DIGITALIZATION IN VOLUNTEERING

TRENDS – PRACTICAL EXAMPLES – EFFECTS

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1.INTRODUCTION

Voluntary commitment is particularly evident in unpaid work with and for people.

Voluntary work is not necessarily subject to the rules of the "free market", i.e. the economic system, but of course there are requirements, rules, processes and trends in the "paid" world of work that also shape volunteer work or work with volunteers. Our future is increasingly determined by technology: new jobs, business models and services are emerging, but it is also changing people's needs and requirements.
Even volunteer work cannot ignore these changes caused by digitization, even if the needs, motivation, and requirements in "not for profit" volunteer work also differ from those in the paid, "for profit" oriented world of work: public welfare orientation instead of profit orientation.

Digitalization already plays an important role in most volunteer organizations: most of them use IT, digital tools or online services in their daily work or public relations. But work, information and communication processes are also becoming increasingly digitalized. The Covid19 pandemic has made this necessary. Zoom conferences, WhatsApp communication and working with clouds have made our lives and work easier and have become an integral part of everyday life. However, increasing digitalization will also lead to the digitization of entire services and work processes: online counselling, online meetings, work organization via digital tools or media will play an increasingly important role. This trend will certainly also be promoted and demanded by the volunteers themselves – especially the young volunteers – but also by the beneficiaries - i.e., those who make use of voluntary services.

To make volunteering attractive in the future and to inspire people to volunteer, appropriate leadership skills are required for the use of digital instruments, possibilities, methods, and new ideas. This means that those responsible for voluntary organizations must not only undergo personal training to competently use digital tools, methods and applications, but also develop a digitization strategy for their own organization, as digitalization affects various areas of voluntary commitment.

The following report provides an overview of trends that have arisen because of digitization, describes how they affect volunteering and what is important for the coordination of volunteer work.

We have concentrated on the following coordination tasks, where digitization plays or will play a major role:
- Reaching out to and dealing with different groups of volunteers
- Matching volunteers with placement sites
- (Project) Management & work organization within organizations
- New offers and services

2. Impact of volunteering and its necessities and manifestations in voluntary organizations

2.1. Different groups of volunteers

There are different groups of volunteers. Digitalization makes it possible to address them much more precisely, i.e., to better meet their demands, needs and requirements as well as framework conditions. Especially older and younger volunteers differ greatly, so they must be addressed and supported differently.

2.1.1. Engaging young volunteers

Trend and necessities

Young people are already growing up as digital natives and deal with digital tools and structures differently than older people. For them, it goes without saying. This means that they are more likely to be enthusiastic about digital work in voluntary work and they can contribute their contribution to volunteering regardless of time and place. In addition, they are also open to new developments on the digital level, which they can then understand and apply more easily and quickly.

Many studies show that young people are more willing to commit themselves to tasks in the field of climate and environmental protection but also to other socio-political agendas. However, they are far more mobile and less loyalty friendly. they are quick to get involved in certain issues and are very active. They often shy away from long-term commitment, the assumption of permanent tasks or membership in an association.

Digitalization can now help young people to quickly find out where they can get involved. It enables them to get involved online and thus regardless of location. They can also often support organizations very well in the field of public relations, as they move much more confidently in social media and use them in everyday life. They recognize the trends and can usually respond much more flexibly to the rapid changes and use new tools and media.

Practice

In recent years, many engagement platforms and apps have established themselves that enable placement in voluntary work digitally.

In **Austria**, there is a platform that specifically addresses young people and gives them a good overview of where and how they can get involved.
(https://www.wienxtra.at/jugendinfo/infos-von-a-z/freiwilliges-engagement/)

A good example of the involvement of young volunteers in the **Czech Republic** is the initiative MUNI helps https://munipomaha.cz/en. It is a volunteer center of Masaryk University in Brno, which allows young people to choose between helping after a tornado, during a pandemic or Russia's war in Ukraine. In this way, it fulfils the principles and values of the voluntary service abroad of young volunteers at regional level. Es explains to young people in a very practical way why they should get involved, how they can help or where they can get involved. (https://munipomaha.cz/).

