



RECOMMENDATIONS ON DIGITAL VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Digitalisation has emerged as a significant trend, influenced in part by the pandemic but extending far beyond it. The move towards digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the operations of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), highlighting the importance of remote work, online collaboration, and virtual communication. This trend mirrors a broader societal shift where technology plays a central role in various aspects of our lives, including how NGOs approach issues such as volunteer management, education and social initiatives.

Through the project “**ProVol Digital- Professional volunteer management and training through digitalisation**” we are offering this recommendation guide for NGOs and volunteer coordinators to stay up to date. The aim of this guide is to equip NGOs and volunteer coordinators with digital expertise and to adapt their skills in dealing with technology to the current standards. Through this tool we want to inspire and empower other organisations to enter the digital sphere as well.

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The authors who contribute to this guide are:

- Marioara Butyka, Centrul de Voluntariat Cluj-Napoca, Romania
- Nicoleta Chiş-Racolţa, Centrul de Voluntariat Cluj-Napoca, Romania
- Perdita Wingerter, Gemeinsam leben und lernen in Europa e.V., Germany
- Larissa Schillai, Gemeinsam leben und lernen in Europa e. V., Germany
- Lenka Vonka Černá, Dobrovolnické centrum, z.s., Czech Republic
- Nicol Magrotová, Dobrovolnické centrum, z.s., Czech Republic
- Elke Beneke, EB projektmanagement GmbH, Austria
- Silke Jamer-Flagel- EB projektmanagement GmbH, Austria
- Gabriele Sailer- EB projektmanagement GmbH, Austria

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1

**DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF
VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT AND VOLUNTEER
MANAGEMENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

This chapter is aiming to lead us into understanding the trends in volunteer management that affected the volunteering organisation in four countries (Romania, Germany, Austria and Czech Republic) in 2022-2023, and identify what challenges and needs emerged during this time in the field of volunteer management and digitalisation.

*Knowing the **trends, needs and challenges** helps organisations to become more aware and equipped with the necessary strategies to face the challenges of the fast-changing time we are living in.*

Individuals and organisations in four European countries were questioned to help us build this recommendation and guideline for volunteering organisations across Europe who are adapting their work to digital era challenges and opportunities.

The questionnaire we applied is not part of the scientific research, but the answers given by the leaders, volunteers managers, volunteers or project managers in the respondent organisations are based on direct empirical grassroots experiences which is valuable and relevant. Their opinions are the building block on the present guideline, together with the experience and expertise of the four-partner organisations.

1.1. MAJOR TRENDS THAT AFFECTED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VOLUNTEER ORGANISATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The respondents reflected on which trends are affecting their organisation in the field of volunteer management in the digital age. We are presenting here the most visible trends we observed in all the organisations examined:

Digital communication has found its way into volunteer organisations for staying in contact, for finding volunteers, manage tasks, etc. Communication is increasingly taking place via newsletters, messenger chat services and online meetings. The use of digital media in public relations, advertising and recruiting has become increasingly important. The use of social media tools is the most visible trend in all countries.

Volunteer coordinators' work has changed due to the organisation's shift to the digital world. The digitisation of the processes and the digitalisation of the programs grew substantially. Many processes and programs have been moved online.

In some countries, like in Austria the legal framework for volunteers is getting fast adapted and other countries, like Czech Republic, don't have any legal specifications related to that. In Romania, steps have been taken to change the legislation on volunteering and adapt it to the digital age. For example, introducing the possibility for the volunteering contract to

be an electronic document, or simplifying the processes for online or short-term volunteering. The initiative is still pending, the final outcome is not yet known.

The organisations seem to have adapted very fast to the digital management of the organisation and volunteers especially in countries as Romania where the infrastructure for internet is very well organised and the number of young volunteers is bigger than in the other countries.

Changes in volunteering services were observed in each country. Organisations tend to find ways to offer individual services digitally in the future, both for new volunteers and new target groups and beneficiaries. The organisations in all countries started to adapt and developed new trainings and counselling for volunteers, but still there are challenges in terms of tools and training in this matter (see more challenges and needs below).

The range of online or hybrid support/supervision and training opportunities for volunteers is increasing and this brings new perspectives and challenges.

New questions and possibilities are emerging in each country as adaptation for information overload, such as digital detox programs, digital cleaning or digital minimalism.

1.2. CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD OF VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE

One of the indicators included in our analysis was related to the challenges organisations and volunteer coordinators have.

The respondents reflected if and which challenges are affecting their organisation in the field of volunteer management in the digital age. We identified the following similarities and differences, of course having in mind the very different realities in each country.

Here are the following **general observations**:

Information overload, online fatigue and brain overload seems to be the main challenge for the organisations in all the countries. For example, Romania has the biggest percentage of regular users of digital tools and this is correlated with the fact that the users are confronted with information overload, online fatigue's, mental tiredness which is also supported by lack of physical activity.

The lack of guidance on what digital tools are available on volunteer management is also a major challenge along with the lack of motivation and training for staff and volunteers.

Funding for technical equipment and software together with the insufficient IT infrastructure and bad internet connection in some regions (e.g. Germany) is also a challenge in many organisations.

Support from the local communities and funding seems to be a general challenge for most of the organisations, maybe less for the organisation from Germany who have many years of experience already.

Motivation of the staff and volunteers seems to be a bigger challenge for organisations in Germany and Austria and a bit less challenging in Romania and Czech Republic.

The age of the volunteers influences a lot the way in which the digital tools are implemented in the organisation. Also, there is a big information gap: elderly people inform themselves differently than younger people, and younger people change their information and communication channels more quickly than ever before. We can say that organisation who are working with less young volunteers face more challenges in terms of digitalisation, but is hard to generalise it to all countries.



1.3.NEEDS IN THE FIELD OF VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT IN DIGITAL AGE- what is needed for professional digital volunteer management?

Looking at the challenges mentioned above, we have the following general observation related to the needs of in the respondent organisations related to volunteer management in the digital age:

Overall, there is some knowledge about digital tools in all the countries. Respondents are aware of the potential of digital tools. However, many are overwhelmed by digitalisation. As there are many tools available, they need an overview of the most useful ones and motivate staff to actually use them.

Most of the organisations need information and guidance on what are the available digital tools on volunteer management. There are good information websites available, but it is not easy to find the information and not a lot of people know about it. People need to be informed about it on a personal level. There is a big need for contact points and personal guidance where to find information and support for the use of digital tools.

Then, there is bigger need for funding, technical support and infrastructure for the majority of organisations in Romania, Austria and Czech Republic, especially for the smaller organisations.

In all countries there is an obvious need for deeper training for staff and volunteers in using digital tools in volunteering management – including for big and small organisations. It is challenging to identify the need for training – some need it very much, some don't need it at all.

Organisations are in need of being supported in what tools to use and how to adapt and work with digital tools with volunteers who are disabled in any way.

One extra need is related to capacity growth of the community, sponsor, partners, funding agencies, community in order for the organisation to use the digital tools.

In the case of Romania, people would be in need for an efficient app that would help the process of volunteer management.

In Germany some apps are available (e.g. FlexHero, letsact, Microsoft Cloud for Non-Profit), but are still unknown, or too expensive to use for most small NGOs. Also, there are some available and it is difficult to judge, which one is the best one for your needs.

An app for volunteer management should at least include: a database of the volunteers, the option to plan events, monitor changes in staff, online communication with and information for volunteers, and online portal where volunteer positions are posted, and where interested volunteers can apply, automatic replies, invitations, and reminders. The app should also help to give an overview of the activities, projects, and development of the NGOs, and include reports about the volunteer activities, have search and filter functions.

All these challenges and needs are to be taken in consideration when building volunteer management programs, when defining the strategy of the organisation in the field of volunteering and when envisioning the future of the volunteer work in the organisations in the digital era.





2

HOW TO COORDINATE YOUR VOLUNTEERS AND ORGANIZE THEIR WORK DIGITALLY

Benefits, risks and safety in volunteering digital work

2.1. DIGITALISATION IN THE VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Organisations throughout the world are adjusting their operations to be more digitally compatible. This is due to many changes we are facing in the world: Covid-19 pandemic, technical and infra-structure development, economical changes, high mobility of people, the need of efficiency and flexibilization of work by working remotely, both for employees and volunteers, the growing demand from the volunteers to be present online, etc.

Many organisations working in the field of volunteering have realized the importance of digitalisation and already are using or investing in new approaches as seen in the trends in the previous chapters. Organisations must continually change in order to stay viable and in line with the constant changes that lie ahead. In our current digital world, organisations don't have any choice but to embark on the digital transformation journey.

Digitalisation in volunteer management is the use of digital technology to improve the organisations way of working with volunteers in order to reach its mission.

It is the process of moving to a digital approach in volunteer management. It incorporates the process of adapting traditional volunteer management processes and volunteer work to new technologies and embraces digital

technology's potential to collect data, identify patterns, and make smarter decisions related to volunteers' management and service. This would also imply the diversification of volunteering activities in order to facilitate new activities specific to remote and digital work.



The purpose of digitalisation implies the process of enabling, improving, and transforming volunteer management services and operations through the use of digitalised data and tools in order to improve how organisations conduct volunteers' activities. These procedures and interactions may not be entirely digital, but they do rely on digital technologies more heavily than they did previously – before the pandemic or maybe 5-10 years ago.

2.2. STAGES OF EFFICIENT DIGITAL VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Involving volunteers in an organisation is a planned and structured process. The volunteer manager/coordinator is the main actor that ensures reaching the objectives of the organisation at the community level as well as the overall motivation and impact on volunteering services provided by volunteers (during the process and in the final results).

In the next chapters we will discover the process of managing volunteers and highlight some tips and tricks on how to coordinate volunteer work and organize their work also digitally. We will go through this process from various perspectives: the volunteer involving organisations, the volunteer coordinator perspective and also volunteer perspective.

There are different theoretical models that present the stages of an efficient volunteer management process. Out of these, we have chosen the ones we believe generally applies to almost any volunteer management process. The theoretical model is based on 6 different steps or phases presented below and we choose to look on this process from the perspective of how we adapt digitally as an organisation in each of these steps:

1. Preparation of the organisation for involving volunteers also digitally
2. Promotion of volunteering opportunities using digital tools
3. Recruitment and selection volunteers using digital tools & matching platforms
4. Capacity building (training, motivation and supervision) of volunteers using online and digital tools
5. Recognition of learning and merit of the volunteering using digital tools
6. Monitoring and evaluation (reflection and feedback) of the volunteering activity

Preparation of the organisation for involving volunteers digitally

Involving volunteers in an organisation must be in close and direct connection with its declared mission, vision and values and also to be adapted to the time contexts we are living in. That is why, before establishing any contact with potential volunteers, it is an absolute necessity to have a preliminary preparation/planning stage. If we decide to fast track this process and skip the planning stage, we could end up with multiplying the problems of the organisation instead of diminishing them by working with volunteers. And, if we relate to digital tools, more attention needs to be invested in preparing the organisation digitally for the volunteers managing process/ steps.



Preparing the organisation for the involvement of volunteers using digital tools is just like laying the foundation for a building. The main question we should be asking in this regard is: *are we ready to ensure an efficient volunteer management digitally and set an example?*

To prepare the organisation for working with volunteers in a digital world requires at least attention to:

✓ **Volunteer managers readiness to use digital tools** themselves: *using volunteer-ing digital volunteer contracts, using cloud solutions to store all the documents relevant for volunteers, using an online timesheet, using an online job description, using Trello for volunteer project management, using digital evaluation methods etc.*

✓ **Volunteer motivation to use digital tools:** *using social media to thanks to volunteers for their work, using newsletter, organising online parties, organising online individual meetings to offer support and motivation for volunteer.*

✓ **Volunteer's readiness to use the digital tools in their service:** *online training for using digital tools.*

✓ **Access and information about what digital tools are available:** *offering access to a list/ collection of tools that are used in the organisation.*

✓ **Organisation capacity to offer counselling, support and training for the managers and volunteers to use digital tools:** *online meeting to increase volunteer's capacity to implement their work and to develop themselves personally and*

professionally, online questionnaires about the motivation, online training, electronical materials to read, offering professional counselling or coaching.

