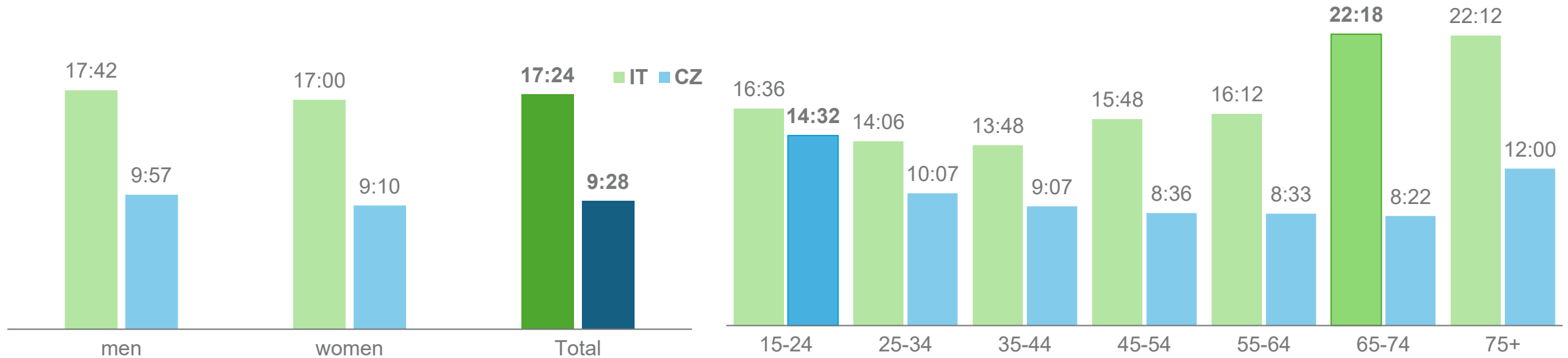
**Italy: 8.8%** → 4,522 volunteers (thousand) / 51,364 population (thousand)

**Czech Republic: 13.1%** → 1,136 CZ volunteers (thou.) / 8,665 population (thou.)

- No gender gap in IT, more women than men in CZ.
- Engagement increases with age (peak IT **65-74**; CZ **35-44** ).
- The greatest cross-country differences in the central age groups.
- Participation rates converge in older age groups.

# Time devoted to volunteering in IT & CZ

Average number of hours spent on the main activity in the last 4 weeks



Source: ISTAT (a) and CZSO (b), 2023 - Excluding (a) blood donors (Italy) and (b) volunteers who did not perform any activity in the last 4 weeks (Czech Republic).

**Italy: 17 hours and 24 minutes | Czech Republic: 9 hours and 28 minutes**

- **More time for men than women** both in CZ & IT
- **Higher time commitment** among specific age groups:
  - **Italy: strong increase** in time among **older age groups**, peaking at over **22 hours** for **65+**
  - **Czech Republic: peak** in the **youngest age group (15-24)** with over **14 hours**



# Summary of participation patterns

Participation and intensity of commitment

## Higher participation in the Czech Republic:

- **Czech Republic** shows **higher participation** than Italy across all age groups, **except for the elderly (65+)**, where both countries are similar.

