



# **The Role of Municipalities in Supporting and Promoting Inclusion of People with Disabilities through Volunteering**



**Volunteering Equality  
Rights Action  
VERA 2024**



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# Introduction

In the context of a four-year framework agreement grant under the European Union's "Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values" fund (CERV) – "VERA 2024" (Volunteering, Equality, Rights and Action 2024), the Centre for European Volunteering (CEV) has created this publication: "The Role of Municipalities in Supporting and Promoting Inclusion of People Living with Disabilities through Volunteering." This publication **contains examples from 12 different municipalities, candidates, and winners of the European Volunteering Capital Competition.**

This publication **aims to shed light on the policies and programmes** of the participating municipalities, showcasing their **distinctive approaches and practices to foster inclusion through volunteering.** Municipalities play a crucial role in supporting and promoting the inclusion of people living with disabilities, serving as the primary point of contact between citizens and public services in their local communities. This publication's varied projects and initiatives contribute to "Collaborative Communities" an open and proactive approach to cross-sector cooperation for societal change. By fostering inclusive volunteering opportunities, municipalities enhance social inclusion, improve community cohesion, and empower people with disabilities to more actively contribute to society. From grassroots campaigns and awareness-raising initiatives to skills development programmes for volunteers, the following examples highlight the importance of local collaboration and a cross-sectoral approach to the engagement of volunteers in driving positive change.

These goals align with the **European Union's Disability Strategy**, which emphasises key principles such as accessibility, participation, equality, and non-discrimination. This strategy aims to create a barrier-free Europe for persons with disabilities, facilitating their full and equal participation in all aspects of life. On a global scale, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) provides a comprehensive framework for the rights of persons with disabilities. Key articles include: participation in decision-making (Article 4.3), awareness-raising (Article 8), accessibility (Article 9), living independently and being included in the community (Article 19), education (Article 24), health (Article 25), work and employment (Article 27), participation in political and public life (Article 29), and participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure, and sport (Article 30).

This International Convention **sets the standard for national and local governments**, including municipalities, **to promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities.** Municipalities can significantly contribute to realising these global, regional, and local commitments through dedicated and inclusive volunteering initiatives. By highlighting their achievements, CEV seeks to inspire and encourage other municipalities and organisations to adopt similar strategies across Europe.

# Participating Municipalities

## EV Capitals:

**AARHUS**  
**2018**



AARHUS  
KOMMUNE



European  
Volunteering  
Capital  
2018  
Aarhus

**GDAŃSK**  
**2022**



GDAŃSK



Gdańsk  
2022  
European  
Volunteering  
Capital

**TRONDHEIM**  
**2023**



TRONDHEIM  
KOMMUNE



Trondheim  
2023  
European  
Volunteering  
Capital

**TRENTO**  
**2024**



COMUNE DI TRENTO



Trento  
2024  
European  
Volunteering  
Capital

**MECHELEN**  
**2025**



MECHELEN



Mechelen  
2025  
European  
Volunteering  
Capital

## EV Capital Candidates:

**CASCAIS**  
**2015 & 2019**



CASCAIS  
Tudo começa nas pessoas



European  
Volunteering  
Capital  
2015

European  
Volunteering  
Capital  
2019

**EDINBURGH**  
**2016**



• EDINBURGH •  
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL



European  
Volunteering  
Capital  
2016  
2017

**AUGSBURG**  
**2019**



Stadt  
Augsburg



European  
Volunteering  
Capital  
2019

**AVILÉS**  
**2025**



AYUNTAMIENTO



Avilés  
candidate 2025  
European  
Volunteering  
Capital

**SALAMANCA**  
**2025**



Ayuntamiento  
de Salamanca



Salamanca  
candidate 2025  
European  
Volunteering  
Capital

**MAIA**  
**2026**



Maia  
candidate 2026



European  
Volunteering  
Capital

**RZESZÓW**  
**2026**



Rzeszów  
candidate 2026



European  
Volunteering  
Capital

# Accessible and Inclusive Volunteer Opportunities

Municipalities play a critical role in ensuring that volunteer opportunities are accessible, inclusive, and free from discrimination for people living with disabilities. This aligns with Article 5 of the CRPD, which emphasises equality and non-discrimination, and the EU Disability Strategy 2021-2030, which highlights the importance of removing barriers to participation and ensuring equal opportunities for all.