✓ **Suitable technical equipment and digital tools to support the use of digital tools in the organisation:** *access to different tools with the organisational accounts: Zoom, Mentimeter, Miro, etc*

✓ **Support from community, sponsor, partners, funding agencies, community centres and Resource Centres** *to grow capacity of the organisation in using digital tools.*

We are going to reflect in this guide on *what digital tools are we using as volunteer managers in different stages of volunteer management?*

The decision to use digital tools in volunteering management or involving volunteers digitally should be preceded by evaluation of the advantages, risk and safety related to these two dimensions in the context of the organisation.

The preparation of the organisation for involving volunteers digitally has to take into consideration also organisational needs, developments in the field, current challenges related to digitalisation, existing trends and the capacity of the organisation to overcome challenges. In the previous chapter we addressed the trends, developments, needs and challenges. Let's start with analysing the advantages and risks of digitalisation in general.

Advantages of digitalisation in volunteering management

Access to more volunteering opportunities: digitalisation has opened up a new world of opportunities when it comes to volunteering due to the technological solutions in the field of remote working. There are now completely new volunteering roles and anyone can open/ start their own volunteering initiatives.

Accessibility of data and faster access to information: the digital era brings all kinds of information to our fingertips thanks to the centralization and accessibility of data. For example, people now rely heavily on computers and mobile phones with internet connection, which give you an immediate answer to any questions you might have. Volunteering matching platforms, online enrolment forms and evaluation forms can offer lots of data in a faster way.

Growing agility: volunteering work must be able to swiftly respond to very different challenges that appear in our communities. Organisations should be agile enough to shift directions rapidly and to do so, agile techniques should be adopted across all departments and when the volunteer management processes are automated, it allows them to modify and adapt to changes at a relatively fast pace.

Improved ability to communicate: digitalisation has also transformed our ability to communicate, with numerous apps

which allow us to send messages to each other in real time and in many different formats. For example, mentioning someone's name on a social media post or doing a video call. We can be in contact with the volunteers any time of day, we can send large documents, we have access to collaborative work.



Less human error: when operations are automated, the likelihood of human error is considerably decreased. We can consider here tools like Excel, Google forms, pools, online questionnaires which are not as prone to error as humans when working with volunteers.

Efficiency of the volunteer management processes (promotion, recruitment, selection, training, monitoring and evaluation): efficiency is defined as how well time, effort, and money are utilized to complete a task or achieve a goal. One of the most significant advantages of digitalisation is that it reduces the time it takes to complete a task, the effort necessary to complete it and the cost of doing it correctly.

When the organisation business process is automated, you can expect reliable outcomes every time and achieve greater transparency and fairness.



Greater productivity: when we automate manual repetitive processes, we reduce monotonous tasks and allow the team to focus on more difficult and innovative initiatives that will help the volunteer management or volunteering work function more efficiently.

Inclusion: we are also able to communicate more efficiently new ideas thanks to digitalisation, which helps them to spread more quickly. Volunteers who are not available for a physical meeting, or volunteers with health challenges can participate online because of the access to digital tools.

More transparency: transparency in volunteering management processes is critical for long-term success. If processes of volunteer management or volunteering services are digitally monitored, the organisation will have more faith in how things are done. Volunteer Managers don't have to worry about volunteers forgetting what they're supposed to be doing, since everyone understands what they're supposed to be doing at all times – using management digital tools like Trello, Basecamp, Salesforce etc.

Standardising the quality of work: if we automate our volunteer service follow-up process, for example, volunteers or community beneficiaries of the volunteering work will receive the same quality of support from the organisation every time.

Better morale: when volunteer managers or volunteers are required to focus on manual repetitive tasks, it reduces their ability to learn, develop, and advance professionally. Organisations benefit from digitalisation since it automates these repetitive activities, allowing them to engage in more significant initiatives and so enhancing their morale.

Reduce operational costs and save time: digitalisation in volunteering management and volunteering services enables the most efficient and cost-effective use of your core resources. Inefficient processes cost organisations up to 30% of their

annual revenue. When processes and procedures are done manually, there is a far greater chance of resources being squandered. Digitalisation has the potential to save up to 90% on operational expenses (Source: Forrester).

Risks of digitalisation on volunteer management and volunteering services



Social isolation and mental health problems: spending too much time online weakens our ability to develop face-to-face social skills with new people and increases the gap of real socializing. This means that our need for real connection is weakened leading to social isolation and mental health problems.

Weaken the strength of belonging to a community: through excessive social media and fast online communication, we reduce the face-to-face meetings which is slowly reducing the feeling of belonging to a real-world community which can have a huge impact on our wellbeing and happiness.

Increase the chance of misuse: for example, incorrect or false information or very different approach in a volunteer program can be used for manipulative purposes.

Less and less specialized: so many people are becoming experts just by being online or using apps that solve many challenges. It became a hard task to become a real specialist on something since computers, apps and robots solve lots of our problems.

Unreliable sources and plagiarism: there is so much information out there that it becomes very hard to know which sources or information are real or not. The enforcement of copyright law is hard to implement as the information that is present on the online world is vast and to track every data is becoming harder.

Risk of being hacked: as businesses increasingly store data electronically, they become more vulnerable to attacks from hackers who could gain access to this information.

Manipulation of digital media and fake news: manipulation of digital media is more common than before and it increases the possibility of fake reports and results inducing more confusion instead of reality. Photographs, audio files, and videos are easy to edit. The size and quality of the image, the true voice of the characters can be manipulated to create something new which lacks originality and true nature of the product or the message.

The impression of too much work or work overload: as working with the use of digital technology increases speed and performance there are drawbacks of using it too. Workers from all around the world have to manage, analyse and handle large numbers of data which can be hectic, requiring greater attention, which creates distress and isolation.

High costs: many owners or managers think that a major disadvantage of digital transformation is that it can be costly at the beginning to implement. For example, your organisation will need to invest in new hardware and software and train employees and volunteers on how to use these new tools, which can add up.

Lower participation online: for online events participants tend to enrol but many are not attending in the end.

Digital technology creates addiction: online and offline computer games, messaging, social media platforms, chat rooms, and other websites can be susceptible to becoming addictive.

Disruption to employees: additionally, the implementation of new technologies can lead to job losses, or lower the level of motivation for volunteering for the elderly people, or some positions or tasks may become redundant. This disruption can cause stress and anxiety for employees, or volunteers which can impact their productivity, morale and motivation.

Online fatigue: this is a specific type of pandemic-related fatigue, deriving from overusing internet and technology during homeworking.

Safety in digitally volunteer management

When we talk about safety, we mostly refer to online safety since this implies a higher degree of risk when talking about digitalisation.

Online safety refers to the act of staying safe online. It is also commonly known as internet safety, e-safety and cyber safety and data protection. It encompasses all technological devices which have access to the internet from PCs and laptops to smartphones and tablets. Being safe online means individuals are protecting themselves and others from online harms and risks which may jeopardize their personal information, lead to unsafe communications or even affect their mental health and wellbeing.

When we are working with volunteers, we need to consider that operating within an online space is something most of us take for granted, but we need to stop and consider also the potential danger which exists.

Practical recommendations on how to reduce risks through digitalisation

Here are some advices to protect volunteer managers and volunteers from risks when working online and using digital tools:

✓ **Don't let your browser remember your log in details:** it's much safer to re-enter your details every time you log in, even if it takes slightly longer time.

✓ **Update your internet browser:** the latest versions have built-in protection against fake websites and viruses.

✓ **Never share your password.**

✓ **Create a strong and easy-to-remember password for all the accounts you are using:** passwords that combine letters and numbers are generally harder to guess. Use a different password to the one you use for other services.

✓ **Change your password on a regular basis.**

✓ **Look after your paper statements:** fraudsters can use information on paper statements to steal someone's identity. You should always destroy your paper statements before throwing them away.

✓ **Learn to spot fake emails and websites:** criminals use them to convince people into giving away passwords and bank details – the technical terms it is called 'phishing'.

✓ **Get the latest anti-virus and firewall software:** download updates regularly to make sure you're protected against any new online threats.

✓ **Keep Personal Information Professional and Limited:** volunteers or community beneficiaries don't need to know personal relationship status or your home address. They do need to know about your expertise and professional background, and how to get in touch with you.

✓ **Keep Your Privacy Settings On:** marketers love to know all about you, and so do hackers. Both can learn a lot from your browsing and social media usage. But you can take charge of your information. Make sure you have enabled these privacy safeguards, and keep them enabled.

✓ **Make Sure Your Internet Connection is Secure.**

✓**Be Careful What You Download:** a top goal of cybercriminals is to trick you into downloading malware – programs or apps that carry malware or try to steal information. Don't download apps that look suspicious or come from a site you don't trust.

✓**Make Online Purchases from Secure Sites:** any time you make a purchase online, you need to provide credit card or bank account information – just what cybercriminals are most eager to get their hands on. You can identify secure sites by looking for an address that starts with https: (the S stands for secure) rather than simply http: They may also be marked by a padlock icon next to the address bar.

✓**Cloud back-up of crucial documents:** cloud backup has made it possible for organisations of any size to improve their data protection. Is advisable to back up crucial documents.

✓**Be Careful What You Post:** the internet does not have a delete key. Any comment or image you post online may stay online forever because removing the original (say, from Twitter) does not remove any copies that other people made.

✓**Be Careful Who You Meet Online:** people you meet online are not always who they claim to be. Indeed, they may not even be real. Fake social media profiles are a popular way for hackers.

✓**Don't use private emails and numbers:** e.g. WhatsApp: protection of privacy is important. Is advisable that volunteers don't use their private emails and phone numbers.

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3

HOW TO FIND NEW VOLUNTEERS ONLINE Best practices in promotion, recruitment and selection of volunteers

In chapter two of the guide, we described the stages of efficient management of volunteers, working online or with digital tools. In chapter one we tackled preparation of the organisation-advantages, risks and safety of digitalisation in volunteer management. In this chapter we will tackle the promotion and recruitment of volunteers using digital tools.

In most cases finding the volunteers implies an active process of spreading the word about the volunteering opportunity and searching for the appropriate volunteers.

Spreading the word about volunteering opportunities implies promotion and searching for the right volunteers implies recruitment. Recruitment is about finding people with the same interests and values who are willing to volunteer.

3.1. THE PROCESS AND STEPS OF RECRUITMENT

Recruitment of volunteers follows the main guidelines of any type of recruitment. The recruitment process follows two main steps:

1. Preparing and planning the recruitment: answers three main questions:

- *What volunteers do we need?*
- *What will they do in our organisation?*
- *How many volunteers we need for online and digital volunteering?*

Directly connected to the elements discussed in the previous chapter (Preparation of the organisations for involving volunteers) it includes assessing the need for volunteers in the organisation, developing the job descriptions, as well as the volunteer's profile both for face to face but also for online or digital volunteering. The planning phase implies focusing the recruitment (choosing the target groups based on the previously established job descriptions), creating a timetable for the recruitment and developing the recruitment process (creating the message, choosing the recruiting techniques which best fit the objectives pursued, promotion of the opportunities, identifying the resources needed and the persons involved).

2. The recruitment itself: involves turning into action the strategy developed in the preparation and planning steps. It has a clear time limit.

In any of the forms you choose to promote the opportunities there is a need for a call for volunteers.