In **Germany**, numerous online platforms and apps have emerged in recent years that specialize in volunteering and target younger people. Examples of this are e.g. Aktion Mensch (https://www.aktion-mensch.de/) or NGO Jobs (https://www.ngojobs.eu/freiwillige-gesucht-ehrenamt-in-deutschland/). Weltwärts (www.weltwaerts.e) or Volunteerworld (www.volunteerworld.com) or Zeit Ausland (www.auslandszeit.de) tries to attract young people to international volunteering.

2.1.2. Inclusion (mobility, people with physical disabilities)

Trend and necessities

People with disabilities should also be able to volunteer, be socially integrated and make a socio-political contribution. But their limitations often prevent them from being used in "regular" volunteer sites. Digital tools and devices, but digital engagement opportunities can help overcome these barriers. Thus, technical devices can contribute to the fact that, for example, people with sensory disabilities such as blindness or deafness can volunteer, such as administrative tasks or counselling services. In the case of physical impairments that severely restrict mobility, for example, a digital commitment can make voluntary work possible.

Practice

The **Austrian** organization Jugend eine Welt explicitly addresses people with disabilities as volunteers in international volunteering (www.weltwegweiser.at/inklusion). Lebenshilfe Styria also explicitly offers the possibility of volunteering for people with disabilities (www.lebenshilfe-stmk.at), similar offers the Wiener Hilfswerk (www.cba.fro.at/75684).

2.2. Bringing volunteers together with organizations involving volunteers and volunteering activities

One of the biggest challenges in volunteering is to use volunteers in such a way that they can contribute their skills and meet their interests, but at the same time the places of employment can use the volunteers in such a way that they can fulfill their tasks and services.

2.2.1. Comparison of interests and offers

Trend and necessities

Volunteers have certain skills, experience, and competencies that they can bring to their volunteer work. At the same time, however, they often have concrete ideas about what they want to do, which tasks they want to take on, with which target groups they want to work or in which volunteer area they would like to work. Interests and competencies can also differ. Voluntary organizations, on the other hand, have certain areas of application where they are looking for volunteers with certain competences and skills for certain tasks.
Digital tools and methods can help to consider the interests and needs of both sides.

Practice

As soon as we find concrete examples, they will be added here.

2.2.2. Tests of interests and skills

Trend and necessities

Assigning the tasks of potential volunteers in volunteering is one of the most important onboarding tasks in volunteering. Online aptitude tests are becoming increasingly popular. They consider the interests and abilities of people and match them with the tasks in volunteer work. This ensures that there are no over- or under-demands, but also that motivation in voluntary work remains high.

Online aptitude tests are becoming increasingly popular. These are mostly self-tests, which either survey at a general level and then assign volunteers to those organizations where they have the greatest potential for development, or they are offered by the voluntary organizations, which then assign them to their tasks within the organizations.

On the **Austrian website** testedich.at there is also the personality test: Which volunteer position suits me? Ten questions are asked about personality and then there are suggestions as to which organization is suitable (although many areas are missing, such as the blue light organizations, many young clubs ...). (https://www.testedich.at/persoenlichkeitstests/andere-persoenlichkeitstests/quiz35/1418225926/welches-ehrenamt-passt-zu-mir).

In **the Czech Republic**, there are numerous online platforms that offer such a service. The best known are: https://www.vlnapomoci.cz/; National Platform for Corporate Volunteering: https://www.zapojimse.cz/ and Platform https://munipomaha.cz/chci-pomahat

Volstel from **Germany** is a platform that mediates social commitment for private individuals, NPOs and corporate volunteering activities. The platform sees itself as a social enterprise and is active in Berlin and other cities in Germany. (https://vostel.de/de/).

