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**Go Get Award**  
*Empowering Senior Volunteerism*

# Educator's Handbook

**LET'S HELP THEM BECOME VOLUNTEERS**

What do adult educators need to know  
about volunteers and volunteering

„Keep going, reach goals, get an award: empowering senior volunteerism“

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***Handbook for adult educators***

***Let's help them become volunteers***

***What do adult educators need to know about volunteers and volunteering***

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## INTRODUCTION

This Handbook has been developed within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme Strategic partnerships for adult education „Keep going, reach goals, get an award: empowering senior volunteerism“ No. 2020-1-LT01-KA204-077966.

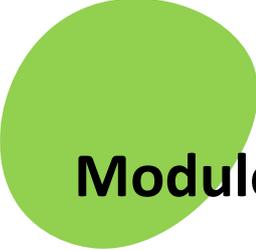
We have written this Handbook to provide the adult educators, who work with older people, with the necessary knowledge and skills on how to empower, guide and support older adults (55+) to become volunteers and engage in the *Senior Award Program*.

The target group of this Handbook is adult educators, particularly the ones working in organizations that primarily are not concerned with education, i.e. cultural and local community centers, libraries, museums, etc.

The Handbook contains 4 modules each of them providing theoretical concepts related to older people's volunteering. Each module is supplemented with questions for reflection, an ice breaking activity and two exercises. The aim of the questions for reflection is to test the knowledge that adult educators have acquired by reading this Handbook and participating in training. The purpose of the ice breaking activities is to engage adult educators into an active learning process. The exercises are meant to apply the theoretical modules material in practice.

We hope that the material provided in this Handbook will enable adult educators to engage, guide, support and retain older people in their pursuit of better and active life in old age.

*-The authors*



# Module 1

## WHY DO OLDER PEOPLE VOLUNTEER AND WHY THEY SHOULD VOLUNTEER

When older people get retired something happens; suddenly they are pushed out of the world of active people. Now, they can observe “the real life” passing by, unless they find new contents for their life - start doing new things and meeting new people. Paid work, education and/or continuous volunteering will provide their life with a structure they need. Their leisure time will not be accidental (meeting peers each week, drinking coffee etc. ) anymore, but serious, structured, target oriented time, constructing them and their communities.

### Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the learners will be able to:

- upgrade their knowledge about motivation;
- comprehend older people’s motives for volunteering;
- identify barriers hindering older people from volunteering;
- learn about the benefits older people gain through volunteering;
- learn more about the benefits the community gains from older people’s volunteering.

### Module in a nutshell

The module is divided into three units:

UNIT 1. What is motivation and what are older peoples’ motives for volunteering?

UNIT 2. What benefits from volunteering are there for older people?

UNIT 3. What benefits of older people’s volunteering are there for communities?

## UNIT 1. What is motivation and what are older peoples' motives for volunteering?

Motivation explains human behaviour. Basically motivation is enthusiasm to do things. There are many theories of motivation- i.e. Herzberg (1959) classifies the factors that influence motivation into two major groups: *hygiene factors* (external factors such as physical conditions of work, safety, organizational procedures, relationships, etc.) and the following *motivational factors* which are at the core of motivation:

- (1) Achievement or fulfillment, opportunity to do interesting things.
- (2) Recognition coming from a well done job.
- (3) Interest in one's own work, stimulating tasks that allow one to develop
- (4) Increased responsibility etc.

Moreover, it has been found that primary motivations for volunteering are of both altruistic and self-interested nature. Smith (1997) argues on the basis of research findings that

48% of the respondents want to help.

47% are asked to help.

45% volunteer because of their needs and interests of their family and friends, and

42% volunteer because of their own needs and interests (Smith, 1997).

*Volunteering is not about giving, it is about both giving and receiving and it is about exchanging.*

## UNIT 2. What benefits from volunteering are there for older people?

The most important benefit volunteers take from their voluntary work is the enjoyment they experience, the satisfaction of seeing results, meeting new people, making friends and a sense of personal achievement.” (Smith, 1997, p.61-62)

In Table 1 Živilė Navikienė has listed the most frequent individual/personal benefits older people get from volunteering (better health, hobbies/new goals, friendship, their family’s admiration, happiness). Benefits listed under the health heading are: lower risk of getting lonely, isolated or depressed. Older volunteers who are active, not only physically but also mentally, keep moving, therefore they are at a lesser risk of cognitive decline. Leisure time activities can be integrated into volunteering. They may broaden volunteers’ interests and trigger their primary motivation for learning in relation to the work they perform.