*Avilés*

## AARHUS

Inclusive volunteer opportunities are promoted through the Citizen Guides program. This initiative offers training and resources to volunteers, **supporting individuals with disabilities in achieving greater independence and active participation** in community activities. By tailoring its approach to each volunteer's unique needs and capabilities, a supportive and inclusive environment is created and fostered for all participants.

## AUGSBURG

Professional volunteer coordination and advice is provided to interested parties and non-profit organisations. The municipality cooperates with individuals affected by disabilities, who act as experts in their respective fields. This **collaborative approach ensures that volunteer opportunities are designed to be inclusive and free from discrimination.**

## AVILÉS

Close collaboration with local volunteer organisations ensures that volunteer opportunities are accessible and inclusive. The Municipal Volunteer Office works diligently to provide **participation opportunities for everyone, without exception**, ensuring that all volunteer events are inclusive and discrimination-free.

## CASCAIS

The municipality **acknowledges that not all volunteer opportunities are inclusive and is working to improve this.** Through consultancy and awareness-raising activities, including creating a video on inclusive volunteering, Cascais is making strides towards ensuring all volunteer opportunities are accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities.

## EDINBURGH

The municipality supports Volunteer Edinburgh, which offers **tailored services and ongoing training and resources for organisations to offer and maintain inclusive volunteer roles.** This ensures that opportunities are free from discrimination and open to all, regardless of abilities.

## GDAŃSK

Accessibility principles for people with special needs are embraced as a mandatory requirement for non-governmental organisations' projects to receive city funding. The cooperation between the city and NGOs is rooted in the principle of subsidiarity, which empowers these organisations to implement various tasks. **NGOs are vital in ensuring volunteer opportunities are inclusive and free from discrimination**, actively monitoring these standards. Examples include engaging volunteers with disabilities in city events and European volunteering programmes, including those with intellectual disabilities, to promote a diverse and inclusive community.

## MAIA

The municipality participated in the launch of the **Guide "Supported Volunteer Methodology: People with Disabilities as Agents of Change"** by Pista Mágica. This guide promotes strategies for protected, supported, and inclusive volunteering. Maia aims to ensure that volunteers with disabilities can participate in activities suited to their capabilities and aspirations. When full autonomy is not possible, the municipality collaborates with volunteering coordinators to adapt conditions, including physical adaptations and communication adjustments, to support the volunteer's needs.

## MECHELEN

A robust anti-discrimination policy that extends to people with disabilities ensures that the volunteering policy **focuses on talents rather than disabilities, promoting inclusivity.**

Volunteer fairs are advertised using diverse imagery to show that anyone can volunteer. These fairs are fully accessible, including a low-stimulus zone for those who need it, ensuring that volunteer opportunities are inclusive and welcoming to all.

## RZESZÓW

Great importance is placed on educating office employees and residents, as well as potential or active volunteers, regarding accessibility, addressing potential discrimination, overcoming stereotypes, and conduct/attitude towards people with disabilities. The Municipality also **ensures volunteering availability for people with disabilities by adapting volunteer workplaces to their needs.** Specialised trainings are organised for volunteer coordinators to understand and consider the diverse needs of people with disabilities. Moreover, integration initiatives involving people without and with disabilities to build a community free from discrimination are actively promoted.

## SALAMANCA

Tailored training on basic aspects of volunteering for people with disabilities, similar to training provided to the general population is provided to NGOs. **The municipality encourages volunteering organisations to adapt their activities to be inclusive.**

Collaboration with other municipal services and volunteer organisations helps ensure that technical staff and volunteers are trained to avoid discrimination and facilitate the integration of people with disabilities into volunteer roles.

## TRENTO

Organisations operating in the disability sector ensure that volunteers are engaged in safe, non-dangerous activities, focusing on inclusive experiences such as art, sports, culture, training, theatre, mobility, and meals. The **quality of volunteer engagement is upheld through the supervision of professional social workers** who oversee these activities and intervene when necessary. This oversight guarantees the quality of interactions and ensures the well-being of both volunteers and individuals with disabilities, thereby making all volunteer opportunities inclusive and supportive.

