

RESEARCH STUDY: VOLUNTEERING FOR MORE VALUE



VOLUNTEERING
INSPIRED by VALUES

VOLUNTEERING FOR MORE VALUE

The main goal of this research is to analyze and to understand the current state of volunteering and volunteer programs in the European Union in relation to values such as inclusion, diversity, tolerance, solidarity and European values, and to detect problems and possible solutions to increase the quality of volunteer programs in context of value based volunteering in order to strengthen the capacity of organizations that include young volunteers in their activities.

Some of the questions we wanted to answer with this research are:

- To what extent volunteer programs contribute to fostering intercultural dialogue, inclusion, diversity, tolerance, and solidarity and European values
- What are the indicators of value based and impactful volunteer programs
- Explore the level of capacities and competences for value-based leadership
- How young people understand their volunteer engagement in relation to values
- To what extent programs of volunteer orientation and education are supporting value based volunteering

Methods we have used in research in order to collect answers to those questions are:

- Structured questionnaire - this method refers to an online questionnaire with the aim of collecting as many answers as possible in the area of the three partner countries, and intended primarily for volunteer involving and infrastructure organizations
- Focus groups - this method involves an informal gathering of young people in order to answer certain open-ended questions with the help of a moderator.

The research is designed as a two-way process, exploring the attitudes of young people as beneficiaries of volunteer programs, and attitudes of organizations' that implement volunteer programs.

This research is part of the Erasmus+ project "VIV - Volunteering inspired by values". The project coordinator is Centro Servizi Padova Solidale (Italy), and the partners are Croatian Volunteer Development Center (Croatia) and Associacao Mais Cidadania (Portugal).

VOLUNTEER INCLUDING ORGANISATIONS

1. Introduction and methodology

The goal of this research was to find out whether volunteer programs in the countries of the European Union are related to values such as inclusion, diversity, tolerance, solidarity and other European values, but also to map problems and possible solutions for increasing the quality of volunteer programs in the context of value-oriented volunteering, and with the purpose of capacitating organizations that include young volunteers in their activities. The research was intended for organizations that include young volunteers in their work, and was conducted on a sample of 98 organizations.

The research was designed in the form of an online questionnaire, and consisted of 24 questions. Data were collected from October to December 2022 in Italy, Portugal and Croatia.

The questionnaire was divided into several thematic areas. The first part of the questionnaire was related to the background and basic information about the organizations participating in the research. Then the questionnaire focused on the experience of working with young volunteers. After that, we tried to find out whether organizations participate in inclusive volunteering and how. With the questionnaire, we also wanted to find out what volunteer management looks like in the surveyed organizations and whether there is room for improvement, or any difficulties in implementing volunteer programs with young people. The last section of the question referred to what we were most interested in - the values of the surveyed organizations and the attitude of the organizations towards the mentioned values, as well as the ways of communicating those values to the public.

2. Background information

There were 98 organizations participating in this research (37 organizations from Italy, 31 from Portugal and 30 from Croatia), of which 89% declared themselves as Association/NGO, while there was also few public institutions (4%), foundations (2%),

religious bodies (1%) and other (4%). When asked about what areas organization works in, the most of them answered Social activities (60%); Youth (50%); International mobility (24,5 %); Human rights (23,5%); Culture (17,3%), Environmental protection and nature (17,3%); Sport (7,1) and other areas (17,3%).

As for **target groups**, the largest percentage of organizations mention young people as their primary group. In addition to young people, children, volunteers, women, migrants, homeless people, seniors and generally all citizens are often mentioned as target groups. LGBTIQ+ people, victims of trafficking, politicians, animals, sick people and people with various disorders are mentioned somewhat less frequently.

3. Working with young volunteers

All organizations that participated in the research include volunteers in their work, and 93,6% of them also include young volunteers, while only 6.4% of organizations said that they do not include young volunteers in their work.

When asked what percentage of the total number of volunteers in their organisations are young people, numbers range from 2% to 100%. Nevertheless, the overall average of young volunteers involved in organizations is 57.5%, with some differences among 3 countries (Portugal - 71%, Croatia - 65.8%, Italy - 35.7%).