2.2.3. Recognition for online volunteering

Trend and necessities

But also, the volunteer work itself is a sign of socio-political commitment and is welcomed by employers. Voluntary commitment is therefore also on the radar of personnel developers. If voluntary commitment can be proven in the CV, this will be positively connoted by companies.
In recent years, different competence certificate models have emerged here. For this purpose, the competences acquired in voluntary work are described and are included in the curriculum vitae. Volunteering in on-line sessions as a skill described is a new approach.
The EU's Youth Pass can be cited as a model here. It makes nonnormally and informally acquired competences in youth work visible (www.youthpass.eu).

Practice

The certificate of competence of Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke is currently the most widespread competence assessment model in **Austria** (https://ring.bildungswerke.at/projekte/workshop-kompetenzerfassung-service-learning/).
This is used as a proof of competence model and is also recognized by companies, but also used as a tool to filter out skills and interests.
AHA Plus, also from **Austria**, has developed a recognition system for young people who want to volunteer, considering digital applications (https://www.aha.or.at/plus).
Proof of work in voluntary services in **Germany** can be used for the application documents.
In the voluntary services FSJ and BFD you receive a certificate at the end of the service, and the period of service is partly recognized as practical time during your studies or training.

In **the Czech Republic,** certificates can also be issued for online activities. However, there are currently no explicit services of the online voluntary service. The recognition of online volunteering in the Czech Republic is another unwritten chapter and an opportunity for new national and international projects. We can see new trends in the newly established so-called Regional Volunteer Centers or digital platforms that bring together volunteer experts, where a volunteer expert collects points for his activities in favor of the non-profit sector. (www.umsemumtam.cz).

In **Romania**, there is a model for a volunteer certificate (Voluntpass), which has been developed by the industry, but is not yet widely adopted and widely used. However, more and more award ceremonies and galas for volunteers are being organized at local level (both by NGOs and public authorities), which is a sign that volunteering is seen and gaining more and more value over time.

2.3. Trend Digitalization in Organizations

Digitalization in organizational development is evident in many aspects, it works in communication, in the way we work. It is important that the management level is digitally savvy or can delegate it well and that resources are also available to build up the necessary digital skills.

2.3.1. Digital Leadership

Trend and necessities

Volunteer coordinators face the challenge that the deployment or management of volunteers has changed because of the organization's transition to the digital world.
Entering the online and digital world requires a constantly learning organization and a constantly learning approach to one's professional and personal life.

Practice

In **the Czech Republic**, leading people with the help of digital tools requires new qualities of work, clearly defined goals, and selected tools. Here, SMARTZENA is an important online tool (www.smartzena.cz). In the **Czech Republic**, TechSoup is https://www.techsoup.cz/ dedicated to professionalization and digitization, offering various products, online training, or volunteer expert assignments in the field of digitization of management in the non-profit sector.

2.3.2. Trend: Standardization of processes and use of tools in administration

Trend and necessities

Digitalization accelerates the standardization of recurring processes, which in turn facilitates control. In addition, there are standards that make daily work easier and save resources. This has also led to the increasing use of on-line project management tools or filing tools. The following criteria apply above all: user-friendliness, easily accessible, free of charge, connectable. It is important to find out the best for the organization from the countless number of tools.

Practice

In **Austria**, the Network for Volunteer Coordination relies on the use of checklists for self-evaluation of quality assurance (https://www.freiwillig-engagiert.at/fuer-organisationen/netzwerke

In Germany, the Academy for Volunteering in Germany deals with the targeted selection of helpful tools and also trains the appropriate application (https://www.ehrenamt.de/1662_Digitale_Freiwilligenkoordination.htm). The website Deutsches-Ehrenamt.de offers excellent foundations for volunteering and has its own download center (Our download center | DEUTSCHES EHRENAMT (deutsches-ehrenamt.de).