Call for volunteers is a short but clear description of what your opportunity offers to potential volunteers. When writing your call for volunteers make sure you include the following information:

- short introduction of your organisation;
- details about the location of the activities as well as the exact dates. In case of online or digital volunteers very specific information about it;

- information about the role of the volunteers and their main task;
- what you have to offer the volunteer;
- selection criteria (mention here if any experience the volunteers should have or any specific competences you require, if any);
- what is the application procedure and when is the application deadline;
- full contact details of the person responsible for the recruitment and you make yourself available for further questions from potential volunteers both face to face, online or by phone.

Once your call for volunteers is ready, the next question is how you can make sure the message reaches the volunteers targeted.



3.2.DIGITAL TOOLS FOR PROMOTION AND RECRUITMENT

There are *different ways to promote the call for volunteers*, some more efficient than others, but most of them need the use of digital tools either for:

- designing the call for volunteers (like Canva, Illustrator or other visual design tools). In case the recruitment process is designed under a specific funding mandatory publicity features and guidelines should be taken in consideration;
- news-spreading tools (like social media channels, e-newsletters, website, blog, matching platforms);
- collecting the data for interest or enrolment (Google forms, databases, Jira, Sinch, Slack etc);
- maintaining the flow of communication (e-mail, WhatsApp, Zoom, Facebook groups, etc).

In all cases however, an efficient recruitment process of digital volunteers relies on a combination of the following:

- *Make it simple to register for volunteering.* Everyone is busy, so the easier you can make it to volunteer, the better. Don't make supporters jump through hoops to sign up to volunteer. You'll want basic contact information so you can keep in touch with them about future opportunities, but this isn't the time to capture their complete profile.

- *Database with potential volunteers (warm body recruitment)* – Even if you don't have an active call for volunteers when this happens, it's a good idea to create your own database with volunteers who express their interest in volunteering with you and once you decide to host new volunteers you can send them this call. In case the organisation is using volunteering matching platforms or app, some of them have many digital features for volunteer management.
- *Online platforms and online groups* – Platforms or online groups where volunteers are already there offer you the chance to promote your vacancy among young people interested in volunteering projects.
- *Specific volunteering platforms.* There are also specific matching platforms for the promotion of specific volunteering activities or programs as: the European Youth Portal (warm body recruitment), European Solidarity Corps platforms, etc.
- *Former volunteers (concentric circles recruitment)* – Happy volunteers are the best promoters your organisation can have. Involve the volunteers you have worked with in the past to promote your call of volunteers among their friends or relatives. For some organisations this is the one of the most successful tools they have to attract new volunteers. You can create a sub web page, which includes reports and quotes of former volunteers.
- *Get ambassadors from the target group* who will be spoke persons for the target group.
- *Approach participants of your online and offline activities in order to recruit them as digital volunteers.*
- *Use social media* – Be creative in using social media for the promotion and recruiting volunteers. Use your organisation's Facebook, Instagram, Twitter page as well as the different Facebook groups where you can post your opportunity. Pay attention to the people who are engaging with your posts the most. These are supporters you can reach out to directly to see if they're interested in getting more involved. You'll also want to create shareable content. So, if you're looking for volunteers for a special event, try creating a fun infographic explaining your needs and where folks can go to sign up. And, make sure to ask them to help you share the message! Finally, you can also create Social Media events for volunteer opportunities. For example, if you're a local environment organisation, try creating a social media event for a park clean-up day. When volunteers show up at your event, make sure to get their contact information so you can send them future volunteer opportunities and

enrich your database.

- *Direct messages on LinkedIn* are harder to ignore than some other means of communicating over social media. Users will get a notification about your message, and it will have a personal touch to it, which is always nice. Look for LinkedIn users within your service area who have a history of volunteer work listed on their profile. Reaching out to these individuals helps you tap into people already excited about volunteer work.
- *Place ads in local media outlets such as TV, radio, newspapers and social media.* Many local media outlets will offer low cost or free messaging for nonprofits or community groups. Reach out to your local TV broadcasts, radio stations, and newspapers to place ads about your volunteer needs.
- *Influencers, bloggers, vloggers.* They can very effectively deliver a message/call for volunteers. The recommendation is to find those influencers, bloggers/vloggers who promote values similar to those your organisation believes in and acts on. A message from a strong social influencer can reach a large number of people with the same values.
- *Use traditional media too* and do a cross media campaign (e.g. promote the same content and picture on social media, your website, etc)
- *Present of former partner organisations (brokered recruitment)* – Send your call for volunteers to partner organisations you have worked with in past projects. Of course, if your experience was not positive with a partner you can choose who to inform or not. If you decide to start a targeted recruitment (for example for volunteers that have experience in painting or creation of videos) you can also narrow down the partners you contact with the call, depending on their profile and area of expertise.
- *Find a corporate partner.* Corporations are prioritizing social responsibility more and more. You can use this feeling to discover new corporate partners whose employees could become volunteers. A great way to kick off a corporate partnership is to host a volunteer day.
- *Reach out to donors.* Existing and past donors are also an easy option for volunteer recruitment. They're more likely to want to volunteer because they already have an affinity for your cause.

You've crafted a compelling recruitment message and you have a list of strategies on how to do the promotion and recruitment. But many successful volunteer programs take a multi-channel approach to advertise their volunteer opportunities. Multi-channel marketing simply means you take advantage of a variety of marketing platforms to share your message.

These platforms may include: Email, social media, Website and Blog, Phone, Mail, volunteering matching platforms, etc.

By advertising your volunteer opportunities using different channels, you'll grow your network more quickly *and* attract fresh voices. But, *how do you choose the best marketing channels for your program?* Throwing your volunteer opportunities at every channel probably isn't the most cost-effective strategy. Instead, start by focusing your efforts on a few of these channels and do it well.

Let's have an example! Let's say you need summer volunteers for your summer camp for working with primary level pupils. You know that high school and college-aged students would be great to be camp animators. While you've traditionally relied on flyers in high schools and universities, you're not attracting the volunteers you need.

It's time to switch up your marketing channels! According to [this study on social media usage](#), 84% of adults aged 18-29 use social media regularly. Meanwhile, only 45% of adults older than 65 use social media. So, if you're looking to diversify your volunteer pool, why not take to social media to advertise your opportunities? Social media is becoming increasingly popular for marketing nonprofit causes. Why? Social media is wide-reaching, cost-effective, and easy to track. (Source: <https://www.galaxydigital.com/blog/marketing-volunteer-opportunities>)

If you're looking to market your volunteer opportunities on social media, start by choosing one or two platforms to master. Most Popular Social Platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tik Tok.

As a conclusion, a very important principle in building your promotion and recruitment strategy is to balance the number of channels used for promotion and resources invested in this process with the number of volunteers you are searching for.

We questioned 50 individuals and organisations in the four partner countries involved in the ProVol Digital project, and you can see below which are the most used and recommended digital tools in *planning and implementing promotion and recruitment in each of the four countries.*



THE MOST USED AND RECOMMENDED TOOLS	ROMANIA	CZECH REPUBLIC	AUSTRIA	GERMANY
PROMOTION OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES	Facebook Instagram Organisation website Canva WhatsApp TikTok Digital newsletter E-mail marketing Database (Orgo)	Facebook Instagram Canva Organisation website E-newsletters	Facebook LinkedIn Organisation website/ homepage	Facebook, Organisation website/ homepage Instagram Canva Emails
RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION	Google Forms Excell Outlook Zoom European Solidarity Corp platform 123formbuilder Discord	Phone Facebook Google forms Sinch WhatsApp Employment office website, Organisation's website		Email addresses Social media – Facebook Homepage Freinet Volunteer database Instagram Haus des Stiftens

Conclusions:

- In Romania more than 50% of the organisations are using the tools above. There is motivation for using them and a need for more in-depth training on these tools.
- In the Czech Republic, online tool use among non-profit organisation is still very conservative. The most frequently used tool is Facebook. The conservative use indicates the need for further education and training on how to use digital tools for non-profit employees, as well as training in other forms of social media for recruitment.
- In Austria, the organisations are using very few tools for promotion and recruitment. No organisation is satisfied with the current possibilities. There is also a need for tools, counselling and training.
- In Germany use of social media is not only perceived as an influential trend; it seems to be a must-have for organisations. Most of the organisations use websites and social media for several purposes at the same time: promotion, recruitment of volunteers.

More about each of these tools you can find in the tools collection we developed in the existing project. You can find the collection here- [Digital Tools](#).

This description of the tools can help you understand more about different categories of tools that can be used in recruitment for communication and marketing. But you can also find on the same link, digital tools for project management, video conferencing, collaboration, self-management, time management, marketing, e-learning, financial management, learning material development.

Sources/ bibliography:

- Ida Adolfová, Ioana Bere, Albeta Brozmanová Gregorová, Dana Solonean, Alicja Zachert, Oana Țicle ,EVSification manual. Volunteer management in EVS projects, Centrul de Voluntariat Cluj-Napoca
- <https://memberclicks.com/blog/volunteer-recruitment-ideas/>
- <https://www.galaxydigital.com/blog/marketing-volunteer-opportunities>
- ProVol Digital Questionnaire





4

**DIGITAL VOLUNTEERING:
matching platforms-quality criteria**

Technology is transforming the way organisations manage volunteers. Many non-profits work with volunteers, so it's important that your organisation can successfully recruit and manage them. In a digitalized world, there is a clear need of reliable online access in order to bring organisation and volunteers easier and faster together. The volunteer matching platforms might be a very useful solution.

4.1. WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER MATCHING PLATFORM?

*A volunteer recruitment platform is a software that can help you streamline and create efficiency around **volunteer recruitment** and **volunteer management processes**.*

Why a matching platform? Because:

- it is the place where the organisation can promote volunteering opportunities;
- it is the place where volunteers and organisations can quickly register to create their own profile allowing them to independently find the perfect volunteering match;
- it is the tool that is making it quick and easy for organisations to find suitable matches, and individuals to find the right role for them as community actors;
- it is the place where organisations and volunteers can manage their own volunteering journey;
- it is the tool where all the volunteer and organisation data are stored in secure database allowing volunteering

teams to record all volunteers' details and to analyse the data in real time.

These platforms can help with recruitment and volunteer outreach, training, scheduling, and timekeeping. Choosing the right volunteer platform can take your organisation to the next level.

4.2. FEATURES A VOLUNTEER MATCHING PLATFORM COULD HAVE

We researched to see what type of features matching platforms could have across the globe. We listed below a very broad list of features that we identify platforms could have.

Of course, there's no 'one-size-fits-all' volunteer matching platform that will work for every organisation and volunteers in any part of the world. Some platforms combine recruitment tools with volunteer management functions; some are geared toward highly-skilled volunteers or disaster response volunteers; some are designed for specific events; some are designed for a specific finances program as European Solidarity Corps; some maybe cover just the basic features from below, some are more complex; some are reaching volunteers and organisation just from one country, regional or international level; some are designed just for online or remote volunteering; some platforms had been designed with little resources, other had a major investment to develop the platforms.

When thinking about deciding to use a volunteer matching platform it is important to know that a platform can have many features. One of the features is very much linked with the recruitment process, but the platform can have many features that can help with selection, counselling, motivation, managing, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, recognition and dissemination of the volunteer's work. Here are some **general and specific features** a volunteer matching platform can have:

- volunteer outreach (promotion and recruitment);
- identify volunteers and match them to opportunities within your organisation or other organisation training for volunteers;
- share volunteer opportunities from the platform on social media;
- volunteers event planning, scheduling and timekeeping;
- streamline volunteer recognition online events;
- assist with recognizing your most outstanding volunteers;
- connect volunteers so they feel more engaged;
- send automated communications so the volunteers stay in the loop;
- send automated, custom email greetings;
- has integrated digital tools to capture and collect photos of your volunteers at work;
- has automated, custom questionnaires to potential volunteers;
- comprehensive volunteer data collection and management with extensive reporting features;
- customized reporting tools so you can gain valuable insight into your volunteer's experience;
- volunteer time-tracking functions, including on-site check-in, a mobile app, and web-based options;
- offer access to educational resources on how to mobilize volunteers;
- easy self-scheduling functionality for individuals and groups;
- communication capabilities, including email and text messaging;
- unlimited tech support via phone and email to help troubleshoot any issues;
- mobile time tracking capabilities to help reduce manual data entry;
- tools to create and manage events;
- tools to create recurring volunteer events or one-time opportunities;
- the ability to track volunteer shifts and attendance to identify trends;
- collaborative tools so schools and businesses can partner with nonprofits to co-host volunteering events;
- website integration to streamline recruitment efforts;
- search among their highly-skilled volunteer talent network;
- access a nonprofit resource hub that includes one-on-one coaching and regular trainings , etc.