Health	Hobbies and new goals	Friendship	Family attitude	Happiness
Lower risk of cognitive decline, and other health conditions.	Leisure time activities/ hobbies are integrated into voluntary activities.	Volunteering helps older people meet and make new friends.	Families think positively about volunteering.	Emotional satisfaction. Meaningful and productive activities make older volunteers happier.
Prevents depression, loneliness and isolation.	Possibility to broaden interests.	Volunteering increases physical activities.	Families are proud about the family member’s lifestyle.	Devoting time to others structures volunteer’s time.
Volunteering keeps cognitive abilities mobilized.	Setting new goals for one’s life.	Connections between generations stimulate learning.	Older volunteers are emotionally less dependent on the members of their family.	Confidence, and optimism, make older volunteers happier and self-fulfilled.

Table 1. Older adults’ personal benefits of volunteering

Volunteering helps making friends. It may increase older volunteers' physical and mental activities. It induces intergenerational bonding and leads to non-formal learning. Volunteering activities can enhance older volunteers' relationships with their family members. Families may be proud of their older volunteering members, may admire their active lifestyle and are happy about their increased emotional independence.

As a result of what has been mentioned above older people's socio-psychological needs are met. Older volunteers feel happier and emotionally satisfied. Meaningful and productive activities can enhance older volunteers' life perspectives. Their time gets structured around the volunteering tasks. They have something to care for, to think about and even if they live alone their loneliness is less difficult to endure. Older volunteers may gain self-confidence and trust, become more optimistic and positive. In the *Volunteer Functions Inventory* (Chacon et al., 2017) motivating reasons for volunteering are cited and described.

*To be useful* is a motive for volunteering and is both a personal and social value. *Wanting to understand* means that individuals want to learn, practice, and enhance knowledge and skills in addition to learning about the world and other people (Chacon et al., 2017; Guntert et al., 2016; Stukas, Snyder & Clary, 2016).

*Protective motivations* are related to people's need to cope with their problems or to avoid them. (Chacon et al., 2017; Guntert et al., 2016). In addition, volunteers may be motivated *to help the less fortunate than themselves* due to their feeling of guilt for being more fortunate (Stukas, Snyder & Clary, 2016).

*Enhancement* or personal growth may be motives for volunteering, which means feeling better about oneself and increasing self-esteem; (Chacon et al., 2017; Stukas, Snyder & Clary, 2016; Guntert et al.; 2016).

*The most valuable volunteers' characteristics* are compassion, open-mindedness, willingness to do whatever is needed, and a positive attitude.

### UNIT 3. What benefits of older people's volunteering are there for communities?

Volunteering has a real and valuable influence on individuals, communities and society in general.

Volunteers make friends with other volunteers and with people whom they help. These relationships may transcend ethnic, class, and geographic delimitations and build community.

Step by step, in the process of volunteering, people become more involved in their neighborhood. They may discover that their neighbors are nice people, so they trust them more. To a certain degree they can rely on them for help, if and when needed. Moreover, volunteers may bring people together and really take on a problem in their community.

*Due to the contribution of their volunteers, communities are getting more connected and cohesive.*

*Volunteering equates social capital* (knowledge, experiential knowledge, skills, network). It promotes inclusion, supports socially marginalized groups, enables active citizenship, extends opportunities for paid or unpaid work and builds civil society. It engages people in social actions, community building, and community renewal.

*Volunteering may defend a common community* cause by raising awareness about it which is an ongoing and carefully planned process, alleviating stereotypes and prejudices but it can also improve the quality of life of the community. It can better pupils' educational attainment, support sustainable development, alleviate environmental problems, react actively to climate changes, etc. *Volunteering organizations may deliver public services.*

Volunteering in a community most often takes place face-to-face but lack of transportation, time, constraints, disabilities, etc. make many people prefer volunteering via phone or computer. There are many projects where these remote older volunteers can help. Writing and graphic design can be done remotely and today many organizations can be helped by composing and sending out e-mails and building websites. This can be volunteers' job. While *home-based volunteering might* be right for older volunteers, they may contact organizations they like and ask about possibilities to volunteer.

