

Sub-granting Report VERA 2024

(Financial Support to Third Parties - FSTP)



Volunteering Equality
Rights Action
VERA 2024



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the European Union

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Introduction

VERA “Volunteering, Equality, Rights, Action” 2024 is a project funded by the EU “Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values” Programme (CERV) to promote citizen engagement and equality through volunteering. VERA includes several important initiatives such as campaigns, events, the EVCapital Competition and European Volunteering Capitals Candidates Community (EVCCC), with a key emphasis on capacity building at the local level, throughout Europe. Through this emphasis, VERA aims to provide more inclusive volunteering opportunities, engaging with citizens in their full diversity of genders and other discriminating factors, and similarly aims to inspire and motivate even more citizens to contribute to the resilience of Europe through volunteering.

In line with these aims, CEV in 2024 has provided 179,000 EUR in sub-granting funds (Financial Support to Third Parties - FSTP) to partner organisations working on projects matching one of the two VERA thematic strands during this year.

The first strand, “Volunteering & Equality” focuses on activities centred around data gathering and research, particularly concerning the diversity of volunteers/volunteering, the barriers to volunteering for disadvantaged groups, as well as the development of national or regional volunteer development plans utilising the aforementioned research as an evidence base. In 2024, specific efforts and attention were given to the involvement of people with disabilities in volunteering.

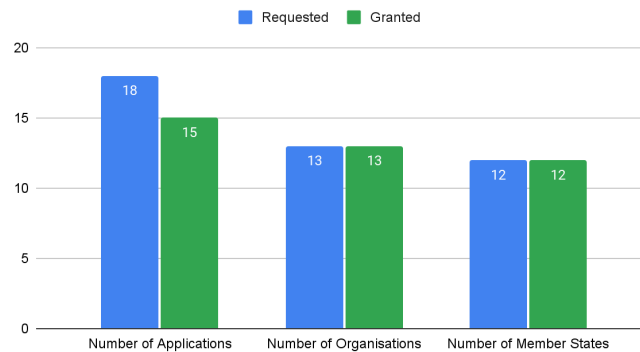
The second strand, “Rights & Action” focuses on inclusive volunteering campaigns and events, particularly implemented in the framework of national/regional volunteer weeks, conferences and festivals. The aspect of cross-sector collaboration is emphasised in this strand, aiming to strengthen volunteer centres/networks and other support frameworks to ensure quality and inclusive volunteering at the local level. The specific focus on inclusive volunteering events and campaigns at the local level, for people with disabilities to engage as or with volunteers, complements the focus of the “Volunteering & Equality” strand, approaching the issue in different ways.

Through these activities, supported by member organisation staff and CEV volunteers, volunteering will be better understood as a key tool for achieving inclusive societies, where all citizens can be engaged and active, contributing to community resilience and solidarity, irrespective of their characteristics, disadvantages, or intersecting discrimination.

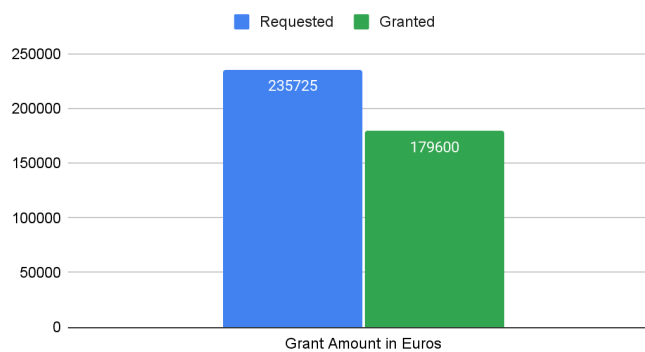
Sub-Granting Overview

(total data of grants given, organisations, and strands)

VERA 2024 Subgranting General



Overall Subgrant Totals



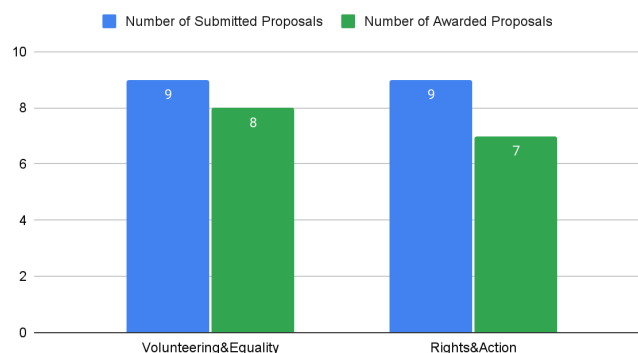
We received a total of 18 applications from 13 organisations from 12 different member states requesting a total amount of 235,725 EUR.

Compared to the previous year, the total number of applications was down by 4, while the number of organisations and the variety of member states both increased by 1.

We granted 15 applications from 13 organisations from 12 different member states for a total amount of 179,600 EUR.

The applied for and approved projects were grouped into the two strands, Volunteering & Equality / Rights & Action, as follows.

Proposal Data by VERA 2024 Project Area





Volunteering & Equality strand

Research & Consultation to discover the extent to which volunteering involves people/citizens representing the full diversity of genders and other discriminating factors, in particular people with disabilities. How to use the Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030 (BEV2030) to advance volunteer engagement in a more inclusive way at national or regional level and so becoming more diverse, especially as regards involving people with disabilities as volunteers will be an essential component.

Outputs: National or regional fact sheet/report on volunteering including data on diversity in particular how people with different disabilities are involved as volunteers and what barriers exist that prevent it as well as a National or Regional Volunteer Development Plan (using the gathered data as the evidence base) with a central focus on rights of people with disabilities to have access to volunteering opportunities and diversity in volunteering in general.

8 applications from 8 organisations across 8 EU member states were granted a total of 89,800 EUR, 11,225 EUR each.

Rights & Action strand

Events, campaigns & Activities linking EU policies that facilitate the involvement of people with disabilities to volunteer, such as the European Disability Card, to active citizen engagement through volunteering contributing to resilience, the recovery process and society based on values and rights. This should contribute to the development of local volunteer development strategies and their implementation in candidate and/or winning municipalities involved in the European Volunteering Capital Competition, facilitating volunteering for people who have disabilities.