4.3. CRITERIA FOR A VOLUNTEER MATCHING PLATFORM

We researched what the 50 individuals from the organisations from Austria, Czech Republic, Germany and Romania consider about the usage of volunteering matching platforms in their countries. In Czech Republic, there is no widely used unified matching platform. The lack of a unified platform indicates a need for one. In Austria, for the small clubs no digital platform is working very well – maybe a new system has to be installed/established. In Romania just one platform is available and mostly European Programs designed platforms are used. In Germany, lots of matching platforms and apps are available at local, regional and national level. The users of the platform have positive and negative experiences. See some examples below.

Romania

Just 3 organisations from 13 are using a matching platform and one has an internal platform. It seems that in Romania they are not promoted and used enough, and have a low response and selection rate. The matching platforms used in Romania are:

- <https://hartavoluntariatului.ro/>
- Erasmus+ European Solidarity Corps Portal- [Erasmus+ European Solidarity Corps](#)
- National Internal platforms for scouts: edu.scout.ro
- Eurodesk opportunity finder-[Eurodesk Opportunity finder](#)

- European Youth Portal- [European Youth Portal](#)

Germany

There are many different matching platforms in Germany on different levels: local, regional, nationwide, organisational level platforms. They are hosted by organisations, local groups, universities, and volunteer agencies. Many platforms are supported by ministries or municipalities. Here are some examples of matching platforms in Germany:

- Nationwide: www.freiwilligendatenbank.de
- www.helpteers.net/info/plattformen/, <http://www.govolunteer.de>
- Regional: <https://freilich-bayern.de> (Bavaria), <https://www.deinehrenamt.de/Start> (Hesse)
- Local: <https://tatennetz.de> (Passau), <https://www.landkreis-passau.de/senioren-gesundheit-soziales/ehrenamt/ehrenamtsboerse/>

Some organisations have their own volunteer matching system on their website. But the functions are very basic. You can search for groups that are looking for support near the own location. They only provide contact information, not what kind of support they need. (for example, see Caritas: <https://www.caritas.de/magazin/schwerpunkt/krieg-in-der-ukraine/hilfeboerse-ukraine>) Here is a list below with many platforms available in Germany: <https://helpteers.net/info/plattformen/>



Questioning the users in the four countries on the negative experiences on the platforms they used, here are the experiences that the users did not appreciate. So, is strongly recommended when in search for a platform to check all these criteria's:

- many requests from the user that the platforms are not able to serve;
- superficial information;
- not enough intuitive;
- unclarity about area of preferences for volunteers;
- unclarity on who is the contact person;
- unclarity on the skills the volunteers can contribute with;
- matches are not always identifiable;
- platform efficiency bags;
- low response rate was under 10%, the selection rate was under 2%;
- incapacity of the platforms to do the matching;
- incapacity to reach to a large number of volunteers;

- lack of funds for the continuation of the platform after the funds finished;
- lack of consistent promotion of the platform, etc.

In the same time here are the criteria's recommended by users for a matching platform:

- clear information on the platform about the opportunities and needs of the organisations;
- clear understanding of the volunteer's preferences;
- easy to understand by anybody;
- clarity of the area of volunteering;
- intuitive and user friendly;
- good user guidance;
- colourful and attractive;
- clarity on who is the contact person in the organisation;
- availability of information;
- easy match of the volunteer profile with the offer;
- easy connection of the volunteer with the host;

- relevant information about hosting organisation and volunteers after the matching took place;
- enough number of volunteers on the platform (popularity), etc.

Taking in consideration the needs of the organisation, the challenges they are facing related to digital volunteer management, the feedback we got from users on different platforms, here is a checklist that we recommend for the organisation in search of a matching platform.

This checklist aims to support the organisation in finding the best platform that would cover their needs, especially related to recruitment, but also other features that support the management of the recruited volunteers. The checklist is not complete, it contains only the basic recommendations on what to look for, based on the needs of the organisation or of the volunteers using the platform.

4.4. CHECKLIST IN SEARCH FOR A VOLUNTEER MATCHING PLATFORM

NEEDS OF THE ORGANISATION/ QUESTIONS:	SOFTWARE CAPABILITY TO CONSIDER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you need your volunteers to have access to volunteering opportunities? • Do you need community partners to promote volunteers' opportunities on your website? • Do you want to be able to work with multiple partners across locations? • Do you need to schedule volunteers with ease? 	<p>Opportunity Listings: Look for an interface that allows site users to search for local opportunities based on their preferences.</p> <p>Volunteer Database: Volunteers should be able to create profiles, enter their contact information, and complete important onboarding steps easily (like background checks and liability waivers) all through a single system. Their information should be stored online automatically once captured (eliminating the need for manual spreadsheet entry). Volunteer information should be both secure and accessible to site managers.</p> <p>Program Management: Your organisation may oversee a variety of programs or work with a number of community partners across multiple locations. It's important that these programs can all be managed using a centralized system. A tool that operates online means that program managers can access the system anywhere (and simultaneously).</p> <p>Automated Communication: When volunteers register for an opportunity, your system can automatically thank volunteers for their interest, send email reminders for an upcoming event, or ask for a donation to your cause.</p>

NEEDS OF THE ORGANISATION/ QUESTIONS:	SOFTWARE CAPABILITY TO CONSIDER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you need multi-channel communication to maintain real connection with volunteers? • Do you want to send email and text to volunteers without a separate e-mail list? • Do you want volunteers to receive mobile notifications? • Do you want to select volunteers based on their preferences and organisational needs? • Do you want to a software that integrates with social media platform? • Do you want your current volunteer management process automate the matching of volunteers with opportunities, based on their unique interests and skills? 	<p>Automated Communication: When volunteers register for an opportunity, your system can automatically thank volunteers for their interest, send email reminders for an upcoming event.</p> <p>Volunteer Text Messaging: Need to communicate with your volunteers quickly? Some systems allow you to send text messages to groups of volunteers. This is especially helpful if you need to let volunteers know about last minute changes or communicate with event volunteers on the job.</p> <p>Mobile Notifications: If your platform has a volunteer mobile app, the app will notify volunteers when an opportunity nears. Mobile apps that utilize geo-location can even prompt volunteers to sign-in to a shift automatically when they've arrived on location.</p> <p>Social Media Integration: Sharing should be easy! Look for a software that integrates with social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to promote your volunteering opportunities and events.</p> <p>Matching system. The software will allow to filter data base on preferences by- skills, interests, availability, face-to face or online remote volunteering, etc</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you want to save time and invest it in building valuable relationship with the volunteers? 	<p>From engagement to management. An effective volunteer management software can take the place of your spreadsheets, while saving you valuable time and resources. Your software unifies the many facets of your volunteer program—from engagement to management. With the right system in place, you can provide that your registration, hours tracking, background checks, and communication systems are centralized, organized, and easily accessible. These useful features are designed to simplify your processes and reduce administrative time so that you can direct your efforts toward building relationship with the volunteers.</p>

NEEDS OF THE ORGANISATION/ QUESTIONS:	SOFTWARE CAPABILITY TO CONSIDER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you want to track and communicate your impact and generate more enthusiasm around volunteering? 	<p>Hours tracking and reporting. You are looking for a management system that has a robust reporting tool and custom report-building capabilities. More accurate reporting on the outcomes of your volunteer program provides supporters with evidence that you're allocating resources appropriately and constantly working to uphold your mission. Some volunteer management systems offer multiple ways of tracking and logging volunteer time, like a mobile volunteer app that automatically logs hours when volunteers check in and out of a service project, or an online check-in kiosk that makes it easy to record attendance. Ultimately, automated tracking and comprehensive reporting capabilities can save you hours on administrative tasks, freeing you up to focus on building meaningful relationships. The volunteer needs to agree with all this.</p> <p>Integrated digital tools to capture and collect photos of your volunteers at work so you can further promote volunteer opportunities. This can be used also for recognizing the most outstanding volunteering activities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other features your organisation might be interested in: • Do you want a background check information? • Do you want volunteers event planning, scheduling and time keeping? • Do you want to volunteers to connect with one other so they feel part of one community or more? • Do you want to question volunteers about their needs? Do you want to identify some trends? 	<p>Online Background Checks. When volunteers register for an opportunity through your volunteer management platform, they can be automatically directed to complete a required check. If the volunteer position needs some certain qualification and skills, you can offer opportunities in the registration form, to give additional information about qualifications, skills and opportunities. But data protection needs to be secured.</p> <p>Event planning, scheduling and time keeping tool integrated into the platform.</p> <p>Community building tool. The volunteer's part of the same program can have access to a separate online community to share experiences.</p>

NEEDS OF THE ORGANISATION/ QUESTIONS:	SOFTWARE CAPABILITY TO CONSIDER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you want to have an automatic notification tool to keep everyone informed? • Do you want to want collaborative work with volunteers? • Do you want to streamline recognition events for volunteers? 	<p>Questionnaire integrated into the platform. In case you want to questionnaire about their need and to identify trends.</p> <p>Automatic notification to keep everyone informed about any change.</p> <p>Collaborative work with other volunteers.</p> <p>Streamline recognition events for volunteers.</p> <p>Source: https://www.sterlingvolunteers.com/blog/2020/01/5-most-useful-volunteer-management-software-features/</p>

Below is a list with five volunteering matching platforms around the world which offer volunteering opportunities locally, regionally or globally.

1. European Youth Portal:
https://youth.europa.eu/go-abroad/volunteering/opportunities_en
2. VolunteerMatch:
<https://www.volunteermatch.org/>
3. VolunteerNow,
UK:<https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/volunteering/inspire-me/>
4. UN Volunteers UVP - Unified Volunteer Platform (unv.org).
5. Helpteers, Germany:
<https://helpteers.net/info/plattformen/>- from where you can have access to many other platforms in Germany for example.

All of these platforms help recruit qualified volunteers for more many organisations across the world! They boast the largest

volunteer networks in the world (including more than 100,000 nonprofit organisations and access to millions of volunteers) and can make recruitment super easy and quick! Many more platforms are available out there. You can search the platforms by countries. There are countries with national platforms or you can find many platforms by regions, by municipalities, private platforms and nonprofit ones. Is a matter of choosing the right platform for you.

Sources / bibliography:

- <https://www.instrumentl.com/blog/best-volunteer-recruitment-platforms-for-nonprofits>
- <https://www.sterlingvolunteers.com/blog/2020/01/5-most-useful-volunteer-management-software-features/>



5

**ON BOARD, MOTIVATE, SUPPORT AND
EVALUATE VOLUNTEERS DIGITALLY**

In this chapter we focus on how to organise the onboarding process of the volunteer digitally. The main questions we ask ourselves here are:

- *Once the volunteers were recruited and selected, what strategies, digital tools and methods could we use to on-board the volunteers?*
- *How can we motivate, support and supervise volunteers online?*
- *How can we evaluate the quality and impact of online digital volunteer work?*
- *What kind of digital tools are useful for these processes?*

5.1. ONBOARDING VOLUNTEERS

The preparation and the onboarding process that helps the volunteers get introduced to their work within the organisation – which depends on how volunteering is anchored in the organisation – can be divided into two parts:

1. Orientation: the process of preparing the volunteer to adjust to the organisation and their job and to become effective as soon as possible (also known as induction). Orientation is understood as a process of helping volunteers understand and feel comfortable with the organisation. Making a volunteer feel comfortable and having an important part of the organisation is crucial and it mainly happens during orientation sessions, where the intellectual, practical, and emotional bond between the two is established. So, it is important that you provide information about the

- (A) history, mission and philosophy, beneficiaries, programs and projects;
- (B) structure, rules, logistics and day to day routine, the space, the possibilities, and the job position, operations and procedure; and
- (C) the social organisational structure.

