



A B C of Family Volunteering

**Practical Handbook for Adult Educators
and Volunteer Involving Organisations**

Authors: Jelena Kamenko Mayer, Marta Hauser, Stuart Garland, Corina Pintea, Diana Bere, Mădălina Boțu, Espen Andresen, Mareen Werthefrongel, Andreea Nagy, and Gabriella Civico.

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The project was coordinated by Pro Vobis (Romania), and implemented in partnership with Volunteer Ireland (Ireland), Hrvatski centar za razvoj volonterstva (Croatia), Freiwilligen-Zentrum, Augsburg (Germany), Vestre Aker Frivilligsentral (Norway), and the Centre for European Volunteering (Belgium), and funded by the European Commission, through the Erasmus + Program.

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Introduction

Welcome to the world of family volunteering!

The ABC on Family Volunteering in front of you is the practical handbook that brings closer and presents a baseline introduction into the concept of family volunteering.

Family volunteering is a form of volunteering, involving more than one person in a household or extended family, volunteering together. Even though it is not quite a new concept, it still hasn't been developed enough in most of the European countries and its potential still hasn't been explored and recognised.

Through this practical handbook we want to offer an insight into family volunteering at a glance, present different opportunities that it provides, and show its potential when organised through different Volunteer-Involving Organisations (VIOs) and activities.

The ABC on Family Volunteering aims to provide a series of stakeholders - adult educators, Volunteer-Involving Organisations, and institutions interested to develop or support family volunteering - with the theoretical framework. The handbook describes the basic principles, the development of the concept, its challenges, and benefits, gives examples of good practice implemented through high-quality family volunteering programmes, ideas, suggestions, and opportunities that can serve as an inspiration and encouragement.

Through the next chapters, we invite you to explore how family volunteering can be a creative alternative for family engagement, a learning opportunity for the whole family, and one of the solutions to encourage disadvantaged groups to get involved in volunteering. Here you will find answers on the different kinds of opportunities it provides for VIOs, how it can contribute to community development, prevent isolation, strengthen solidarity or the social capital... and the list goes on and on.

Join us in exploring family volunteering adventures and possibilities through this handbook!

The project team



"My name is Anghel Ioan and I am a volunteer of the association "Ajungem Mari", Sibiu branch, together with my wife Diana and my daughter Denisa. We have been active volunteers since 2017, at the Placement Centre in Orlat, Sibiu County, Romania.

We flirted with the idea of volunteering for a long time (approx. 10 years), the reason being a personal one, family! ... Until one day, when my wife saw on the internet that there is a need for volunteers in the Placement Centres from Sibiu. She presented the information to me and I agreed to "test" what it was about. Therefore, I participated in the volunteer training course, organised by the association.

I MUST mention that, in fact, the whole family participated in the training, namely me with my wife and our two daughters, who at that time were 18 years old (Adelina) and 15 years old (Denisa). I did not force them to participate in the training, they came voluntarily, and curious to see what it was about. After graduating from the training course, all of us, the four members of the family we became ... volunteers!

The idea of all family members volunteering was born from the fact that we had to offer from our energy, from our free time, from our knowledge ... to others, but together, to be sure that ONLY so, we can succeed in the difficult mission as VOLUNTEERS!

The experience gained after volunteering is special, in view of the fact that once I "entered" this system, I had the most different reactions from children: from gratitude to rejection, from tears of happiness to swearing, from being appreciated as a model for them (even by certain children) to statements such as "what do they want?", etc. From our point of view, as volunteers, I can say, on behalf of the whole family, that just volunteering in a Placement Centre, you can have unique experiences and that there are things that have impressed us (here I mean what the children said, about why they got there).

I can say that choosing to volunteer "together", that is, the whole family, was for the children from that Placement Centre - something unique ... I hope with all my heart to have instilled in them the idea of FAMILY, of unity within the family (contrary to the model of the families they came from) ... We wanted to present them that a family means something other than what they were used to seeing, that a decent language can be used, that the child of the family can have a beautiful education, that a promise offered must be honoured, in a word, I wanted and I hope we managed to be an EXAMPLE!

We wanted to be a model not only for children, but also for other volunteers, inspiring them, motivating them, helping them, mobilising them, and appreciating them! We hope we succeeded!

In fact ... WE ARE CONVINCED!"

Ioan Anghel (volunteering with his wife Diana), Romania

I. Family Volunteering at a Glance

What is family volunteering?

Generally, family volunteering occurs when family members volunteer together in the community service activities. In light of the values that volunteering promotes, we define family as any group of two or more people that considers itself to be a family: parents, children, siblings, foster parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, partners and any others who consider themselves a family. It is important to say that families can be blended, and certainly do not have to be defined by biology and/or legal frameworks.