Outputs: Inclusive Volunteering campaign and event development and implementation connected when possible to national/ regional volunteering weeks, conferences and festivals together with local volunteer development plans including the methodology for cross sector collaboration, strengthening of volunteer centres/networks and other support structures ensuring quality and inclusive volunteering at the local level especially for people with disabilities.

7 applications from 7 organisations across 7 EU member states were granted a total of 89,800 EUR, with one grant receiving 22,450 and the remaining 6 receiving 11,225 EUR. On average, 364 people were reached per subgrant of 11,225 EUR, and an average of 408 people in grants of 22,500 EUR.

1. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Bulgaria Association (Bulgaria)



Big Brothers Big Sisters of Bulgaria
Голям брат Голяма сестра България

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Bulgaria, identified a lack of initiatives and organisations offering inclusive volunteering opportunities for people with disabilities, exacerbated by a further lack of government initiatives or policies aimed at supporting the inclusion of people with disabilities in volunteering activities. While infrastructure may exist around volunteers supporting those with disabilities, the opportunity for people with disabilities to be volunteers rather than beneficiaries plays very little role in national conversations on volunteering. Many organisations lack the capacity to offer inclusive opportunities, and the tailoring of activities to the abilities and interests of people with disabilities is not common practice.

Given that 2023 data highlighted around 10% of the population of Bulgaria has a disability, the impact of this lack of accessibility and inclusion on society is far reaching.

In terms of Methodology, the research was conducted with a mixture of desk/academic research, and direct consultations with various stakeholders. Online surveys and interviews with people with disabilities allowed insight into the needs, preferences and experiences of people with disabilities in volunteering. The online methodology facilitated a wider reach and more accessible way of giving input.

Through this online survey, disseminated nationally, 202 respondents from across Bulgaria contributed towards understanding the experiences of people with disabilities, with a series of 17 open ended questions and shared directly with national and regional organisations working with people with disabilities.

The online survey/interview input was complemented with focus groups, which brought together people with disabilities, representatives from the NGO sector, community groups, and other stakeholders to identify attitudes towards the civic participation of people with disabilities, experiences and how this is felt both for the volunteers and for the organisations. Roundtable discussions held again with a variety of stakeholders aimed to explore specifically the barriers faced, and challenges that NGOs and policy makers can face in creating inclusive opportunities. This series of 3 focus groups (2 face-to-face, 1 online) saw 53 participants, mainly those with mobility, visual or hearing impairments and social workers. Aiming to explore these results and findings more deeply, a roundtable discussion was hosted in Plovdiv on 9th December, with 51 participants, mainly people with intellectual disabilities, representatives of social institutions working with people with disabilities, and NGOs working with the same target group.

The **final report on existing volunteering opportunities for people with disabilities** was produced and is accessible [here](#), detailing the key findings and recommendations such as the expansion of the mentoring network to provide personalised support and guidance in volunteering, the promotion of examples of successful volunteers with disabilities stories, and the creation of an accessible information platform on volunteering including accessibility features.

Volunteer time: 33 days, 1 volunteer.



Photos taken from the focus groups on inclusive volunteering



2. Croatian Volunteer Development Centre (Croatia)



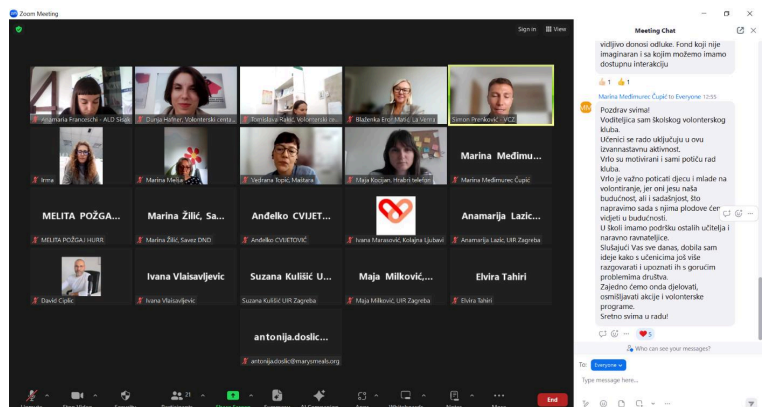
The Croatian Volunteer Development Centre, approached this area of work following the key challenges, priorities and areas identified in the draft proposal of the National Volunteer Development Plan (NVDP) in Croatia, of which CVDC had a role in contributing to the drafting phase. Through this national plan, issues such as an inadequate infrastructure and lack of financial support for volunteer-involving organisations were highlighted as having a large negative impact on the capacity of organisations to offer diverse and high-quality volunteering opportunities, further limiting their capacity to engage volunteers with fewer opportunities, in particular people with disabilities.

Through research and consultations with organisations, the project has gained a closer and more direct insight into the impact of financial support on volunteer organisations, particularly regarding the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities. Regional dialogue forums with key stakeholders have built towards a national picture, while allowing the consideration of regional differences.

This was established through multiple methods. Firstly, two surveys were organised and distributed, the first aimed at volunteer organisations (with 124 responses), and the second aimed at businesses (with 45 responses) in order to gain the perspective of both the private and voluntary sector. Following this, a further series of four online regional dialogue forums were hosted in Zagreb, Split, Rijeka and Osijek, with 60 participants in total. This forum aimed to engage key stakeholders from both the civil society and public sectors, exploring funding solutions and best practices with a particular emphasis on improving accessibility for volunteers with disabilities.

Stemming from this research, the detailed **model study for the plan for the development of a fund** to support volunteer programmes has been created and provides a strong, evidence based foundation for the future establishment and management of such a fund. The overall objective of this fund is to build the capacity of volunteer organisations to develop and implement quality and diverse volunteer programmes, involving volunteers from diverse backgrounds and life situations, through providing the resources in terms of funding, and knowledge through the research report. To this end, a **factsheet** was created summarising the research findings regarding the current state of inclusive volunteering and the involvement of businesses in volunteer activities in Croatia, and providing concrete recommendations to increase accessibility. The factsheet is available in **Croatian** and translated into **English**.