## TRONDHEIM

All planning is based on universal design principles. For **volunteer organisations operating in older buildings, the municipality offers guidance, funds for necessary adjustments,** and assistance with communication strategies. This support helps ensure that volunteer opportunities are accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities.



Cascais

# Special Initiatives and Policies

Municipalities play a crucial role in promoting and supporting inclusion within the community, including through volunteering. By adopting specific policies, programmes, and regulations, they demonstrate a strong commitment to empowering individuals with disabilities, aiming to create a more inclusive society in line with Articles 9 and 27 of the CRPD, which highlight the need for inclusive volunteer opportunities.



*Augsburg*



## AARHUS

The **Citizen Guides** project, supports younger adults with disabilities in achieving their life goals through peer mentoring. The Citizen Guides, who have first-hand experience with disabilities, assist others in similar circumstances, providing practical and emotional support helping many individuals with disabilities gain greater independence and confidence. By fostering these connections, Aarhus actively promotes a community where people with disabilities can thrive and participate fully.

## AUGSBURG

Collaboration with the Augsburg Volunteer Centre enables various measures promoting accessibility including the **city map for accessibility**, created by “barrier checkers” who assess public places for accessibility features. This project involves volunteers with diverse disabilities who provide detailed information on accessibility, contributing to a more inclusive city environment. These efforts highlight the importance of community involvement in promoting accessibility.

## AVILÉS

The **2030 Urban Agenda and the Strategic Social Promotion Plan** underline the importance of inclusive practices, such as promoting inclusive sports volunteering and encouraging community participation to foster autonomy and socialisation. These measures aim to build an inclusive and cohesive city, guaranteeing social rights and protection for people with disabilities.



Rzeszów

## CASCAIS

The **Individual Community Inclusion Project** (PIIC me) through the Department for Social Inclusion, guides young people with disabilities through the transition to adult life. This project offers five tailored options, including inclusive volunteering, to ensure social inclusion. The municipality facilitates volunteer opportunities for individuals with disabilities, mediating their integration with host institutions and enhancing the quality of inclusive volunteering through expert consultancy. This comprehensive approach supports the social inclusion of all its residents.

## EDINBURGH

The volunteering strategy created in 2006 is regularly updated to align with city priorities. The inclusion of people with disabilities in volunteering is facilitated by funding given to “Volunteer Edinburgh” that enables tailored support delivered through welcoming shopfront premises, word-of-mouth recommendations, bespoke publicity, and robust referral routes via health services and Job Centres. **Technology and the impactful role of volunteer ambassadors**—people with disabilities who share their transformative experiences—have been vital in these efforts.

## GDAŃSK

Supports and encourages the full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of social life. In line with national obligations, working to eliminate barriers and ensure that events and services are accessible to all, both physically and digitally. The **Special Action Programme** for people with disabilities emphasises Volunteering as a critical area for individual development and social inclusion.

## MAIA

Comprehensive training for volunteers and organisations encourages adaptations to create an enabling environment for people with disabilities. In addition, the **Legal Regulation of the Municipal Volunteer Centre** outlines the rights of all volunteers, including those with disabilities. Personalised recruitment processes and in-person interviews ensure that volunteers with disabilities are matched with suitable opportunities, promoting their integration and empowerment through volunteering.

## MECHELEN

A **voluntary advisory council** for people with disabilities, ensures their continuous participation in community activities. The council organises adapted activities, supports other organisations with funding, and provides a platform for individuals with disabilities to voice their opinions. A network of citizens with disabilities, serving as experienced experts, also improves the city's accessibility together with a mechanism for receiving individual complaints.

## RZESZÓW

Collaboration with NGOs to enhance volunteering opportunities provides robust support for volunteers engaging with people with disabilities through comprehensive training, consulting, and assistance in organizing volunteer activities. **Social and cultural projects accessible to people with disabilities** are also promoted, highlighting volunteering as a powerful form of active support and community engagement.



Salamanca

## SALAMANCA

The Volunteering Agency and the city collaborate with organisations supporting people with disabilities, providing **essential volunteer training, and adapting educational materials**. The agency also offers services for volunteers with disabilities, fostering their active engagement in community activities. These inclusive programmes ensure that individuals with disabilities can participate fully in volunteering, promoting a diverse and welcoming community.