The activities in which organizations involve young volunteers are numerous and different, and can be classified into several categories:

- European solidarity corps volunteer program
- National and international youth mobility and camps
- Workshops and non-formal education activities
- Promotional activities
- Administrative, logistic and management tasks
- Activities of raising awareness on different problems
- Community volunteering and community development
- Advocacy activities

- Organization of events
- Working directly with target groups of organization
- Volunteer management

When asked who usually provides training for young volunteers in their organization, most of them answered volunteer coordinator (67%), following a person from the organization's management (34%); another volunteer (25%); another employee (20%); youth worker from the organization (16.5%); youth worker outside the organization (6%). Only 6% of organizations said that they do not offer any training for their volunteers.

- Since there were few organizations that do not include young volunteers in their work, we tried to find out the reasons for it and the answers include following:
- We do not know how to bring young people to our organization (50%)
- We do not know how to identify, engage and manage young people (33%)
- We do not have the logistical capacity to accept volunteers or organize their activities (16%)
- Young people change interests/lifestyle too often (16%)
- Young people do not want to volunteer (16%)

4. Inclusive volunteering

Since the research deals with the topic of values of organizations that include volunteers, we devoted one part of the research to inclusive volunteering.

It turned out that most of the surveyed organizations, 61% of them, include people from different groups at risk of social exclusion through inclusive volunteering in their work, and half of them have a special program for the inclusion of volunteers from groups at risk of social exclusion (inclusive volunteer program).

Of the remaining 39% of organizations that do not include the mentioned groups in their work, 12% of them would one day like to offer inclusive volunteering.

When asked what are the main reasons for not including people from different groups at risk of social exclusion as volunteers, organizations list the following factors:

- They do not have the necessary conditions (e.g. space suitable for people with disabilities; we do not speak a foreign language...) – 47%
- They do not have suitable volunteer positions/activities – 41%
- We do not know how to engage people at risk of social exclusion – 14%
- Inclusion of people from groups at risk of social exclusion takes too many resources – 6%

5. Volunteer management

As for volunteer management, the first few questions of the questionnaire referred to the volunteer coordinator. Most of the organizations (89%) have a volunteer program coordinator, the person responsible for managing the volunteer program. 76% of the coordinators coordinate the program along with other activities in the organization and for only 13% of them that is their only role in the organization. 11% of organizations do not have a volunteer coordinator.

Most of the coordinators participate often (41,5%) in additional trainings related to the management of the volunteer program, while some of them do it periodically (36,5%).

The range of topics of additional education in which volunteer program coordinators participate is wide, and some of the most frequently mentioned topics are related to volunteer management, youth engagement, European values, Conflict Management, Human Rights, social emergency volunteering, inclusive volunteering, volunteering in crisis situations, communication etc.

There is 22% coordinators who do not participate in additional trainings, from which 15,5% of them would like to in the future.

When asked what the main reasons were for this, most of them answered:

- Lack of time or availability
- Lack of training options in their community
- Lack of funds needed for paying external educators

Volunteer management cycle looks similar in all surveyed countries, with some organizational differences based on different volunteering positions. Recruitment is usually done through social media, online forms or live visits to schools, universities or other institutions. After that, most of the times there is interview, especially when we talk about long-term volunteering. Organizations choose their volunteers based on their interests, knowledge, skills and previous experience. Some volunteer positions require additional training for volunteers, often when the position refers to work with vulnerable groups. Some organizations are implementing a training for all of their volunteers and they use this time to welcome volunteers and to pass on their entire organizational culture, mission and purpose. Monitoring and evaluation is mostly done through frequent conversations, documentation monitoring, interviews and evaluation questionnaires.

6. Values

In the last section of the questionnaire, it was important for us to find out if organizations communicate their values to volunteers and which values are important for them to communicate to young volunteers, as well as when they do it.

Almost every surveyed organisation, 91% of them, said that they, when looking for volunteers, communicate clearly and precisely what values their organization is guided by.

The values they think are most important for their young volunteers to have are:

- **Solidarity** – 71%
- **Inclusion** – 47%
- **Tolerance** - 32%
- **Equality** – 30%
- **Dignity** – 20%
- **Justice** - 18%
- **Freedom** – 15%

There is no unified way in which organizations check whether their volunteers have the mentioned values, but most of their methods can be reduced to:

- Through the daily behavior of volunteers
- Through frequent conversations with volunteers about values
- Through an initial interview
- Through additional training for volunteers
- Through the analysis of volunteer motivation
- Through the volunteer mentoring process

Although these are the most common ways to check values in volunteers, most organizations agree that values are something that is learned through the volunteering process and it is not necessary for volunteers to come with some values already. Volunteering is the way young people absorb values such as solidarity, tolerance, equality and the like.