Volunteer time: 33 days, 2 volunteers.



Invitation and photo from the online regional dialogue forum





3. Federació Catalana de Voluntariat Social - FCVS (Spain)



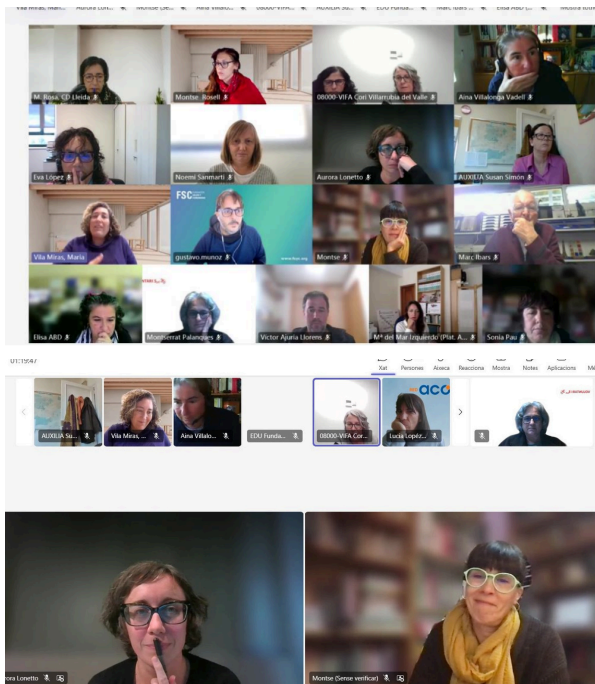
FCVS has previously collaborated with other organisations, such as the Volunteering Observatory of the Spanish Volunteering Platform, on various research projects in Spain, such as “Voluntariat and Disability” in 2017, “Report on Volunteering in Catalonia” in 2018, and “Volunteering in Spain: Who, How and Why” in 2023. The aim of this research project, funded through VERA FSTP, was to build upon and add to this existing research and expertise base, with a specific focus on the profile of volunteers, and representation of people from vulnerable groups in volunteering. Variables relevant to social exclusion were given a strong emphasis in the research, collecting information of an intersectional nature.

The research was focused into 4 main areas, Health and Community, Gender and Equality, the International area, administrative and communication. Through reinforcing this knowledge base, and placing a specific focus on understanding the barriers that exist to volunteering for people from vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, followed by a strong dissemination campaign, the **research report** contributes towards better understanding the profile of volunteers and issues related to inclusion. Together these 4 areas will build towards an overall picture, under the title “Access and participation to volunteering in Spain.”

In terms of methodology, through consultations and direct dissemination to volunteer-involving organisations across Spain, the research report will also serve as a point where consulted organisations can reflect upon and consider their own inclusion efforts, and what barriers may exist for their potential volunteers. Some **recommendations as part of a draft volunteer development plan** are included based upon explanatory hypotheses deriving from the research. Through these combined, along with the reinforced evidence base, the overall objective is to contribute towards making volunteering more inclusive and accessible for the diverse groups of citizens in Spain.

The final research, following evaluation by a reading group composed of 8 people (volunteers and staff in volunteer organisations), was published on 22nd of November 2024 during an online event. The event saw the participation of 34 citizens, gathered to present and launch the research, generating knowledge to promote improvements in volunteering opportunities. A total of 326 entities received the report directly, and a further 6 platforms/networks were disseminated to. Social media and press release dissemination further reached 30,000 impressions, with the newsletter published on 5th December reaching 15,303 contacts and a further 1001 clicks to the report link from this. The report can be accessed at [this link in Catalan](#), with an English translation anticipated in 2025.

Volunteer time: 33 days, 5 volunteers.



Photos taken from the online dissemination event





4. France Bénévolat (France)



France Bénévolat, identified that current communication around people with disabilities, particularly in the context of volunteering, in France is dominated by people speaking on behalf of those with disabilities, while little space is given for the volunteers' own words. The research involved not only gathering data and published literature on the topic but also gave the possibility for the gathering and sharing of the direct speech, perspectives and experiences of volunteers with disabilities, the activities aimed to give a voice to those who contribute so much but are often not adequately engaged in public dialogue. The dissemination of these reports aims to firstly give visibility to volunteers with disabilities, showcasing that people with disabilities can be contributors not only beneficiaries of volunteering, and secondly to inform and engage volunteer organisations on the issues, the barriers faced by volunteers with disabilities, and the potential of their contributions.

France Bénévolat cooperated closely with the Association des Paralyses de France, who work directly on issues relevant to people with disabilities, and facilitated much closer and more direct access to volunteers from this target group. Through this collaboration, the reach of the proposal and the capacity to include the direct experiences of volunteers with disabilities, was reinforced.

In terms of methodology, the project operated primarily through direct interviews and focus groups. These consultations further involved organisations hosting volunteers with disabilities, and those who support volunteers with disabilities, with the aim of exploring four categories of barriers to inclusive volunteering previously outlined by CEV (awareness, design of activities, organisational structure, and the personal aspect).

Over the course of the project, 20 face to face and online interviews were conducted, moderated by 4 researchers, a further 32 organisations were contacted and contributed towards the survey on people with disabilities and the voluntary sector. 10 young people, representing a diverse range of disabilities (physical, mental, psychiatric and sensory), 5 supporting structures and families, and 5 associations hosting young volunteers with disabilities were consulted during the interview stages.

The **final research report including recommendations for the national volunteering strategy** ([FR version here](#)) was shared during a series of 3 seminars and webinars, to over 100 people in total. This included the AG France Bénévolat Ain, on 19th June 2024, a webinar on "Volunteering & Disability" on 15th November, and directly to the board of France Bénévolat on 28th November. The report is printed digitally and available online, and was widely disseminated including with the APF disability network of 54 associations representing people with disabilities, France Bénévolat's own network of 90 volunteer centres and international partners, and national/local authorities such as the Ministry of Solidarity, The Minister for the Disabled, and further local authorities such as CCAS and MDPH.

Volunteer time: 44 days, 6 volunteers.