## TRONDHEIM

Considerations for people with disabilities are included in all plans and measures, adhering to the principle that what is necessary for some benefits everyone. With a focus on universal design, the city ensures that **all community planning and execution are inclusive**. Although the responsibility for inclusion primarily lies with the public sector, this comprehensive approach reflects a strong commitment to accessibility and participation for all citizens.

## TRENTO

Collaboration with "La Rete" social cooperative, an organisation that involves almost exclusively volunteers in activities designed to support individuals with disabilities and their families has been ongoing since 1988. Collaboration with several other key organisations, including: Anffas Trentino, Laboratorio Sociale, Estuario, CS4, Agsat, and Impronte, all of which integrate volunteers into their inclusive social programmes such as socio-occupational pathways, independent and inclusive living, and cultural, recreational, and sporting events. The **"Working Group for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities,"** with 15 NGOs collaborate on disability-related matters in an open and participatory manner, encouraging the involvement of users, family members, and citizen volunteers.

# Resources

Municipalities demonstrate their commitment to fostering inclusive communities by providing essential financial support, technical support, and training resources to local volunteer organisations. This aligns with the EU Disability Strategy 2021-2030 and the CRPD, which emphasise the need for adequate funding to implement policies promoting inclusion and accessibility.



*Rzeszów*

## AUGSBURG

In partnership with the umbrella organisation lagfa-bayern, financial and informational support is provided to volunteer organisations. **Specialist information and networking opportunities** with relevant partners are also offered, ensuring that organisations working towards disability inclusion receive comprehensive support.

## AVILÉS

Volunteer entities are supported with financial, technical, and training resources and provided with free spaces for their activities. The "**Citizen Contribution to Municipal Budgets**" (**participatory budgeting**) initiative allows citizens and associations to present proposals for municipal funding. Many approved proposals focus on improving city accessibility. This approach ensures that volunteer organisations, particularly those focused on disability inclusion, receive the necessary support to thrive.

## CASCAIS

Offers **technical support and monitoring** to volunteer organisations through professionals from the Volunteering and Social Inclusion Departments. If needed, the municipality covers the cost of mandatory insurance for volunteers. This support structure ensures that organisations can effectively include people with disabilities in their volunteer programmes, enhancing social inclusion.



Avilés

## EDINBURGH

Local volunteer organisations are supported by funding to Volunteer Edinburgh, enabling them to **maintain strong relationships with over 1,400 organisations**, from large charities to small community groups. The municipality provides information, training, and support to ensure quality volunteer roles and has also resourced volunteer emergency response initiatives in recent years.

## GDAŃSK

The annual **Programme of Cooperation with CSOs** outlines the priorities for co-financed activities, with significant funding allocated each year to the Gdańsk Volunteer Center. This funding ensures that people with disabilities can volunteer on equal terms with other residents. Additionally, grants are provided to civil society organisations to train and prepare volunteers, including those with disabilities. The city's dedication to inclusive volunteering is highlighted by the annual allocation of approximately 250,000 euros to support these initiatives.

## MAIA

Public benefit grants are provided to support the needs of organisations engaging with people with disabilities. These **grants co-finance costs for various organisations**, including the Portuguese Association of Parents and Friends of Mentally Disabled Citizens and the Salvador Association. These organisations are encouraged to involve their users in volunteering activities suitable to their capabilities. The annual municipality budget supports activities that enhance community spirit and promote volunteer projects for all residents, ensuring inclusive participation.

## MECHELEN

The **Advisory Council for people with disabilities** provides annual monetary funding for projects that promote accessibility and integration. Organisations can apply for grants of up to 600 euros. Additionally, Mechelen's volunteer centre offers training for organisations on engaging volunteers by focusing on their talents rather than their disabilities, fostering a more inclusive volunteer environment.

## RZESZÓW

The **Phoenix International Integration Centre**, a fully accessible facility that serves as a hub for organisations focused on social inclusion, is available free of charge. The Municipal Senior Centre enhances this effort by promoting volunteering among adults, while the Social Integration Centre's vocational and social activation programmes engage volunteers and help integrate people with disabilities into the local community. Strong financial support is also offered to NGOs dedicated to disability inclusion, **co-financing key projects through the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of Disabled People** and promoting volunteering at cultural, sports, and social events.