When asked in which part of the volunteer management cycle do organizations typically communicate their values to potential volunteers, respondents answer the following:

- **Finding and selection** – 46%
- **Preparation and introduction into the organization** – 39%
- **Monitoring and support** – 10%
- **Recognition of contributions/rewarding** – 5%

The methods by which organizations communicate their values to young volunteers can be divided into several categories:

- written word – it's written in the Statute, on flyers, posters and booklets, on webpages or it is written in the agreement
- Verbally – meetings, dialogues, interviews, speeches, creating strong relationships with volunteers etc.

- education and training – organizing additional trainings, presentations or education for volunteers regarding organizational values
- learning by example – through activities, through everyday behaviour, by being a good example for volunteers, through organizational culture etc.

For research purposes, organizations were asked what their biggest problems are when involving young people in volunteer activities, and the most common answer we received was a lack of commitment and responsibility among young volunteers, as well as non-continuity and unpredictability of their engagement. The second problem that is mentioned most often is related to the motivation of volunteers, which is initially very high, but decreases over time because young people tend to look for quick results, which they cannot always achieve. There is also a great attitude among organizations about the disinterest of young people today in volunteering in general. Several organizations expressed their dissatisfaction with their lack of time, resources and employees to be able to deal with young volunteers in a quality way.

YOUNG VOLUNTEERS

1. Introduction and methodology

In order to find out how young people see value-oriented youth volunteering, several focus groups were organized in 3 European countries - Italy, Portugal and Croatia. Participants, with the help of a moderator, have discussed about their volunteering experiences, the values that volunteering organizers promote in their work with young volunteers, and the values that motivate them to engage in the community. During November and December 2022. We have organized 7 focus groups with total 63 young participants. The youngest participant was 16 years old, and the oldest was 30 years old. Beside local volunteers, there were also few international volunteers participating in focus groups.

The tools and methods that have been used for this part of research were live meetings, zoom meetings and online questionnaires, which were helpful for getting more information on the topic.

The focus groups consisted of several thematic units. To begin with, it was important to find out young participants' background information related to their volunteering experiences (beginning and duration of volunteer engagement, type of organization they volunteer in, type of volunteer activities they participate in).

The second thematic unit was about motivation. Here, it was examined why young people most often get involved in volunteering, how fluid their motivation is, what are the most common factors that increase and decrease motivation among young people when we talk about volunteering.

Next, young people were asked to describe the entire process of volunteering, from involvement to evaluation. The goal was to find out what young people consider good in volunteer management in their organizations and where they see space for improvement, as well as the most common reasons for leaving volunteer engagement.

The most important part of the research with young people was related to the topic of values, where the inner values of young people were discussed, as well as how much they influence the choice of organizations and volunteer positions they join, as well as the frequency and ways in which organizations communicate their values to volunteers.

2. Background information

There were **63 participants** involved in the research, **aged from 16 to 30**. All of them had some experience in volunteering, whether they volunteered in different NGO organizations or informal youth groups.

The participants have different experience in volunteering; most of them have been involved in long-term volunteering, while some have only recently started volunteering. **The age range in which young people most often start volunteering is between the ages of 16 and 24**, with the vast majority already involved in volunteer engagements during high school. Therefore, young people who have been volunteering for only one year, as well as those who have been volunteering for more than 10 years, participated in this research.

Several of them gets involved in activities through the school volunteer club, while others get involved independently in various volunteer activities, volunteer for a long time and/or lead activities in their organizations.

Some of them were involved in local volunteering and some of them were involved in international volunteering. Few of them have experience in both local and international volunteering. The ones that have not tried international volunteering yet expressed a desire to try it someday. Majority of young people had at least some experience in volunteering with other international volunteers or participation in international projects and trainings.

Young people most often choose the following activities for their volunteer engagements:

- **Human rights**
- **Eco activities** (cleaning and planting actions, as well as other sustainable activities)
- **Animal protection**
- **Artistic and creative activities** for children or youth, as well as volunteering on festivals
- **Intercultural activities** such as youth exchanges, international camps and workshops
- Volunteering with **vulnerable groups** (hospitals, elderly homes, schools etc.)