#### Ice - breaking activity

Divide the group into pairs or threes and let the subgroups find ten things they have in common and report to the rest of the group. "We all like, we all can't stand, we are all in favour of."

The aim of the following 2 exercises is to help the adult educator assess the person's readiness and availability for volunteering

**Exercise 1. Answer the questions.**

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Are you retired?		
Can you spare time for volunteering?		
Do your health conditions allow you to help others?		
Do you love interacting with people?		
Do you want to learn something new?		
Do you prefer doing paper work or using computer?		
Do you want to use your specific competencies and experience?		
Do you want to feel part of an organization?		
Do you want to be useful to others?		
Do you want to be more connected with the community?		
<b>If you have answered YES several times, proceed to Exercise 2.</b>		

## Exercise 2. Find the day/the time for volunteering:

Weekdays	In the morning/in the afternoon	Volunteering activity/organization
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

### Questions for reflection:

1. What are the main motives for older people's volunteering?
2. What are the benefits of volunteering for older people?
3. In your view, are there any old age specific voluntary activities?
4. How would you present volunteering activities to somebody who has not had volunteering experience yet?

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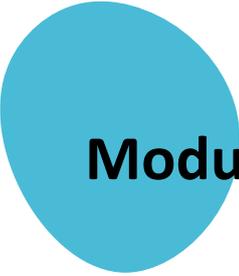
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Tenure-track professors and non-profit opportunities: the benefits of volunteering in your community <https://careerpurpose.com/industries/education/benefits-of-volunteering>



# Module 2

## HOW TO PROMOTE VOLUNTEERING AND RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS FOR THE SENIOR AWARD PROGRAMME

*Senior Award Program* is a special program for older people combining several activities (learning, volunteering, sports) and enabling older people to participate and remain included in society. Moreover, any type of volunteering requires knowledge about the promotional techniques, animation and recruiting of volunteers.

### Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the learners will be able to:

- understand the promotion of volunteering and recruiting volunteers;
- explain what the *Senior Award Programme* is and how it is structured;
- understand the public impact of the *Senior Award Programme*.

### Module in a nutshell

The module is divided into three units:

UNIT 1. How to promote volunteerism?

UNIT 2. Senior Award Program combines different activities

UNIT 3. Public aspects of the *Senior Award Programme*

## UNIT 1. How to promote volunteerism?

Wanting to engage older adults in volunteering and enhance the image of volunteering, educators need to be familiar with an array of animation and communication strategies. By using them, they are not aiming at seducing potential volunteers (marketing), but on the contrary, at engaging their transformation. Different approaches are needed addressing potential volunteers in urban and rural areas. Different approaches are needed addressing different segments of older people-potential volunteers in compliance with their educational level, experience, values, etc.

Raising awareness about nature, the value, the mission and the benefits of volunteering is constituent of any strategy for motivating people to volunteer. Older people might underestimate their abilities or think they would not be able to do it. Moreover, they are not informed enough about volunteering opportunities. Shortly, older people have a lot to give and do not volunteer because nobody has invited them to do it.

### **Best communication channels and methods**

*Direct communication* between two or more people (i.e. adult educator and prospective volunteer) which helps building a long term personal relationship.

*Presenting examples of successful volunteering* by famous people. Discussing personal and community benefits of volunteering is effective and convincing.

*Word of mouth.* Experienced volunteers share with their peers their individual stories as well as their impressions about their life changing discoveries, overcoming economic, religious, socio-cultural difficulties, improving their emotional and physical health. Such success stories motivate other older adults to make changes in their lives and gain new experience.

*Different organizations or institutions.* Non-governmental and charitable organizations, not-for-profit educational, cultural, health and sport organizations but also commercial and financial organizations - libraries, outdoor patient clinics, educational institutions, shopping centers, banks and other institutions providing services to older adults - are a good channel to use.

*Leaflets, reports, short newspaper or magazine articles* may be a good marketing tool when it comes to promoting volunteering.

*Emotional marketing* can inspire and motivate. Content that is created to inform people about volunteering activities, events, etc. must evoke emotions with pictures telling the volunteering stories of public persons. (Sliburyte L., 2014).

*Digital invitations* extended via smartphones, emails, social networks.