## SALAMANCA

The **Municipal Volunteering Agency** was established in 2013 to support all volunteer entities, focusing on organisations working with disabilities. This agency acts as a central resource, providing necessary support to bring volunteering closer to the disability community and promoting inclusive volunteer practices across the municipality.

## TRENTO

Targeted support is provided to specific organisations that primarily operate with volunteers. This support is facilitated through financial contributions and services management via public advisories issued and requested by the municipal administration. While this focused support is significant, Trento also extends its **cultural orientation** towards volunteering across all funded organisations, ensuring they involve volunteers in their operations. This inclusive approach underscores the commitment to **fostering a volunteer culture that supports people with disabilities**, aligning with broader municipal efforts to promote accessibility and social inclusion.

## TRONDHEIM

Close collaboration with representatives from disability groups together with offering specific grants to remove obstacles and running a central lending service for helpful equipment is central to the strategy. 14 volunteer centres are supported to organise inclusive events, such as the annual "generation games." Funding and assistance are provided to ensure accessibility, including **sign language interpretation at significant events**. Volunteer organisations are also supported to ensure that people with disabilities can participate as volunteers in large events, such as the upcoming World Cup Nordic skiing in February 2025.



*Salamanca*

# Local Alliances

Municipalities often collaborate with local organisations and advocacy groups to promote volunteering as a means to enhance the inclusion of people living with disabilities. This collaboration aligns with Article 29 of the CRPD, which emphasises the right of persons with disabilities to participate in political and public life, and the EU Disability Strategy 2021-2030, which highlights the importance of partnership and active involvement of civil society in fostering inclusive communities.



*Aarhus*

## AUGSBURG

Actively collaborates with various committees and organisations, including the **Advisory Board for the Disabled and the Inclusion Office**. These partnerships, alongside initiatives with entities like Aktion Mensch, a German lottery funding activities around inclusion, and the Augsburg Volunteer Centre, ensure a cohesive effort in promoting inclusive volunteering and addressing the needs of people with disabilities.

## AVILÉS

Structures such as the Social Welfare Council, Barrier Elimination Council, and Local Volunteering Board have been established. These bodies include numerous **entities advocating for the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities, leveraging their experience and knowledge** to shape municipal inclusion policies. This collaboration ensures that local entities participate in designing and implementing inclusive volunteering initiatives.

## CASCAIS

Collaborates by providing technical support to organisations and organising awareness-raising activities. It promotes the Volunteering Festival, which includes the **Volunteering Market where organisations showcase their projects, including those focused on inclusive volunteering**. This event fosters community engagement and highlights the importance of including people with disabilities in volunteer activities.



Salamanca

## EDINBURGH

The municipality actively collaborates with local organisations like Volunteer Edinburgh to promote volunteering as a means to enhance the inclusion of people living with disabilities. The municipality enables these organisations to **provide tailored volunteer opportunities through funding and support**, build strong relationships with over 1,400 other groups, and offer training and resources. These efforts help ensure that people with disabilities are included and valued in the community's volunteer initiatives.

## GDAŃSK

Neighbourhood Houses and Clubs, which are essential venues for involving people with disabilities in local activities are co-financed. These **neighbourhood houses and clubs, managed by residents and NGOs, ensure equal opportunities for people with disabilities** to participate and initiate activities. Many initiatives engaging people with disabilities are undertaken in these spaces, promoting their inclusion in community life.

## MAIA

The Municipal Council for Citizens with Disabilities includes representatives from the city council, municipal assembly, parish councils, and various disability advocacy groups. It promotes socially useful activities to develop relational, personal, and professional skills and facilitates the **transition of people with disabilities to regular employment when possible**. The municipality's long-standing partnership with Pista Mágica and participation in national training initiatives also supports inclusive volunteering efforts.

## MECHELEN

Collaboration with organisations for people with disabilities during the annual volunteer fair encourages other organisations to be inclusive. The volunteer centre **advises volunteer candidates with disabilities and organises a learning network focused on inclusivity**. It provides guidance and follow-up support to organisations striving to be more inclusive.

