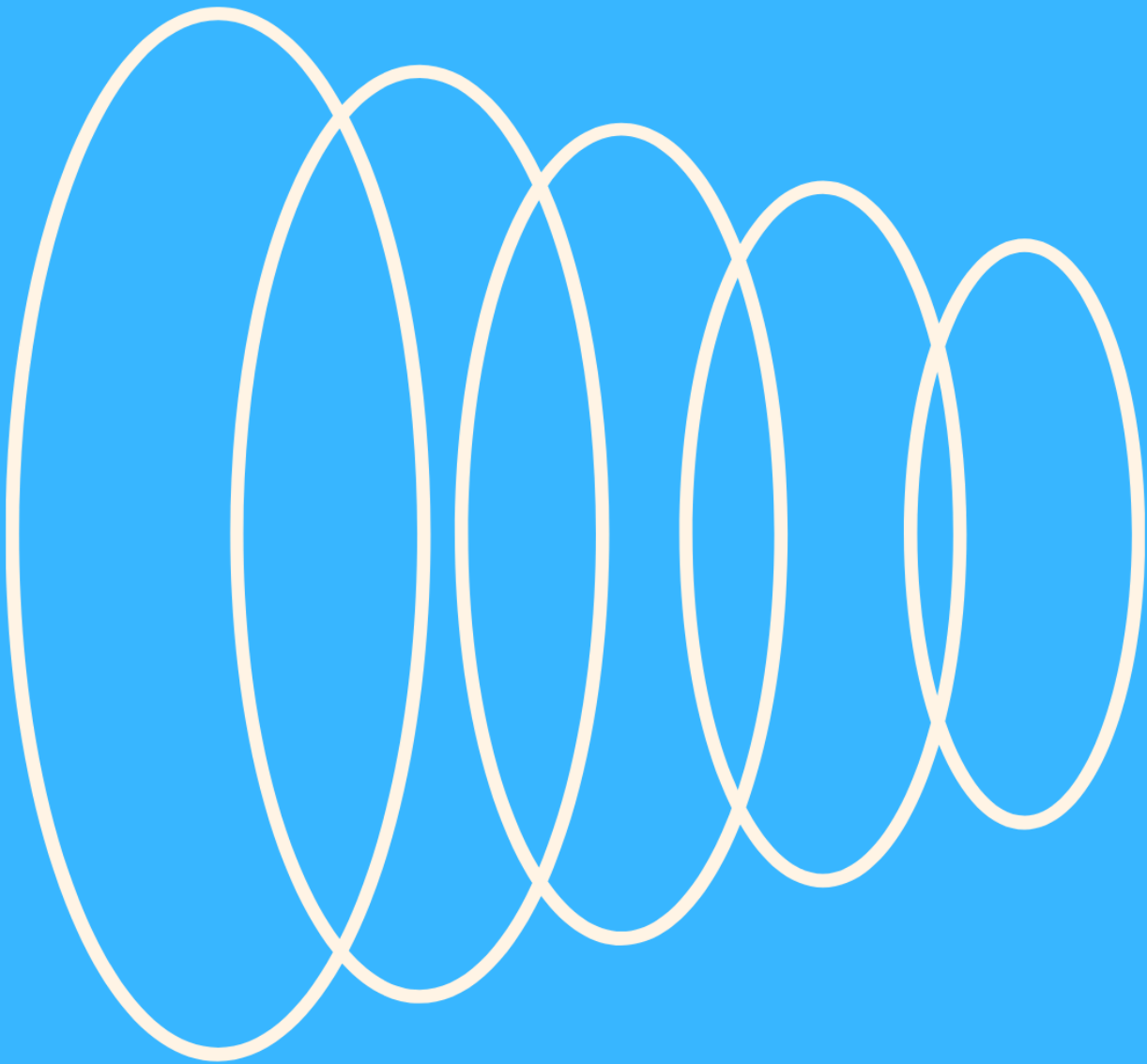


Trends Effective Communication Strategies and Impact of Volunteering

Research



Trends, Effective Communication Strategies and Impact of Volunteering

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The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or official policy of the European Union and PVN.



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Introduction

Volunteerism occurs and develops in every society. The concept of volunteering, as well as the forms of its engagement, may vary in different languages and cultures, but the values of volunteering are essentially the same and universal: the desire to contribute to the common good, with free will and with the feeling of solidarity, without expecting any financial compensation back.

Volunteerism is a mutual, reciprocal and intertwined process, with a positive impact at the personal, community, institutional and social level.

Many further developments have happened in volunteering context, by assessing the impact of international work camps and other volunteering projects. The project "ICON - Capacity building for the IVS movement in impact assessment, communication, and community building" a consortium of 4 organisations, INEX-SDA, CCIVS, PVN and GAIA is implementing this project, where research on target groups is undertaken in Czech Republic, Albania and Kosovo.

This research aims to understand citizens' trends, and willingness regarding their voluntary engagement, along with the effective and attractive communication methods for obtaining information on voluntary engagement; and measure the impact that volunteering has had in terms of interpersonal and professional levels to volunteers. The research has gathered data through a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data has been gathered through research for the target groups to understand what are the trends of volunteering and the most effective communication methods and techniques they would like to be informed on volunteering opportunities. There have been asked 1200 citizens in Albania, over 15 years from rural and urban areas. The sample consisted of 1200 Albanian citizens, over 15 years old coming from rural and urban areas and the questionnaire was distributed online through the snowball technique.

Among the respondents, 68.9% have had volunteering experience and 31.1 % did not volunteer in the past.

The majority of respondents prefer to volunteer during summertime and weekends, followed by short-term volunteering from 2 weeks to 2 months.

The main topics and categories would volunteer are the top priority topics to volunteer for were top priority topics: environment, art and culture, organising festivals, working with kids, community service, and working with animals. The respondents learned about volunteering opportunities, mainly through their peers (33%); in schools and universities (31%) and through social media (29%) However, the majority of respondents would rather receive information regarding volunteering opportunities through social media and e-mail. The most attractive ways to deliver information and messages about volunteering vacancies is through reels, short posts

and videos. The most used communication channel to be informed among youths is Instagram, mostly used in the afternoon and during the night.

To measure the impact of volunteering on former volunteers themselves, a separate questionnaire was drawing up and shared with 15 former volunteers who had volunteered in Albania and across Europe. has been asked through an interview and the assessment questionnaire 15 volunteers who have volunteered in Albania and abroad in different European co Respondents stated different reasons why they had volunteered, and almost everyone connected the reason with the motivation to make an impact on their lives and others. their motivation to make an impact on their life and others. Over 95 % of them stated that volunteering developed their skills, improved competencies and improved their personal and professional life.

Volunteering has a positive impact on beneficiaries and communities, by enhancing quality of life, fostering social ties, improving their life, becoming more open and flexible, and contributing to the local development. Volunteering fosters community cohesion by exhibiting an environment of mutual aid and cooperation. Youth with fewer opportunities have become more independent, enhanced their participation and restored trust to the organisations and community.

Moreover, volunteering has a profound and multifaceted impact on the organizations and municipalities. By augmenting service delivery, and enhancing community engagement, volunteers contribute significantly to the success and well-being of these entities. Embracing and supporting volunteer efforts can lead to more resilient organizations and vibrant, well-supported municipalities.

The research is organised in four parts/ chapters. The first part summarises the methodology and context of volunteering in terms of benefits, challenges, Albanian reality etc.

The second part, analyses the data about the trends of volunteering and effective communication channels and messages people use and prefer to be informed and engaged about volunteering.

The third part, analyses the qualitative data on the impact of volunteering at individual, community and institutional levels by showcasing the impact volunteering has had on volunteers, beneficiaries, communities, organisations and institutions.

The last part of the research brings some recommendations and conclusions, along with bibliography.

Methodology

The researches' main aim is to understand citizens' trends, and willingness regarding their voluntary engagement, along with the effective and attractive communication methods for obtaining information on voluntary engagement; and to measure the impact that volunteering has had in terms of interpersonal and professional levels on volunteers, institutions and local communities.

Research questions

- ➔ What are the trends of volunteering in Albania, including the length and thematic?
- ➔ What would motivate people to volunteer?
- ➔ Which are the communication channels which would attract and be more effective to inform and engage volunteers?
- ➔ What is the impact of volunteering on the community, beneficiaries, institutions and volunteers themselves?

The questionnaire questions were compiled to provide a comprehensive understanding of the needs, trends challenges related to voluntary engagement, as well as to understand the effective communications strategies and channels to attract volunteers and engage them in voluntary actions. For the purpose of the data collection qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed. Using the preliminary research results and knowledge from desk review, the questionnaire was prepared and the results of the survey are contextualized with the qualitative findings.

- **Desk research** is conducted to draw the panorama of the current volunteering context, why is important, how volunteers can be motivated, how to attract them and how to communicate effectively with them. In addition, it brings an overview of what could be more feasible communication channels to inform and engage volunteers.
- The semi-structured **survey** collected quantitative data and qualitative data on citizens over 15 years old across Albania to understand the trends of volunteering, what would motivate them to volunteer, which communication channels they use, and how they would prefer to be informed about volunteering opportunities and concrete engagement opportunities. A total of 1200 citizens filled in the questionnaire, targeted randomly, who did not have previously volunteered or participated in volunteering activities from urban and rural areas of Albania. Collecting such data helps to understand how to reach and how to communicate with the target group.

- **15 in-depth interviews** are conducted with voluntary providers such as organisations, municipalities, and youth centres that hosted short or long term volunteers ; volunteers have been engaged to understand the impact volunteering has left on the institutions, organizations and the target group they work with. Interviews are realized face-to-face and virtually with the key stakeholders.
- 15 other interviews and **impact assessments instrument/semi structured questionnaires with Albanian volunteers** who volunteered in Albania and abroad and European volunteers that volunteered in local communities in Albania. The interviews are used to understand and analyse the impact volunteering had on each of them. Understanding the impact helps also designing and applying effectively the communication strategies and channels for increasing the voluntary engagement focused on multi-level impact for those who have been engaged in voluntary actions.

Volunteering generally involves offering time and skills to help others without expecting financial compensation. The context of volunteering can vary widely depending on the location, the needs of the community, and the type of work involved. Here are some common aspects:

- **Community Support:** Volunteers often work in local communities to support various initiatives, such as education, integration, healthcare, environmental conservation, and social services.
- **Skill Development:** Volunteering can provide opportunities to develop new skills, gain experience, and build a network of contacts. It's also a way to apply existing skills in new and meaningful ways.
- **Cultural Exchange:** In international volunteering, there's often a cultural exchange component, where volunteers learn about and immerse themselves in a new culture while sharing their own.
- **Humanitarian Aid:** In areas affected by disasters or conflicts, volunteers may provide critical support in terms of relief efforts, rebuilding, and offering psychological support.
- **Personal Fulfilment:** Many people volunteer to give back to their communities, find a sense of purpose, and experience personal growth.