Photos taken from the in person interviews with volunteers with disabilities





5. Pista Mágica (Portugal)

The activities built upon previous actions by Pista Magica, through which it was highlighted that methodologies proving the impact of volunteering carried out by people in vulnerable situations (particularly those people with disabilities) are fundamental in advocating for more inclusive volunteering practices. The project focused research at the national level, engaging with representatives of the target groups (organisations, volunteers, public entities and people with disabilities), and was collaboratively created by Pista Magica along with the Portuguese Volunteering Confederation (CPV) and Polytechnic Institute of Porto.

The focus of the research was on the following factors:

- The existing needs and resources of volunteer-involving organisations with regards to the inclusion of People with Disabilities.
- The obstacles raised by People with Disabilities in accessing volunteering opportunities.

The conclusions of this research are also shared through a scientific article and with the national entities responsible for creating the National Strategy for Inclusion, ensuring a wide reaching impact and the potential for integration into national policy.

The final event disseminated the results of the research, and provided the opportunity for capacity building among organisations to contribute towards the greater involvement of people with disabilities in volunteering, particularly as volunteers rather than beneficiaries as an essential aspect of **regional and national volunteer development plans and the Portuguese National Plan for Inclusion.**

In terms of methodology, two online surveys were organised to research and better understand the current contexts, the first of which was aimed at people with a disability, and the second at organisations working with people with a disability. This survey and research process was arranged under the collaboration between the member and external organisations, and received validation from organisations working with people with disabilities, people with disabilities themselves, and the data protection department at the Polytechnic Institute of Porto. Through these surveys, 104 organisations and 67 people with disabilities were reached, for a total of 171 participants.

Three further focus groups were implemented, under the main themes “Barriers to volunteering for people with disabilities”, “Good practices and examples of inclusive volunteering”, and “what could inspire people with disabilities to volunteer more”. Through the focus groups, 15 organisations and 7 people with disabilities were reached, for a total of 22 participants, and 193 between both the focus groups and surveys.

Final reports were produced for all of these research gathering methods, 2 for each survey and one for the focus groups.

In the survey of 67 people with disabilities, most were not current volunteers but had done so before, while 26.9% had never volunteered. In spite of this, 73.1% highlighted that they would like to volunteer. The benefits of volunteering were widely acknowledged, however it was found that in terms of the barriers to volunteering, 59.7% outlined a lack of opportunities while 56.7% highlighted a lack of knowledge among organisations regarding the needs of people with disabilities. Concerns regarding feeling uncomfortable in volunteering, or lack of support from family members, was reported by almost half of participants. 91.9% responded that they felt training for professionals supporting people with disabilities was crucial.

Dissemination activities have begun with the social media campaign, digital letters, and will continue in 2025 further with inclusion in national level events sharing the full **research report** available [here](#) in English.

Volunteer time: 37 days, 3 volunteers.



Photos taken from the inclusive volunteering event





6. Plate-forme Francophone du Volontariat - PFV (Belgium)

La Plateforme Francophone du Volontariat, following a 2019 quantitative study of volunteering in Belgium, highlighted an uneven level of access to volunteering. Notably, they found that the rate of participation decreases with lower levels of education and socio-economic status. At the same time, multiple crises such as COVID-19 and the energy cost crisis, have both increased demand while decreasing the accessibility of volunteering.

The research explored this issue, and contributed towards solutions, through engaging stakeholders in consultations and feedback to gain insight on the difficulties faced, their viewpoints and experiences. The target groups of said consultations included researchers, volunteers, and employees particularly in volunteer organisations, with the aim of building a picture of the challenges faced both by volunteers and by organisations in implementing social welfare actions in Brussels.

The research has a particular consideration of the obstacles to active participation in volunteering, including the experiences of those with fewer opportunities, and includes **recommendations** for both volunteer organisations and policy makers to ensure volunteering is more inclusive and representative of society, available on the website [here](#).

In terms of methodology, PFV conducted the research as part of a network (VolontariAS) aimed to mobilise various stakeholders on the issue of social welfare volunteering and inclusion. The network, forming a research group, collaborated on designing the outreach methods and questions, which are disseminated among stakeholders and those engaged in the wider PFV network, including organisations, their beneficiaries, and targets identified through the research group discussions. The research group included 15-25 volunteers and volunteer managers, in a total of 14 meetings (6 focus groups, 8 preparation and monitoring meetings). 10 interviews were conducted with volunteer managers, complementing a literature review in gathering data on local level volunteering infrastructure. Over 170 volunteer managers were further engaged through 1-1 meetings and online consultations.

The results and conclusions of the research were presented during an event on 5th December, International Volunteer Day, along with a workshop to broaden these initial conclusions in consideration of national and regional volunteer development plans with 28 participants.

Following this intensive research and consultation process, a **20 page initial research is produced in both French and Dutch** (website [here](#)). An event on 20th February 2025 will be organised with own financing outside the scope of the CERV FSTP grant hosted to present and disseminate the reports, incorporating iterations based on the initial presentation on 5th December 2024.

Volunteer time: 34 days, 5 volunteers.



Photos taken from the research group meetings





7.Slovenska Filantropija (Slovenia)



Slovenska Filantropija, identified that while volunteering makes an enormous contribution towards social inclusion, there is still more encouragement needed for society to ensure accessible volunteering for all, including people of different backgrounds, ages and personal situations.

Exploring this issue deeper, the project created a **regional research** on the current inclusiveness of volunteer-involving organisations, the barriers faced in access to volunteering, and how these barriers could be removed. Following this, a **handbook for inclusive volunteering**, spreading awareness of best practices, was created aimed at municipalities and regional volunteer centres, as well as on the ground volunteer-involving organisations.