## RZESZÓW

The Social Policy Department of the Rzeszów City Hall holds monthly meetings with non-governmental organisations where NGO representatives can promote their activities, submit their ideas and expectations, and thus initiate volunteering and networking activities in the third sector. The **Mayor has appointed an Ombudsman for People with Disabilities** - an accessibility coordinator who promotes and disseminates attitudes oriented towards support and help for people with disabilities, participates in meetings of organisations acting for the benefit of people with disabilities and their surroundings.

## SALAMANCA

Various entities are directly and constantly contacted to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in volunteering. The Municipal Volunteering Agency and other municipal resources facilitate this objective. Training organisations and technicians is crucial for implementing truly inclusive programmes and projects. **Promoting dialogue between organisations** engaging proactively with people with disabilities and those aiming to make their volunteer programmes more inclusive **is an essential strategy**.

## TRENTO

Collaboration with local organisations and advocacy groups with a durable approach via the "Working Group for the Inclusion of People to with Disabilities" is fostered by **providing operational support through financing specific organisations dedicated to promoting and involving volunteers in the disability sector**. This dual approach ensures that inclusive volunteering is both strategically planned and effectively implemented within the community.

## TRONDHEIM

Actively shapes roles and tasks for the World Cup 2025 Nordic skiing event to ensure that volunteers with disabilities can contribute meaningfully. The municipality collaborates with advocacy groups to test accessibility features like stairs, pavements, and buildings, **ensuring that all aspects of public life are inclusive**.



Augsburg



# Cross-Sector Collaborations

Municipalities collaborate with various stakeholders, CSOs, and institutions to organise volunteering projects that raise awareness and promote the inclusion of people with disabilities. These collaborative efforts are guided by the principle "Nothing about us without us," ensuring that individuals with disabilities are actively involved in decision-making. This approach aligns with Article 8 of the CRPD, which emphasises awareness-raising, and the EU Disability Strategy 2021-2030, which highlights the importance of cooperation and partnership in fostering inclusive societies. While public awareness activities are often highlighted during special days such as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3rd, the European Day of Persons with Disabilities (also on December 3rd), and World Autism Awareness Day on April 2nd, municipalities also contribute to raising awareness through sports events and everyday activities.



*Gdańsk*

## AUGSBURG

Committees such as the **Advisory Board for the Disabled and the Inclusion Office** collaborate alongside key players like Aktion Mensch and the Augsburg Volunteer Centre to ensure comprehensive support and knowledge sharing, enhancing the capacity to organise inclusive volunteering projects.

## AVILÉS

An **annual volunteer awareness campaign** collaborates with local entities to promote inclusion. **Volunteering awards highlight and disseminate inclusive projects**, such as: the Avilés Red Cross NOVA Theater Group, comprising individuals with serious mental illness; the tour guide group of young people with intellectual disabilities from the "Rey Pelayo" association. International Inclusion projects within Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps are also important.

## CASCAIS

Technical support to organisations promoting volunteering is provided and a short video to raise awareness of inclusive volunteering has been produced. The municipality plans to develop a **Volunteering Support Programme** to promote inclusive volunteering further. This initiative encourages more organisations to engage people with disabilities as volunteers and raise community awareness.



Rzeszów

## EDINBURGH

Collaboration with stakeholders, NGOs, and institutions organizing events like the annual celebratory gathering at the City Chambers, hosted by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh are a central part of the strategy to **recognize and thank volunteers, including those with disabilities**, long-term health conditions, or other support needs. It serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of inclusivity in volunteering, highlighting the contributions of all volunteers, regardless of their age, background, or abilities.

## GDAŃSK

The most important partner in organising volunteering is the Gdańsk Volunteer Centre. It acts as an intermediary between volunteers and NGOs needing volunteers providing training to integrate volunteers, and **implementing campaigns to increase visibility and improve volunteer engagement quality**. There are no programmes specifically for people with disabilities, all offers, and activities at the centre are accessible, ensuring inclusive participation.

## MECHELEN

Impactful policies are co-created with citizens and organisations, leveraging **International Awareness Days** to organise projects that promote inclusion. For example, on the International Day for People on the Autism Spectrum, a carillon concert by a blind musician and a performance with sign language is organised. Such events, involving volunteers with and without disabilities, highlight the city's commitment to inclusion and raise awareness about the capabilities and contributions of people with disabilities.