1.1 Why do people volunteer?

One explanation could be that volunteering reflects a person's personality: some people are by nature helpful, active and generous, and some people are less so. These are more or less stable differences, whether in people's genes from their upbringing or some self-reinforcing experiences. We probably all know those people who always do something extra, are always willing to help, ready to take the initiative, whether in the workplace, in the neighbourhood or at home. And we also know the other kind of people who remain passive most of the time, always have something else to do, are too tired, etc.

Moreover, motives relating to initiating an activity or proving something to others are seldom reasons for continuing to participate in voluntary work. Within this context force of habit and obligations felt toward other volunteers or the organization play a larger role. It is then much more difficult for people to refuse an initial request. And once they have accepted a duty or duties and have entered into agreements with others, they will feel obliged to honour the obligations they have assumed.

About 80% of volunteers who have engaged in direct volunteer activities have

affirmed that the reason why they volunteered was to offer their help, but during the process, they realized that they themselves benefited more (Rama and Xhaho, 2020).

The Plan of Action to Integrate Volunteering into the 2030 Agenda in a technical meeting in 2020 (Chris Millora, 2020) broadly defined as follows in :

- Mutual aid/self-help (“By us, for us”): When people join informally with others to address a perceived need. People volunteering in this category either work together to address common needs, reciprocate support or solve a personal need in order to offer help and support to others in the same situation.
- Philanthropy and service to others: This is the most commonly perceived form of volunteering and is usually conducted through organizations and associations, where people work to deliver specific services to others in need.
- Civic participation: Involves people voluntarily engaging in political or decision-making processes at any level, for example through committees, social audits or providing other forms of feedback.
- Advocacy and campaigning: Collective action aimed at securing or preventing change in broad or specific areas, including pressure groups.

1.2 Benefits of volunteering

Volunteering is a multifaceted activity that benefits individuals, communities, and society as a whole. It promotes personal growth, enhances well-being, and fosters social connections for volunteers while providing essential support to organizations and communities, driving social change, and contributing to a more cohesive and resilient society. Here are some key benefits:

- Benefits for Volunteers

Personal Growth and Development: Volunteers often acquire new skills and enhance existing ones, such as leadership, communication, and problem-solving. **Increased Knowledge:** Exposure to different causes and issues broadens understanding and provides new perspectives.

Enhanced Mental and Physical Well-being Volunteering provides a sense of purpose and fulfilment, which can enhance overall happiness and life satisfaction. Engaging in volunteer work can reduce stress levels and improve mood through the act of giving and helping others.

Social Connections and Networking: Volunteers often meet new people, form friendships, and build a network of contacts within their community and beyond. Provides opportunities to connect with others who share similar interests and values.

Career Benefits: Volunteer work can enhance a résumé, showcasing skills and experience relevant to potential employers. Offers chances to network with professionals and gain references that can support future job searches.

Increased Confidence and Self-Esteem: Accomplishing tasks and contributing to a cause can boost self-confidence and self-worth. Positive feedback and acknowledgement from others reinforce a sense of accomplishment.

Learning and Personal Fulfilment: Volunteering, especially in diverse or international settings, exposes individuals to different cultures and ways of life. The act of making a difference and contributing to a cause provides deep personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement.

- Benefits for Communities and Organizations

Enhanced Community Services: Volunteers provide valuable human resources to organizations, enabling them to offer more services and reach more people. Helps organizations expand their programs and services, often allowing them to serve a broader audience.

Increased Community Cohesion: Volunteering fosters a sense of community and helps build stronger social ties among residents. Encourages collaboration and collective action to address community needs and challenges.

Cost Savings: Volunteers help organizations reduce costs associated with staffing and operations, allowing more funds to be directed toward program delivery.

Innovation and Fresh Perspectives: Volunteers often bring fresh ideas and perspectives, which can lead to innovative approaches and solutions within organizations. Engaging volunteers from different backgrounds adds diverse viewpoints and expertise.

Local and Global Impact: Volunteers play a critical role in addressing local and global issues, from poverty alleviation to environmental conservation. Contributes to social and environmental change, advancing causes that might otherwise lack sufficient support.

Benefits for Society at Large

Fostering Civic Engagement

- Active Citizenship: Volunteering promotes active citizenship and encourages individuals to participate in civic life and community affairs.
- Democratic Values: Supports democratic values by engaging people in collective problem-solving and community decision-making.

Economic Benefits: Economic Contributions: Volunteer work contributes to the economy by providing services that would otherwise require paid staff, thus leveraging community resources.

Building Resilience: Community Resilience: Volunteers help communities build resilience by providing support during crises, disasters, or periods of economic hardship.

According to the study done by Rama and Xhaho (2021), some benefits of volunteering are the development of personal skills and life skills; improvement of career opportunities, reflecting on skills in the labour market, a connecting/intermediary bridge between studies and the market work; promotes empathy, inclusiveness and solidarity; creates connections and socialization, strengthens social capital; improves the quality of life and positively affects the relationship close to the community.

1.3 How to inspire and engage volunteers

- Explore creative recruitment methods

Recruitment should feature highly in your thinking and planning when you create a volunteer role. As with any recruitment campaign, things are incredibly competitive. You'll need to make yours stand out. Get creative on social media, use a variety of striking, visual content, include testimonials, short impactful videos (which needn't be costly) and emotive experiences from existing volunteers to capture imagination and demonstrate the difference they'll be making once they join.

- Make them feel welcome

Introduce them to employees and other volunteers to help them feel part of things. Have senior leaders drop by to introduce themselves. Show that you're a warm, friendly and approachable organisation.

- Establish clear communication

Strong, regular communication motivates volunteers and a lack of it is one of the main reasons they become demotivated. Ensure they're receiving relevant, tailored information, rather than regurgitating organisation-wide messages that aren't applicable. Deliver those comms using suitable channels that they've confirmed they're happy to use. Be ready to listen and respond to feedback and concerns, particularly when the organisation is experiencing change or the role itself changes.

- Ensure they have access to the resources they need

The nature of the role is likely to mean that volunteers won't always be working conventional hours or in an office environment with easy access to resources. Make sure they can get hold of the information they need, when they need it – a volunteer's portal or printed materials if necessary, just be sure to make access easy.

- Introduce variety

Keep things interesting. Consider your volunteers as extra staff who are capable of performing complex tasks that use their experience and skills. Provide leadership opportunities to those who want to shoulder responsibility and guide others. Help them connect with people they may not otherwise interact with. Understand their skills and background – they maybe able to do more than you're currently offering them.

- Provide a named line manager or mentor

The line manager is the key to engagement, motivation and trust because human relationships and interaction matter. Make sure everyone knows who handles their ongoing support, guidance and direction and give them someone specific to talk to and share successes or concerns with.

- Encourage managers to practice influencing skills

Use powers of influence such as sharing the organisation's strategic vision for volunteering, using a variety of influencing strategies to help you clarify changes you want to bring about and influencing others within the organisation when it comes to valuing your volunteers.

- Acknowledge contributions

Gratitude is a strong emotion. It can change a person's outlook on just about any situation. Maintain morale by showing gratitude and demonstrating it openly. Don't overlook the power TNTs (Tiny Noticeable Things), those small, simple gestures like taking them to lunch, giving a small gift, or sending a thank you card to their home.

- Help them to develop new skills

Anyone who is willing to volunteer is likely to have a healthy curiosity and willingness to try new things. Indeed, many volunteers get involved just so they can develop new skills around those topics and issues they feel passionate about. Often simply transitioning from the private sector to the voluntary sector requires a new skill-set and volunteers will welcome the opportunity to learn how to work effectively in a different environment.

- Encourage social connectedness

Many people volunteer because of the social interaction so provide opportunities, both digitally and in person with colleagues, service users and visitors. Help people to feel connected and part of something bigger. Your staff and your volunteers are likely to be the best-informed advocates of your brand and, given the opportunity, have great things to say. It's a win-win situation!

- Share success stories

Volunteers want to know that they are making a difference. Let them see their work in action through tours and presentations and by inviting them to provide suggestions about how that work can be done even better. Share their stories smartly and creatively with the wider public to spread the word even further and instil pride in your people.

1.4 Communication and volunteering

- Communication strategy on volunteering

A communication strategy for volunteers is crucial for several reasons, as it helps ensure that your organization effectively engages, supports, and retains its volunteers. Here's why a communication strategy is essential:

- Clarity of Purpose and Expectations

Clear communication helps volunteers understand their roles, responsibilities, and the impact of their contributions. Volunteers are more likely to be motivated and productive when they know what is expected of them and how their work contributes to the organization's goals.

- Building Strong Relationships

Effective communication fosters relationships and trust between volunteers and the organization. Strong relationships enhance volunteer satisfaction and commitment, leading to increased retention and a more cohesive team.

- Increased Engagement

Regular and meaningful communication keeps volunteers informed and engaged with the organization's activities and updates. Engaged volunteers are more likely to participate actively, take on additional responsibilities, and advocate for the organization.

- Effective Problem-Solving

A good communication strategy provides channels for volunteers to raise concerns, provide feedback, and seek help. Addressing issues promptly and effectively helps prevent misunderstandings and conflicts, ensuring a smoother operational process.

- Efficient Use of Resources

A structured communication plan helps manage information flow and ensures that messages are delivered efficiently. Reduces the risk of duplication, missed messages, and wasted time, leading to more effective use of both volunteer and organizational resources.

- Alignment with Organizational Goals

A communication strategy ensures that volunteer activities and messages are aligned with the organization's mission and goals. Keeps volunteers focused on the core objectives and ensures that their efforts contribute to the overall success of the organization.

- **Recognition and Motivation**

Regular communication provides opportunities for acknowledging and celebrating volunteer achievements. Recognizing volunteers' efforts helps boost morale, motivation, and loyalty, encouraging continued involvement and commitment.

- **Training and Development**

Communication strategies can include training materials and updates on best practices. Ensures that volunteers have the knowledge and skills they need to perform their roles effectively and safely.

- **Adapting to Changes**

A communication strategy provides a framework for disseminating information about changes in policies, procedures, or organizational needs. Helps volunteers stay informed and adapt to changes without confusion or disruption.

- **Feedback and Improvement**

An effective communication strategy includes mechanisms for gathering and responding to volunteer feedback. Continuous improvement based on feedback helps refine processes, enhance the volunteer experience, and address any emerging needs or concerns.

A well-developed communication strategy is vital for fostering a positive and productive relationship between volunteers and the organization. It ensures clarity, engagement, efficiency, and alignment with goals, all of which contribute to a more successful and harmonious volunteer program.

1.5 Effective communication channels with volunteers

Engaging volunteers effectively involves choosing the right communication channels to reach them and keep them motivated. The most effective communication channels for engaging volunteers often involve a mix of digital and in-person methods, tailored to the preferences of your volunteer base. Regularly evaluate and adjust your communication strategies to ensure they meet the needs and expectations of your volunteers, fostering a strong and engaged community. Some of the most effective channels along with an analysis of pros and cons of each are:

a) Email

Pros:

- Direct and Personal: Allows for detailed, personalized communication and documentation.
- Tracking: Easy to track open rates, click-through rates, and responses.
- Flexibility: Can be used for newsletters, updates, invitations, and surveys.

Cons:

- Overloaded Inbox: Volunteers might miss important emails if they receive too many.
- Not Immediate: Responses can be slow, and some emails might go unread.