It is important, but a challenge to transfer the organisational culture and create a comfortable, welcoming atmosphere in the digital sphere.

The same applies to the onboarding support: How can you identify the competencies and skills? What is needed for the volunteer to work efficiently (e.g., more information, support, more training).

Our focus in this chapters is to have a closer look on how we organise the onboarding, counselling, motivating and supporting of volunteers digitally. Its purpose is to provide an organisational context to the volunteer and help them understand how they fit into the organisation. It should be clear to both sides how to keep each other informed. All this content can be delivered digitally to the volunteers in more formats:

- All the information can be provided (and is strongly recommended) in one or more online meetings where all the information is presented digitally in an attractive manner, using visual presentations (Canva, Mentimeter, Prezi, etc), videos from volunteering activities, structured logic frames of the work of the organisation, the system of

- monitoring, evaluation, recognition, etc.
- All the information can be organized in a Volunteer Orientation and Support Guide e-book that is available online so the volunteer can go through it individually in their pace.
- Information can be provided and detailed in extra tutoring like one-to-one meetings or in small groups online meetings.
- The information can be available online in short predefined asynchronous training which volunteer can access in a certain amount of time. But this needs to be doubled by online meetings where volunteers can interact with the team and implicitly with the team culture.

No matter which is the approach or the combination of the approaches, here are the questions you need to provide content and answers for the volunteers. It is the duty of a coordinator to be able to give answer to following topics and questions.

- What is the mission, values, history of the organisation?
- How does the organisation work?
- What are the rights and responsibilities of the volunteers? What the Volunteer Code includes?
- Who reports to whom and using what tools?
- Who is responsible for what areas of the organisation's work? Where and how he can file a complain?
- What are the "rules" of the physical and the online workplace?

- Which technical equipment is available online and in location?
- Which applications and digital tools are used by the organisation to do the management of the programs, projects and volunteers?
- Where everything is kept both physical and online; how you get access to what you need; security procedures, what passwords are to all devices and applications for online working, etc?
- What are the rules for keeping life-work balance for the team and volunteers especially when the online work is done?
- What will an average day look like for volunteers and online volunteers?
- Who is in charge the supervision of the work and how the supervision system looks?
- How often reflection and feedback are conducted?

Related to **social orientation**, the most important task is to familiarize volunteers with people that work in the organisation and to explain what each of them does. This is necessary for the volunteers to feel they are part of the team- even if these tasks are done face-to-face or online. Here are some examples: hybrid or online team sessions, room for chit-chats during online sessions, breakout sessions during online meetings, mentioning of the volunteer at the team section of the website, holding up their picture in team group picture, etc.

Also, every organisation has its own culture. The culture is the result of the organisation's history and of the thinking and behaviour of its founders and former and current staff. Understanding the organisational culture, it will make their transition into the organisation and the workplace easier. Here are some areas of the organisational culture that volunteers should be aware of:

- dress code even in online line, eating or not eating during meetings/ online meetings, online attendance rules (always with the video camera opened/ or not)
- work relations (How do people treat one another? Is there a family atmosphere, or is everything kept formal? What about language? Gender relations, inclusion?).

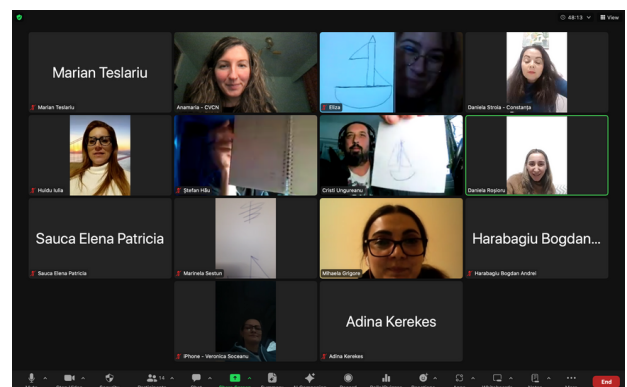
The language used is relevant. The volunteer coordinator will use in online meetings an elegant manner of addressing so that they understand that this is the standard of communication with their colleagues or beneficiaries of the organisation.

What else you can do digitally for orientation and onboarding support?

For social orientation and to fit in with the organisational culture we can organize different online activities:

- invite the organisation leadership to meet with volunteers online;

- organize a monthly online activity: e.g., informal evenings with free discussion or quiz nights;
- invite volunteers to have a Monday online morning coffee together once a month on the first Monday of the month;
- make an online carnival (you enter in costume and change your name with Rename) and everyone tries to guess who is hiding behind the mask;
- we diversify the working atmosphere e.g., by organizing meetings where everyone wears something on their head: hats, caps, turbans, etc.
- everyone presents at each meeting their favorite hobby, or favorite book, or favorite film etc.
- we sprinkle online activities with online knowledge activities (quizzes about volunteers, knowledge energizers, etc.)
- we organize special guest meetings with former volunteer or online volunteers who can share their experiences and provide inspiration.



What hands on activities you can do digitally on the online meetings during orientation and onboarding support?

1. For the organisation's presentation:

- frontal presentation in PPT, Mentimeter, Canva, Prezi;
- a quiz (in Menti, Kahoot or Trivia) for volunteers with questions about the organisation (volunteers can have more time so they can look for answers to the questions);
- a wheel with random questions asking various topics about the organisation;
- guests (volunteers, former volunteers) to share their stories, testimonials;
- video presentations about the organisation, etc.

2. For the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and the organisation:

- frontal presentation in PPT, Mentimeter, Canva, Prezi;
- divide participants in breakout rooms to have discussions on topics as: volunteers' rights, volunteers' responsibilities, host organisation's rights, host organisation's responsibilities;
- homework and study cases: to read the documentation. and present what they understood most or least;
- clarify unclear issues: Q&A in Mentimeter. Or in internal information management system
- create a self-directed online training or resource (web)site, you can refer too for details

3. For growing motivation:

- discussion of individual motivational drivers in breakout rooms or by doing personal videos on it;
- work in small groups in breakout rooms and collected in online (whiteboards) the individual needs of volunteers, followed by presentation of the volunteer support system;
- guided storytelling about the host organisation's dreams.

4. For on-board ongoing support:

- apply regular online questionnaire send by online newsletter where volunteers can give feedback, express their need, offer innovative ideas, etc.;
- organize regular coaching and support meeting where the volunteers feel freely to express themselves.

5.2. VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

The volunteer's development and support include: trainings and meetings, support and supervision, offboarding and recognition. A lot of volunteering tasks don't need a specific training, but some do or sometimes need further training to improve skills and knowledge. If this is the case, you need to provide ONLINE training opportunities, either as an online live training course or live on the job training, online coaching or a self-directed learning course.

5.2.1. Training is directly related to the skills and knowledge necessary for the volunteer to have in order to do a particular job. To determine the type of training you should give to your volunteers, you need to find out the answer to the question:

What skills, knowledge or attitudes does the volunteer need to perform their work? Is it a face-to-face work, is it online work, or is it both combined?

The training should meet the requirements of the position but also the learning needs of the volunteers. Any training, especially the initial training, should cover the particular skills and information the volunteers need to do their jobs. In some cases, of course, volunteers may already have most of the skills and information they need, therefore, training should focus on upgrading these skills, or on information that is new or specific to the organisation.

There are a variety of methods to structure different types of training: online training, face-to-face, hybrid or asynchronous training.

How to conduct orientation and training sessions digitally

Even though the purpose of orientation and training is different, they can be treated jointly when it comes to the way they should be conducted online or when using digital tools. Varying the format is a way to keep the orientation/ training interesting and fresh.

Some elements you need to take into consideration **before delivering the trainings**:

- decide which online video conferencing tools you want to use. See some [HERE](#);
- make sure that the volunteers are able to use the videoconferencing tools as Zoom or other platforms;
- use time in the online training for presenting how is each digital tool that you are planning to use working, and give some time for volunteers to familiarize with its features;
- offer special support for the digital tools that you are going to use in the trainings before the training if need it.

Some of the following techniques and tools can be of used during the general or specific training for volunteers:

- **energizers or icebreakers:** which needs to be use often especially in online to make participants move and energize;
- **presentations:** here are some tools that can be used to make presentations: Mentimeter, Miro, PowerPoint, Prezi, Youtube , etc.;
- **facilitate groups activities:** small-group problem-solving, collaborative activities, games for which you can use breakout rooms, Kahoot or Mentimeter for quizzes, Mural, Jamboard for collecting information from participants, etc.;

- **direct experiences:** to understand concepts, contents, get more skills. It can be working in groups (breakout rooms) that can be done both offline on online using breakout rooms;
- **observations:** seeing the actual practice of what you have talked about or experienced;
- **evaluation and reflection activities:** to evaluate if the learning objectives have been reached. You can use tools like Mentimeters, Survio, Google Forms, Kahoot, Action Bound etc.;
- **managing training resources:** collaborative spaces where volunteers have access to the information and tools delivered during the training. You can use tools like Padlet, Google Drive, Trello, Dropbox, Wakelet;
- **homework:** which can be deliver to study at home for volunteers, or you can provide online tests;

5.2.2. Support, supervision and motivation of the volunteers

All volunteers need support and supervision no matter if they do volunteer online or on the spot. Support is needed to keep the volunteers motivated and on track, but also in times of crises and problems. Supervision is needed to monitor the volunteer's performance, quality, impact of their volunteering, and if tasks have been implemented appropriately. But supervision also is needed to check if the volunteering is beneficial for the volunteer, and that the needs of the volunteer, but also that of the organisation and/or the beneficiary are met.

The form that this takes will vary wildly. For example, volunteers who work with seniors in hospitals will need different support and supervision to a volunteer who mainly does administrative work in the office or



the volunteer who does digital remote work online.

The support and supervision should reflect the following four key principles also for digital management support:

<p>You must provide always a point of contact to have a safe environment available so the volunteer feels comfortable to ask for help anytime.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a contact person for general coordination information and also a contact personal for digital needs (in case the coordinator doesn't have yet the digital skills) ;
<p>You must provide support and supervision at appropriate times and places for volunteers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion of individual motivational drivers in breakout rooms or by doing personal videos on it; • organize regular coaching and support meeting where the volunteers feel freely to express themselves; • frontal presentation in PPT, Mentimeter, Canva, Prezi; • divide participants in breakout rooms to have discussions on topics as: volunteers' rights, volunteers' responsibilities, host organisation's rights, host organisation's responsibilities; • homework and study cases: to read the working documentation and present what they understood most or least; • clarify unclear issues: Q&A in Mentimeter; • create a self-directed online training or resource (web)site, you can refer to for details;
<p>Your organisation should have the capacity to adapt to different types of needs in different moments of time in different types of settings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply regular online questionnaire send by online newsletter where volunteers can give feedback, express their need, offer innovative ideas, etc.; • work in small groups in breakout rooms and collected in online (whiteboards) the individual needs of volunteers, followed by presentation of the volunteer support system;
<p>You should maintain balance between the primary needs of the organisation for the completion of the tasks and delivery of services (supervision) on the one hand and on the other, the personal needs of the volunteer (support).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply regular online questionnaire send by online newsletter where volunteers can give feedback, express their need, offer innovative ideas, etc.; • guided storytelling about the host organisation's dreams, etc;

In different types of organisations working with volunteers the role of the support can be managed by the manager, supervisor, coach or the mentor – depending on the organisational structure. Supervision of volunteers is the main role of the supervisor.

