

The project «Volunteers as a Force of Solidarity in Times of Crisis » was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"

Applicable to the Strand 2 – Measure 2.2 "*Networks of Towns*"
Measure 2.3 "*Civil Society Projects*"
Strand 1 – "*European Rememberance*"

Preparatory activities (if applicable): in total, 1372 persons from 5 European countries (Croatia, Belgium, Italy, Serbia, Poland) participated in the international research that was conducted as a part of preparatory activities.

Location / Dates: research was conducted online, partner communication was conducted online

Short description:

Preparatory project activities consisted of a project set up, initial partner meetings that were conducted online and international research that was conducted in all partner countries.

Project team members conducted research on the attitudes towards migration, refugees, integration, volunteering in general and volunteering in crisis during spring and summer 2020. Research goal was to examine attitudes and perspectives on volunteering and volunteers, specifically on volunteering during various crises. In our research, the emphasis was on the refugee crisis that took place in Europe between 2015 and 2017 and the subsequent work with refugees in integration processes. All countries involved in this research had influx of refugees and issues and challenges on the borders during that period. Consequently, they engaged volunteers and organized volunteer work via different organizations.

The project partners and countries their organizations were stationed in determined research population. Every partner had to spread the survey across the country, contacting their partners and associates in other NGOs so we could have geographically more widespread sample. The sample consisted of 265 participants from Belgium, 301 participants from Croatia, 256 participants from Italy, 193 participants from Poland and 357 participants from Serbia. The data was collected between May and September 2020.

Since the data collection was happening during the global pandemic, which was indeed unforeseen circumstance, in total only 1372 participants were included in the research, and unevenly distributed across countries (disproportionate in relation to their population). Analysis was adapted according to that, so we only analyzed differences between respondents with emphasis on their sociodemographic characteristics (such as gender, age, education level, etc.), while not taking into consideration the variable "country of residence".

Survey was designed in cooperation with University of Split (Department of Sociology), and it consisted of six parts:

1. Sociodemographic questions
2. Trust scale (general) – trust towards others and institutions
3. Statements on volunteering and volunteering experience
4. Volunteering during crisis in general
5. Volunteering – refugee crisis
6. Volunteering – COVID-19 crisis

Partners conducted online meetings (group and individual) when necessary to ensure understanding of the tasks and to give support to each other in implementing them. Group partner meetings were conducted on June 23rd 2020 (online, with 6 participants from all partner countries: Croatia - 1, Belgium - 2, Serbia - 1, Poland - 1, Italy - 1) and on September 21st 2021 (live, in Split, with 16 participants from all partner countries: Croatia - 5, Belgium - 2, Serbia - 4, Poland - 3, Italy - 2). Regular partner coordination and communication was conducted via e-mail or phone, as needed.

Total number of participants in preparatory activities is 1388 (1372 research participants, 16 persons in total team members).

Events:

8 events have been carried out within this project:

Event 1 – Promotional Visibility Event (two days) - Croatia

Participation: The event involved 93 **citizens**, including 1 participant from Serbia, 3 participants from France, 1 participant from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1 participant from Canada – not eligible, 1 participant from Germany, 86 participants from Croatia. From those participants, 10 of them were persons with some kind of disability.

Location / Dates: The event took place **Split, Croatia** on September 18th 2021.

Short description: The aim of the event was to promote the VOCIS project, raise public knowledge on Europe for Citizen program (now CERV) and to raise awareness on importance and challenges of volunteering in crisis and integration. In addition, during this event we presented project activities and aims. We conducted a wide public event with 20 CSO's and 93 participants.

Event 2 - International kickoff event in Croatia

Participation:

The event involved 59 citizens, including 45 participants from Croatia, 3 Polish citizens, 1 participant from Macedonia, 3 participants from Italy, 1 from Belgium and 6 Serbian citizens.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Split, Croatia in Hotel Park on September 22nd 2021.

Short description: The aim of the event was to gather the panelists and experts and to address the role of volunteers in solidarity and integration. The panelists were the representatives of important civil society organizations in Croatia that are dealing with refugees and asylum seekers: Center for Peace Studies, Jesuit Refugee Service and Are you Syrian.

The second panel discussion addressed the crisis volunteering (volunteering during COVID 19 pandemic and earthquakes in Croatia. During this event two researches were presented (Attitudes of students of the University of Split on migration, integration and migrants and International research on (crisis) volunteering).

In addition, we took the opportunity to host the representative of Government of the Republic of Croatia, which is the CERV program contact point, and present the CERV program to interested participants.