In the **Czech Republic**, a publication entitled "New approaches to communication and presentation" was produced in 2022 on the initiative of the Ministry of the Interior. This manifests itself in an online environment for the development of education in volunteering - experiences and practice. (Ostrava: ACCENDO, 2022). In addition, the document recommends educational content for employees of volunteer centers, volunteer organizations and volunteer training. The publication and document are being prepared within the framework of the public contract entitled "Ensuring the main results of Project II - Development of volunteering in the Czech Republic", which is carried out within the framework of the project "Concept for the development of volunteering in the Czech Republic with a focus on ensuring the regional and sectoral availability of volunteering in the form of volunteer centers". (https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/rozvoj-dobrovolnictvi.aspx?q=Y2hudW09NA%3d%3d)

In **Romania**, the law on volunteering does not contain specific methodological standards, so there are no references to standardized procedures and requirements for NGOs using volunteers. In this case, each NGO or institution hosting volunteers develops its own procedures and forms - which in turn leads to a wide variety of systems and approaches - some are very bureaucratic and demanding (especially in social services or child protection activities), while others are extremely lax or vague and do not even bother to comply with the minimum legal requirements (such as signing a volunteer contract).

2.3.3. Development of digital skills

Trend and necessities

The trend towards further education and training is increasingly permeating volunteering. The need for further education is constantly increasing. As a result of the Covid pandemic, the trend towards online learning became increasingly visible. The range of online and offline or hybrid training opportunities for volunteers is increasing and is being used.

Practice

In **Romania**, volunteers have been repeatedly offered training by their host organization, usually as an internal training opportunity and to prepare them for their tasks or as a means of recognizing and retaining existing volunteers. However, this is hardly assumed. On the other hand, youth organizations participating in the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programs often offer their volunteers and youth workers numerous training and participation opportunities on a wide range of topics, but not all of them are related to the current tasks of volunteers.

In **Germany**, the Frauenhofer Institute deals with the learning needs in NPOs and has developed the digi HUB NGO there, where learning needs are recorded (https://www.dlpm.iao.fraunhofer.de/de/digitallabor-fuer-non-profit-organisationen.html). This is also where the Volunteer Academy was created, which offers a comprehensive training program for volunteers (https://www.ehrenamt.de/). The volunteer portal of the VHS offers checklists for setting up a learning support system (checklists for setting up a learning support system (vhs-ehrenamtsportal.de).

The Ministry of the **Interior of the Czech Republic** has conducted a variety of online/offline training and courses for volunteer coordinators and volunteers in eleven regions. The results are currently being evaluated and the first results are summarized in the publication: (New approaches in communication and presentation. Online environment for the development of education in volunteering - experiences and practice. Ostrava: ACCENDO, 2022)).

2.3.4. Trends in online communication

Trend and necessities

Digital communication has also found its way into volunteer organizations to stay in touch or to find volunteers for assignments or tasks. This primarily concerns contact, information but also communication with the beneficiaries.

Practice

In **Austria**, the number of online meetings has increased significantly since the Covid19 pandemic. Different tools are used – from WhatsApp meetings to ZOOM calls, especially the user-friendliness as well as the possibility to use these tools free of charge.

2.4. Impact of digital volunteering on beneficiaries

2.4.1. Trend Online Social Forms and Networking

Trend and necessities

In terms of communication in the voluntary sector, there is a strong trend towards the digital world. Research has shown that the mouthpiece is no longer the print media and personal contact, but the channels of social media.

With the support of digital tools, target groups can be reached faster, easier, and more targeted. Also, a larger number of people can be reached with just one click. Invitations to act come through messenger groups, and there are already apps to find volunteers for different activities (depending on the region). However, you should use the right tools for certain age groups, so older people are more likely to be reached via Facebook, younger people via Instagram, Signal or Tik-Tok groups – although this is becoming increasingly mixed. WhatsApp is the only tool that is used across generations according to international studies.