In terms of methodology, an “Inclusive Volunteering Day” was organised for 6th April 2024, aiming to gather information and research, while also raising awareness to begin the project. 30 volunteers engaged through this day, restoring a courtyard and garden in an intergenerational centre, from a diverse range of backgrounds including a group of volunteers from a local homeless shelter, volunteers from the LGBT and Roma communities, and volunteers with disabilities. Complementing this method of outreach and research gathering, a direct consultation on inclusive volunteering was organised for October 23rd, gathering 20 representatives of organisations to understand the needs and limits of volunteer organisations in creating inclusive opportunities. A survey of 108 people, self-identified as people from vulnerable groups or with fewer opportunities, further gathered information and the direct perspective of the beneficiaries of this proposal. Additionally, a promotion stand was organised as part of the National Volunteer Week festival on May 23rd, to which 41 volunteers and mentors from the city of Pomurje were invited to participate. The event gathered 85 organisations, around 4000 volunteers, and a further 2,500 participants.

The Handbook itself, “Meeting the Challenges - A Handbook for Diverse and Inclusive Volunteering”, was printed with 200 physical copies and made available freely online. It was also presented during the Volunteering Forum hosted on December 2nd, with 72 participants. A further specific report on the possibilities and challenges of inclusive volunteering in Pomurje was also published online. Within this report, 10 volunteer stories were included, which were also published in the Roma Newspaper “Romano Them” with a circulation of around 500 copies, and were also published on the website [here](#).

All published outputs are available [here](#).

Volunteer time: 33 days, 1 volunteer.



Photo Taken from the Inclusive Volunteering Day



Photo taken from consultations with volunteering organisations





8. Volunteer Ireland (Ireland)



Volunteer Ireland, conducted research on the inclusion of volunteers with disabilities, utilising data from the 2022 Irish census, which featured a question on volunteering. Previous research had been conducted in collaboration with Universities in Ireland, looking at inclusive volunteering programmes while identifying barriers and challenges in engaging diverse volunteers. Further consultations with volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers, focused on the barriers to volunteering for people with diverse backgrounds, and also served as a knowledge base outlining the context and need for this proposal. The research report focuses on the extent to which people of different genders, disabilities/abilities, ethnic backgrounds, citizenship and age, are involved in volunteering and the barriers faced. Further evaluation of the Irish National Volunteering Strategy (NVS) as compared to the priorities and recommendations of the Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030 (BEV2030) was carried out.

In terms of methodology, a focus group was conducted in Drogheda, Co Louth, Ireland, exploring the barriers to diversity in volunteering and potential solutions to overcome these. This was complemented by a survey of volunteers, which included specific questions exploring inclusion and the barriers to volunteering. A further informal coffee morning, aimed to give participants a more open and casual environment to explore the barriers to volunteering for diverse sets of people, was hosted as part of the direct outreach and research.

The **two reports** were developed, focusing on current volunteering statistics. One of these reports focused on data specifically related to disabilities, while the second report focused on diversity and inclusion in volunteering more broadly, while considering long-lasting conditions such as ethnic background, health, gender and age.

The **mapping exercise report** between Ireland’s National volunteering Strategy and the Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030 was also produced and disseminated successfully.

The reports were shared with 1,580 volunteer managers, and an additional 150 volunteer centre staff received the reports and utilised it in their engagement with over 8,000 volunteer-involving organisations and 140,000 volunteers in the national volunteering database I-VOL. As part of the dissemination activities, a photograph range was created with different volunteers and roles creating a diverse bank of volunteer profiles through photography.

Volunteer time: 33 days, 2 volunteers.



Photos taken from the bank of volunteer profiles



1. Croatian Volunteer Development Centre - CVDC (Croatia)

HRVATSKI
CENTAR
ZA RAZVOJ
VOLONTERSTVA

The Croatian Volunteer Development Centre, with this project has fostered active engagement through volunteering, nationally and locally, primarily through engagement with the European Volunteering Capital competition (EVC). The competition itself gives recognition to volunteering, while encouraging municipalities to consider and implement policies which give strength to the volunteering sector.

It is highlighted that Croatia has never had a candidate engaged in the competition, and seeks to motivate municipalities to become candidates, fostering the cross-sectoral collaboration and cooperation which is central to the voluntary sector. Through **research**, **capacity building**, and an **advocacy campaign**, the project has empowered stakeholders to uphold volunteerism and inclusivity, fostering a culture of active citizenship and community resilience through volunteering supported by municipalities especially for people from marginalised groups such as people with disabilities.

The first stage of the project saw research and data gathering among cities and local municipalities in Croatia, assessing the current state of volunteer development measures within the strategic plans of these municipalities. The aim of this research was to identify the level of preparedness among municipalities to support volunteering and engage with the EVC competition and lay the groundwork for awareness raising based upon the concrete context in which volunteering takes place in Croatia.

In this context, a questionnaire was distributed digitally to local and regional self-government units across Croatia, seeing 46 respondents. This highlighted that while volunteering is widely recognised as important to communities, a lack of strategic documents to support its development presents a challenge.

The promotional campaign actively encourages cities and municipalities to participate in the EVC competition, reached through social media and in collaboration with local volunteer centres, utilising video and audio pieces to reach a wide audience.

A series of webinars highlighting successful volunteer initiatives, particularly those involving citizens from diverse backgrounds and life situations, further added to this campaign and explored the issues relevant to the sector. The first webinar focused on the EVCapital concept, sharing best practices while highlighting the positive impact of the competition on local communities, while sharing initial results from the research gathering. The second webinar focused on strategies for fostering community dialogue in the development of local volunteering plans, involving speakers from both local municipalities and volunteer organisations.

Together, these dissemination and communication efforts reached around 13,000 individuals, with 87 in the webinars specifically.

The national volunteering conference provided a platform for the sharing of best practices and expertise, collaboration and network forming, and emphasising the importance of collaboration in community volunteering and the inclusion of people with disabilities as volunteers, all within the wider framework and dialogue on the EVC competition. This final event, hosted on 7th November 2024 in Karlovac and online, brought together 117 participants from Civil Society, local authorities and other stakeholders. Here a panel discussion took place specifically on the experiences of cities holding the EVCapital title, strategies for developing local plans and fostering cross-sector collaboration.

Volunteer time: 33 days, 3 volunteers.