3. Motivation for volunteering

When asked what was their primary motivation for volunteering, the answers of most of the participants can fit into the following few categories:

- **Supporting others** – desire to help and support others, especially volunteering with vulnerable groups of people and people in need, sometimes helping people who have similar life stories as them
- **Building the community** – desire to improve the community and to be the change they want to see in their environment; desire to create something new for the community
- **Networking and connection** – desire to make new contacts, social ties and friendships, to get to know people with one's own, or similar, interests and values, to feel more connected to the community
- **Feeling of usefulness** – the desire to feel useful and to do something meaningful, the desire to spend some quality free time
- **Personal growth** - gaining new experiences, developing a stronger sense of self, developing their skills, gaining new skills and knowledge which will help them in their future life, leaving the comfort zone

- **Intercultural aspect** – the desire to meet and interact with people from different cultures and backgrounds

Although the **motivation can be fluid** when young people volunteer for a long time, most of the participants expressed that their motivation has stayed the same over the time. Some of them even said that their **motivation is getting bigger the longer they are engaged**. There are several reasons why the motivation is changing over time:

- **The shift of interests during time** – sometimes when young people are volunteering for some period, they realize that their interest has become more specific and, therefore, their motivation has changed regarding the volunteer position or the beneficiary group. For example, one volunteer has started volunteering as an instructor of computer science for children, but then her interest, as well as the motivation shifted specifically to helping the children who are at risk of poverty
- **Definition of motivation** – their motivation at the beginning was maybe not so well defined, and as time went by things started to make more sense. Over the time they are more aware of their impact, so their motivation gets bigger
- **Change of expectations** – the reduction of motivation can happen, when results of volunteer activity does not meet the expectations of volunteers. In that situation, many volunteers can bring back their motivation if they change their expectations. For example, some volunteers were at first did not see the results and change they were hoping to see. So, the motivation shifted to meeting new people, gaining new experiences and aiming for personal development so they could become more powerful drivers of change themselves.
- **Encountering problems in volunteering** - the motivation can change over time due to cultural misunderstandings, weight of heavy expectations or general lack of knowledge and training

The volunteers who are aware of their decreased motivation are usually looking for the ways they can bring it back. Only few volunteers think at this point that their motivations is irreversible and they are thinking of leaving the organizations.

The overall conclusion from all of the volunteers is that internal motivation is easier for maintaining and it lasts much more than external motivation.

Factors affecting change in motivation

Whether we are talking about decreased or increased motivation, the factors that affect the fluidity of motivation among young volunteers can be reduced to several categories:

- **Values** – the reduction in motivation can be caused by the lack of consistency between the values and activities proposed by the associations because in this way volunteers lose sight of the goal of volunteer action. On the other side, maintaining their personal values and reminding themselves of their goals helps maintaining the motivation. For them it is easier to maintain the motivation if their personal values match the values promoted by the organization.
- **Organizational culture** – most of the volunteers mentioned good work conditions, good structure of organization, as well as good communication as really important factors for maintaining their motivation. What reduces motivation among young volunteers is miscommunication and general lack of effort to present the goals of the activities, as well as inflexibility and apathy shown by the team of some organizations. Some other factors are lack of organization and lack of support from the association.
- **Scope of responsibility** – new challenges and opportunities for learning, as well as personal development often motivates volunteers. In addition, they appreciate participating in decision-making process about their engagement. However, if they do not have enough responsibilities or if there is too much weight to them without any learning aspect, their motivation will decrease. It can happen both because of boredom and feeling of uselessness, or because of stress and overload of tasks.
- **A sense of belonging and acceptance** - what emerges from the analysis of the responses is that motivation remains high when the volunteer operates in a stimulating and welcoming environment, which helps the volunteer to get into the spirit of the organization, to make him or her feel part of the whole, in a safe, open, welcoming and understanding environment that allows him or her to feel

comfortable and express himself or herself to the fullest without fear of experimenting to increase his or her skills. On the other hand, big motivation-reducing factor is having no opportunity to voice their needs and feelings and bearing the weight of expectations on their shoulders without having a chance to address it.

- **Impact visibility** – young volunteers emphasize the importance of seeing a tangible results of one's actions that brings a sense of gratification and the feeling of making a difference/contributing to the change. If they don't see the results for a long time, or they become overwhelmed by the feeling of powerlessness to help the others or to solve the problems in the community, they can feel a bit demotivated to continue volunteering.
- **Peer role models** - mostly younger volunteers (aged from 16 to 18) express the importance of peers who volunteer together with them or older volunteers who serve as role models. This way, their volunteering experience is made easier for them and they are motivated to continue volunteering.
- **Personal commitments** - it is not always easy to be able to combine volunteering and private life/personal commitments, hence, the motivation to volunteer reduces as the time one has to devote to it decreases.