Best Practices:

- Use compelling subject lines and keep content concise.
- Segment your email list to target specific groups effectively.
- Include clear calls to action.

b) Social Media

Pros:

- Wide Reach: Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have vast audiences.
- Engagement: Allows for interactive content, such as polls, stories, and live updates.
- Community Building: Helps in creating a sense of community and belonging.

Cons:

- Algorithm Dependence: Posts might not reach all followers due to platform algorithms.
- Time-Consuming: Requires regular updates and monitoring.

Best Practices:

- Tailor content to the platform and its audience.
- Use visuals and engaging formats to capture attention.
- Engage with comments and messages to build relationships.

c) Messaging Apps

Pros:

- Real-Time Communication: Platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram, and Slack offer instant communication.
- Group Chats: Facilitate group discussions and quick updates.
- Accessibility: Often used on mobile devices, making it easy for volunteers to stay connected.

Cons:

- Privacy Concerns: Volunteers might be wary of sharing personal contact information.
- Information Overload: Group chats can become overwhelming if not managed properly.

Best Practices:

- Use channels where volunteers are already active.
- Create specific groups for different purposes (e.g., project updates, general announcements).
- Set guidelines to manage the flow of information and maintain focus.

d) Volunteer Management Software

Pros:

- Centralized Information: Manages scheduling, tracking hours, and communication in one place.
- Customization: Can be tailored to specific needs and preferences.
- Integration: Often integrates with other tools like email and social media.

Cons:

- Learning Curve: This might require training for both staff and volunteers.
- Cost: Some platforms can be expensive, although there might be some others for free

Best Practices:

- Choose a platform that fits your organization's needs and budget.
- Provide training and support for users.
- Use the software to streamline and organize communication.

e) In-Person Meetings and Events

Pros:

- Personal Connection: Builds stronger relationships and trust through face-to-face interaction.
- Immediate Feedback: Allows for real-time discussion and feedback.
- Team Building: Strengthens team cohesion and morale.

Cons:

- Logistics: Requires planning and can be resource-intensive.
- Limited Reach: This might not be accessible for all volunteers, especially if they are remote.

Best Practices:

- Schedule regular meetings and events that accommodate volunteers' availability.
- Ensure clear communication about the purpose and logistics.
- Provide follow-up communications to reinforce key points and next steps.

f) Newsletters and Bulletins

Pros:

- Regular Updates: Provides consistent updates and information.
- Professional Look: Can be designed to look polished and organized.
- Informative: Can include a variety of content, such as success stories, upcoming events, and volunteer spotlights.

Cons:

- Production Time: Requires effort to create and distribute.
- Readability: Must be engaging to ensure volunteers actually read it.

Best Practices:

- Design visually appealing and easy-to-read newsletters.
- Include relevant and timely information.
- Make it easy for volunteers to provide feedback or get involved.

g) Surveys and Feedback Forms

Pros:

- Gather Insights: Helps understand volunteer satisfaction and gather suggestions.
- Anonymous Options: Allows volunteers to provide honest feedback without fear of reprisal.
- Customizable: Can be tailored to specific topics or issues.

Cons:

- Response Rates: Volunteers might not always complete surveys.
- Analysis Required: Requires time to analyze and act on feedback.

Best Practices:

- Keep surveys short and focused.
- Communicate the importance of their feedback.
- Share how their input will be used to make improvements.

1.6 Volunteering in Albania

According to the Law of Volunteering, volunteering is an investment of time on free will, of knowledge and skills to perform activities or services by the volunteer, for the benefit of the volunteer provider and/or beneficiary. Voluntarism is performed free of charge, without compensation or any other material benefit.

Volunteering in Albania is an area of significant potential and development. While there are challenges related to recognition, resources, and awareness, there also lay opportunities for growth and impact, particularly with increased engagement from youth, support from organizations, and ongoing efforts to build capacity and partnerships. Albanian culture places a strong emphasis on family and community support, which can translate into volunteerism at the local level, often driven by personal relationships rather than formal organizations.

In Albania, volunteering has been practised in different forms, from “forced labour” during communism, to community contribution in informal ways. After communism when society was in transition still people showed a strong sense of community and made voluntary contributions even without knowing it. After some times it started to get organized, structured and impactful, basically by civil society organisations who had it in focus. After 2000 it started to glow, especially the international volunteering, organisations were hosting and sending volunteers

from the Erasmus Plus program (EVS) and now the new program ESC (European Solidarity Corps); there have been peace corps volunteers, international work camps etc. International workcamps have been and still are voluntary activities which create strong ties between volunteers and target groups/ local community, local and international volunteers in diverse topics from social to environment, youth, children etc. Project Vullnetare Nderkombetare (Peace Volunteering Network) / PVN has started since 2004 those workcamps in collaboration and as a part of Service Civil International. The work camps remain a strong pillar of volunteering at the international and local levels.

In 2016 the Law on Volunteering in Albania was approved aiming to support and encourage volunteering, however, when it came to the implantation it shrank the volunteering due to measurements which hinder instead of fostering volunteering Nowadays (2024) the law is under revision after the long and sustainable effort of Civil society organizations.

Even though there are many efforts and good practices in terms of developing capacities of organisations and municipalities, establishing partnerships between organisations, municipalities, universities and schools, engagement of international and European volunteers etc, its still challenging due to:

- Lack of Formal Recognition: Volunteering is not always formally recognized or valued in Albania, which can affect motivation and the perceived importance of volunteer work.
- Limited Resources: Many volunteer organizations face resource constraints, impacting their ability to attract and support volunteers effectively.
- Awareness Gaps: There is often a lack of awareness about the benefits and opportunities of volunteering, particularly in rural areas.
- Training Needs: There is a need for more training and capacity-building programs to help volunteers and organizations develop effective skills and practices.

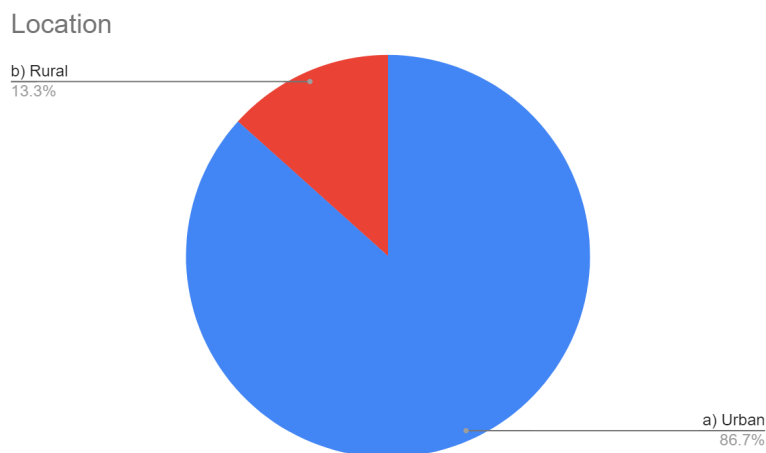
Economic Constraints: Economic difficulties can limit the ability of individuals to commit time to volunteer work, especially if they need to prioritize paid employment

II. Findings from the survey

2.1 Demographic data

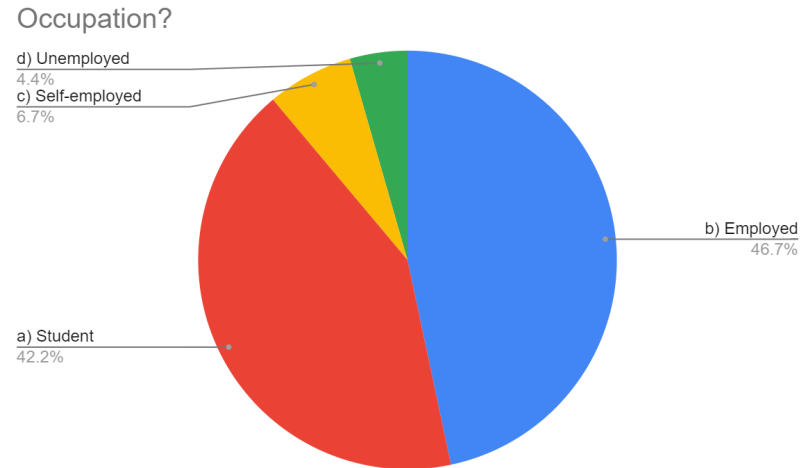
In this survey, citizens over 15 years also across Albania from both rural and urban areas, where the majority of the online survey reached citizens from urban areas of around 86.7 %. Even though the country has national accessibility to the internet, still reaching the rural areas is a challenge.

The majority of the respondents who answered the questionnaire come from urban areas in contrast to those who live in villages. Although there is internet access all over the country 86.7% of respondents live in a city or town and the rest resides in rural areas. .



Graph 1: Residence

Among 1200 citizens asked majority of them, 46.7% are employed, followed by 42.2 % who are students. This enables us to identify and compare the trends of volunteering between employed

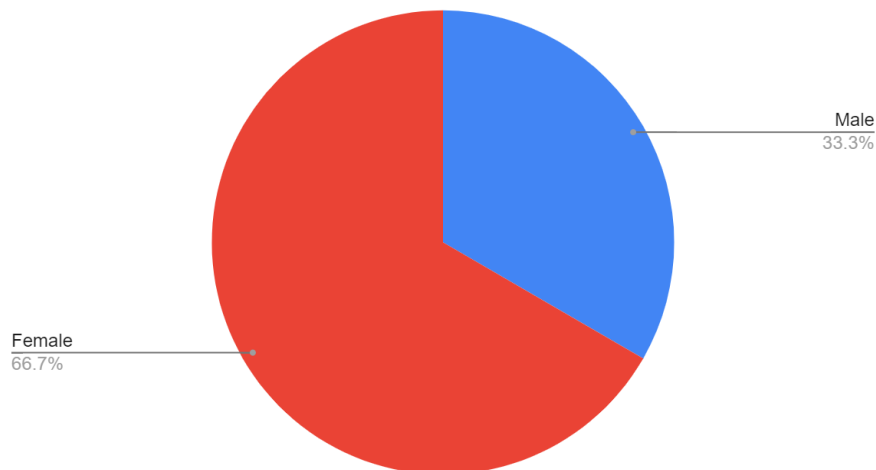


and unemployed people.

Graph 2: Occupation

The majority of people filling out the survey have been girls and women with around 66.7%, this trend is easily reflected even in voluntary activities where girls and women are more interested and more engaged in voluntary actions.

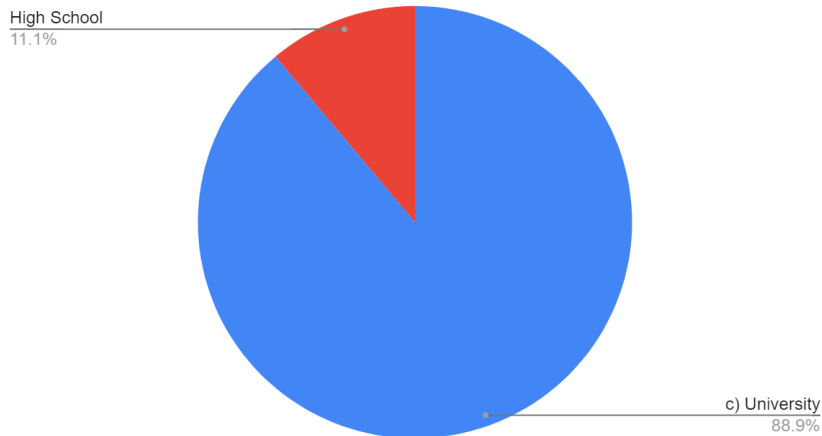
Sex



Graph 3: Sex

88.9 % of respondents had finished the university.

