
Report
“Revealing European Values In Volunteering in Europe” #REVIVE Seminar
Bulgaria

Date and Venue: 05.12.2023, EXPO hotel, Plovdiv

Agenda

Date: 05.12.2023

Venue: EXPO Hotel, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

13:30 - 14:00	Registration and coffee
14:00 - 14:10	Welcome and opening. Video message from Gabriella Civico - the Director of CEV
14:10 - 15:00	Presenting the results from the National research to discover the extent to which volunteering involves people/citizens representing the full diversity of genders and other discriminating factors
15:00 - 15:45	Best volunteering practices: Cultural mentoring program
15:45 - 16:30	Best volunteering practices: National Student Council
16:30 - 17:00	Q&A. Feedback. Closing

The Big Brothers Big Sisters of Bulgaria Association (BBBS) held “The Colours of Volunteering” Conference on the International Volunteer Day – 05.12.2023, at the EXPO hotel in Plovdiv. The event was aimed at promoting volunteering, presenting the results from National research to discover the extent to which volunteering involves people/citizens representing the full diversity of genders and other discriminating factors, supported by the VERA grant, demonstrating several best volunteering practices from the work of BBBS and celebrating volunteer’s efforts throughout the year. The Conference had duration of 3.5 hours.

It was attended by **52 people in total**, 38 of them women and 14 of them men. Among the participants, there were representatives from civil society and volunteering organization such as

the National Youth Forum, The Youth Center in Plovdiv, The Bulgarian Youth Delegates to the UN, The Association of the Pharmacy Students, The “Plovdiv 112” Voluntary Formation, The Edu Playground Foundation, Municipal Foundation “Plovdiv 2019 – European Capital of Culture”, teachers, active high school and university students, as well a large number of volunteers. Most of the participants were from Plovdiv but there were also guests from Sofia, Pravetz, Karlovo and Teteven.

The event began by a welcoming speech from Lena Karnalova – the Executive Director of BBBS, followed by a video message from Gabriella Civico, CEV’s Director. The program continued with a presentation of the National research on volunteering for 2023 which was presented by Kristina Dimitrova who was part of the team, working on it. Both the results from the focus groups and the online questionnaire were shown and some main conclusions on the state of volunteering in Bulgaria were made. One of the main points showed that still there is a misunderstanding on what volunteering exactly is, since there is no official definition, nor framework or legal regulation in the country. Also, there was data about the gender, level of education, place of living, etc. of those who volunteer. Another interesting conclusion was that the motivation of the volunteers from the big cities and those from the small cities differ significantly - those, living in a big city, volunteer because they want to do something for themselves, while the ones living in a small city do it because they want to help the community.

After the presentation of the volunteering data, two best volunteering practices from BBBS’s work were introduced – a pilot cultural mentoring program, aimed at supporting kids and young people’s personal development through attending cultural events in the city together with their mentors and National Student Council (NSC) – a network of student councils and parliaments in the Bulgaria which aims to promote self-governance and to advocate for the students’ rights on national level.

The audience had a chance to meet two of the mentors in the cultural program and to hear about their motivation, experience working with their mentees and how volunteering had changed them. They also had the chance to hear about the work of the National Student Council from two of the Board Members who also work on a voluntary base and shared their motivation, aspirations and goals. The National Student Council provoked a great interest from the audience who had a lot of questions and congratulated them on their efforts.

Some quotes from the Conference:

Nadina, mentor: “Being a mentor changed my perspective. As we grow older, we tend to view things more negatively. This experience taught me to look on the bright side.”

Yohan, a Board Member of the NSC: “I would never give up, I know this could be hard at times and things could get on my nerves, but I would simply not give up.”



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Dimitar, volunteer (through a video message): "... volunteering is a tool for change... but it is way easier when you have the unconditional support of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Bulgaria Association ... an organization that believes in and supports the ideas of its volunteers."

Nadejda, teacher: "Volunteering is a real gift."