Event 3 – National event Croatia

Participation: The event involved 130 citizens, including 1 participant from Belgium, 1 participant from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1 participant from Ireland and 127 participants from Croatia.

Location / Dates: The event took place online, on February 9th 2022.

Short description: The aim of the event was to present the results of the research conducted in the scope of the project VOCIS, which would be the introduction into further discussion about volunteering in general, and about volunteering during crises.

During the conference, VOCIS project and research results were presented.

Experts in the field of volunteering gave presentations on potential of volunteering for building sustainable and resilient communities. In the first part of the conference, as an introduction to the topic, relevant documents and research were presented, "Plan for European volunteering until 2030", "Guidelines and examples of good practice involving volunteers in crisis situations" and the results of a recently conducted public opinion survey on topic "Experiences of volunteering in the post-earthquake crisis in Sisak-Moslavina County".

The international panel "Potential of volunteering for the recovery and resilience of the community" followed. It included Stuart Garland from the Volunteer Ireland organization, Tamara Jovičić from the IKS Association from Petrinja, Leo Staković from the Croatian Youth Network, Igor Čović from GlobalLogic and Branko Ančić from the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb.

Mirna Šostarko, from the Croatian Volunteer Development Centre, introduced the participants to the practical "Guidelines and examples of good practice for involving volunteers in crisis situations". The intention of the Guide is to gather relevant information in one place for volunteers, informal initiatives and volunteering organizers in accordance with the principles of crisis volunteering and good volunteering practice and the involvement of citizens in crises.

Antonia Matković from the Association MI presented the results of a recently conducted public opinion survey on the topic "Experiences of volunteering in the post-earthquake crisis in Sisak-Moslavina County".

Event 4 – National event Serbia

Participation: The event involved 58 registered participants, including participants from Serbia, Russia and Croatia, 3 participants from the Croatia, 1 participant from Russia and 54 participants from Serbia.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Belgrade, Serbia, on January 30th 2022 from 9:45 to 12:35. 8 citizens participated live, while 50 people followed the event online.

Short description: The aim of the event was to present the results of the research conducted in the scope of the project VOCIS: Volunteers as a Force of Solidarity in Times of Crisis, which would be the introduction into further discussion about volunteering in general, and about volunteering during crises.

First discussion (interview) was with a representative of an organization from Serbia that gathered people from all over the country to oppose new legislation on property expropriation and referendums that they contend favor private companies over citizens and the environment in December last year. The focus was given on organizing a large number of people who wanted to help, using modern technologies and social networks. They described their experience and problems that they encountered.

On the second round table, representatives of three organizations discussed the challenges and experiences they faced during their work with volunteers. Some focus was given towards the volunteering rights, and other legislation regarding the volunteering in Serbia and Croatia. Similarities and key differences were shown during the conversation.

The event ended on a positive note from panelists, with hope that conferences like this one would bring more and more people into volunteering in the future.

Event 5 – National event Italy

Participation: The event involved 64 participants. In total, 59 participants from Italy; 2 from Croatia; 1 from Poland; 1 Filipino and 1 with two nationalities (Italian and Peruvian). 26 citizens participated live, while 38 people followed the event online.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Milano, Italy, and online, from 9.00 to 13.00, March 26th 2022.

Short description: The aims of the event were to describe the project VOCIS: Volunteers as a force of solidarity in times of crises, to share the results of the research conducted within the project and to discuss the topic of volunteering, and of volunteering during crises situations (volunteering with migrants and refugees and volunteering during COVID 19 crises).

In the second part of the event, two roundtables were therefore held in order to involve some civil society organizations and volunteers in reflecting on the themes of the project. In the first roundtable, a group of 5 different organizations discussed about their experience during the pandemic. They described the way they activated, managed and coordinated volunteers during COVID-19 crisis, what difficulties they encountered, which results they achieved.

In the second round table we interviewed some young volunteers who told about their personal experiences of volunteering in different contexts (migrants, COVID-19 emergency and cultural events). They explained the reasons why they took action and they shared some thoughts on their possible future actions in the field of volunteering and active citizenship.

The event ended with a brief debate with the participants and an invitation to stay in touch to further explore the issues raised by the project.

Event 6 – National event Poland

Participation: The event involved 53 citizens, including 13 participants online from Croatia (2 participants), Italy (1 participant), Poland (7 participants), Ukraine (1 participant), Belgium (1 participant) and USA (1 participant) and 40 participants (37 from Poland and 3 from Ukraine) present live in Katowice.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Q Hotel Plus in Katowice (Poland) and online via zoom platform with English translation, at 21th of April 2022 from 10.00 am to 05.00 pm.