## MAIA

The strategy for volunteering promotes social cohesion and equal opportunities, supporting values of solidarity, civic participation, and social inclusion. Partnering with Pista Mágica, a certified volunteer school, training on inclusive volunteering is provided. The municipality also participates in national training initiatives and shares opportunities with NGOs and volunteer institutions. Maia's **Chamber for Inclusion, part of the Municipal Service Office, offers specialised services** to support the participation and integration of people with disabilities in the community.

## RZESZÓW

Collaborating with various institutions, including the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled (PFRON), universities, and schools, to promote inclusive volunteering, the municipality supports volunteer activities in the NIEZAPOMINAJKA (Forget-Me-Not) Community Self-Help Home, orphanages, and social welfare homes. Key initiatives include the Rzeszów 50+ Volunteer Center (2018-2020), which engages individuals aged 50 and above as volunteers, creating **a comprehensive database of volunteers and beneficiaries**, and providing training for both volunteers and coordinators. The municipality has also promoted volunteering through workshops, educational materials like brochures and films featuring people with various disabilities. Notable events include conferences on International Volunteer Day (2018-2021), the "Rzeszów's Strongmen, it's WE" in 2022, which highlighted the achievements of people with disabilities, and the "Rzeszów Friendly to People with Disabilities" march and debate in 2022, which underscored the city's commitment to creating an inclusive environment.

## SALAMANCA

The Municipal Volunteering Agency maintains constant contact with various city entities to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in volunteering. The agency **conducts specific training and incorporates actions collaborating with the Municipal Health School** to implement projects to raise awareness about the inclusion of people with disabilities, particularly in volunteering.

## TRENTO

The "Working Group for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities" serves as a crucial platform where **all participating organisations can voice their ideas and contribute to developing inclusive practices**. This facilitates open communication among stakeholders and actively supports the most impactful proposals. The municipal administration works closely with these organisations to ensure the realisation of these initiatives, reinforcing the collaborative approach to promoting inclusive volunteering and ensuring that the needs and ideas of people with disabilities are prioritised in decision-making processes.

## TRONDHEIM

A **designated awareness and promotion advisor** influences all sectors of the municipality and ensures that large events, such as the World Cup 2025, focus on universal design for inclusivity. The municipality collaborates with volunteer organisations to include people with disabilities as volunteers at these events, providing grants to remove obstacles and running a central lending service for helpful equipment.

# Addressing Challenges

Municipalities increasingly recognise the importance of volunteering to address specific challenges faced by people with disabilities. By implementing targeted programmes, initiatives, events, workshops, and awareness campaigns, municipalities promote the inclusion and active participation of people with disabilities in community life.



*Cascais*

## AARHUS

Challenges faced by people with disabilities are addressed through the Citizen Guides programme, which supports individuals with disabilities in achieving greater independence and participating in community activities.

**Inspired by the peer mindset of psychiatry, the programme provides training and resources to volunteers, ensuring meaningful volunteer roles for people with disabilities.** This initiative reflects the commitment to addressing specific challenges through targeted volunteer-supported programmes.

## AUGSBURG

Collaboration with local organisations to organise actions on the European Day of Protest for the Equality of People with Disabilities 2024 (3 May) is essential and the municipality works with lagfa bayern, the Association of Volunteer Agencies in Bavaria and other project partners to raise awareness about inclusion. For example, **on May 7, 2024, a symposium on participation through commitment** was held, bringing together various stakeholders to discuss and promote inclusive volunteering.

## AVILÉS

Various initiatives and events are organised and co-organised to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities. Volunteer programmes, such as the "Leisure and Free Time Programme for People with Disabilities," awareness workshops in educational centres, and accessibility workshops are available. **In 2024, the Annual Volunteer Meeting and Volunteer Work Awards are dedicated to inclusive volunteering,** highlighting the municipality's commitment to addressing the challenges faced by people with disabilities through volunteer-supported initiatives.

## CASCAIS

The municipality has **leveraged its 1st Portuguese Volunteering Capital status to promote inclusive volunteering.** A video to raise awareness and showcase success stories of inclusive volunteering, aiming to integrate more young people with disabilities into volunteer projects has been created. As part of the Portuguese Volunteering Capital's programme, Cascais will host an online workshop in November 2024 focused on inclusive volunteering, sharing the "PIIC me" project with other municipalities and encouraging the exchange of ideas and good practices.