Practice

In 2019, a total of 4.4 million people used social media in Austria. Around 7.2 million people in Austria now regularly use social media to exchange ideas with friends and stay in touch with family and friends – social interaction is increasingly taking place online or via digital media. Communication has led to a change in society through the Internet. Currently, 3.9 million users use the Instagram platform. (statista.com or artworx.at/social-meida-in-oesterreich-2020#)

Almost half of all **Austrians** are involved in an association. With 5.42 million active users (statistics 2022, June 2022), Facebook is the most popular social network in Austria (market share of over 80 percent). So, it makes sense to be visible in the digital world and on social media to be found. One challenge is to find the right channels for everyone.

Half of all **Germans** use social media weekly. 94% of the population in Germany aged 14 are online. With 18 million active users, Instagram is the most popular social network in Germany. So, it makes sense to be visible in the digital world and social media to be found. One challenge is to find the right channels for everyone, because young people are more likely to use Instagram and TikTok these days, while the older population is more likely to use Facebook. In Germany, a study also shows that children and young people use mobile technologies intensively to maintain and expand social contacts. Social networks like Facebook and messaging services like WhatsApp serve as important channels for communicating with friends from school and beyond.

In **Germany**, the networking platforms Xing and LinkedIn are the most popular. During the government-mandated lockdown during the Covid19 pandemic, online networking replaced face-to-face networking such as after-work parties or job fairs. According to a German

survey, 32 percent of jobs in Germany are gained through personal contacts and networking, in small companies it is even more: 47 percent.

In the **Technical Republic,** we can observe the changing trends in the online connection of people. Young people like changes and new tools that they try out, share knowledge, and expand their digital skills very quickly. The future lies in connecting online and offline environments. People will want to experience stronger emotions; they will want to feel dynamism and movement in volunteering. According to the latest available data relating to 2020, Czechs are slightly below the European Union average when it comes to using messengers. Among 16- to 74-year-olds, the proportion was 68%. 66% of Czechs of the same age used Messenger.

Social networks are used by 4.938 million people over the age of 16 in the Czech Republic. This is according to data from the Czech Statistical Office (ČSÚ), which it published on Tuesday. This corresponds to 56.3% of the population in this age group. Of those who have used the internet in the last three months, 68% of those over the age of 16 use social networks. Compared to 2020, the number of users of social networks has increased by 2.5 percentage points (in 2020 it was 53.8%).

Of the 16+ group studied, most people in the 16-24 age category use social networks. 95% of them are represented on at least one social network. With increasing age, the proportion of users of social networks decreases. For example, the figure is 60% in the 45-54 age group and 11% in the 65+ group.

These are usually people with a college degree or people with a high school diploma. By profession, students and housewives are most represented on social networks. Social networks are used slightly more by women (58%) than by men (54.4%) - in both cases it is also the population aged 16 and over.

The 2021 data from the Czech **Republic** also shows that 78% of the Czech population aged 16 and overuse email for private purposes. Residents of Prague (85%) use email the most. In contrast, very few people in the Ústí region use an e-mail inbox, namely 70%.

In 2021, 68% of the Czech population over the age of 16 used messages via messengers (e.g., FB Messenger, WhatsApp, or Viber). In the youngest age group of 16–24-year-olds, almost everyone (97%) sends messages via chat, 99% of students. They also very often use housewives, 96% of whom send messages over the Internet. So far, 22% of seniors send messages via the Internet.

According to the latest available data relating to the year 2020, Czechs are slightly below the European Union average when it comes to using messengers. Among 16- to 74-year-olds, the proportion was 68%. 66% of Czechs of the same age used Messenger.

A 2019 Eurobarometer survey for **Romania** shows that the use of social networks in Romania is above the European average, which was 54% in 2019 – at that time, 60% of Romanians aged 16 to 74 used social networks, with 85% of social media participants in the 16-24 age group.