Support for volunteers can be focused on:

- setting up an environment where volunteers can express themselves;
- helping a volunteer acquire or develop new skills or upgrade the existing skills;
- helping a volunteer to express and resolve personal and professional problems;
- helping a volunteer feel good about what they are doing and show they are valued;
- providing a volunteer with the information they need in their personal life and in work (for example relevant contact);
- assisting a volunteer on obtaining additional resources (providing awareness of community, educational, and economic resources available and how to access these resources);
- increasing a volunteer's ability to interact with people/groups/things from various backgrounds (cultural, racial, socio-economic, etc.).

Support for volunteers can be offered in both formal / structured ways (e.g., induction, training, one to one meeting, group meeting) and informal / unstructured ways

(e.g., listening and communicating with volunteers). Good support system can accommodate any strategy or combination of strategies and should use a variety of methods and activities.

Support and supervision can digitally take place during organized individual or group meetings specially designed for that. The meetings can happen on a regular basis or on the need or request. Below there is a list of questions for supervision which can take place online or using online messaging or emails:

- How do you feel about your volunteering generally?
- What's going well with the program? Is there anything you have done which you are pleased about?
- What hasn't gone well? Is there anything that has happened lately?
- Which are you unsure about? Do you face any type of difficulties, including challenges related to digital skills or wellbeing?
- *Ideas for improvement:* How can the volunteer program/project be improved? Did you receive adequate training and support?
- Do you feel like there is any support or training that you need?
- Are you satisfied with your role? Do you feel your time is productive? Are there any tasks in the organisation that you want to do? Are there any areas of our work you'd like to move into?
- Last meeting you agreed to do..., let's talk about the progress with this!

- Are there any actions that we should set ourselves between now and the next time we meet?

You can improve your supervision meetings by using some of the following digital TOOLS:

- You can **evaluate the perception** of the volunteer related to feelings they have, rating results or challenges, grading different evaluation indicators related to tasks or results, using tools like Mentimeter, Servio, Google forms, Dixit Cards and Points of view (online pictures), etc.
- You can take **notes** from the volunteers to summarize their ideas. You can use Padlet, Jamboard, Mural.
- You can use project management tools in the discussions with volunteer to **evaluate the progress of the work** in comparison with the initial plan. You can use tools like Microsoft Project, Airtable, Trello, Breeze.
- You can visually show the learning route for the volunteer you can use tools like Miro, Jamboard.
- You can **stimulate reflection** on learning by asking volunteers to make a video or a digital artwork that describe how the volunteering actions and learning was for them. This is a good starting point to get more content relevant for supervision.
- You can ask volunteers to write a letter to themselves before they start the volunteering job using the FutureMe. The letter will arrive in their

inbox one the volunteering job is almost done or at the end of the volunteering work this is a nice context for reflection and supervision.

Some of the presented tools above you can find also this Digital Toolbox, but some you can explore by yourself.

Motivating volunteers

Maintaining the volunteers' motivation is a hot topic. Especially when we look at motivating volunteers in a digitalized world. We believe that motivating volunteers should be a persistent set of decisions based on understanding organisation and volunteer needs. Is built on a set action the organisation does, even before volunteers arrive in the organisation: promotion, recruitment, onboarding (orienting and training, supporting and supervision). All these contribute to the motivation of the volunteers.

Motivation is the one element that supports, gives energy and directs human behaviour into action.



When people are mainly motivated by *rewards*, *punishments*, and *internal pressure*, they have a harder time initiating and maintaining their behaviours over the long term – including volunteering. However, when people are more autonomous – that is, when people are motivated more by their value for the behaviour, or by their *interest* and *enjoyment* of the behaviour—they tend to be more persistent in their behaviour, feel more satisfied, and have higher well-being overall while volunteering.

Self-determination theory (SDT) suggests that all humans have three basic psychological needs – **autonomy, competence, and connection** – that underlie growth and development and support a high degree of motivation. So, how should these three needs be supported when working with volunteers digitally so they can stay motivated both in face-to-face context and online context?

Autonomy is supported by attempting to grasp and acknowledge the volunteers' wishes, preferences and perspectives, conveying understanding of their point of view, providing a rationale for engaging in a volunteering activity, and providing choice in how to behave. Supporting a volunteer's autonomy also means refraining from trying to control or pressure them to act in a certain way.

- You can use the following digital tools to stimulate autonomy: use questionnaires like Mentimeter, Kahoot to choose their course of actions, give them different digital tools options to use during activities they are providing, provide extra e-books or materials that can help volunteers take the best decisions, take feedback very often both verbally and by online questionnaires, organize enough meetings where they feel their voices heard, empower them to organize autonomous events and activities where they can use digital tools also.

Competence is supported by providing the volunteer with optimal challenges and opportunities (specific goals that are challenging enough, but not overwhelming), encouraging their sense of initiation (try it out!), providing structure (for example, evidence-based results) to mobilise and organise behaviour and providing relevant feedback for the volunteers.

- You can use the following tools to satisfy the need for competence: use evaluation tools as Survio, Google forms, FutureMe, Kahoot, organize reflection and evaluation meetings online and give tools for reflection and evaluation, have all volunteering documents organized using management tools like Google Drive, Microsoft Project, DropBox and keep of the documents the volunteers need in order, communicate and disseminate as much as you can the results of their

work making videos, Canva, Prezi or PPT presentations where their work is visible.

Finally, **connection and relatedness** are supported when others (manager, coach, supervisor, mentor, beneficiaries, other volunteers) are involved and show interest in the volunteers' activities, are empathic in responding to their feelings and convey that the person is significant, cared for, and appreciated. We need to take into consideration that the need for connection is harder to satisfy in online settings and remote work – that means the volunteer coordinators need to find different ways to satisfy this need.

- You can use the following tools to satisfy the need for competence: organize meetings where participants can identify with the visual identity of the organisation, make them wear the same colour or funny hats, involve a group of volunteers in making their own poster, video or any branding digital materials that can be used in communication internally and externally, apply online questionnaire in Google form, Survion, Menti and show empathy and understanding for their feelings, ideas, opinions, organize appreciation and recognition event where people can see picture, video, quotes and impressions about them, in online meetings have personalized visuals with whom they can identify, create online groups where the volunteers can share feelings, ideas, impression, where they can communicate off hours too.

When these needs are optimally supported both in face-to-face and online settings in the volunteering organisation, evidence suggests that people are more autonomous in their behaviours, are more likely to persist at their behaviours, and feel better overall, which grows the level of motivation to continue to act and be a longer-term volunteer. You cannot satisfy all these 3 needs only digitally, but, using digital tools can create an amazing context for keeping and growing motivation also for online volunteers.

5.3. OFFBOARDING VOLUNTEERS – RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTEERS

One of the best ways to create a positive experience for volunteers is to consider the end from the start. Effectively offboarding association volunteers helps maintain a positive relationship with members and ensures a smooth transition for everyone, regardless of their level of commitment to the organisation. While not everyone is going to be happy about moving out of the role, at the very least leaders can work to make it a win-win for all. Here are some basic strategies for offboarding:

- **Develop a clear offboarding policy:** establish a standardized process for offboarding volunteers.
- **Communication:** notify the volunteer about their offboarding in a timely manner. But also have transparent regulations, on how a volunteer has to communicate that and when they are stopping volunteering (e.g. no-ghosting regulation communicated at the beginning)

- **Exit interviews or online questionnaires:** conduct an exit (online) interview with the volunteer to gather feedback on their experience, identify areas for improvement and learn about their reasons for leaving. If an interview is not possible, ask them in an email or provide an online questionnaire.
- **Recognition and appreciation:** show gratitude for the volunteer's contributions. Send them an (online) farewell note, write them a reference letter or a certificate, post a thank you or farewell post on your social media channels etc.
- **Knowledge transfer:** ensure that the volunteer's knowledge, skills, and experiences are documented and passed on.
- **Reassignment opportunities:** offering alternative (online/digital) volunteer opportunities can help re-engage your departing volunteers and avoid those hard feelings.

Recognition of the volunteers

Recognition is an important retention and motivation tool in working with volunteers.

Recognition is acknowledging the efforts; it shows appreciation for the work that volunteers do for the organisation and provides volunteers with a sense of belonging and contribution and a feeling of accomplishment.

Recognition is also a public proclamation. Volunteer recognition is more than physical, digital pins or certificates; it is creating a culture within the organisation that shows volunteers they are valued, appreciated and important to the success of the program.

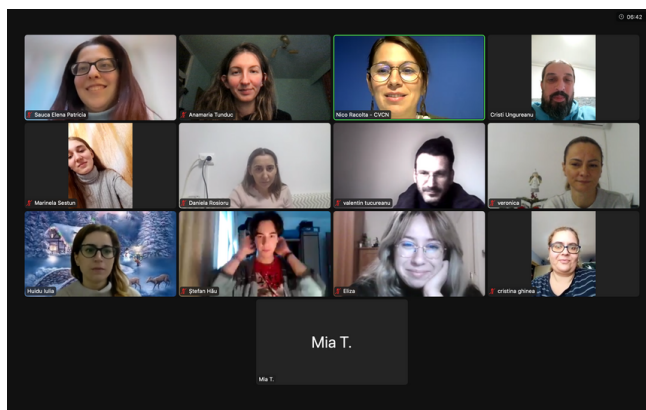
How can we use digital tools for recognition. Here are a few ideas:

- celebrate of 5 December online-International Volunteer Day;
- send messages or emails with Happy Birthday – birthdays, names, holidays;
- make social media posts with volunteers, results, etc.;
- organize thematic online parties;
- mention names on the organisation's website, at events where volunteers have been involved;
- send personalized thank you letters;
- send certificates of participation;
- public thanks;
- nominate volunteers to various events celebrating volunteers, initiatives etc.;
- invite the most dedicated volunteers to join the Board of the organisation;
- invite volunteers to represent the organisation at conferences/online events;
- invite volunteers to participate in various prestigious courses (online or offline);
- increased responsibilities (coordination tasks if the volunteer wishes);

- make special social media postings by name (check with the volunteer if they want to appear with their picture/name);
- give letter of recommendation.

Other important things that you can do also online and using digital tools for the recognition of the volunteers: greeting volunteers when they arrive online, smiling when you see them in the online meetings, asking for their opinions on different matters, collect their ideas during the online meetings by using online questionnaires or tools, showing interest in their personal interest (you can send online newsletter with interesting opportunities related to their interest), telling volunteers “You did a great job” by sending an online card, send testimonials from beneficiaries about their job by email or other communication means, posting graphic displays showing progress toward targets using project management tools, getting volunteers put their names on the products they produced, writing articles about their performance for an online newsletter, mentioning major contributors by name in your status report to management, inviting volunteers to present their results in future online meetings with new volunteers, giving the plaque or certificate (physical or digital) for most improved results, decorating a volunteer’s work area on their birthday but also in online settings, celebrating online the major accomplishment of a volunteer, create a video about the volunteers work, making special caps, shirts, bags for them,

encouraging volunteers to write an article about some accomplishment at work, buying volunteers good equipment (if possible), getting a volunteer’s interviews in video and pictures for outstanding accomplishment, make the volunteer very visible online or in social media, etc.



5.4. FEEDBACK AND REFLECTION OF THE VOLUNTEER WORK

Volunteer coordinators care about their volunteers' **performance, efficiency** and **personal development**.

The reflection time must be a cooperative, supportive dialogue between the organisation and the volunteer. This means that you should create context for the volunteer to evaluate the overall project, the activities, the relations, and the learning experience.

