Editing Wikipedia as an alternative to traditional civic activism (Europe)

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Wikimania
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Civic attitudes – indirect measures:

- membership in organisations
- participation in demonstrations
- volunteering
- trust
- social capital
Western Europe more civic than Eastern Europe - a few examples

- Active membership in environmental organisations FR 6%, NL 4% - BG 0.4%, RU 0.4%
- Signed petition IT 54%, NO 69% - UA 7%, PL 24%
- “Most people can be trusted” SE 68%, NL 45% - SI 18%, MD 18%
WHY?
Membership in “civic” organisations
Official demonstrations
(and the unofficial ones:}
“Volunteering” - the subotnik
But are really the East Europeans so reluctant to contribute to the common good?
No – look at wikipedia
My indicator

number of wikipedia articles

number of speakers of given language with internet access
And what did I get:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Bulgarian</th>
<th>Greek</th>
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Look at this:

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Western Europe

Eastern Europe
Volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services. (wikipedia)

contributing to wikipedia = volunteering
My explanation

• contributing to wikipedia has a very low threshold for engagement
• East Europeans dislike formal organisations (remember the photos?)
• East Europeans like to use wikipedia as a platform for their social contribution
Caveats

• Lousy data - particularly on volunteering
• “Large” languages (English, French) left out because it's impossible to estimate the number of people online
• This is a blog post than an academic paper

There is need for proper research
Thank you - dziękuję!

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