## GDAŃSK

The majority of CSOs rely on volunteers, providing opportunities for people with disabilities to take initiative, implement ideas, and join activities on a voluntary basis. Five local funds have been established that can support this: neighbourhood; youth; seniors; sports & recreation and equal treatment fund. These funds are accessible to all residents, including people with disabilities, offering financial support for social initiatives and projects. This approach **encourages civic activity and supports the inclusion of people with disabilities** in various community-driven efforts.

## MAIA

The municipality is committed to promoting inclusive volunteering and implementing initiatives that allow people with disabilities to participate in meaningful activities. This is partly done by **collaborating on a social innovation project with other municipalities in the Oporto Metropolitan Area, guided by the Pista Mágica Volunteer School.** This project aims to include people with disabilities and those at risk of exclusion through volunteering, enhancing their sense of inclusion and well-being.

## MECHELEN

The policy against all forms of discrimination includes a strong focus on the inclusion of people with disabilities. The **municipality's volunteering policy emphasises talent over disability**, promoting volunteer fairs with diverse imagery to ensure everyone feels welcome and included. The fairs are accessible and feature a low-stimulus zone, ensuring they cater to the needs of all participants. This inclusive approach helps to address specific challenges faced by people with disabilities in volunteering.

## RZESZÓW

Supporting people with disabilities through volunteering is actively addressed. In previous years, the commune commissioned activities involving **information campaigns, such as the Persons with Disabilities Day, 2023 and 2024 editions, which were focused on integration and anti-discrimination.**

Additionally, the "I am my Leader - You be your own" (org. „Jestem swoim Liderem - Ty bądź swoim”) social campaign and the "Rzeszów's Strongmen, it's WE" (org. "Rzeszowscy Siłacze, to MY") are examples of initiatives that engage volunteers in promoting equality and supporting people with disabilities in everyday life.

## SALAMANCA

Various actions through services and resources to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in volunteering are implemented. These **actions aim to make individuals with disabilities the main 'actors' in volunteer activities**, promoting their inclusion and normalising their participation. Raising awareness and sensitising the community towards people with disabilities is a constant focus of municipal policies across different areas.

## TRENTO

The primary partner in addressing challenges faced by people with disabilities through volunteering is "La Rete," which promotes several key initiatives to support volunteering in the disability sector. These initiatives include awareness and research campaigns for volunteers, **training sessions for citizens interested in volunteering with people with disabilities, supervision and ongoing training for active volunteers, and public recognition events.** This sustained effort helps address the specific challenges faced by people with disabilities and ensures that volunteer opportunities are both meaningful and supportive.

## TRONDHEIM

While there are no specific initiatives focused solely on people with disabilities, the municipality is **committed to achieving universal design in buildings, online platforms, and public awareness.** This long-term commitment ensures that volunteer opportunities are increasingly accessible and inclusive for all residents, including those with disabilities.



Rzeszów

# Conclusion

This publication provides an **overview of the innovative approaches and practices implemented by participating municipalities** to address the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and promote their inclusion through volunteering. By exploring these diverse strategies, we see a unified commitment to creating inclusive communities where everyone can contribute and thrive, supported by each other and local institutions to meet their diverse needs.

The **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (CRPD) is a **fundamental framework** guiding these efforts. Emphasising the importance of accessibility, participation, and equality, the CRPD encourages municipalities to create environments where people with disabilities can exercise their rights and engage fully in society. The EU Disability Strategy 2021-2030 builds on these principles, highlighting the necessity of mobilising funding and expertise to support inclusive initiatives.

Throughout this publication, **municipalities have showcased the proactive steps taken to ensure volunteer opportunities are accessible, inclusive, and free from discrimination.** Municipalities address specific challenges by collaborating with local organisations, advocacy groups, and stakeholders through targeted programmes, initiatives, and awareness campaigns. These efforts are crucial in dismantling barriers and creating pathways for people with disabilities to engage in meaningful volunteering.

The featured municipalities have demonstrated that inclusive volunteering is not only about providing opportunities but also about transforming societal attitudes and structures to embrace diversity and promote equality. Guided by the **principle "Nothing about us without us,"** these efforts ensure that people with disabilities are actively involved in decision-making, reinforcing the commitment to inclusive and participatory governance.

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