E-resource library <http://gogetaward.eu/recource-library/> has been created in the partnership project GGA providing information about organizations that offer volunteer opportunities, volunteer training programs, legal acts and inspirational success stories.

Volunteer programs offered by an individual or an organization should provide answers to the following questions:

**Why** (rationale, goal, objectives, planned activities)?

**Who** (potential volunteers, their interests, skills, attitudes, availability)

**What** (what is the core message about volunteering you wish to communicate)

**How** (which communication channels are going to be used for delivering a message)

Your animation approaches are successful, if with the right message, using the right communication channels you reach the targeted audience.

In her publication “Promoting volunteerism” Janet Lautenschlager provides information on strategies for activities related to the promotion of volunteering among older adults:

- *Informing the community about the benefits of volunteerism, the roles that volunteers undertake, volunteers' activities, volunteers' contribution to the life of their community, local, national or international organizations offering volunteering opportunities;*
- *Encouraging and supporting volunteers by strengthening their membership and contacts within their community;*
- *Teaching and learning: providing new knowledge and strengthening the skills for volunteering;*
- *Recognizing the efforts of volunteers, appreciating their selfless volunteer work to keep them motivated. Visibility, understanding and support – these are the terms that describe best the expected outcomes of promoting volunteerism.*

There are many ways and strategies to promote volunteerism that don't require extra financial costs:

- *handwritten thank you cards or a personal note with volunteer work moments captured in photos;*
- *informing about a person's direct experience in volunteer work and showing appreciation at various events throughout the community;*
- *organizing a volunteer day and rewarding volunteers with a Volunteer Certificate;*
- *sharing results of volunteerism and volunteering success stories online;*
- *Senior Award Program.*

More: [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/pdf/ch\\_promoting\\_volunteerism.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/pdf/ch_promoting_volunteerism.pdf))

## UNIT 2. Senior Award Program combines different activities

One of the most attractive ways to convince older adults to volunteer and learn new things is *the Senior Award Program* which has been developed following the example of *The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award*, which is a unique program encouraging young people to learn, plan their purposeful life, develop personal and social competencies and be perseverant.

The Senior Award Program has been designed in the Erasmus+ project „Keep going, reach goals, get an award: empowering senior volunteerism“ (GGA) complies with the principles of the original Award Program. It reflects the need of older adults to stay active in retirement while offering learning and volunteering opportunities. Older people are encouraged not to give up their interests and hobbies, maintain their physical and mental health, and participate in educational activities (traveling, excursions). The Senior Award Program focuses on personal development and overcoming personal challenges.

Main areas of activities:

- Participation in voluntary work (mandatory);
- Learning to gain new knowledge and skills (personal development) (mandatory);
- Staying physically active (optional);
- Undertaking educational tourism (excursions, hiking) (optional).

Each participant in the Senior Award Program will work individually, including some collaborative activities. Personal achievements of the participants will be evaluated and acknowledged from the very start of the program, regardless of their prior work and/or activity. The advantage of the program is that older people given their health, physical, geographical, cultural and social conditions, will find ways to improve themselves in intergenerational relations. This is meant to reduce their social exclusion and form a positive attitude towards aging and older people.

## UNIT 3. Public aspects of the Senior Award Programme

Three levels of volunteering have been found in analyses provided by the GGA partnership (State of Art review of older people's volunteering):

1. **First level** – personal growth, because volunteering gives you opportunity to learn new skills, discover and develop your potential, develop your self-control, enable you for team work;
2. **Second level** – solving social, economic and educational problems at the local and national levels. Volunteer work includes a wide range of activities, among which dealing with people of different nationalities, people of different religions and with different social status, old or disabled people, children with special needs, etc.
3. **Third level** – social growth including individual initiatives, personal development and strengthening of civil society.

The first level focuses on personal growth, the last two highlight social aspects of volunteering. Most often volunteers do their volunteer work in the area where they live. That is why it is the local community and local organizations and institutions which increase their social value created by volunteers first. It is easier for a volunteer who earns award points to find meaningful volunteering opportunities. Volunteers are invited to seminars, courses, and trips where they meet their peers and other community members, gain knowledge and learn. Volunteers are greatly supported by their community, thus improving the quality of their life.