The reflection can happen in at least two dimensions: **reflection on the work / service** provided by the volunteer and **reflection on the learning or reflection on the personal development** of the volunteer.

Work reflection refers to the volunteers' performance at the workplace, and the fulfilment of delegated tasks. Its goal is to find answers to the following questions: *How do volunteers feel in their position and about tasks delegated to them? How are they completing delegated tasks? Do they need more support or more freedom? Is there some space for improvement? Does the volunteers' job meet their expectations and reach their potential?*

Personal development of the volunteer. Personal development reflection should be designed by taking into consideration the following elements: *Are volunteers achieving by volunteering what they have assumed they will? Do activities and assignments help them achieve their goals? If not, how to shape the tasks to support this process? Do volunteers develop other competences that they did not assume at the beginning?*

How is the process going? Are there any obstacles or delays? Is there a need to make some corrective action to support the volunteers' development?

Reflection of the organisation. How did the volunteer experience the organisation and its (volunteer) staff? Volunteers have the chance to offer their feedback on the organisation work.

The process implies: formulate questions; collect data; analyse data; modify plans, programs, and actions (if needed!).

The reflection and feedback process can become more efficient when using digital tools. Lots of tools can be used for evaluation as: Google Forms, Survio, Mentimeter, Kahoot, reflections groups online (in zoom or another interactive platform), etc. More suggestions you can see below.



5.5. DIGITAL TOOLS THAT CAN BE USED IN MANAGING, SUPPORTING, RECOGNITION AND EVALUATION OF ONLINE VOLUNTEER WORK

For orientation and training as strategies for learning, motivation and recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom, Webex, Teams, Skype, Bigbluebutton, Otter, etc.
For collaboration and team management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google Drive, Google Docs, Connecteam, Miro, Menti, Mural
For self-management and time management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google calendar, Mindmeiser, Todoist, Toggl, Google Task, Microsoft to do, Serene, Rescue time, etc.
For communication and managing staff and team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-mail, Whatsapp, Telegram, IFlow.
For the orientation and training online , we can use e-learning tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online moderation, Google Search, Coursera, Udemy, Help, Wikipedia, Google classroom etc.
For learning management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Padlet, Wakelet, Moodle, Confluence, Miro.
For educational material development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LearningApp, Microsoft PowerPoint, Actionbound, Prezi, Learning Snack, Kahoot, Youtube, Canva, etc.

5.6. EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES THAT ARE SUITABLE FOR ONLINE AND DIGITAL VOLUNTEERING

Bellow you can read a list of potential volunteering activities that can be done digitally and/or online by volunteers and some tools could be recommended to be used for each type of activity:

<p>Fundraising activities: The volunteers contribute in fundraising and crowdfunding campaigns. <i>Social media tools</i></p>	<p>Social media master. The volunteers offer time and skills to do social media campaigns. <i>Social media tools</i></p>	<p>Grant writing. The volunteers contribute in writing grant applications.</p>	<p>Content creator. The volunteers have skills to create texts, stories, or other type of content. <i>Social media tools</i></p>
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<p>Research and documentation. The volunteers do research and documentation on different topics.</p> <p><i>Excell, Survio, Google Sheets, SurveyMonkeys</i></p>	<p>Translation. The volunteers translate content or different documents.</p> <p><i>Deepl and Google Translate</i></p>	<p>Legal of financial support. The volunteers offer consultancy services as a specialist.</p>	<p>IT support. The volunteers provide IT services for the organization.</p>
<p>Database organizer. The volunteers use digital tools to organize and manage data.</p> <p><i>Excel</i></p>	<p>Photo video services. The volunteers contribute with organizing or making visual presentations.</p> <p><i>Animoto, Pictory, Sapseed, Lightroom Mobile</i></p>	<p>Graphic design. The volunteers make really nice graphic designs.</p> <p><i>Canva, Adobe express, Coreldrow, etc</i></p>	<p>Teaching/ training/ facilitation. The volunteers delivers on-line classes for kids, youth, adults, seniors, etc. on specific topics.</p> <p><i>LearningApp, Actionbound, Learning Snack, Kahoot, Padlet, Wakelet, Moodle, Confluence, Miro.</i></p>
<p>Teaching/ training/ facilitation. The volunteers delivers on-line classes for kids, youth, adults, seniors, etc. on specific topics.</p> <p><i>LearningApp, Actionbound, Learning Snack, Kahoot, Padlet, Wakelet, Moodle, Confluence, Miro.</i></p>	<p>Fun and teambuilding activities. The volunteers for e.g. can organize online teambuilding activities like cooking session, sing together, percussion or dancing workshops, etc</p>	<p>Coaching or mentoring. The volunteers offer online hours for coaching or mentoring for other volunteers or beneficiaries.</p>	<p>Social and emotional support/counselling. The volunteers offer online emotional support for beneficiaries.</p>
<p>A friend on the phone or online. The volunteer can offer time be on the phone or online to a person in need to talking, a person who feels alone, a senior with no family, etc.</p>	<p>Virtual reading clubs. The volunteer organizes virtual reading clubs for kids, teens, adults or seniors</p>	<p>Reading for elderly or seniors. The volunteer organizes reading sessions for people in need.</p>	<p>Designing webpages. Volunteers build websites and populate them with content.</p>

More relevant information about some of the tools mentioned can be found [HERE](#).

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6

COMMUNICATION OF VOLUNTEERING WORK IN THE DIGITAL ERA



In this chapter, we are focusing more on the communication of volunteering work in the digital era.

When we talk about target audience, channels (websites, social media), information or storytelling on volunteering, most likely, we know that everything will be promoted digitally since **digital is the new normal**, and it's also the most environmentally friendly. But let's start with what communication is?

6.1. WHAT IS COMMUNICATION IN THE FIELD OF VOLUNTEERING?

Communication is two-way process of sharing information and exchanging ideas, data and messages between the volunteer and the organisation and beneficiaries – through appropriate channels – to reach identified target audiences.

*Communication it is the **red string** of a volunteering programs that needs to be known and promoted.*

Communicating your volunteering programs, activities and results will:

- enable you to engage with your volunteers, partners, stakeholders;
- show the impact of your work and the impact of the volunteers and their results in society;
- expand your network for future collaborations;
- support the dissemination of your volunteering results;

- raise citizens' awareness on the importance of volunteering;
- show the success of your organisation work.

Your communication journey starts with a **communication strategy!**

A communication strategy defines your objectives (why you want to do it), target audiences (for whom?), messages (what you want to say), channels (how you want to say it) actions (what you want to do) and indicators (how you measure the results).

6.2. MILESTONE OF A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

- **Set your communication objectives.** What do you want to **achieve** with your volunteering programs or activities- both for beneficiaries and volunteers?
- **Define your target audience(s).** Who do you want to reach with your communication?
- **Choose your key message(s).** Each objective and target audience will have a corresponding key message.
- **Identify your activities and channels.** How are you going to reach your volunteering audiences?



Actions	Channels
Events	website, social media platforms
Publications (leaflets, brochures)	website, events
Videos	website, YouTube channel, social media platforms
Press releases	direct e-mails, news distribution services
Newsletters	direct e-mails, website
Social media posts	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.
Web or news articles	website, social media platforms, blogs

- Set simple **indicators to measure your communication work** and success. For example, the number of clicks on your website or social media.

Alongside your strategy, you must have a communication plan. Your communication plan must be specific, time-based and developed at the beginning of each year.

To do a communication plan you can use digital tools a: Breeze, Trello, Google Drive, Microsoft Project, Airtable, Miro, Padlet, etc.

Bellow we are going to tackle some important elements for communication planning and implementation.

6.3. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

6.3.1. Create your volunteering program visual identity

To be able to run a communication strategy related to your volunteering work you need to create your volunteering

visual identity. A visual identity includes all visual elements (i.e.: logo, font, images) that can be associated with your volunteering activities. A visual identity represents who you are and lets you be easily recognized by your target audiences. Your visual identity will be used for:

- your project website;
- digital materials;
- printed material (posters, brochures) or as PDF-documents;
- social media accounts;
- videos shown in social media, YouTube or on website;
- promotional materials (mugs, pens, t-shirts...).

Choose your visual elements. Your visual identity consists of:

- **a colour palette.** Useful tools: Colordesigner, Typeinspiration.com;
- **fonts.** Useful libraries: Google Fonts, Exljbris;
- **illustrations and images.** Useful image banks: Unsplash, Pixabay;
- **icons.** Useful resources: Flaticon, Iconsvg.

When using images, illustrations and fonts, make sure you are always compliant with the copyright and personal data protection rules applicable in your country.

Make sure you have an accessible design, which means making sure that as many people as possible can enjoy and benefit from your work. For example, when you use Canva, make your designs in the free version. Make sure they are easily accessible for people with hearing, visual, cognitive or attention impairment.

Remember to use patterns in charts or add descriptive texts to enable accessibility for people with colour-blindness. Avoid flashing lights in videos so as not to trigger a seizure in people with epilepsy.

6.3.2. Share your project results

Do not keep your volunteering stories and results of volunteering work for yourself – let them speak for your community, across different countries and people's experiences.

Sharing stories about the results of volunteering work is important to:

- acknowledge volunteers' achievement;
- spread collective knowledge;
- build a community and learning culture around volunteering.

Tell others about volunteering activities, protagonists of volunteering and results of the volunteering from day one. How?

- **Think digital.** When planning your content, think of the **channels** you can use to publish your stories. How can you best reach your target audience?

Web writing has replaced print writing in the majority of cases and has become the most preferred way of communication.

- **Document and collect experiences.** Let your target audience know what you are up to: from your volunteering goals and partners' roles to activities or outputs, your volunteers' stories, policymakers and organisations that are active in your field.
- **Distinguish** between information and storytelling. **Information** involves providing factual data, **storytelling** is the art of building a narrative which **engages** an audience.
- **Create your content strategy.** When preparing your content, think first **who you are writing for**. This will determine: the **content type**: a news article, a blog post, a web page, a social media post; the **tone of voice**: how you say it, the words you choose, their order, rhythm and pace; the **channel to use**: website, social media, radio, press, podcasts
- Respect the **golden rules of digital content writing**: *keep it short and simple; prefer active verbs to passive; use headings and paragraphs; include links, catchy visuals and multimedia content.*

6.3.3 Identify the right communication channels.

The right communication channels help you spread your message or information on volunteering to a greater audience. When you are looking for volunteers, identify what volunteers you are looking for, and in which way they communicate usually, then choose your digital channels wisely, follow the steps below.

A. Use websites. A website is the main “house” of your content. It showcases information, stories and results about your volunteering programs and is the most comprehensive channel to use. A website or a landing page about a special volunteering program ensures your **digital presence** in the community or the world. As your website represents your central means of communication, make sure to design it as inclusively as possible.

B. Share your results on the Project Results Platforms or volunteering platforms. The Project Result Platforms are **databases** that contain descriptions, results and contact information all projects funded for example under the Erasmus+, Creative Europe and European Solidarity Corps programmes. The volunteering platforms can give you access to larger target groups interested about volunteering. More about recruitment platforms you can find in chapter four.

C. Use social media. Since in our research we identified that the use of social media is one of the biggest trends in digitalisation of the volunteering work, let’s look here a bit more on some tips and tricks on social media. More on some marketing digital tools you can find [HERE](#).

Posting on social media follows two principles: **timing** – every platform has its peak time where it records higher engagement. Choose the best time to increase your visibility; and **frequency** – research suggests that one post per day is optimal, with a maximum of two per day. Three posts per week are a minimum.

Consider creating your own **social media calendar** to help you keep an overview of your upcoming social media posts.

[Hootsuite](#) provides you with more tips and free templates. You could simplify planning even further by incorporating a tool like [Buffer](#) to schedule your social media activities ahead of time.