Photo taken from the National Volunteering Congress



2. Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector - MCVS (Malta)



The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector, organised a day long event “Together We Shine (TWS)”, consisting of workshops, performances, and family-oriented activities, supported and implemented by volunteers with disabilities. The event was the centrepiece of a wider campaign around inclusive volunteering, particularly regarding the engagement of volunteers with disabilities, and featured activities from a wide range of sectors and organisations, including art, performances, sports, and environmental storytelling. This core event, TWS, was further complemented by a sister event, hosted directly in a volunteer centre in Birgu, aiming to showcase the bridging of voluntary organisations to volunteers with disabilities, and inspire other organisations to begin the same engagement.

Prior to this proposal, MCVS had already issued an open call for voluntary organisations to submit concepts and ideas for inclusive volunteering activities, through this event MCVS has been able to facilitate and empower organisations to implement these activities, in the wider framework of the day long event, and engaging with a diverse group of volunteers and beneficiaries.

The **event and wider campaign**, seeing the direct involvement of volunteers with disabilities, while being a public facing and community centred event, provided the opportunity to make the contributions of volunteers with disabilities visible. Members of the public, particularly families, who are openly invited to engage with the event, had the opportunity to experience first hand the benefits of engaging volunteers with disabilities, as these volunteers enabled and led the fun activities families are there to enjoy. Through this direct, close contact between citizens and volunteers with disabilities, awareness of the contribution of volunteers with disabilities will be raised, while combatting the stigma and misconception that people with disabilities are recipients, not givers, of help and support - which is common across European states. In line with this, a video showcasing the project and outcomes of the two events, was created and shared during the Volunteer Award Ceremony on 5th of December 2024, the occasion of International Volunteer Day.

In order to strengthen the event, and encourage organisations working on different topics to begin to engage and learn from each other, MCVS collaborated heavily with other organisations and stakeholders who held stalls or activities within the event. One such organisation, Agenzija Sapport, was particularly crucial in the sister event, as they are the national agency for persons with disabilities. Through this cooperation, MCVS ensured that people with disabilities are at the heart of the event and wider communication campaign. Agenzija Sapport was further able to extend MCVS’s reach to their own beneficiaries, which allowed research into the special talents and hobbies of people with disabilities engaged with Agenzija Sapport - this was one of the key ways in which MCVS was able to ensure activities could be designed, implemented and led directly by people with disabilities, on topics which they feel passionate about, in this way it demonstrates the focus on what a volunteer with disabilities can contribute, rather than what they cannot.

In terms of outreach and impact, through these two events 19 volunteer organisations across Malta were engaged in the project, collaborating with a further 3 public entities. 51 volunteers with disabilities were engaged and helped ensure the events were possible, including leading workshops and activities directly. Approximately 700 participants attended the two events.

Volunteer time: 41 days, 1 volunteer.



Photo taken from the “Together We Shine” event



Photo taken from the “Sister” Event





3. Plataforma del Voluntariado de España - PVE (Spain)



Plataforma del Voluntariado de España, presented this proposal as a continuation of the work done already on promoting transformative volunteering, and the participation of a diverse and inclusive range of volunteers. Volunteering is understood as one of key drivers of active social participation, inclusion, and fair societies, and as such should be in and of itself as inclusive as possible - which is in line with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030.

The main objective of this project has been in line with the above factors and has therefore increased the opportunities for access to volunteering for people with disabilities, as an expression of their right to full participation in Spanish society. This has been achieved through specific objectives, the promotion of inclusion of people with disabilities in volunteering programmes developed by PVE and its wider network, the dissemination of the right to active civic participation of people with disabilities through volunteering, and dissemination of the direct experiences of volunteers with disabilities.

In terms of methodology, these goals have been achieved through **events and a campaign “#SomosVisibles”**, which centred around the **audiovisual piece** created under this proposal.

The events were incorporated into PVE’s Autumn School of Volunteering 2024, as this presented a key opportunity to gather and disseminate to the wide PVE network, gathered in one place. Through this approach, more direct contact and dissemination with organisations and volunteers was enabled.

The workshop was hosted primarily for organisations, focussing on how they can ensure their organisation is accessible, inclusive, and ready to engage volunteers with disabilities. Through this workshop, 33 representatives from organisations were reached and educated, with 25% of these participants being people with disabilities. Overall, 70% of participants expressed a high level of satisfaction with the workshop.

Roundtable discussions focused on the experiences of volunteers with disabilities, providing a chance for mutual learning and exchange, while giving space for the real life stories of volunteers with disabilities, who may or may not have experienced barriers, to be explored. The first of these roundtables had the title “Diverse People, Different Abilities: Volunteers with Disabilities”, which saw contributions from 6 speakers, 3 of whom were persons with disabilities. The second roundtable, “Political Commitment or Politics of Commitment at local level” had contributions from 3 speakers standing for City Councils in candidate cities for the European Volunteering Capital Community, and a speaker from the City Council in which the Autumn Volunteering School took place. Together, these two roundtable discussions saw 238 attendees from 85 different organisations, highlighting a strong and broad impact on volunteer organisations in particular.

The **audiovisual piece** collects stories and positive examples of volunteers with disabilities, showcasing their impact on the community and the impact of volunteering on the person with disabilities themselves. This piece which was first launched during the Autumn School of Volunteering 2024, serves as a centrepiece of the wider dissemination campaign “#SomosVisibles”, has also included dissemination of the **Guide to Inclusive Volunteering** to those in PVE’s network (2,941 downloads) and presenting the project “Inclusive Volunteering as a right to active participation of persons with disabilities” with 56 citizens during a meeting with the City Council of Aviles (EVCapital candidate 2025).

Volunteer Time: 67 days, 5 volunteers.



Photo taken from the #SomosVisibles campaign



Photo taken from the Autumn School of Volunteering 2024





4. Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organisations - PDCO (Slovakia)



Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organisations, identified a lack of capacity for volunteer organisations to offer inclusive volunteering opportunities, compounded by a lack of information on those opportunities which are inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities. This lack of information was highlighted as a huge barrier to the full accessibility of volunteering, and has a negative impact on potential volunteers, organisations, and the wider community.