## Ice breaking activity

### Objective:

To get the older volunteers learn new and interesting things about each other

Give each participant a piece of paper and a pen or a pencil. Have the participants trace their hands on the piece of paper with the pen or the pencil. Ask the participants to write their names on the piece paper and exchange it with their pairs. Have the participants talk to each other, ask questions and write the answers on each finger (one word only). Later have the participants tell the others what they have learned about each other. The questions may be as follows:

- What's your name? How old are you?
- What's your educational background?
- What adjectives describe you best?
- What is your hobby/ favorite pastime?
- Why do you want to volunteer?

## Exercise 1

Have older people read the description of the *Senior Award program*, which is available in English and 5 project partners' languages: Bulgarian, Dutch, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Slovenian, on the project website: [www.gogetaward.eu](http://www.gogetaward.eu) and name 2-3 reasons why they should get engaged in this program.

## Exercise 2

Have older people, the potential volunteers, pick up 2-3 video or written success stories which are available on the project website under this link: [www.gogetaward.eu/get-inspired](http://www.gogetaward.eu/get-inspired) Have them watch or read the success stories and list 3-5 benefits of volunteering in old age.

## Questions for reflection:

1. Why do older people with higher levels of educational attainment volunteer more?
2. What is the most effective communication channel that motivates older people to volunteer? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Is the Senior Award Program more beneficial for individuals or society? Please, give your arguments.

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# Module 3

## HOW TO COPE WITH DIFFICULTIES IN VOLUNTEERING?

Without volunteers, any non-profit organization, educational centers, etc. would be hard-pressed to make an impact on society for a worthy cause. Despite the widespread recognition of the enormous value of volunteering, the process of effectively managing volunteers to become a real asset to an organization can be difficult. The main goal of this module is to show some of the main difficulties facing the management of volunteers by charitable, profit and non-profit organizations, and how to overcome them.

### Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the learners will be able to:

- understand how to manage volunteers;
- recruit volunteers in sudden situations where many volunteers are needed;
- act as an inspiring leader of volunteers;
- train volunteers.

### Module in a nutshell

The module is divided into three units:

UNIT 1. What do you need to know about the Recruitment when a sudden event occurs?

How to overcome such situations?

UNIT 2. What do you need to know about Inspiring Volunteer Leadership? How to develop it?

UNIT 3. What do you need to know about the training of volunteers? How to do it?

## **UNIT 1. What do you need to know about the Recruitment when a sudden event occurs? How to overcome it?**

One of the top problems of the volunteering organizations is finding volunteers who: (1) are talented and passionate; (2) are available with knowledge, skills, and competencies to work in various positions; (3) have the ability to donate their time. Very often a sudden event occurs, for example COVID-19 or the war in Ukraine, many refugees coming to your country. Your organization is slammed with requests for resources or volunteers. Do you have sufficient help? How can you solve the problem? There are some successful strategies to find new volunteers during a crisis. First, through current volunteers (Turnbull, A., 2021). They often have friends and family that are just as eager to get involved in volunteering. Try approaching your best volunteers with a motivational question such as: "You do such fantastic work for our organization. If you could suggest to us friends and family members who share the same passion and would be interested in volunteering, it would be a great help for our goals!" (Sterling Volunteers Staff, 2017). Second, use social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc. to motivate new volunteers who actively use new media for communication. It's no secret that people all love them, especially their mobile phones. On average, they spend 5-6 hours on their phones each day and that's not including the time that they use their phones for work! Our phones are glued to us and much more used than emails. Third, call big organizations such as union of pensioners, universities, educational/ cultural centers, etc. and invite people to be volunteers. It is a chance for them to start their own professional path through volunteering, to gain skills, contacts and experience, to meet interesting people, and last but not least - to understand what they want to do. Pensioners often have idle time on their hands which they would prefer using for a good cause. Their experience and enthusiasm should not be overlooked. Fourth, the opportunities that volunteering poses can be used as tools to attract new volunteers when there is a need. For example, participating in various activities - creative writing, training, administrative management and reporting activities, creation of websites, information materials, films, and various products, working with people, organizing events and campaigns, attracting sponsors, and many others. In this way, in addition to the satisfaction of the help provided and the sense of meaningful working as volunteers also supports successful professional choices.