Special occasions such as the Volunteering Day or other recognized international days that can be connected with volunteering, are the perfect moment to increase your promotion and publicity efforts digitally. These communication moments can serve as **hooks** to attract traffic to your social media posts.

Also, social media writing is **short, sharp and strong!** It uses a limited number of characters, which makes your communication more engaging but also challenging.

Find below a few **tips** to write effective social media posts:

- **Identify which social media channel/s you want to use.**
- **Learn to speak your audience/s' language** according to the age of your audience. You could ask them a question, use a quote or a set of emojis and encourage them to comment under your post and share their experience.
- **Use digital multimedia content.** Social media is all about **visual communication**. Images, videos or infographics catch the user's attention much faster and effectively than text on its own. For images: make sure you apply the right dimension and resolution, for videos: try not to exceed one-minute duration, for infographics: visualize numbers and data.

D. Reach out to the digital media. Media outreach means sharing your volunteering stories and results with **journalists** who have an online platform to tell it to a wider audience and maximize outreach.

E. Think of when to reach journalists. Like in the case of social media, keep the principles of **timing** and **communication moments** when you send your press release to the media.

F. Share your results at online events. Events are the perfect opportunity to **showcase** your volunteering results.



6.4. EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Evaluating your communication activities and understanding how effective they are is the last step of successful strategic communication.

There are three key moments for evaluation: *before your activity starts* – when choosing your performance indicators in the communication plan; *during your activity* – while monitoring your performance; *after your activity* – when your communication has taken place.

A performance indicator is a quantitative or qualitative criterion that measures how successful your communication activity is. It can measure "how much" or "how many" or "to what extent" or "what size".

Imagine you have organized an online celebration during the Volunteering Day and would like to understand if it was successful or had the impact you desired.

For this, you should first make sure your objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and in time (e.g. at least 100 volunteers participating in your online event) and look at the indicators such as:

- **number of volunteers** who joined online;
- **number of people** who liked or commented on the relate social media posts or followed the livestream on the Volunteering Day;
- **number of unique visits** on the website’s article about the celebration;
- results of the **satisfaction survey** you sent after the event.

At the beginning you created a communication plan that included performance indicators. It is important to remember that the choice of indicators should go hand in hand with the communication objectives you stated in your plan. Here is a short overview of some performance indicators you can use in relation to social media for example:

Social media	Website	Press	Events
<i>reach</i> (how many people see your content), <i>impressions</i> (number of times your content is displayed), <i>engagement</i> (number of interactions people have with your content with likes, comments, shares or retweets)	<i>number of visitors,</i> <i>time spent on the website,</i> <i>topical interests of visitors</i>	<i>press coverage,</i> <i>number of journalists participating in your event</i>	<i>number of participants,</i> <i>feedback from participants via online surveys</i>

Once your indicators are set, it is time to collect your data and analyses it. A well-conducted evaluation will provide you with helpful feedback and new ideas for your upcoming communication activities or your next communication plan.

Digital channels such as social media platforms or website providers offer free inbuilt tools to monitor your reach and engagement. In the case of events, you could consider sending out a short survey to participants after it has taken place. Find more inspiration on *Google Forms* or *Surveymonkeys*; they provide good hints on how to write survey questions.

Source and bibliography:

Angelo Strano, Jessica Mariani, Ana Alhoud, Natascha Kittler, How to communicate your projects- tell your story, make an impact. A step-by-step guide on communicating projects and their results. Developed by European Commission (Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture) in close cooperation with the European Education and Culture , Executive Agency (EACEA), December 2021, First edition, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021, © European Union, 2021



7

**HOW TO DEVELOP AND SUPPORT
INFRASTRUCTURE FOR VOLUNTEER
MANAGEMENT AND VOLUNTEERING IN
DIGITAL ERA**

The pandemic and the digital time we are in proved that volunteer managers or volunteers can be just as effective at home as they are in the office, and now we're used to online or hybrid meetings as part of our work life.

Today's hybrid workplace demands flexible collaboration tools that support remote and office work. That means that in the office or at home volunteer managers and volunteers need to have a basic infrastructure to support digital work or service.

Meeting online is one of the basic activities when working with volunteers online. There are many meeting platforms available and the number is growing. Today's users are invited to meetings hosted on Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Cisco Webex, Google Meet and more. Whether they are collaborating between departments or between organisations, users need a simple way to join any meeting and skill to use all the IT infrastructure: both hardware and software.

7.1. WHAT IS DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE?

Preparing the organisation for volunteer management in a digital world also involves preparing the organisation with the minimum digital infrastructure, readiness for the volunteer managers and readiness to use the digital technologies by volunteers too.

Digital infrastructure refers to the digital technologies that provide the foundation for an organisation's information technology and operation including for volunteer management.

Examples of digital infrastructure include:

- internet backbone, broadband;
- mobile telecom and digital communication suites, including applications;
- data centres and networks;
- organisation portals, platforms, systems, and software;
- cloud services and software;
- operational security, user identity and data encryption;
- APIs and integrations (an application programming interface is a way for two or more computer programs to communicate with each other. It is a type of software interface, offering a service to other pieces of software).

The organisations working with volunteers also need a minimum of digital transformation – meaning to implement digital technologies in the processes of volunteer management and volunteer services.

The four primary areas of digital transformation include: Volunteer experience and beneficiaries experience, Data & Analytics, Cloud Computing, Mobility (using smartphones and tablets).

To achieve these goals, there needs to be a change in mindset within the entire organisation. It's not enough to work with people who know how to use digital technology; you also need to train them to work together as a team with the digital technology (both managers and volunteers).

An effective digital transformation strategy incorporates a culture of innovation, empowerment, change and the following steps:

- **Recreate Your Internal Processes.** Some organisations still use outmoded internal processes. To recreate your internal process, you must implement technology that enhances the way the organisation is working with volunteers and improves the experience for everyone.
- **Overhaul Your Technology.** By digitising operations, volunteer managers in the organisation can remove barriers and react more efficiently to changes. Embracing the cloud, adopting AI, and welcoming big data are all going to be critical to helping the organisation to keep pace with all the trends in digitization.
- **Increase the Quality of Your Customer Relations.** The third pillar of digital transformation in volunteering organisation is to improve your customer experience (volunteers and community beneficiaries the volunteers provide service for).
- **Training for the team and volunteers** how to integrate the digital transformation in the organisation.

- **Be in line with legal obligation** (e.g., data protection legislation).

IT infrastructure is made up of the following elements. This list is not all mandatory, since digital volunteering can be done with less IT infrastructure but it helps us in identifying the ideal conditions to support digital volunteering work:

- **The router**, which connects multiple networks;
- **The hub or switch**, which connects multiple devices within the network and orchestrates communication between them;
- **The modem**, which connects the network to the internet;
- **Storage devices**, which house data and can be accessed by authorized devices on the network;
- **User access devices**, which include computers, printers, tablets, and other interfaces that users use to connect with and access the network;
- Some parts of the network can be combined; a modem and a router, for example, can reside on one device. And while points in the network are generally connected by cables, certain connections, such as those between user devices or between those devices and the router, can be done wirelessly with WiFi or Bluetooth;
- **Internet connection**;
- **Updating operating systems**: Windows, Linux/ Ubutu, Android;
- **Official website**;
- **Computers** (number and performance);

- **Data storage capacity;**
- **Updating software solutions;**
- **Management software for:**
promotion, recruitment, evaluation, monitoring, etc;
- **Smartphones;**
- **Laptops;**
- **Digital camera: photo, video;**
- **Multifunctional network items;**
- **Video Projector;**
- **Speakers;**
- **Microphone;**
- **Routers wireless;**
- **HDD extern or SSD's;**
- **Fix phone/ fax;**
- **ServerSoftware solutions:**
 - Microsoft Office(for example);
 - Antivirus;
 - Email address-own domain (only if possible);
 - Website domain address;
 - Software for photo and video editing;
 - Accounting software.



Social media accounts: Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, etc. Is important to know that some organisations are not allowed to use it, e.g., if they are on organisation attached to the local administration in some countries.

IT applications for:

- Online promotions;
- Accounting and invoices app;
- Infographics app;
- Project management apps;
- App for monitoring social media and websites;
- Apps for legal purposes;
- Learning apps;
- Clouds apps: Google Drive, Dropbox, Microsoft One Drive, Apple iCloud, Box, Orange cloud, Microsoft Azure.

Digital competences need to be developed by volunteer managers and volunteers who provide digital or online volunteering services could be done either by training, self-learning, coaching or other approaches.

Researchers at the EU's Joint Research Centre have produced some useful documents for 'measuring' digital skills and they are saying that the main 5 areas of digital competencies are:

- **information and data literacy:**
browsing, searching and filtering data, information and digital content;
- **communication and collaboration:**
interacting through digital technologies, sharing through digital technologies,

engaging in citizenship through digital technologies, collaborate through digital technologies, netiquette, managing digital identity;

- **digital content creation:** developing digital content, integrating and re-elaborating digital content, copyright and licencing, programming;
- **security:** protecting devices, protecting personal data and privacy, protecting the environment;
- **problem solving:** solving technical problems, identifying needs and technological responses, creatively using digital technologies, identifying digital competencies gaps.

7.2. HOW ORGANISATIONS CAN GET SUPPORT FROM THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO GROW CAPACITY IN DIGITALISATION

The survey we applied during the ProVol Digital project, shows that the majority of the organisations we questioned would need more support from the local community, to grow the organisation capacity on digitalisation.

How can you do that?

- Develop partnership with different IT providers (enterprises, companies) to provide free IT equipment for the organisation – as sponsorship or donations – as a service to the community.
- Ask for support from organisations/ institutions who have as a mission to offer technological and digital support for NGO. See TechSoup Global

Network (techsoup.org) or Sinch - which are providing equipment, software and trainings for nonprofit organisations in many countries of the world.

- When writing a grant application make sure to budget equipment and software if eligible.
- Put pressure to local and national funding program to grow budget line for equipment and software infrastructure.
- Identify companies or institutions who are renewing technical equipment and they want to donate the existing equipment's (if the equipment is still good enough).
- Identify if existing volunteers and partners can contribute with their equipment to different project that you have in the organisation.

Sources/bibliography:

- <https://base22.com/the-importance-of-digital-infrastructure-and-integration-planning/>



Digitalisation has emerged as a significant trend, influenced in part by the pandemic but extending far beyond it. The move towards digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the operations of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), highlighting the importance of remote work, online collaboration, and virtual communication. This trend mirrors a broader societal shift where technology plays a central role in various aspects of our lives, including how NGOs approach issues such as volunteer management, education and social initiatives.

Through the project “**ProVol Digital- Professional volunteer management and training through digitalisation**” we are offering this recommendation guide for NGOs and volunteer coordinators to stay up to date. The aim of this guide is to equip NGOs and volunteer coordinators with digital expertise and to adapt their skills in dealing with technology to the current standards. Through this tool we want to inspire and empower other organisations to enter the digital sphere as well.

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The project is funded by the **EU-program Erasmus +**.

The authors who contribute to this guide are:

- Marioara Butyka, Centrul de Voluntariat Cluj-Napoca, Romania
- Nicoleta Chiş-Racolţa, Centrul de Voluntariat Cluj-Napoca, Romania
- Perdita Wingerter, Gemeinsam leben und lernen in Europa e.V., Germany
- Larissa Schillai, Gemeinsam leben und lernen in Europa e. V., Germany
- Lenka Vonka Černá, Dobrovolnické centrum, z.s., Czech Republic
- Nicol Magrotová, Dobrovolnické centrum, z.s., Czech Republic
- Elke Beneke, EB projektmanagement GmbH, Austria
- Silke Jamer-Flagel- EB projektmanagement GmbH, Austria
- Gabriele Sailer- EB projektmanagement GmbH, Austria

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