Education

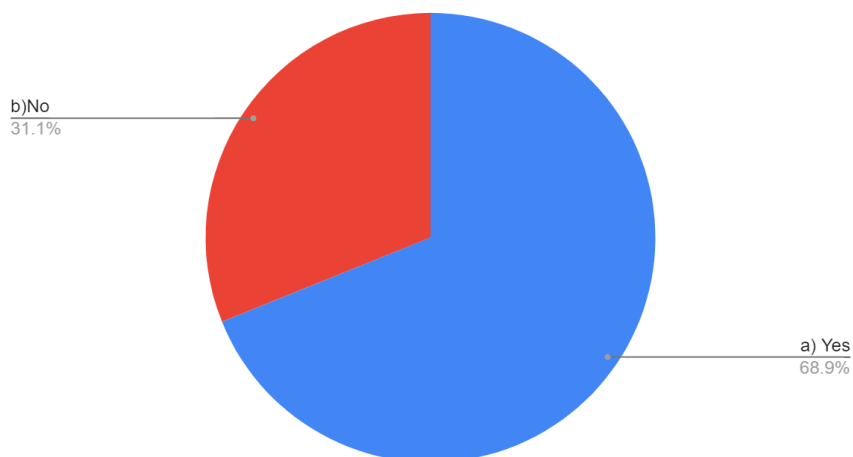


Graph 4: Education

2.2 Trends of volunteering

The survey aim was to understand the trends, challenges and willingness of the people who did not volunteer and understand their perspective for future volunteering. Among the respondents there has been 68.9% who have had volunteering experience and 31.1 % who did not volunteer. Both target groups bring valuable perspectives to understand and analyze how we can reach them in terms of communication and PR.

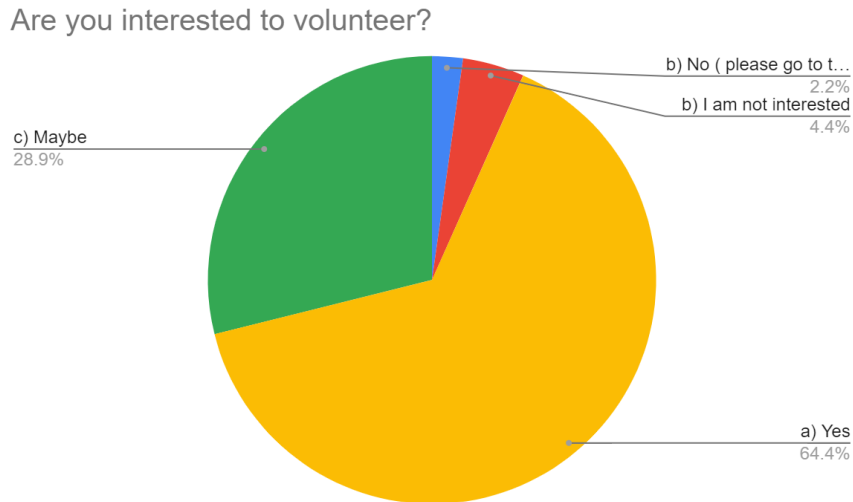
Have you ever been a volunteer?



Graph 5: Volunteering engagement

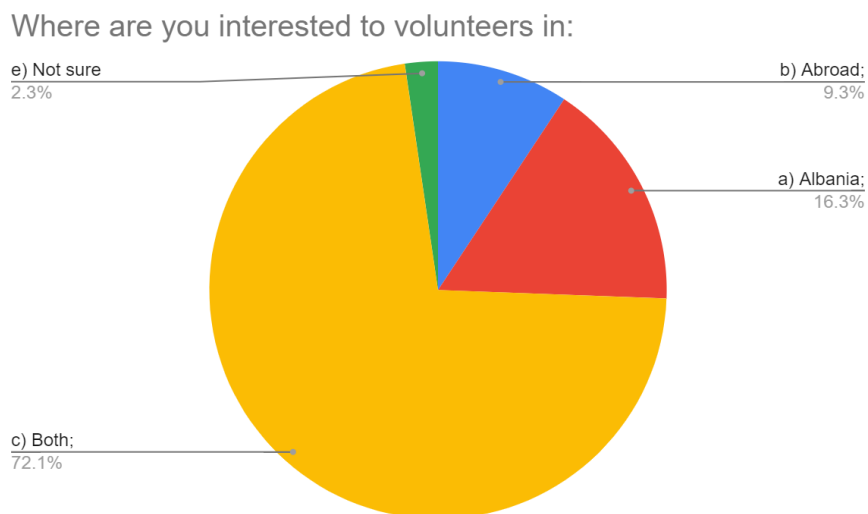
The majority of respondents (64.4%) are willing to volunteer, this from both respondents who have been volunteering and those who have not had the opportunity to volunteer. There is a

considerable number of respondents 28.9 % who are not sure if they want to volunteer or not, this target might be motivated and engaged if they were offered interesting volunteering options, topics, length, the right motivation and communication strategies.



Graph 6: Interest on volunteering

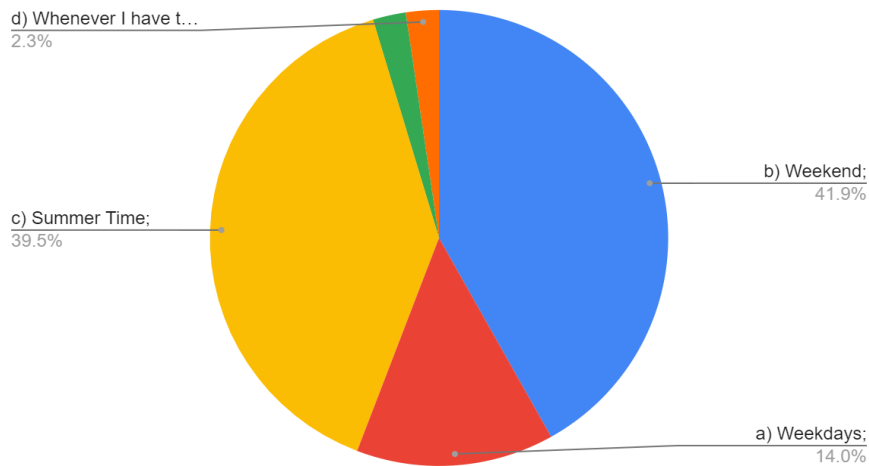
The majority of respondents are interested in volunteering in Albania and abroad, 72.1 %. This flexibility is quite positive due to existing volunteering opportunities, especially with the workcamps which are organised all around the globe and Albania has ongoing and sustainable volunteering opportunities for people with no age limit.



Graph 7: Where is the interest for volunteering

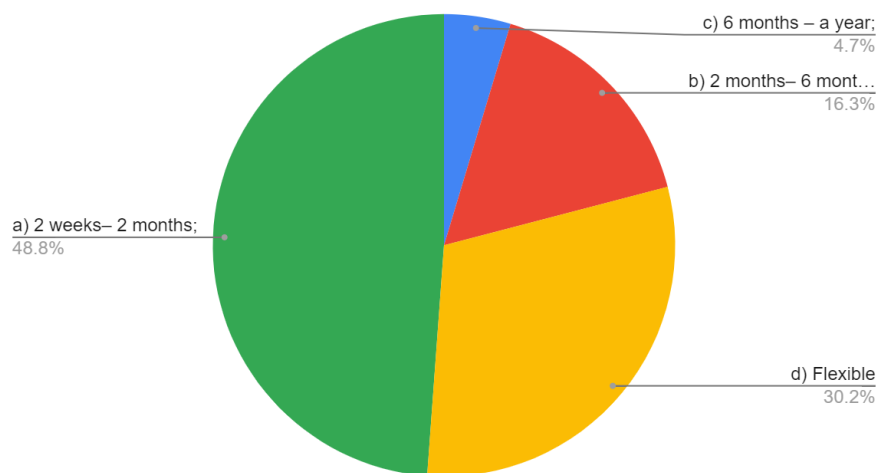
The majority of respondents prefer to volunteer during summertime and weekends, followed by preferring short-term volunteering from 2 weeks to 2 months over long term opportunities. However, there is around 14% are willing to volunteer during the weekdays, and 30 % very flexible to volunteer for any length of volunteering.

What is your favorite time of the year to volunteer?



Graph 8: The favorite time of the year to volunteer

For how long would you prefer to volunteer?

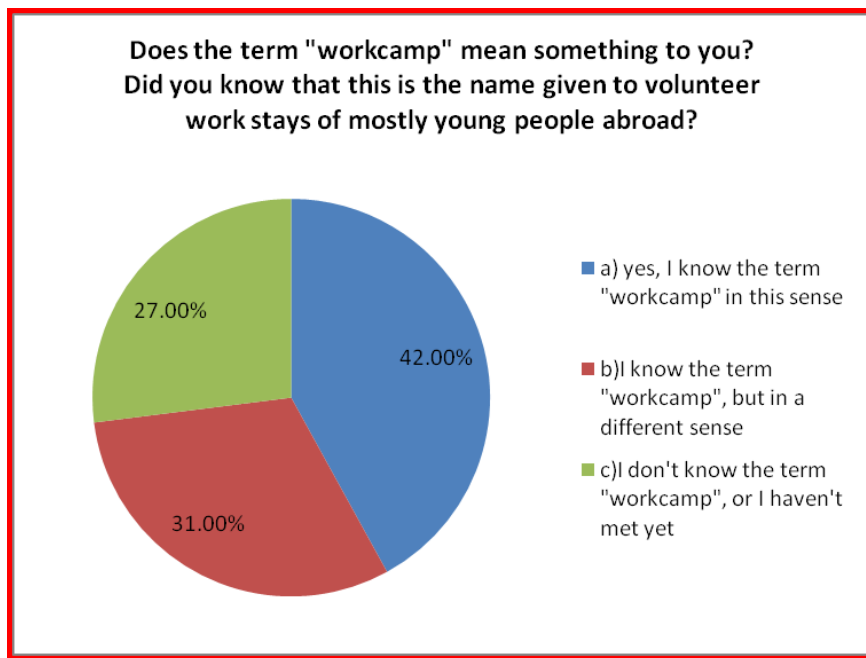


Graph 9: Length of volunteering

Regarding the question of what are the main topics and categories to volunteer for, there were four top priority topics: environmental topics, artistic and culture, work with kids, and working with animals.