## **UNIT 2. What do you need to know about the Inspiring Volunteer Leadership? How to develop it?**

The leaders play a very inspirational role for volunteers (T. Morand, 2019; T. Marand, 2020; Sterling Volunteers Staff, 2017). In the management of the volunteering, there is a need to encourage and support leadership, because without it the same handful of people stayed in leadership positions until they burned out. In this case, the organization would lose both a leader and a volunteer. The Solution to the problem in the development of inspiring leaders is to create a support system. On one hand, it includes leadership sessions to pass on information, share ideas about activities, celebrate successes, discuss issues and challenges, and brainstorm to grow the organization. This helped build community, so no one feels alone and gives support to the new leaders. It is also a good strategy to invite potential leaders to the sessions. That way, they will get an idea about what being in leadership is actually like. Some of them can be much less intimidated, and ready to try to inspire the volunteers. On the other hand, when it comes to challenges in leaders' development, managers have to consider creating opportunities for volunteers to assume leadership roles. For example, volunteer meetings with leaders can give the experienced volunteers the opportunity to develop leadership skills, share wisdom with the new volunteers, and help them address any issues or concerns. Also, volunteer managers could “promote” experienced volunteers to volunteer trainer positions, in which they would initiate and train all new volunteers. Such opportunities will motivate volunteers, pique their interests, and lift responsibilities from busy staff.

### **UNIT 3. What do you need to know about the training of volunteers? How to do it?**

Good training and education separate the well-organized non-profit from the ad hoc non-profit (Research Report. Impact of transnational exchange experiences on senior volunteers and organizations, 2020; Volunteering in the European Union, 2010). In order to provide good training to volunteers, an organization must have a process and system to teach. They have to include some main characteristics. First, it is training related to the main procedures: registration and participation in an activity, completing reports, etc. This training will make volunteers feel welcome. While in-person training is common, there are now several online tools and document-sharing services that make virtual training easy and effective. Second, it is ongoing education related to the evolving leadership, goals, mission, and key events of the organization. It can come in the form of regularly scheduled meetings with volunteers that make their voices and concerns feel heard. It gives the managers the opportunity to make sure they are getting the most out of the volunteering time and to address any issues one-on-one. If the volunteers are taking the time to engage with their leaders, then it's important for the leaders to recognize the volunteers' work and be open about changes being made based on their recommendations. It is vital to make volunteers feel involved and included. Third, the training for developing the communication skills in new media (social networks, emails, phones, computers, direct messages, text messages, etc.) is important to do volunteering. Fourth, training in necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies is an open door for new opportunities for volunteers to present themselves in the best way (Study on Volunteering in the European Union. Country Report Bulgaria, 2020). Fifth, the training in any area of volunteering has to be used by the managers to bring fun, celebrate and appreciate the volunteers' results, to build a strong volunteer community that makes it easy for volunteers to connect with each other (Promotion of the Active Life of the Elderly in Bulgaria. Collection of good practices, 2020).

## Ice breaking activity

Give to your potential trainees pictures of people of different age (young, middle aged, and old). Ask them to pick up a picture and explain what strategy they would use to attract the person in the picture as a new volunteer.

## Exercise 1

Use flashcards picturing leaders of volunteers in different problem situations. Shuffle them. Let pairs of participants pick up one of them and explain the problem, the aim of the leader in this situation, and the necessary corresponding activities.

## Exercise 2

Have a look at the pictures and read about the “International Day of Forests and Afforestation Week in Bulgaria”. Discuss the steps for recruiting volunteers and organizing a big volunteering event.

### International Day of Forests and Afforestation Week in Bulgaria

World Forest Day is celebrated on 21 March. The first organized afforestation day in Bulgaria was held on April 12, 1925. The first Forest Week in Bulgaria took place from April 15-22, 1934.



Following the tradition, every year, the pensioners from the 20 clubs of the Union of Pensioners of Slivo Pole Municipality perform activities aimed at nature conservation. They help the Municipality by afforesting places with clay soil or wetlands.

In September 2019, 2000 black poplar trees were planted on an area encompassing 25 acres of land.



The number of participants was 220 people, the oldest was 92 years old, and the youngest was just 9.





### Why should we do it?

Mrs. Veska Uzunova, the President of the Union of Pensioners of the Slivo Pole Municipality says:

- The forest is life. The forest is also history, tradition, and concern mentioned in our folk songs; it has been painted by artists and described by writers and poets for so many years.
- Thanks to our statesmen of the past, today we have our centuries-old forests which we are obliged to conserve because they are the oxygen of our people.