The approach of this project was two-fold, firstly through the development of a database of volunteering opportunities, with a specific label and additional information provided for opportunities which are accessible to people with disabilities in order to create the conditions for organisations to better engage people with disabilities as volunteers, providing better information to potential volunteers & raising awareness.

In terms of methodology, the process of creating this database involved outreach and direct consultations with regional volunteer centres, who jointly cooperate on the database and in defining the criteria by which the readiness of an organisation to engage volunteers with disabilities is evaluated. This cooperation with regional volunteer centres further enables and expands the impact of the proposal, bringing a local level impact through the network of regional centres. Through this cooperation, the regional centres are also prompted to reflect on, consider, and improve their own inclusion and accessibility, particularly through the plan for promoting inclusive volunteering which is integrated into the development plans of regional volunteer centres.

A further webinar was hosted to familiarise volunteer coordinators with the barriers faced by volunteers with disabilities, and develop quality standards to better inform how organisations can be more inclusive.

Secondly, an advocacy campaign aims to share the project outputs, raising awareness for the new standards for organisations ready to engage with volunteers with disabilities, the database and system of highlighting accessible opportunities, and contributing towards changing the public conversation towards the inclusion of people with disabilities as volunteers. This campaign focused on sharing the real-life stories of volunteers with disabilities, giving them a voice and visibility, ensuring that conversations involving volunteers with disabilities, have the input of those people.

In terms of engagement during the data gathering and research phase, one **workshop** was hosted, engaging 20 participants from 6 regional centres to explore and develop the quality standards on engaging people with disabilities which are available [here](#). A further two training sessions utilised the quality standards to directly build the capacity of 23 volunteer coordinators to cooperate effectively with volunteers with disabilities.

The **database** was launched in September 2024, and is accessible through the [website](#). So far, the database has over 200 published volunteering opportunities, with 10% of them having been given the label "INKLU" to note inclusiveness and opportunities which are accessible for volunteers with disabilities. Over 1,300 volunteer and organisation profiles have been created, with a mix of engagement in terms of both organisations offering opportunities and volunteers expressing interest in this.

In terms of the **dissemination campaign**, PDCO has further collaborated with external stakeholders to raise the impact and outreach of the proposal, including securing a partnership with a PR agency for pro bono media coverage, cooperation with a national government ministry, and launched the fundraising campaign donio.sk to support sustainable and continued promotion and dissemination.

Volunteer Time: 33 days, 2 volunteers.



Photos taken from the story of one volunteer with disabilities





5. Pro Vobis (Romania)



Building upon previous actions and research particularly from the VERA 2023 subgranting,, Pro Vobis, highlighted that less than 18% of Romanian volunteer-involving organisations surveyed regularly involved people with disabilities, while the data showed that of these, the proportion of volunteers with disabilities was very low. This showcased a need, both to motivate and to inform organisations on how to best engage volunteers with disabilities. Similarly, the previous research highlighted a lack of readiness among volunteer-involving organisations to collaborate with municipalities and local authorities.

The conference entitled “**Future Ready: Volunteering for a Changing World**”, which gathered organisations and stakeholders from across Romania, served to contribute towards alleviating these issues through providing the space for networking, the sharing of best practices, awareness raising and particularly towards empowering organisations to engage volunteers with disabilities. The conference took place in Bucharest from 27-28 November 2024, with 58 attendees and 10 representatives from 3 other organisations supporting the event.

The conference had two main focus areas, “promoting towards Romanian Organisations important elements of the European Volunteering Landscape”, which saw plenary contributions Lejla Sehic Relic, CEV president, and Tenna Soerensen, CEV project officer, who spoke on the trends facing European Volunteering, the need for and importance of advocacy, and the impact of the EVCapital competition & how municipalities can prepare to apply for the competition. Pro Vobis brought forward the expertise gained through the TEAM IV Erasmus+ project, and led a **dedicated workshop on inclusive volunteering**, presenting practical advice also directly from a Pro Vobis Volunteer with disabilities who has a wealth of experience in supporting inclusion.

The second main area focused on “equipping and empowering Romanian VIOs to build or strengthen their roles in partnership with local authorities, for the development of local volunteering infrastructure”, in which two workshops were hosted. The first was facilitated by a representative from the Croatian Volunteer Development Centre, presenting examples and advice on local policy development for volunteering and local advocacy techniques. The second workshop was facilitated by a representative from Bucharest City Hall, in charge of managing relationships with civil society, and explored how NGOs and local authorities can develop stronger and more meaningful relationships. Further workshops within the conference touched on the development of digital volunteering infrastructure, the volunteering law and framework in Romania, and a plenary discussing the best practices seen in the National Strategy for Volunteering in Ireland, which saw the contribution of Volunteer Ireland, CEV member.

In total, 9 workshops were delivered, with 5 keynote speeches, and an additional expert panel on the topic of getting ready for the future of volunteering. Pro Vobis began a cooperation with the Bosch Foundation Romania, and the Romanian National Agency, for funding and resource support on the conference, complementing the close ties forged between volunteer organisations and participants in the conference. Stemming from the conference, participants from Moldova expressed an interest in Chisinau exploring the possibility of applying for the EVCapital competition.

Strengthening the efforts of the conference itself, a **promotional and dissemination campaign** aimed to share the key results of the conference, engaging a broader audience on the topics explored. To this end, a **conference report** was produced and shared with stakeholders, extending the impact beyond the event itself, along with a **video summary** of the event, and **2 visual summaries** created by a professional graphic artist.

Volunteer time: 33 days, 10 volunteers.



Photos taken from the Conference of Romanian Volunteer Organisations





6. Talentum Foundation for the Support of Volunteering (Hungary)



Talentum Foundation, in a 2023 Diversity Research, highlighted that often the biggest challenge facing organisations in engaging a diverse range of volunteers, particularly people with disabilities, is in fact finding and reaching out to these groups. On the other hand, volunteers often felt that accessible opportunities to volunteer were not sufficiently advertised or communicated. Thus, at the heart of this project was to bring together volunteers with disabilities, and organisations ready to engage with said volunteers, extending both the network and options available for both volunteers and organisations.