Categories	Number of respondents
• environmental protection	854
• renovation and care of cultural heritage	437
• artistic and cultural projects	722
• organisation of festivals	679
• support of municipalities and local communities (work in the public space of municipalities, revitalization of public life)	734
• work with kids	602
• work with seniors	398
• working with people with disabilities	350
• working with animals outside of agriculture (shelters, zoos...)	597
• work in agriculture	589
• other (write)	723 sports activities, social issues/ mental health, Youth and democracy, peace education, community services
• none	27

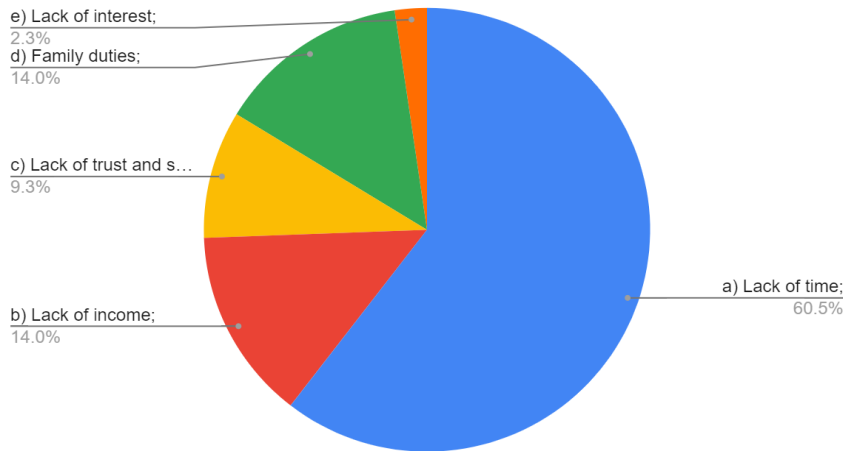
When asked if they know the term "workcamp" refers to volunteer work stays of 1-3 weeks abroad or in your own country, where mainly young people from all over the world go and help local non-profit organisations and municipalities in various environmental, community, cultural, social or other activities, there were 42 % who responded yes, I know the term "workcamp" in this sense, 27 % I don't know the term "workcamp", or I didn't know yet, and 31 % knew the term "workcamp", but in a different sense.



Graph 10: The term workcamp

Seems that the main reason why people can not volunteer is the lack of time, with 60.5% of respondents, that seems that short-term volunteering, summertime and weekends are more feasible options for people.

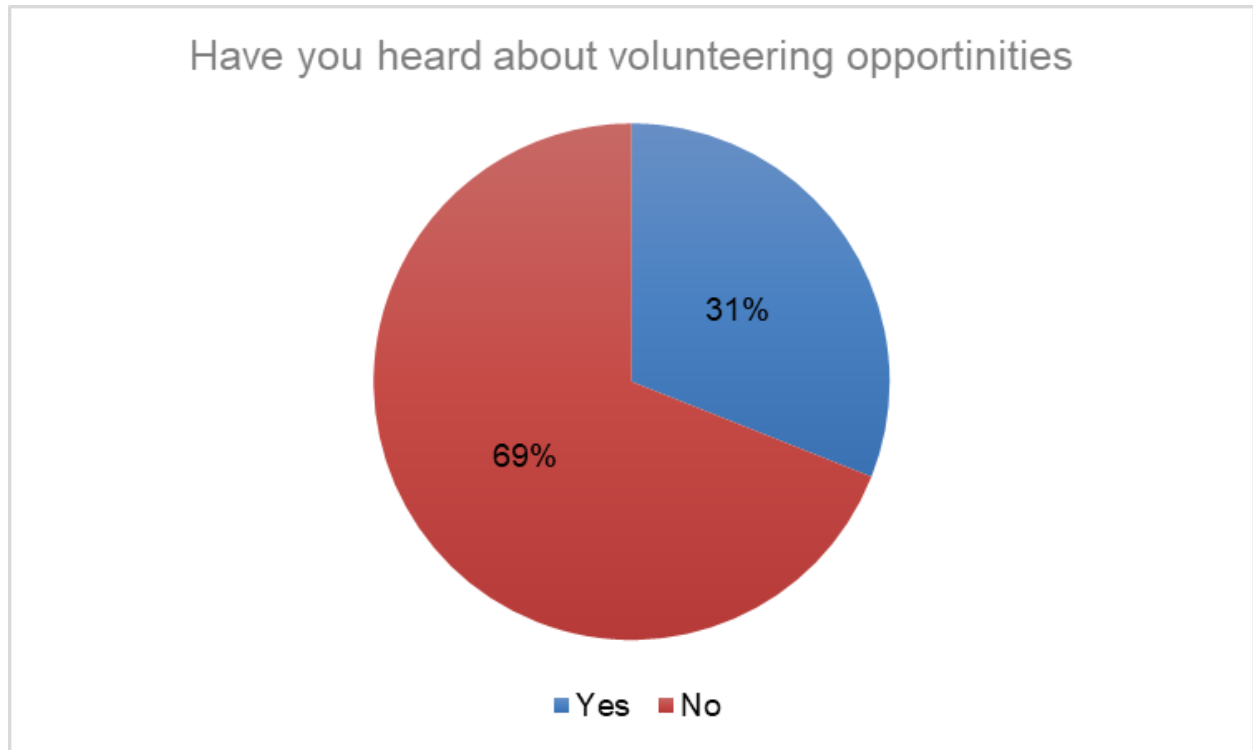
What would discourage you to volunteer?



Graph 10: Why people could not volunteer

2.3 Communication and PR

While we talk about volunteering projects and engagement, communication and PR remain crucial. Choosing effective communication channels, attractive and understandable messages, time slots, and clarity, influence the level of information and engagement for volunteers. It is important that people know about their engagement and the concrete contribution they can make. The survey shows that the majority of people asked 69 % have not heard about existing volunteering opportunities, therefore even if they have time and are willing to volunteer, they don't have the basic information. The remaining 31 % have heard about existing opportunities. For those who have heard, it has not been clear how they can contribute and participate. A good consideration and emphasises should be taken for the majority who does not have information, it is crucial to increase the level of information through effective communication strategies and tools by voluntarism providers and volunteers themselves.

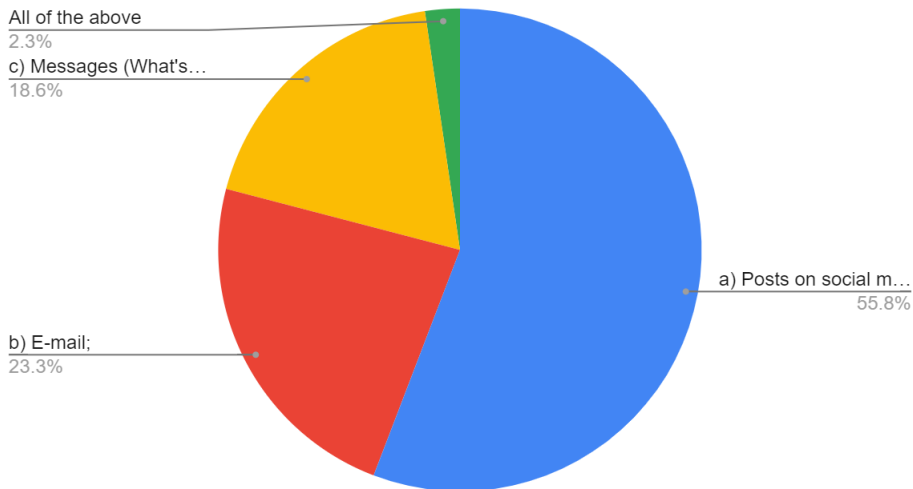


Graph 11: Knowledge about existing volunteering opportunities

survey shows that people have heard about volunteering through their peers (33 %); in schools and universities (31%) and through posts on social media (29 %), the rest heard about it through institutions, media, and promotions.

Even though they heard or were informed about volunteering by their peers and face -to-face meetings, respondents would like or prefer to be informed through social media (55.8%), followed by e-mail (23.3%). On the theoretical part of this study, both social media and e-mail are listed as effective communication channels to inspire and engage volunteers, with their pros and cons. These data help the organization to plan and design communication plans according to the needs and requests of the target groups.

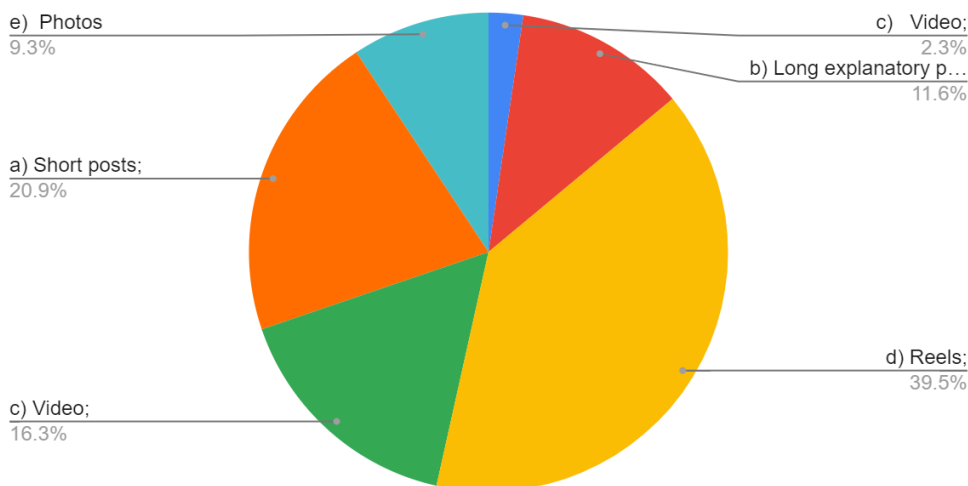
How would you prefer to be notified?



Graphs 12: Preferred informations channels to receive information

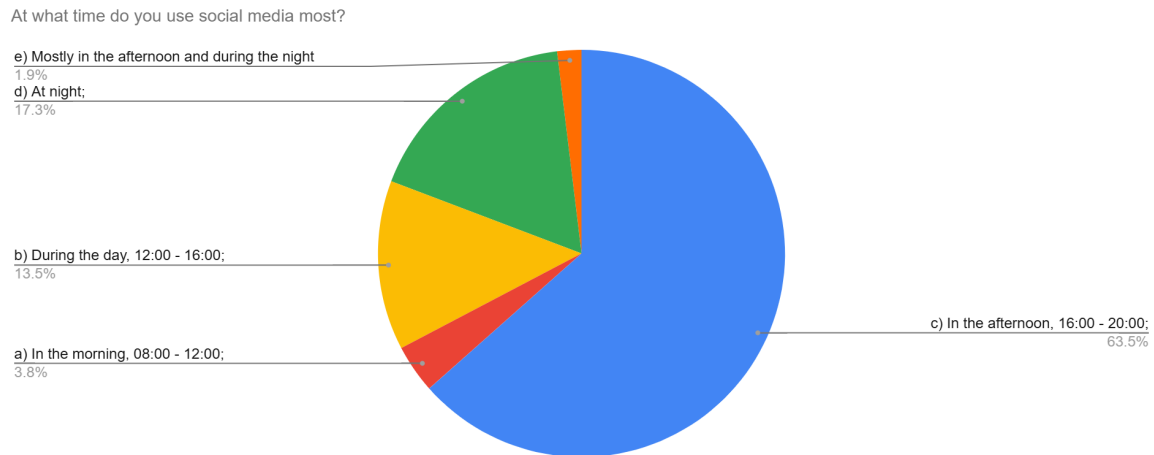
In times when social media is the most used by people and is listed as one of the main communication channels is crucial to understand what types of posts and what lengths are more attractive for people. The survey showed that reels are the most favourite on social media (39.5%), followed by short posts (20.9%) and videos (16.3%).