### Questions for reflection:

1. How are volunteers recruited in crisis situations?
2. What are the qualities of an inspiring leader?
3. What does the successful training of volunteers include?

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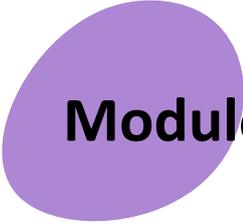
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# Module 4

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO RETAIN VOLUNTEERS? OFFER THEM THE BEST VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE

In this module we will be discussing how to understand and organise volunteering, select and retain volunteers according to their abilities, needs and expectations and make them attached to your organization.

### Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the learners will:

- better understand volunteering and dissipate the myths of volunteering;
- comprehend cost-effectiveness in volunteering;
- understand the volunteers' needs and talents;
- be informed about the reasons for volunteers' leaving or staying;
- learn how to sustain volunteers' commitment and retain them.

### Module in a nutshell

The module is divided into three units:

UNIT 1. What do you need to know?

UNIT 2. How to match the needs?

UNIT 3. Why do volunteers stay, why do they leave?

## UNIT 1. What do you need to know?

First and foremost, volunteering is an altruistic act that we do for a charity, a private company, a non-governmental organization or an individual. On no account volunteering is just going around with a collection box. It is not exploitation of labour either and it is best done when one has a passion.

No matter how important volunteering is, *volunteers should know that they can leave a volunteering programme*. Responsible volunteers may struggle with this issue for a long time and they should be reassured right away that they can move on.

*Volunteers who stay only for a short time are costly*. They are supervised by supervisors who introduce them to the organization, clearly explain the expectations, and provide for the training, equipment. They take care to evaluate the volunteers and their volunteering providing for regular reinforcement and recognition.

Both short term and long-term volunteers are members of the team. *Both* should have access to education, but they should work at least 4 hours a week to get rooted and create bonds. The revolving door issue is particularly a problem when:

- 1) *extensive investment is requested in the education of volunteers,*
- 2) *volunteering jobs require longer and structured commitments,*
- 3) *clients can be harmed when volunteers leave.*

Volunteers who leave take away their knowledge, acquired skills and this is expensive. On the other hand, if volunteers are staying only for a short time and are given no training and guidance, the quality of their work could suffer. If the quality of their work is low, they will feel incompetent and will be frustrated. A volunteering program *should not be like a revolving door* with volunteers coming in and going out since everybody, even the staff, will have the feeling that the volunteering program is worthless. Continuity matters.

## UNIT 2. How to match the needs?

In outstanding organizations with many members a Needs Profile might be used, whereas in smaller organizations selecting the potential volunteers according to their talents is somehow more spontaneous. Not all volunteering organizations use a Needs Profile, their approach being more intuitive, on condition the coordinator knows well both the receiving organizations and the volunteers to be directed there.

The Needs Profile is used when the target population of volunteers is very large, if there is a need for very specialized skills and if there are no other efficient means for locating people with appropriate skills. A careful screening and matching process and a lot of training send an important message to volunteers: Your work is important.

To illustrate this point: At Slovenian Third Age University each volunteer is assigned an area of volunteering. Some are responsible for organizing conferences, writing articles, some deal with advocacy, some are sent to the Slovenian Parliament to follow relevant sessions and are asked to report on their mission, some take care of introductory meetings with future students. All of them are enrolled in Slovenian U3A's programmes, informal events are organized for them but there is a problem: quite often they turn down our demands for help, giving priority to their traveling, grandchildren, gardening, etc. The problem primarily lies with the absence of clear long-term agreement on volunteering. *In episodic volunteering turnover is not such a problem but responsibility and reliability are.*

On the other hand, our volunteers are members of the programme of cultural mediators in public institutions, museums, botanical gardens, hospitals. They are required to spend four hours each day over four days in those institutions, working as librarians, researchers, ambassadors of plants, etc. They participate in the educational programmes regularly and jointly delivered by Slovenian U3A and those institutions. They participate in public campaigning. The more the institutional system around them is tight, the more it has been methodically built, the better their performance.