The clear winner is Facebook with over 12 million Romanian users in 2022, closely followed by YouTube. However, the surprise of recent years has been Tik Tok, which has become the third most used social network in Romania and has gained more users than Instagram since the end of 2020 with 5.36 million users. This is clearly the fastest growing social media and a trend that is gradually developing a potential interest even in the world of non-governmental

organizations and represents a great opportunity for youth and educational messages. The user profile clearly shows that these are young people under the age of 35, who make up 86.63% of all users. Compared to Instagram, in real numbers, we see a difference of 1 million more young people who were present on Tik Tok than on Instagram (as of December 2020).

For **Romania**, we don't have any data to show that the upcoming trend towards more online interaction is the direct cause of more volunteering. People who feel comfortable in the online world can more easily adapt to new forms of engagement and participation, but this trend could exclude a large portion of potential volunteers from recruitment campaigns because they haven't had a chance to get to know organizations, even before the pandemic began. Therefore, there is a great need for traditional volunteering programs, grassroots work, and presence in the community, which, together with the online networking and volunteering opportunities, can fill the gaps.

In **Romania**, online communication with volunteers was already quite popular before the pandemic, as most volunteers (estimated at over 75%) are young people. During the pandemic, the big challenge and change was to extend online communication to other audiences who were unfamiliar with using online channels. Today, it is common to organize meetings, consultations, and team meetings in the form of online calls, which are usually preferred for their speed and practicality. This opens an important opportunity for mixed teams across cities or countries. However, it should be noted that the phenomenon of online fatigue is also on the rise among young people.

2.4.2. Online Volunteering

Trend and necessities

In online volunteering, the respective activity is carried out wholly or partly via digital tools. Tasks such as information procurement and dissemination, networking, the creation of marketing documents, consulting services but also the organization of activities can be carried out digitally.

According to a trend study, the willingness to volunteer on the rise (https://www.presseportal.de/pm/158435/5009636; https://www.share-austria.at/fileadmin/user_upload/papers/SHARE_Report_10_2018_Digitale_Kompetenz_online.pdf). 60% of respondents can imagine contributing from the sofa at home.
The corona crisis has also changed the working day of many digital workers. Moving to the home office saved an average of 35 minutes. The representative survey has shown that compatibility with work/studies and more flexibility are important prerequisites for volunteering. Even though most respondents (86 percent) said they think volunteering is very important, 64 percent said they are not currently volunteering. As a reason, 62 percent give the time factor.

With digital engagement, volunteers can do good from the comfort of their sofas: they can support NGOs and non-profit organizations, for example, with IT issues, design tasks or the conception of social media strategies, with translation services or the moderation of workshops. This form of commitment eliminates the time problem associated with classic on-site work and makes it easier to reconcile work, family, and leisure time with volunteering. This is another reason why the clear majority (64 percent) prefer digital engagement over volunteering on site (24 percent).

Practice

In **Romania**, this was not presented as an opportunity for volunteers, but rather as an impact and change to deal with – that people who had previously volunteered were now finding ways to deliver their service online, without contact with the beneficiaries – what for a large number of volunteers engaged in social/artistic/educational/support activities, which depended on direct human contact, was not easy to cope with. The organizations can still use this lever as an opportunity to attract volunteers who find working from home a great advantage that allows them to contribute to a cause even when they're not around.
In **Germany**, the blog govolunteer is committed to digital volunteering (What is digital volunteering? (govolunteer.com) .

2.4.3. International cooperation

The shift of workspaces into the digital world has removed "boundaries". People from other regions (even cross-border) can now work in other areas.
Cross-border online collaboration in the field of volunteering has clearly increased - many organizations needed a connection to European or international partners to support each other, to learn, to have a room for debriefing, but also to carry out their activities and learn from each other. International cooperation flourished and was the source of many exchange opportunities that were made possible or even improved by transferring to the online world, with lower costs and more opportunities to reach more diverse people. The counter-effect was the abundance of opportunities and the need for self-discipline to take advantage of all available opportunities while managing the daily life of the organization or responding to new crises and emerging needs of beneficiaries.

International digital cooperation enables learning from each other, exchange, and reflection, but also the formation of sub-research teams.