What sort of social media posts would me more attractive to you?

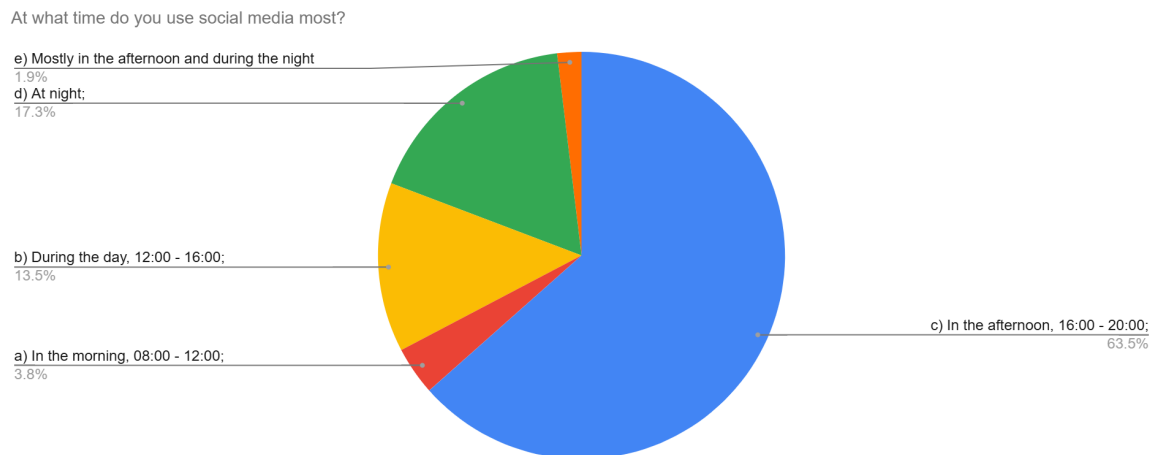


Graph 13: Attractive social media posts

On the question of when you use most social media, seems that the majority of respondents use social media in the afternoon and during the night. Following this trend the organisations should consider using social media at this time slot.



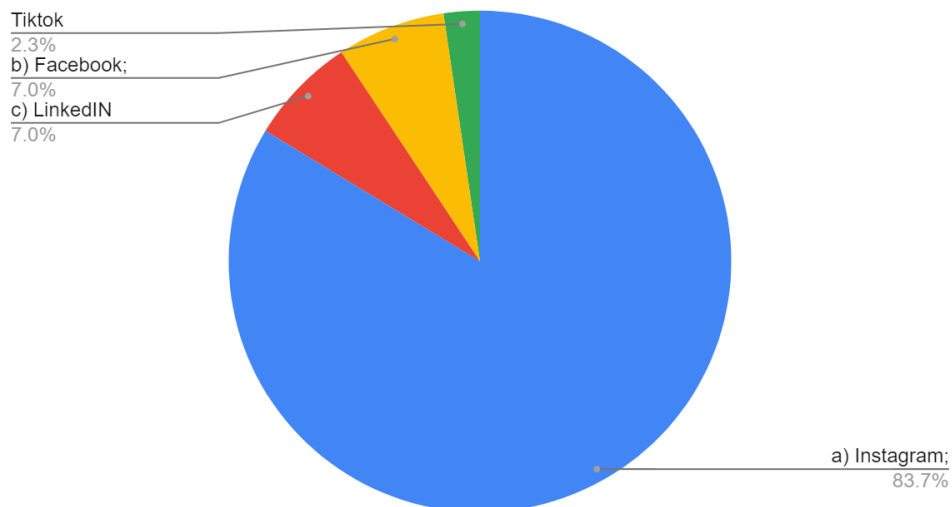
Graph 14: Timing of social media usage



Graph 15: Which social media platform use most

Instagram remains the most used social media with 83.7 % of responses, which is the main trend, especially among young people.

Which social media platforms you use the most?



III. Impact of volunteering

Volunteering has a profound impact on individuals, communities and institutions, offering a range of benefits, volunteering enriches the volunteer, organizations and the community, creating a cycle of positive impact.

In this chapter we will be exploring on the impact volunteering has had on organisations, municipalities and volunteers themselves.

3.1 Impact on volunteers

Planning the voluntary activities is crucial to design volunteering activities which make an impact on the volunteers themselves, especially on skills and attitudes. According to the literature (in the section on volunteering above) there are range of benefits of volunteering at interpersonal and professional levels.

To measure such impact there has been asked through an interview and the assessment questionnaire 15 volunteers who have volunteered in Albania and abroad in different European countries.

Some of them has stated different reasons why they have volunteered, and almost everyone has connected their motivation to make an impact to their life and others.

“ The idea of helping people and trying to positively impact other’s lives. Also thought it as a good opportunity for my personal and professional advancement, which turned out to be like that”

“ I joined the volunteering project for several reasons. I wanted to gain new experiences and skills that would help me in my personal and professional life. Additionally, I was excited about the opportunity to live in a different country and learn about Spanish culture. Finally, I wanted to contribute to the community and make a positive impact while being part of something bigger than myself”

On the questions to rate from strongly discharge to strongly agree on some interpersonal impact volunteering had, 99 % of respondents has stated that strongly agree that volunteering : made me happy; contributed to my personal growth; made me more open; I can make easily friends from different cultures and backgrounds; I know how to manage my emotions; I explored better myself; I feel more independent; It helped me build meaningful relationships or/and connections with people from different backgrounds; Participation in the project helped me to express my opinions more easily; I am more motivated in volunteering.

Furthermore, the same result are for measuring the professional impact volunteering had, more specifically in some of the listed components, where they all strongly agree that volunteering has helped on: have better teamwork skills; I have better presentation skills; can work better individually; have better communication skills; developed leadership skills; impacted my future career or educational goals; helped me build good connections with the local community; influenced my perspective on cultural diversity and inclusion; influenced my understanding and practising of peace etc.

Also participating in volunteering projects has helped volunteers to realize their strengths; have a greater motivation to meet various people (e.g. ages, genders, religions, cultures, countries, and economic situations); become more aware of the different opportunities and disadvantages faced by people; become more aware that people - even though they often try - do not have the same opportunities (jobs, housing, education, etc.); extend the boundaries of my comfort zone etc.

While asked they would advice other volunteers there is still reflected the good impact volunteering had on them :

“Go, enjoy, do not hesitate to ask...asking and listening it will help to not accumulate, but to understand more and more. With years it will become good soft and hard skills of yours. Trust the process” (L.Cengu)

“ If you're considering volunteering or joining a project for the first time, it's important to be open-minded. Embrace new experiences and be ready to learn from different cultures and perspectives. Stay flexible because things might not always go as planned, and being flexible will help you handle challenges better. Effective communication is key, so ask questions, seek feedback, and share your thoughts and concerns clearly and without any fear. Be committed to the project; your enthusiasm and dedication will help it succeed and ensure you get the most out of the experience. Be bold and take initiative. Building relationships with other volunteers, your mentor and local people is also important, as these connections can provide sustainable support and create lasting friendships that can last a lifetime. Last but not least, take time to reflect on your experiences and learn from them. This reflection time will serve you to grow in a meaningful way” (L.Rakipaj).

3.2 Impact of volunteering on the beneficiaries and local communities

Volunteering has a positive impact on both target groups and communities, enhancing quality of life, fostering social ties, and contributing to local development. Volunteering encourages community cohesion by fostering an environment of mutual aid and cooperation. Volunteer actions create a positive ripple effect, contributing to a stronger and more vibrant community.

During the in-depth interviews with the target groups/community members and the organizations and community centres who work directly with target groups and local community is emphasised such impact for a long term.

“All in all, engagement of volunteers in the institution has had a deep stable impact in the local community. Beside providing support for individuals and families residing in the vicinity of the institution as well as volunteers assist in building an united and stronger community, where solidarity and support are in its core. Volunteers have contributed to build Trust between community and institutions, in this concrete case with the municipality (Community Centre, Municipality of Tirana)

Furthermore, the local and international volunteers has been active in the last 2 years in a small Municipality of Lushnja, where volunteers are closer, more connected and more visible for the local community. Small cities are not used to see much diversity, new things and new people , that’s why hosting international volunteers has made a great impact in attracting local volunteers as well as sharing cultures.

“ Volunteers had contributed on twining cultures and experiences, it has a long term effect in the community. The community in Lushnja received a diversity of experiences , innovation, new ideas and a lot of positivity, they become more open minded and accepted toward differences” Municipality of Lushnja

Therefore , the important impact for the civil society is the impact they see to have changed the perception of volunteering. This addresses the above challenge identified in the survey, that some people are sceptical about volunteering or they connected it with the forced labour or labour abuse, that’s why practicing it in local community volunteering actions make the community to see an other perspective and change mindset.

“ The community is more aware of the voluntary services, and is strengthen trust in volunteering itselfes. Has changed the mindset and perception of volunteering that it is not a labour” Local Organizations in Lezha

The other benefits as impact of volunteering are listed as very important for the local communities.

- Strengthened Social Networks: Volunteering fosters community cohesion by creating connections between diverse groups of people, leading to stronger social networks and support systems.
- Increased Civic Engagement: Volunteering encourages greater civic participation and responsibility, often leading to a more engaged and informed community.

- Economic Benefits: Volunteers contribute to local economies by providing services that might otherwise require paid workers, thus freeing up resources for other community needs.

As a part of the local communities, but in more specific perspective, the volunteering had made a huge impact to the target groups who has worked directly in long term from 2 months and up. The individual impact has been significant and sure has changes and improved the quality of life for target groups with fewer opportunities. Volunteers often provide direct assistance that enhances the well-being of beneficiaries, such as through education, healthcare, and social support. Engaging with volunteers can empower beneficiaries by providing them with choices and a sense of agency, which helps in maintaining their dignity.

“ The volunteers positively affected beneficiaries by providing support and contributing in the implementation of various activities that have had an impact on personal and social development of youth with fewer opportunities. As per children they have provided a safe and warm place meanwhile for the elderly people they help to take on isolation and loneliness ”

“ Engaging international volunteers plays a pivotal role in fostering participation among young people as they are intrigued and eager to learn and discover the unknown. In tandem, volunteers contributed to the changing of mentality regarding volunteering in the community they were hosted. In Albania, due to the communist regime, people who were born on that regime regard it as exploitation of workforce and this belief faded over the years “

The real impact PN has seen how some youth are empowered , engaged and take a new direction of life after connecting with long term volunteers. Some of them have been motivated to try themselves long term volunteering abroad, and then further they decided to establish a new life, start university or find a good job.

There are many stories where volunteering has positively impacted the life of target groups and local community, and therefore the real impact should be shared and promoted.