### UNIT 3. Why do volunteers stay, why do they leave?

Service oriented volunteering attracts people who are altruistic and have the same values. Recruitment efforts, however, should target more experienced volunteers because they are stayers and do not drop out. Those who start volunteering to get out of the house in search of some new activity steadily decrease their volunteering. Generally, people who start volunteering for some external reasons are not good volunteers. They leave. (Rose et al.,1993)

The retention problem may be associated with the aging of volunteers and their life transitions. Older volunteers quit if they get sick, they need to take care of their spouse or grandchildren, etc. Sometimes volunteers improve their self-esteem and then they go out and get paid work which proves to be their priority.

The type of work or tasks in themselves do not explain why volunteers stay or leave. But psychological factors do, the personality partly accounts for different outcomes. Applicants may be shy or self-confident, vulnerable or strong. These characteristics may not impact their volunteering greatly, but, volunteers should surely feel capable, competent, satisfied with their work, not frustrated and there should be ideological congruence between them and the organization. To illustrate this point some older people's organizations believe that older people are frail, poor and should be helped, if on the contrary a volunteer is believing that older people are capable and independent the ideological discrepancy might make a volunteer leave.

Effective help volunteers may offer depends on their motives and abilities. "If volunteers perceive their work as successful, they will feel competent, they will make further commitments of their time" (Brummel,1984, Houghland et al., 1988; Payne, 1977 in Rose et al. 1993).

Recruitment should be selective, newsletters and leaflets are not a good way of recruiting, Personal contacts are much better. (Rose et al.,1993) When volunteers are recruited their motives are general and abstract Their reasons for volunteering are altruistic or utilitarian

(their own interest) or both. At first, they are glad to be volunteering since they are praised by their family and social circle. After some months, they perceive a gap, which is not necessarily negative, but it is a gap between what they want and what the organization may offer. The first few months of volunteering are critical. Volunteers either stay or leave during this period.

To sustain the volunteer's commitment, it is important

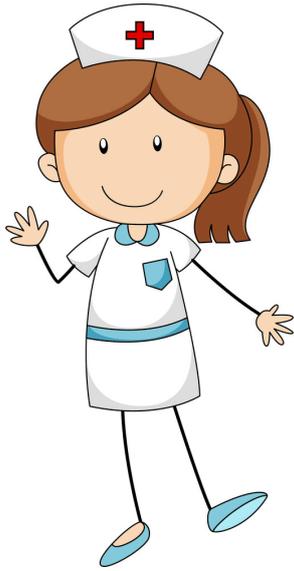
- to provide for successful experience
- to provide for interesting jobs and assignments (intrinsic rewards)
- to recruit people who share the ideology of the organization (cause and goals are worthy)
- to provide for careful attention and monitoring for new volunteers especially after the first three or six months. (Rose et al.,1993)

Volunteers *should not be assigned just routine work*. There should be a lot of educational opportunities, workshops, seminars, as well.

A long-term commitment causes attachment to the organization and its responsibility to the cause of the organization. Sometimes the organization has to place limits on the work of very committed volunteers as to avoid their neglecting their family or friends and their being in danger of burnout.

## **Exercise 1**

On the table lay down pictures of people performing different professional work (nurse, teacher, clown, plumber, doctor, farmer etc.) Go to the internet or make clips from magazines representing more professions. Copy two sets of pictures to offer more choice to more participants. Ask your potential volunteers to pick up a picture and explain why they would be attracted to volunteering in a given area personalized in the pictures.



Source: Clipart



Marie Madeleine reading 1478

<https://artmaniepeinture.wordpress.com/2013/06/08/portraits-de-lecteurs-et-de-lectrices/>

## Exercise 2

Use the same flashcards picturing volunteering positions. Shuffle them. Let pairs of participants pick up one of them and develop a Needs Profile for a given position (needs, expectations, previous experience with volunteering.)

Title of the volunteering position	Volunteer's Talents, needs and expectations	Previous experience with volunteering
Clown	Special abilities/talents	Individual volunteering
Reader		
Doctor		
Nurse	Psychological and other needs	Organised volunteering
Farmer		
Teacher		
Plumber	Expectations	

## Questions for reflection:

1. Volunteers should feel competent. Why is this requirement essential and how to realize it?
2. Maintaining volunteers often becomes challenging. Could you comment on this statement? Why and when it becomes challenging?
3. Volunteers should not be assigned just routine tasks. Why do some volunteers like or dislike routine tasks?

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