To achieve this aim, the member has implemented a series of 5 voluntary actions spread throughout the Southern Great Plain region of Hungary, each with the expressed intent of bringing together both volunteers with and without a disability. Through these events, cooperating with volunteer organisations and organisations working with people with disabilities, new connections and networks have been forged, effectively serving as a bridge between organisations and the volunteers they hope to motivate. Furthermore, the events have showcased the great contributions that volunteers with disabilities make if given the right opportunity to do so, thus aiming to change attitudes, both among organisations and among people with disabilities who may, largely due to societal pressures, feel a lack of confidence and awareness of their own capacities. This in turn is building towards the wider societal shift needed to better harness the volunteer energy of people with disabilities, by highlighting that people with disabilities are not just a vulnerable group to benefit from other people volunteering, but can be active participants and volunteers themselves.

This is reinforced by the advocacy campaign, developed throughout the proposal period in parallel with the events. The campaign, speaking to the wider public as well as volunteers and organisations, took a few different forms.

A **digital Storytelling Booklet** (English) (Hungarian [here](#)) has been created, which tells the stories of 14 volunteers with disabilities in their own words, shedding light on the issues while providing an emotional way of engaging with the topic of inclusion in volunteering. Further, this booklet aims to share positive experiences and success stories of the 12 volunteers interviewed, giving more awareness to the contributions of volunteers with disabilities.

A **15 episode podcast series** served to also explore the experiences of 15 volunteers with disabilities in-depth, again in their own words, ensuring that all conversations include the voice of volunteers with disabilities. The podcast was also published on the national **Szeged News**.

802 citizens were included in the mailing list which announced the publication of the proposal outputs. Further, during an event on 4th December 2024, 80 participants from Talentum and partner organisations gathered and were presented a summary of the activities hosted under this proposal throughout 2024. This event also was supported and enabled by the contributions of volunteers with disabilities, particularly those previously engaged in other activities, with performers including staff and volunteers from the organisations collaborated with during this proposal (FONI, Kreatív Formák Foundation, Nem Adom Fel Foundation).

Drawing links to the wider VERA activities, European Volunteering Ambassadors contributed to the event, with Mate Kerekes giving an in-person speech while Izabella Csordas provided a video contribution.

Volunteer time: 33 days, 4 volunteers.



Performers and Participants during the International Volunteer Day - Volunteer Meeting





7. Volunteer Ireland (Ireland)



Volunteer Ireland wanted to raise national level awareness and capacity building on the inclusion of volunteers with disabilities and foster inter-region cooperation between local volunteer centres with a particular focus on municipalities linked to the European Volunteering Capitals competition. Through this project it has been able to facilitate people with disabilities into volunteering through two primary methods. Firstly, through building the capacity of volunteer organisations to involve people with disabilities, and secondly through a communications campaign about volunteering aimed at people with disabilities.

Approaching this issue from the national perspective, and utilising Volunteer Ireland's strong local networks, the project engaged the network of 29 local volunteer centres across Ireland, with the objective of developing and implementing strategies to raise inclusion.

The **National Volunteer Management Conference** was hosted on 1st May 2024, in Athlone, Co Westmeath, with 169 attendees, and **launched the research on inclusion** in volunteer programmes, in partnership with Volunteer Now, Dublin City University and Queens University Belfast.

Sligo, as a previous European Volunteering Capital in 2017, had a particularly strong role in this proposal, alongside Cork, who was considering an application to be European Volunteering Capital 2026 - due to their already strong presence in supporting volunteering and cooperating with the voluntary sector. The role of these two cities was particularly linked to the **National Volunteering Week 2024**, from 20-26th May 2024, with the theme "Uniquely Us". 17 Volunteer stories were shared across the campaign, including 3 contributions from Cork volunteers and one from Sligo volunteers, along with accessibility tips disseminated daily. The campaign saw over 10,000 engagements across all channels, and 100 people from volunteer organisations actively engaged with the National Volunteering Week campaign on social media. This week brought together various stakeholders, and as such served as a crucial opportunity to exchange knowledge, best practices, as well as the direct experiences of volunteers with disabilities and the challenges or successes they faced in volunteering.

The communication building towards the National Volunteering Week 2024 was launched in Sligo on April 30th, additionally celebrating Sligo's legacy as EVCapital 2017. The National Volunteering Week (NVW) focused on diversity and the National Volunteer Management Conference was themed around volunteer inclusion. Training opportunities for volunteer organisations to build inclusive programmes through engagement with local volunteer centres was also a central component of the project.

In terms of further outputs, a training session was delivered in May, targeting volunteer managers, entitled "Making your volunteer programme more inclusive", with 25 attendees.

Following close consultations with local Volunteer Centres, the guide **"Getting Started - A guide to supporting volunteers with a disability"** was created and shared with 150 staff in Volunteer Centres across Ireland.

Volunteer time: 33 days, 1 volunteer.



Photos taken from the launch event of the National Volunteering Week in EV Capital 2017 Sligo



"Through volunteering, we bring the team together, we feel more comfortable, we are able to help each other."

"To raise awareness of the potential of people with different abilities, we need to involve the media and show positive examples to remove the stigma."

"The conference was truly of a high standard. Bringing together so many volunteer involving organisations, volunteer managers and volunteers in one place has a tremendous impact - this gathering alone sparks motivation and inspiration for the future."

"Promoting volunteering requires continuous effort. Volunteering is precious and invaluable and it must be elevated to a higher level."

"The organisers succeeded in creating a space for meaningful discussion on the financial challenges for volunteer programmes and what is truly needed to strengthen the volunteering sector in my country."

"The Dialogue Forum was highly beneficial, as we had the opportunity to hear new information and share our experiences in working with volunteers and volunteer programmes."

"Regretfully, looking at this report, doing volunteering seems like a privilege. Volunteering programmes must be more accessible and inclusive."

"We need more reports like this. We need more solid information about volunteering."

"Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the life of the Foundation and to volunteer. It was a pleasure tonight. I was especially touched by the performance of the disabled people."

"We succeeded in communication with Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and there is a grant program in final stage of preparations which support involving volunteers with disabilities We consider it to be a huge success that will help to support inclusive volunteering."