Short description: As part of the conference, we presented the main goals of the VOCIS, including the research carried out as part of the project. We focused on three crises - pandemic, climate and humanitarian crises on the border with Belarus and those caused by the war in Ukraine.

Kasia Hromek and Ania Bolewska introduced us to the situation on the border with Belarus, shared with us the emotions that accompanied them and still accompany them in connection with the activities undertaken as volunteers by Grupa Granica and Fundacja Ocalenie. The topic of taking care of ourselves, which we often forget when helping others and fighting for the cause, resounded strongly. Kasia Medwid from the Association for Civic Activity BONA FIDES talked about the activities in which they engaged volunteers during the pandemic and humanitarian crisis and about the possibilities of using community organising in organising the Ukrainian community. Gosia Dudek-Wąs, the commander of the ZHP Katowice Corps, reminded us that also as coordinators and coordinators of volunteering we must think about ourselves and set limits, because our forces are not endless. We must also remember that the coordination of voluntary

activities sometimes involves sending someone home - a bit in line with the "measure your strength" principle.

Thanks to Kasia Majchrzak, we learned about the organization of the social initiative Magazyn Grabowa 1, which was established overnight and provides material assistance to people from Ukraine. Amazing how a group of people who didn't necessarily know and collaborate before can turn ideas into a thriving social store in less than a month! What was extremely important to us in the face of the pandemic and the humanitarian crisis is the climate crisis, which is happening a little beyond our eyes but is affecting us all now. Kamil Szewczyk from the Silesian Climate Movement spoke about activities that continue despite other conflicts (we were impressed by the organization of 6 protests of several people during the pandemic in various cities due to restrictions) and about the future that undoubtedly awaits us.

Elwira Skrobska, who came to us after a 17-hour journey from Chersoń, where she was with humanitarian transport and material aid, and who filled us with hope that how we help now will change (for the better) in the future. Because the most important thing is, first of all, to take care of yourself, for people who want to help and slightly change the face of volunteering as an activity undertaken mostly by women and people socialized to the role of women. Secondly, it is important to remember that every conflict is different and now we need to develop structures that will allow for effective action, no matter what we have to face in the future.

Event 7 – International event Padova

Participation: The event involved 80 citizens, including 40 participants from **Italy**, 5 participants from **Croatia**, 12 participants from **Belgium**, 1 participant from **Bulgaria**, 1 participant from **Cyprus**, 1 participant from **Estonia**, 1 participant from **Finland**, 2 participants from **France**, 4 participants from **Germany**, 1 participant from **Greece**, 1 participant from **Ireland**, 1 participant from **Netherlands**, 3 participants from **Poland**, 2 participants from **Portugal**, 1 participant from **Serbia**, 1 participant from **Slovakia**, 1 participant from **Spain**, 2 participants from **UK**.

Location / Dates: The event took place ONLINE - previously planned in Padova (**Italy**), on October 22nd 2020.

Short description: The VOCIS (Volunteers as a Force of Solidarity in Times of Crisis) webinar in Padova presented the VOCIS Europe for Citizens funded project and explored the real value of volunteering during crises. University researchers, volunteers, participants and partners of the VOCIS project shared their experiences before registered participants joined working groups to explore the different aspects more deeply.

The seminar, originally envisioned to take place in Padova (Italy), due to the changed regulations to counteract the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, took place online, and was available on Live Streaming on the Centre for European Volunteering Facebook page.

Event 8 – Final conference

Participation: The event involved 31 citizens, including 1 participant from Macedonia, 6 participants from Serbia, 3 participants from Italy and 21 participants from Croatia.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Zagreb, Croatia and online, from on May 19th, 2022.

Short description: The aim of the event was to present project results to all participants and to share experience and information on crisis volunteering. Representatives of national Red Cross organization conducted a lecture on their experience with organizing large numbers of volunteers in crisis.

In addition, their volunteer and volunteer coordinator shared his experience being a part of such a complex system that handles thousands of volunteers when the crisis occurs. Representative of ADRA, an NGO that organizes volunteer activities in crisis situations also shared her experience and pointed out some of the challenges they face and means to improve the system.

Representatives of project partner Serbia on the move shared their experience in organizing volunteering in the last years, when Serbia faced more than one crisis, be it environmental, humanitarian or else.

Project manager presented project results, goals and led the discussion on the importance of following European values when organizing volunteering.