Although leaving the organization is the last step and volunteer's wouldn't do it recklessly, there are some factors that appear more often when we talk about ending volunteer engagement.

The most common reason for ending a volunteer engagement is definitely of an external nature and is connected with big "life" change. For example, young people will leave their organizations because of due to studying, moving, finding a job or other private reasons that make them struggle with distance or lack of time.

Regardless, none of them have willingly given up volunteering, although the thought has occurred due to unrequited expectations. They explained that the activities or dynamics of a project sometimes escalated in a way that did not correspond to what they had imagined. Nevertheless, when the disruption happened, it was usually because of external reasons, and not them giving up.

The other situation that can lead to leaving the organization are not being able to meet their needs and expectations during the volunteering and unwelcoming and unhostile organization environment. Some of volunteers left the organization because they didn't like the organization's attitude towards young people and did not feel appreciated.

Never the less, most of the respondents have never left their organizations and they would leave them only in the situation when they don't see a solution to the problem they are dealing with.

4. Volunteer program management

In order to find out the experiences of young people with the volunteering process itself, we asked them several questions related to the management of the volunteer programs of the organizations where they volunteered.

During the discussion, following stages of volunteering process were mentioned: **application/recruitment, interview and meeting with the organization, training for volunteers, supervision or mentorship and evaluation.**

Although a small difference was observed in the way of applying for volunteer positions based on the surveyed countries, the most common ones were:

- Online application/social media
- Networking
- Volunteering fairs
- Schools
- Open application directly to the organization

After the application, usually there is some kind of selection process. Mostly it is just an interview, where volunteers meet the organisation, the stuff and their future position. In some cases, there is no interview at all, and in some cases, mostly when volunteering on specific tasks, the selection process is much longer.

At least half of volunteers mentioned training course or workshop for volunteers as a part of their volunteering process.

Mentorship and supervision is something volunteers find very helpful and wish it were more of it in their volunteering process. Some volunteers have mentors, and it could be an employee of the organisation, or even other volunteer who has more volunteering experience.

Volunteers mention evaluation as the last part of the process, although it can be happening continually.

Volunteer coordinator

More than half respondents claim that there is person responsible for volunteers in their organizations: mostly it is volunteer coordinator, sometimes it is youth worker, and other times is older volunteer. Very few respondents were not sure if there is someone who handles volunteers in their organisation. The vast majority of young people agree that a coordinator or a youth worker makes the volunteering process easier for them and provides them with support and encouragement in the learning process. All agree that the lack of this person can threaten the quality of volunteering and negatively affect the volunteering experience of young people.

When asked about what competences they recognize in a good youth worker or volunteer coordinator, most of young volunteers will agree on the following skills and characteristics:

- **Communication skills**
- **Organisational skills**
- **Leadership and management skills**
- **Empathy**
- **Respect**
- **Patience**
- **Open-mindedness**
- **Ability to balance between the goals of the association and the volunteers**

While most respondents have positive experiences with their volunteering process, there is still space for improvement. Here are some youth tips and tricks for volunteer including organisations:

1. There is never too much education, training, supervision and teambuilding!
2. Make sure that the volunteers' time is not wasted - work on time management and the number of volunteers needed for a particular activity.
3. The introduction part could have been improved - more time and effort could have been dedicated to introducing the values, goals, tasks and wide range of activities the organisations implements so volunteers could gain a better understanding from the very beginning.
4. Communication is the key – this applies to both internal and external communication
5. Moments of openness and honesty need to be created for volunteers to be truthful about health or other issues.
6. More attention should be paid to the evaluation and reward phases as well, as that is when the volunteers are seeing clearly the impact of the work they have been doing.
7. Creating more opportunities for active participation of volunteers in decision-making process and in content creation.

5. Volunteering and values

In order to investigate the importance of value-oriented volunteering, we asked young people what their personal values are and how much they influence their choice of volunteer positions and organizations they join.

Personal values that young people consider very important are the following:

- humanity,
- tolerance
- respect
- solidarity,

- inclusiveness
- openness
- justice and equality
- sincerity and honesty
- kindness and generosity
- integrity
- altruism
- care for the environment

Many of these values played a significant role when they were choosing their volunteer engagement, as young people do not want to get involved in projects or actions that go against their principles.