The need is reflected in the increase in applications for European funding in all European Member States.

2.4.4. Further development of service offerings

Trend and necessities

Digitalization has also led to the emergence of new services and offers for their target groups. They bring relief in different ways: on the one hand, they simplify communication or accessibility with certain target groups, they relieve volunteers in their work with the target groups. This offers opportunities for volunteers and target groups.

The assignment of volunteers to persons who use benefits or services is also not easy to manage. Here, digital apps do a great job through matching platforms, even if the results should still be checked.

Practice

Be my eyes connects blind and visually impaired people with sighted people through a video call. In this way, visual assistance can be offered quickly and easily. (www.bemyeyes.com/).
Youvo is an engagement platform for creatives. The commitment can be decentralized without physical contact. Whether flyers, websites, brands or the entire corporate presence: Through Youvo, creatives can get involved in charitable causes and find charitable support (www.youvo.org)

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) program offers opportunities to carry out various activities online, such as online courses for students in rural areas in developing countries or translation activities. (www.onlinevolunteering.org/en)
No Isolation – a pilot project of Caritas Vienna, which aims to help reduce the loneliness of people cared for as part of "care at home". Volunteers communicate with them via digital devices via video call, send photos and messages, etc. In addition, the volunteers agree to visit the supervised person at home once a month.

Schleswig-Holstein in Germany has made a list of helpful tools that can be integrated into new services with a volunteer website (https://engagiert-in-sh.de/digitales/).

There are no studies or monitoring sites for Romania, but based on observations, it can be concluded that organizations rely heavily on online communication. With the acceleration of digital communications and the pressure to move most of their activities online, NGOs have also been forced to reinvent their advertising and communication mechanisms to attract and retain the interest of their target groups or stakeholders. Digital storytelling has gained momentum, visual, funny, and fancy messages have clearly become the new norm, infographics and mixed images with symbols and small texts are the new trend - used not only in promoting the work of organizations, but also in choosing their services to new audiences. There are numerous online training and courses, online support, mentoring (for students or young people in difficult life situations) and even health and sports activities that remain online even after the restrictions are lifted because they can reach a larger audience.

2.4.5. New forms of volunteering

Trend and necessities

As a result of digitalization, new participation formats such as micro-engagement, crowdsourcing and crowdfunding have emerged. Digitally engaged volunteers are more likely to be committed to a specific cause than to a specific organization, so volunteer organizations need to rethink how they engage their members. Organizations must learn to think beyond their boundaries and prioritize the skills, resources, and needs of volunteers.

Practice

During the period of forced isolation in the **Czech Republic**, many realized how easy it is to get in touch with a person in another country - thanks to communication technologies, especially the Internet. In this situation, the idea of an international hackathon was born, which should not only help the non-profit sector, but also the economy.
The organizing team, which includes volunteers from the ranks of experts in marketing communication, financial management and project management, joins forces and offers its help to selected projects or ideas for innovation of specific industries.

There are no specific studies dealing with **Romanian volunteering**, but the analysis of the messages disseminated by the most visible and active volunteer organizations can point to some new formats of volunteering - in particular, adapted models of personal activities that

can be transferred to the virtual world. As the pandemic and the Ukrainian refugee crisis highlighted clear needs and shortcomings in the way authorities can respond to crises, a massive mobilization of citizens for fundraising, supporting vulnerable or isolated people, gathering materials and resources, creating IT solutions and data management systems that can support crisis response, watch.

2.4.6. Access to online information

Trend and necessities

Print media are rapidly losing importance. In turn, online information becomes the determining factor for information. This also has an impact on volunteering. Without an online presence, you are hardly noticed, you cannot spread current information.

Practice

In **Germany**, the use of traditional print media has been declining for years. This is particularly noticeable among the younger generation. This group now informs itself mainly online or partly via social networks. Google is mainly used for rapid information retrieval. In second place, YouTube videos are watched to learn about a topic. Wikipedia is used by 1/3 of all young people several times a week for research. Nevertheless, for most young people, traditional media come first when it comes to trustworthiness.