3.3 Impact of volunteering on organizations and institutions

Organizations and sometimes local government institutions (municipalities and their community centres) are the main voluntary providers in Albania (Rama O and Xhaho A (2021). They have hosted local and international volunteers, has created standards and improved the volunteering environment in the country. Even though they face many legal, institutional and implementation challenges for a impactful volunteering at all angles, they still make good efforts. In this study we have been focused mainly on the impact volunteering had done to them through the in depth interviews we have done with the organizations and municipalities who have been working with local and international volunteers for short and long term.

Volunteering plays a crucial role in supporting and enhancing the functioning of organizations and municipalities. By leveraging the time, skills, and enthusiasm of volunteers, these entities can extend their reach and effectiveness.

Enhanced Service Delivery and Increased Capacity: Volunteers can expand the reach and capabilities of organizations by providing additional manpower. This allows organizations to serve more target groups and deliver services more efficiently. Volunteers often bring unique skills and expertise that organizations may not have in-house. This can improve the quality of programs and services.

"The participation of volunteers has facilitated the implementation of activities and projects, strengthening ties with the community and promoting the commitment of all to achieve common goals. Thus, the volunteers have not only helped to meet the institution's needs, but have also created a positive and motivating atmosphere for everyone in the team."

Community Engagement and Support: Strengthened Relationships, Volunteer involvement fosters strong ties between organizations and the community, enhancing support and collaboration. Engaging volunteers raises the profile of organizations, which can attract further support, including donations and partnerships.

"The volunteers that we have engaged with our organization have been a very positive promoter of the work done at SIFD and of the image of SIFD in the community of Lezha, not only among young people but among all age groups" (SFID Lezha)

Organizational Development: Leadership and Management is further developed and revitalised. Managing volunteers provides valuable experience in leadership and project management for staff members. Volunteers can bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas, contributing to organizational growth and adaptation.

"The presence of volunteers brought a more open, non-formal approach and significantly influenced the two-way promotion of cultures; which we hope will also affect the two-way promotion of positive practices" (Municipality of Berat)

Volunteering has a profound and multifaceted impact on both organizations and municipalities. By augmenting service delivery, reducing costs, and enhancing community engagement, volunteers contribute significantly to the success and well-being of these entities. Embracing and supporting volunteer efforts can lead to more resilient organizations and vibrant, well-supported municipalities.

IV. Recommendations

Based on the literature review, the research on target groups/surveys and the interviews with the volunteers, organisations and institutions who organise volunteering activities, there are a couple of recommendations for organisations in order to meet the requests and needs of the current and potential volunteers.

4.1 Recommendations for organizations and institutions

Increase Awareness and Education

- Conduct Informational Campaigns: Use social media, local media, and community events to spread the word about the benefits and opportunities of volunteering.
- Partner with Educational Institutions: Integrate volunteering education into school and university curricula to foster a culture of service from a young age.
- Host Workshops and Seminars: Provide sessions that explain what volunteering entails, its benefits, and how to get started, hat benefits. Make such promotion workshops periodically
- Collaborate with traditional media: like TV, radio channels etc to share the information

Host High-Profile Events

- Organize Launch Events: Host events to kick off new volunteering programs or campaigns, attracting media attention and community involvement.
- Participate in Community Events: Get involved in local festivals, fairs, and other public events to raise awareness and attract potential volunteers.

Showcase the Benefits of volunteering at the interpersonal and professional level

- Share Success Stories: Highlight personal stories and case studies of how volunteering has positively impacted individuals, organizations, institutions and communities. Showcase specific projects or initiatives that have achieved significant results due to volunteer efforts.
- Quantify the Impact: Use data and testimonials to demonstrate the tangible benefits of volunteering, such as skill development, competencies, networking opportunities, and personal fulfillment.

Address Scepticism

- **Provide Evidence-Based Information:** Offer research and reports that support the benefits of volunteering, addressing common misconceptions and concerns.
- **Create a FAQ Resource:** Develop a comprehensive FAQ that addresses common questions and doubts about volunteering.

Make Volunteering Accessible

- **Offer Flexible Opportunities:** Provide a range of volunteering options that cater to different schedules and availability, including short-term, remote, and micro-volunteering opportunities.
- **Remove Barriers:** Ensure that volunteering opportunities are inclusive and accessible to people of all backgrounds and abilities.
- **Simplify the Sign-Up Process:** Make it easy for people to learn about and sign up for volunteer opportunities with clear, direct calls-to-action in your communications.
- **Provide Immediate Opportunities:** Highlight volunteer opportunities that are immediate or upcoming to create a sense of urgency and prompt action.

Engage Potential Volunteers

- **Host Volunteer Fairs and Events:** Organize events where individuals can meet with organizations and learn about available volunteer opportunities.
- **Create a Volunteering Portal:** Develop an easy-to-navigate online platform where people can find and sign up for volunteer opportunities.
- **Volunteering Calendar:** Make a list of volunteering activities and calendar that your organization/institution offers

Provide Support and Recognition

- **Offer Training and Resources:** Provide volunteers with the training and resources they need to succeed in their roles and responsibilities. Training should be organized for the volunteers coordinator on managing the volunteers, and to the volunteers themselves how to undertake their roles with clarity
- **Supervising and mentorship:** supervise periodically volunteers by an experienced supervisor, and offer guidance and mentorship at each step
- **Periodic evaluation:** Make formal and informal evaluation meeting and questionnaires with the volunteer in order to measure the progress and assess the impact.
- **Recognize and Reward Contributions:** Implement systems for acknowledging and celebrating the efforts of volunteers, such as awards, certificates, or public recognition.

Utilize Technology

- Develop an App or Website: Create a digital platform that connects potential volunteers with opportunities, tracks their impact, and provides feedback.
- Leverage Social Media: Use social media campaigns to promote volunteering opportunities and engage with potential volunteers. Use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn to promote volunteer opportunities, share success stories, and engage with potential volunteers.
- Use short stories and mostly Instagram for reaching volunteers
- Create Engaging Content: Post diverse content such as videos, infographics, and blog posts that illustrate the benefits of volunteering and provide updates on ongoing projects.
- Create Interactive Campaigns: Run Challenges and Contests: Organize challenges or contests that encourage people to participate in volunteering activities and share their experiences on social media.

Develop a Strong Brand Identity

- Create a Clear Message: Develop a consistent and compelling messaging strategy that conveys the value of volunteering and aligns with your organization's mission.
- Design Eye-Catching Materials: Use visually appealing graphics and materials in your communication efforts to capture attention and interest.

Solicit Feedback, Utilize Data and Insights

- Conduct Surveys: Regularly gather feedback from volunteers and potential volunteers to understand their needs and preferences.
- Adapt Based on Input: Continuously adjust and improve volunteering programs based on feedback and changing trends.
- Analyze Engagement Metrics: Monitor the performance of your PR and communication efforts to understand what resonates with your audience and refine your strategies accordingly.
- Solicit Feedback: Regularly ask for feedback from volunteers and potential volunteers to improve your communication approach.

Engage with Influencers and Ambassadors

- Partner with Influencers: Collaborate with local influencers, celebrities, or community leaders who can endorse and promote volunteering opportunities.
- Establish Volunteer Ambassadors: Recruit enthusiastic volunteers to act as ambassadors who can share their positive experiences and advocate for the cause.

Foster Community Connections

- **Build a Volunteer Community:** Create online forums or social media groups where volunteers can connect, share experiences, and support each other.
- **Promote Team Volunteering:** Encourage group volunteering opportunities to attract teams from workplaces, schools, or social groups.

Encourage Organizational Partnerships

- **Collaborate with Businesses:** Partner with companies to create corporate volunteering programs and encourage employees to volunteer. This is a new concept
- **Work with Community Organizations:** Collaborate with local groups to reach a wider audience and create a network of volunteer opportunities.

4.2 Recommendations for volunteers

Here are some recommendations for volunteers to be more proactive in both local and international volunteering:

Local Volunteering

Identify Local Needs

- Stay informed about pressing local issues and areas where volunteers are needed by engaging with community organizations, local news, and government initiatives.
- Reach out to local nonprofits, charities, and community groups, municipalities to learn about their current needs and how you can help.

Leverage Your Skills and Interests

- Identify how your unique skills and interests can address local needs. For instance, if you're a graphic designer, you might help with marketing materials for a local charity.
- Offer to run workshops or training sessions for local organizations in areas where you have expertise.

Initiate Local Projects

- If you see a gap in local services or resources, consider starting a project or initiative to address it. Gather support from friends, family, and local businesses.
- Collaborate with local schools, businesses, and organizations to create and support new volunteering opportunities.

Engage and Mobilize Others

- Share information about local volunteer opportunities through social media, community boards, and word-of-mouth.
- Actively participate in local volunteer activities and inspire others by sharing your experiences and the impact of your work.

Attend and Organize Local Events

- Attend local volunteer fairs, community service days, and charity runs to get involved and network with other volunteers.
- Organize local events to raise funds or collect donations for causes you care about.

International Volunteering

Research and Choose Projects Carefully

- Research international volunteer organizations thoroughly to ensure they are reputable and align with your values. Look for reviews and ask for references if needed.
- Learn about the culture and context of the region where you plan to volunteer to ensure your efforts are respectful and effective.

Prepare for International Volunteering

- Gain skills or certifications that may be required for international volunteering, such as language proficiency or specialized training.
- Familiarize yourself with the logistics of international volunteering, including travel requirements, health precautions, and local regulations.

Engage in Global Networks

- Connect with global networks or online communities that focus on international volunteering to find opportunities and share experiences.
- Partner with international volunteers or organizations on projects that have a global impact or need cross-border cooperation.

Share Your Experience and Advocate

- Write blogs, create social media posts, or give talks about your volunteering experience to raise awareness and inspire others.
- Use your platform to advocate for global issues and encourage others to get involved in volunteering.

Maintain Long-Term Commitment

- Stay engaged with the projects you've been involved in, even after your initial volunteering period. Offer support and follow-up where possible.
- Develop and maintain relationships with international organizations and local communities to continue contributing to their needs over time. There are diverse volunteering opportunities, like work camps, ESC, long term volunteering etc.

