

Recommendations for Enhancing Volunteering in a Digital Environment



Development of structured and inclusive volunteer programmes enabling remote volunteering

Due to the accelerated digitalisation across all areas of life and business, new opportunities are emerging to engage a greater number of citizens in volunteer activities, especially those who, for various reasons, cannot participate physically. Therefore, it is recommended to develop structured volunteer programmes that facilitate remote volunteering (online volunteering) as well as hybrid engagement models, combining on-site and remote volunteering. Such programmes should be accessible and adapted for people with fewer opportunities, include a clear structure, support and opportunities for volunteers to connect with each other, for example through both online and physical meetings. Volunteer-involving organisations should provide all volunteers with training on the specific tools they will use during their engagement. Additionally, it is essential to foster a sense of belonging and recognition of all volunteers' contributions during the implementation of volunteer programmes, regardless of the mode of their involvement.

Systematic strengthening of digital competencies of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations

It is recommended that volunteer centres in Croatia systematically promote the development of digital skills among volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations, as well as innovation in volunteer programmes, in line with current trends and community needs. In their daily work, they should offer expert support to volunteer-involving organisations at local and regional levels concerning the development of volunteer programmes conducted online or relying on digital tools and artificial intelligence. Moreover, continuous training should be provided to volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations to enhance digital skills and ensure equal access to information, tools, and support. Trainings should cover raising awareness of the benefits and challenges of digital tools, their effective application in managing volunteer programmes and activities, as well as the role and potential of artificial intelligence in volunteering, with an emphasis on its purposeful, responsible and ethical use.

Development of guidelines for the ethical use of digital tools and artificial intelligence in volunteering

Given the increasing use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence across various sectors, it is necessary to timely consider ethical issues and potential challenges related to their application in volunteering. It is recommended that the Croatian Volunteer Centres Network develops guidelines for the ethical use of digital tools in volunteering, with particular emphasis on the use of artificial intelligence, to ensure the preservation of fundamental European values in volunteering and to promote artificial intelligence as a support tool rather than a replacement for human involvement. Artificial intelligence can assist with faster processing and automation of repetitive tasks, but must not entirely replace volunteer engagement. The establishment of mechanisms to monitor the impact of digital tools and artificial intelligence in volunteering activities is also recommended, to ensure transparency, privacy protection and the safeguarding of core volunteering values.

Encouraging the development of tailored digital solutions for volunteer programme management

Although there are numerous business management systems available on the market that can be adapted to some extent to the needs of various organisations, there remains a lack of systems and software solutions specifically targeted at the volunteering sector. Therefore, it is recommended to strengthen collaboration between volunteer centres, volunteer-involving organisations and the IT sector to develop digital tools that meet the specific needs of volunteer programme implementation. The focus should be on creating systems for managing volunteering programmes, tracking volunteer hours and activities, improving communication with volunteers and reducing administrative burdens on volunteer-involving organisations. During development, it is important to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and to ensure technology serves as support rather than a replacement for personal contact and mutual connection. Particular emphasis should be placed on making developed digital tools accessible to smaller, resource-limited organisations, as well as ensuring long-term sustainability of solutions through open licences, partnership models or public funding.



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