Although we live in an age where many people have much more access to information and opportunities, in **Romania** this access is still highly fragmented, depending on the social and economic development of the area and the general interest and willingness of people to use the information offered. At the same time, there is a huge gap between the programs that promote access to information, the way it is structured, communicated, and formulated, and the real needs of the people who need diverse and decoded information most. To simplify messages, procedures, and requests from different citizens, Code4Romania has developed a number of very important, user-friendly digital solutions for a variety of topics – from information about Covid to election data, donation support mechanisms or information needed by refugees. Interestingly, Code4Romania involved more than 2700 volunteers who are professionals in their fields of work, and there is a unique process of digital volunteering that has a huge impact on the country.

Traditional media in the **Czech Republic** are among the most vulnerable in Europe. According to an international survey, the level of threat to their viability was 85% last year, up from 36% the previous year. The average for all countries surveyed is 69%.
Overall, the share of internet users in the **Czech Republic** increased to 83% in 2021. This corresponds to 7.25 million people over the age of 16. Of this group, 98% stated that they use the Internet regularly, i.e., at least once a week. 90% of Internet users access the Internet daily or almost daily. Most of these are people with higher education or people with

secondary education and baccalaureate. By profession, students and housewives are most represented on social networks. Women use social networks slightly more often (58%) than men (54.4%) (source: Czech Statistical Office).

3. Positive and negative effects of digitization

Digitalization creates positive and negative effects on volunteering. The pressure to adapt forces volunteer organizations to be state-of-the-art with their digital tools.

Overall, it can be said that digitization also has enormous potential for volunteer organizations. This is seen on several levels:

- Organization level
- Level of work with volunteers
- Level of services offered by voluntary organizations

However, this also means that a voluntary organization cannot escape digitization if it does not want to be seen as dusty and old-fashioned. However, many volunteers see the added value of volunteering in direct communication with other people - in social exchange. A good balance between digitization and social interaction must be found here.

However, digitalization also promotes intergenerational learning. Younger people are, so to speak, digital natives and can pass on their knowledge and experience well to the older generation. Older people, on the other hand, can pass on their experience and knowledge in direct communication to younger people.

Overall, digitization shows that there can be an increase in efficiency if digital tools and methods are used carefully, but it also increases the pressure to act like a company operating on the market. Processes, decisions, actions become faster and the pressure to act quickly increases. But there is also a pressure to professionalize, the funding agencies expect professional applications, professional project management and billing. Here, too, the pressure is increasingly increasing, and expectations are rising. The question is: is that what you want? And how can you escape it? The answers are not easy – if you swim with the flow of time, there is a danger that you can no longer offer exactly what volunteer work stands for – for social togetherness, for community living. If you oppose this, however, it can also happen that you are no longer perceived as up to date. What recommendations can there be? You should act like companies and first and foremost look closely at the values of the company and the expectations of customers (and these are not only those we work for, but also those with whom we operate) and act accordingly. Furthermore, you can outsource those tasks that you do not want or cannot perform as an NGO – these can be digitized administration services or communication tools.

Another effect of digitization – but this affects not only volunteer organizations but all of us – is the flood of information with which we are struggling. Choosing what is important information and what is less important or superfluous information is not so easy. This is a classic management task – digital skills to deal with it well, to be able to select and classify information well is indispensable. The processing and documentation of information can tie up many resources. Therefore, the development of an information strategy is recommended. This refers to a process of how information is handled, how it finds its way into the organization's communication, how it is documented.

However, digitalization is also changing the way services are offered. New digital tools make it easier to work, speed up interaction or reaction, or reach a much larger target group. Another effect - if digital tools are used carefully - is that time can also be gained for human interaction.

Digitalization is therefore not just a blessing or a curse, but there are many gradations in between. The determining factor here is the human being, who has the power to decide on the type and use of digital instruments.