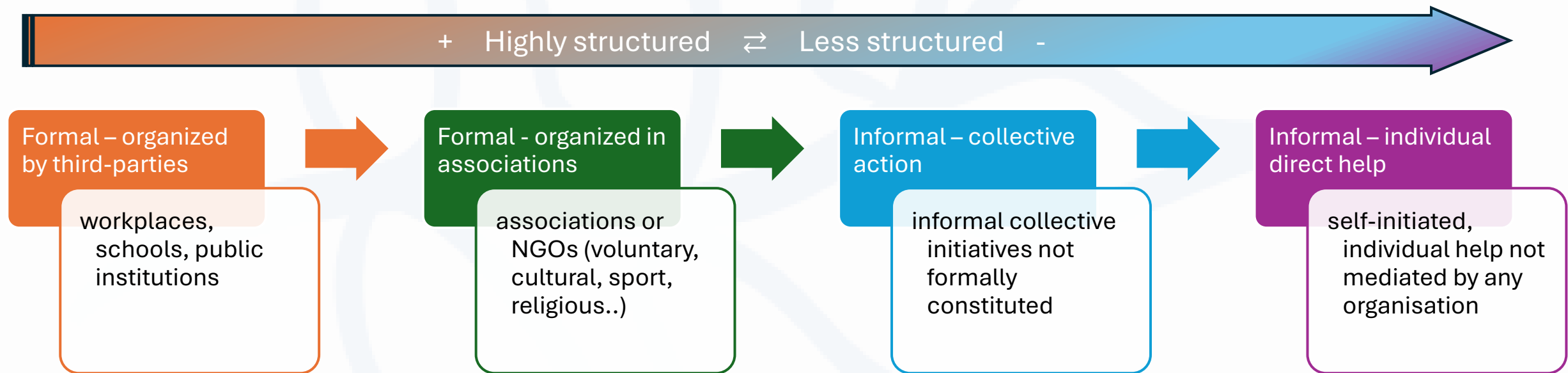
## Higher intensity in Italy:

- **Volunteers in Italy dedicate more hours** than in Czech Republic across all age groups. However, the **15–24 age group** shows the **smallest difference** in time commitment between the two countries.

**Gender differences are modest** in both countries.

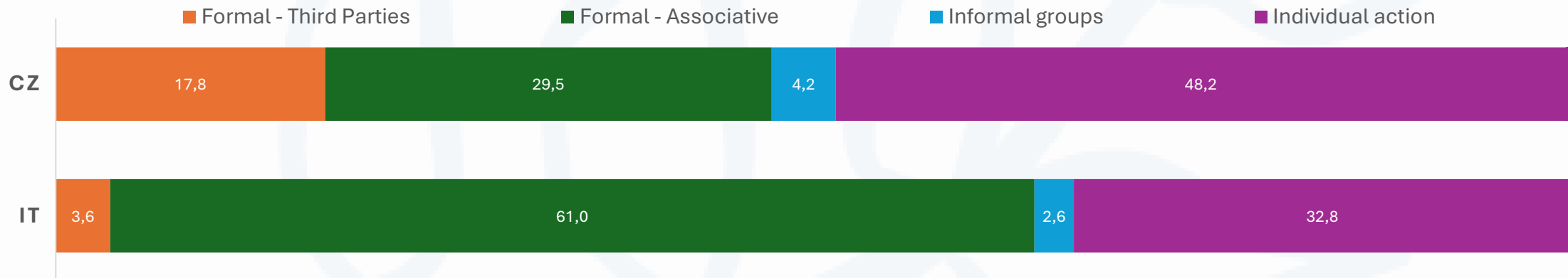
# The Four Tiers of volunteering

How people volunteer? Modalities of volunteer work



# Comparing modalities: Italy vs Czech Republic

## Different traditions of volunteering



Source: ISTAT (a) and CZSO (b), 2023 - Excluding (a) blood donors (Italy) and (b) volunteers who did not perform any activity in the last 4 weeks (Czech Republic).

### Insights:

- In both countries, **most formal volunteers** operate through **associations**, but **third-party involvement** is **much more frequent in the Czech Republic** and **rare in Italy**.
- **Informal collective groups** are relatively **limited** in both contexts.
- **Individual volunteering** — informal, flexible, and often based on **friendship or neighbourhood networks** — plays an **important role** in both countries and is the **most frequent form** of volunteering in the **Czech Republic**.

Does the **Italian pattern** reflect a **strong associative tradition**, while the **Czech model** combines a **legacy of institutionally mediated volunteering** with a **prevalence of individual, non-organised forms of engagement**?

Thank you and let's keep working together on volunteering in Europe

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