V. Conclusions

This study aimed to explore trends and willingness related to voluntary engagement among citizens, evaluate effective communication methods for promoting volunteering, and assess the impact of volunteering on volunteers and key stakeholders. The findings from this comprehensive study provide several key insights and conclusions:

1. **Engagement with Volunteering:** A significant majority of respondents (68.9%) have had volunteering experience, indicating a strong culture of volunteerism within the target population. This suggests that volunteering is a well-established practice among the Albanian citizens surveyed, and there is a solid foundation for encouraging further engagement.
2. **Preferred Volunteering Timing and Duration:** Volunteers generally prefer to engage in activities during the summer and on weekends, favoring short-term commitments ranging from two weeks to two months. This preference underscores the importance of scheduling flexibility and short-term opportunities to maximize volunteer participation.
3. **Popular Volunteer Topics:** The study highlights that environmental issues, artistic and cultural activities, festival organization, working with children, community service, and animal welfare are the most appealing areas for volunteers. These insights can guide organizations in tailoring their programs to align with the interests of potential volunteers.
4. **Effective Communication Channels:** The preferred methods for receiving information about volunteering are social media and email, with a notable preference for engaging formats such as reels, short posts, and videos. Instagram emerged as the most utilized platform, especially during the afternoon and night. Organizations should leverage these insights to enhance their communication strategies, ensuring that they reach their audience effectively through the most popular channels and engaging content formats.
5. **Lack of Awareness as a Barrier to Volunteering:** The majority of respondents (69%) are not aware of existing volunteering opportunities. This indicates that, even if individuals are willing and able to volunteer, their lack of basic information prevents them from participating. Effective communication strategies and outreach efforts are essential to bridge this information gap and make potential volunteers aware of available opportunities. Addressing this lack of awareness can significantly increase volunteer engagement and participation.
6. **Need for Improved Communication Strategies:** Although 31% of respondents are aware of volunteering opportunities and have a clearer understanding of how to contribute, the larger portion of the population remains uninformed. To enhance overall volunteer participation, it is crucial for volunteer organizations and providers to implement more effective communication tools and strategies. This could include targeted outreach, informative campaigns, and easy access to information about how to

get involved. Improving these communication efforts will help ensure that more people are informed and can actively engage in volunteering.

7. **Impact on Volunteers:** The qualitative interviews and assessments reveal that volunteering has a profound positive impact on volunteers, both personally and professionally. Over 95% of those interviewed reported enhanced skills, improved competencies, and overall betterment in their lives. This aligns with the broader benefits of volunteering, including skill development, personal growth, and increased life satisfaction.
8. **Community and Individual Benefits:** Volunteering has been shown to positively affect both individuals and communities. It fosters community cohesion by promoting mutual aid and cooperation, enhancing the quality of life, and supporting local development. Volunteers, particularly youth with fewer opportunities, benefit from increased independence, active participation, and trust in organizations and their communities.
9. **Encouragement of Volunteerism:** The study underscores the need for targeted communication strategies and flexible volunteer opportunities to maximize engagement. By addressing the preferences and motivations of potential volunteers, organizations can better attract and retain volunteers, thereby amplifying the positive impacts on both individuals and their communities.

In conclusion, the research highlights the significant role of effective communication and understanding volunteer preferences in promoting engagement. The positive outcomes of volunteering, both for the volunteers and the communities they serve, affirm the value of volunteerism in enhancing social cohesion and contributing to local development. Future initiatives should build on these findings to further support and expand volunteering efforts

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Annex 1: Survey

This questionnaire aims to understand citizens' needs, trends, and willingness regarding their voluntary engagement, along with effective communication methods for obtaining information and promoting voluntary involvement.

As per the Law of Volunteering, volunteering is the voluntary investment of time, knowledge, and skills by individuals for the benefit of themselves or others.

Please note that this questionnaire focuses on voluntary engagement and not on activism, training participation, study visits, or youth exchanges. Your data will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

For any questions or clarifications, contact us at info@pvnalbania.org.

1. Date of birth:

2. Location

- City/ Urban
- Countryside/ Rural

3. Commitment:

- Student
- Employed
- Self-employed
- Not currently working

4. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Other/ Not specified/ Not prefer to say:

5. Education level:

- Primary
- Secondary
- Higher education

6. Have you ever volunteered?

- Yes
- No

7. Are you interested in volunteering?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

8. Do you know the term "workcamp"? This refers to volunteer work stays of 1-3 weeks abroad or in your own country, where mainly young people from all over the world go and help local non-profit organizations and municipalities in various environmental, community, cultural, social or other activities.

- yes, I know the term "workcamp" in this sense
- I don't know the term "workcamp", or I didn't know yet
- I know the term "workcamp", but in a different sense

9. What topics and categories would you like to volunteer for? (Select all that apply)

- environmental protection
- renovation and care of cultural heritage
- artistic and cultural projects
- organization of festivals
- support of municipalities and local communities (work in the public space of municipalities, revitalization of public life)
- work with kids
- work with seniors
- working with people with disabilities
- working with animals outside of agriculture (shelters, zoos...)
- work in agriculture
- other (write)
- none

10. Where would you prefer to volunteer?

- Albania
- Outside of Albania
- Both

- None
- Not sure

11. Preferred period for volunteering ?:

- Weekdays
- Weekends
- Long-term
- Other (please specify):

12. Preferred duration of volunteering:

- 2 weeks to 2 months
- 2 months to 6 months
- 6 months to 1 year
- Ongoing contribution

13. Are you aware of existing volunteering opportunities?

- Yes
- No

14. How did you learn about voluntary engagement? (Select all that apply)

- Through peers, acquaintances, or family members
- School/University announcements
- Public institution announcements
- Organization announcements
- Social media
- Traditional media (TV, newspapers)
- Email
- Phone (WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.)

15. What would you motivate you to volunteer?

[Open-ended response]

16. What discourages you from volunteering? (Select all that apply)

- Lack of time
- Lack of income

- Lack of trust/skepticism about volunteering
- Family commitments
- Lack of interest
- Other (please specify):

17. How can posts about volunteering be more effective and attractive to you? (Select all that apply)

- Shorter posts
- Informative posts with detailed information
- Videos
- Real-life stories
- Pictures
- Other (please specify):

18. What elements make you interested in reading posts about volunteer opportunities? (Open-ended response)

- How often should promotions for volunteering opportunities be posted?
- Daily
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Other (please specify):

19. Which social networks do you use the most?

- Instagram
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- TIKTOK
- Twitter
- Other (please specify):

20. When do you usually use social networks? (Select all that apply)

- Morning (08:00 - 12:00)
- During the day (12:00 - 16:00)
- Afternoon (16:00 - 20:00)
- Nighttime

21. What is your preferred method of receiving information ?

- Social network posts
- Email
- Phone messages
- Telephone calls
- Other (please specify):

22. Are you familiar with PVN/International Volunteer Projects/Peace Volunteering Network?

- Yes, but not very clear
- No, never heard of it
- Yes, I know it well and am involved

23. Contact details (if you want to receive study results or notifications from PVN):

- Telephone:
- Email:

Thank you for your time and contribution!

Annex II : Interview questions for organizations and institutions

The purpose of this interview is to collect data to measure and evaluate the impact of volunteering, as well as to understand the challenges in the institution, the community, the target groups and the volunteer himself. The collected data is intended to be analysed and help address challenges and build impactful volunteering practices at all levels. The collected data will be used only for research purposes and will be confidential. For any question, ambiguity or additional information, please contact info@pvnalbania.org

1. For how long have you hosted volunteers ?
2. What were their main responsibilities and how did they realize them (how did they perform)?
3. What challenges have you had as an institution while managing volunteers and how have you addressed them?
4. What impact have the volunteers given to the INSTITUTION?
5. What impact have volunteers given to TARGET GROUP?
6. What impact have the volunteers made in the LOCAL COMMUNITY?
7. What impact has it had on the VOLUNTEERS themselves?
8. Would you like to host volunteers in the future? What profile of them would you prefer?
9. In case you are going to host volunteers, what are your needs so that the volunteering has the most impact for the target group, the community and your institution?

Thank you for your participation and contribution to this study!

Annex III: Impact assessment questionnaire for volunteers

You are receiving this questionnaire as you have joined the PVN projects . In this stage, we are collecting feedback, opinions and experiences that will help us understand the impact and results of the project, the good sides of it and those that could be improved. Your feedback will help us assess the impact of this project, and it will be valuable to create an understanding of important aspects of the project and guide us in planning future initiatives. Thank you for your willingness to share and please provide honest and detailed responses to ensure the success of future initiatives.

The answers from this questionnaire will be processed and presented for further needs and work of PVN. All data is anonymous.

Activity name _____

Dates of activities _____

Demographic data

1. Name Surname (optional)
2. Date of birth (year)
3. Gender
 - M
 - F
 - Prefer not to say
4. **Country**
5. **Do you live in an urban or rural area?**
 - urban
 - rural
6. **Level of formal education (latest attended/ obtained)**
 - secondary
 - high school
 - university
 - master/phd

Prior experiences

7. **How many times have you been engaged before in volunteering activities?**
 - my first time
 - 3-5 times
 - 5- 10
 - over 10 times
8. **What was the type of activity you participated**
 - long term volunteering (1 month to 12 months)
 - Short time (2 weeks - 1 months)

- Other

9. Which country, or city did you volunteer in?

Impact of project / volunteering in interpersonal and professional level

10. What motivated you to join volunteering projects?

11. What was the impact of volunteering/projects on interpersonal level ? Please rate from (1 strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

- It made me happy 1-5 (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- It contributed to my personal growth (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- It made me more open (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- I can make easily friends from different cultures and backgrounds (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- I know how to manage my emotions (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- I explored better myself (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- I feel more independent (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- It helped me build meaningful relationships or/and connections with people from different backgrounds (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- Participation in the project helped me to express my opinions more easily (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- I am more motivated in volunteering (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- I'm disappointed by voluntary engagement (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- Other impact on personal level (please specify):

12. What was the impact in professional level, what skills or knowledge have you gained through your volunteering experiences?

- I have better teamwork skills (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- i have better presentation skills (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- i can work better individually (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- i have better communication skills (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- I developed leadership skills (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- impacted my future career or educational goals (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree)
- helped me build good connections with the local community

- influenced my perspective on cultural diversity and inclusion
- influenced my understanding and practicing of peace
- other impact , please specify _____

13. Please assess some other impact of volunteering on you

Please select the statement which applies the best to you:

**Select only one option.*

- Participation in the project HELPED me to improve my communication skills in a foreign language.
- Participation in a workcamp DIDN'T HELP me to improve my communication skills in a foreign language.

Please select the statement which applies the best to you:

**Select only one option.*

- Participation in the project HELPED me to realize my strengths.
- Participation in the workcamp DIDN'T HELP me to realize my strengths.

Select the statement which applies the best to you:

**Select only one option.*

- Thanks to participating in the project/volunteering I have a GREATER motivation to meet various people (e.g. ages, genders, religions, cultures, countries, and economic situations).
- Participating in the project has NOT INCREASED my desire to meet different people (e.g. ages, genders, religions, cultures, countries, and economic situations).

Select the statement which applies the best to you:

**Select only one option.*

- Thanks to participating in the project, I have become MORE AWARE of the different opportunities and disadvantages faced by people of different genders or cultural, ethnic or social origins
- Volunteering/projects HAS NOT brought me that realization.

Select the statement which applies the best to you:

**Select only one option.*

- Thanks to the volunteering I have become MORE AWARE that people - even though they often try - do not have the same opportunities (jobs, housing, education, etc.).
- Volunteering HAS NOT brought me that realization.

Select the statement which applies the best to you:

**Select only one option.*

- Participation in the project / volunteering has HELPED me to extend the boundaries of my comfort zone.
- Participation in the project / volunteering has NOT HELPED me to extend the boundaries of my comfort zone.

14. Would you do such experiences again?

- yes
- no
- maybe

15. Would you recommend such experiences to other people?

- yes
- no
- maybe

16. What advice would you give to someone considering volunteering and/or project engagement in projects for the first time?

17. Do you have any suggestions, comments for us ?