Values of volunteering

When young people were asked to define volunteering, most responses consisted of 3 main components of the definition of volunteering: free will, benefiting the community, and not receiving compensation for a task performed. In addition to all of the above, young people often define volunteering as a learning process, an opportunity for personal growth and the acquisition of new experiences, knowledge and skills. Coming to the theme of values, volunteering is described as an activity to "put oneself at the service of the community and those who need it most, in order to try to change things and promote a different idea of society". Another recurring theme is the one of gratuitousness, of carrying out an activity without being rewarded with money but thanks to which one has rewards that can be traced more to personal motivation.

The values that respondents most often associate with volunteering are: solidarity, sharing and altruism; generosity, empathy, commitment and responsibility, equality, nondiscrimination, integrity, active participation etc.

Values of volunteer including organizations

Most organizations actively communicate their values, most often this happens at the very beginning of engagement, and sometimes during training or education for volunteers. However, it seems that volunteers most often read values from everyday life and the activities that organizations deal with. A very small number of volunteers declared that the organization's values were never communicated to them.

The values that, according to volunteers, their organizations most often communicate are:

- Humanity, tolerance, solidarity
- Dialogue,
- Diversity,
- Democracy,
- Well-being,
- Dignity,
- Equality,
- Inclusion,
- Environmental protection
- Empathy
- Altruism
- Growth and development

The volunteers generally identify with the values of the organizations in which they are volunteering. They also think that associations should always carefully maintain the values they promote for the community within the team and volunteer group as well.

Volunteering as a tool for raising awareness and changing the perception of society

Almost all respondents are sure of the fact that volunteering changed their perception of something and made them aware of a social problem. Volunteering changed their

perspective and way of thinking, but also made them realize who they are and who they want to be.

While some volunteers changed their perception of themselves, many volunteers state that they changed their perception of others - especially when working with vulnerable and minority groups. In addition, the volunteers stated that their perception of society has changed and that they now have a better understanding of social problems and needs.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, both young volunteers and volunteer including organisations think that values are really important when it comes to volunteering. Similar values are recognized as most important in both surveyed groups. Those values are: **solidarity, inclusion, tolerance, equality, dignity, justice and equality, humanity and altruism.**

Except the mentioned values, both groups think it is very important to clearly communicate those values to public, but also to “live” those values through the work and activities of organizations.

Young people are really attached to their personal values and they will always choose their volunteer positions according to this factor, but they also expect to feel those values in volunteering process, through the activities and results of the activities. On the other hand, according to organizers, values are something that can be learned in the process of volunteering and it's not so much important for youngsters to have this values in advance.

The biggest discrepancy in responses between the two groups was observed in the area of motivation. On the one hand, the organizers are not satisfied with the involvement of young people in volunteer activities and mention problems such as **motivation of volunteers**, which is initially very high, but decreases over time because young people tend to look for quick results, which they cannot always achieve. There is also a great attitude among organizations about the **disinterest of young people today in volunteering, a lack of commitment and responsibility among young volunteers and non-continuity and unpredictability of their engagement.**

On the other hand, young volunteers have mention very different factors that influence their motivation, such as **values of organization, organizational culture, feeling of belonging and acceptance, scope of responsibility, impact visibility and personal commitments.**

Nonetheless, when youngsters start to volunteer, they tend to stay in their organizations as more as possible and they try to avoid leaving the organizations if they can find a solution. The leaving only happens when some big life situations occurs for youngsters, such as going to university in another city, starting a family or employment.

Volunteering as a tool for raising awareness and changing the perception of society

Almost all youngsters are sure of the fact that volunteering changed their perception of something and made them aware of a social problem. Volunteering changed their perspective and way of thinking, but also made them realize who they are and who they want to be. While some volunteers changed their perception of themselves, many volunteers state that they changed their perception of others - especially when working with vulnerable and minority groups. In addition, the volunteers stated that their perception of society has changed and that they now have a better understanding of social problems and needs.

Considering everything mentioned, we conclude that it is necessary to bring the perceptions of young volunteers and volunteering organizers closer, as well as to break the stigma of young people as irresponsible, passive and unpredictable. In order to make volunteer programs more value-based and open them to young people, we bring you some tips and tricks for improvement.