The family in family volunteering can be and is also single-parent families, cohabitating families with or without children. The emotional tie in the overall definition of family is the key ingredient, so the exact “technical” nature of the relationships among the various people is irrelevant, just as long as they consider themselves family'. Ultimately, any two or more people who consider themselves family and spend time together volunteering are for us a volunteering family.

Family volunteering has been defined in different ways by different organisations:

“Family volunteering involves more than one person in a household or extended family, from different generations volunteering together.” [24]

“Family volunteering encourages members of the family to volunteer as a unit. This includes the whole family, one parent and one child or teenager or extended family, for example, grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins.” [9]

“A family (e.g. in family volunteering) is any group of two or more people that considers itself to be a family: parents, children, siblings, foster parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, and any others who consider themselves a family.” [20]

“Family volunteering is an unpaid activity that an intergenerational group carries out together for the mutual benefits of participants and the organisations.” [10]

“Family volunteering describes the situation when family members volunteer together. There are all sorts of permutations in terms of what is possible; for example, family volunteering could be a parent and child or grandparents, parent and child or adult partners or brothers and sisters.” [11]

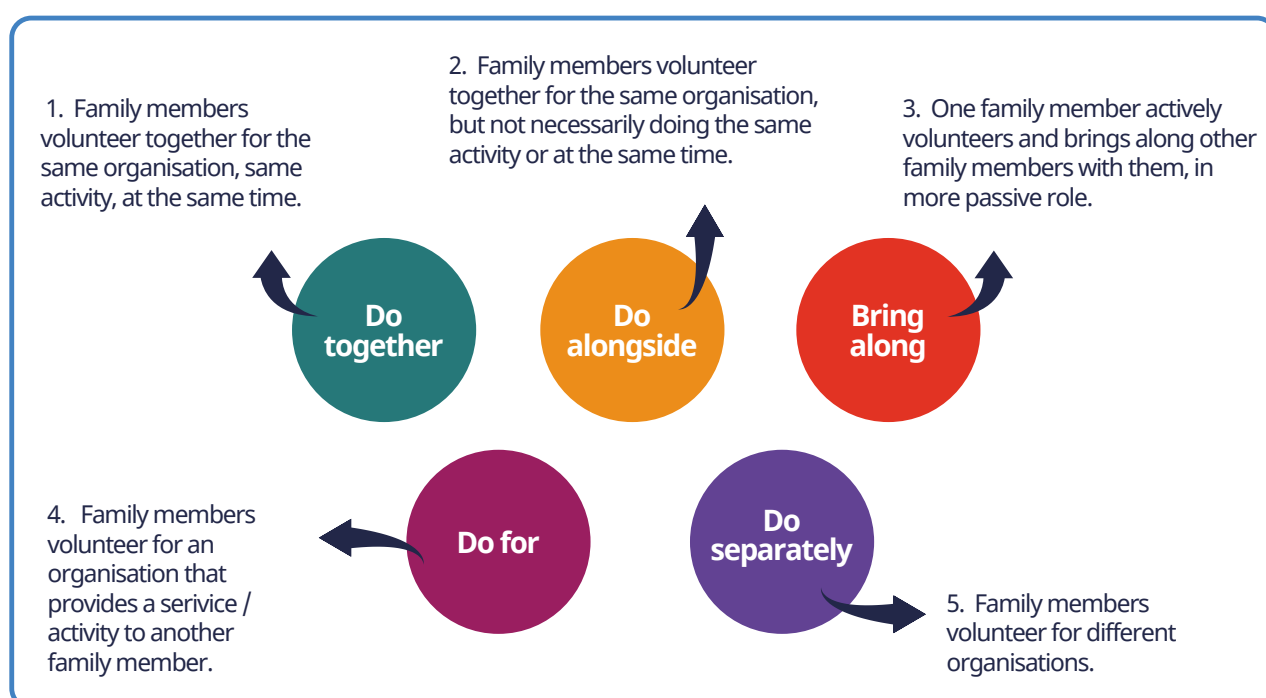
“Family volunteering is an unpaid activity that an intergenerational group carries out together for the mutual benefits of participants and the organisation.” [12]

Basic principles - the concept of family volunteering

Although we defined family volunteering as family members engaging in the community, it is important to point out that family members may also come from different generations, in combinations such as parent/child or grandparent/parent/child, or from the same generation, such as adult partners, or siblings or any other combination of two or more people. The concept and value emphasize togetherness and enhanced opportunities for building relationships. As it is understood here, family volunteering may even be considered family members volunteering for different events or programmes and at different times.

Family volunteering occurs when a family with a common desire to enrich their own lives and the lives of others, offers their time and commitment in service on behalf of the community. Family volunteering has all the principles of any other type of volunteering, where volunteers contribute and engage regardless of their socio-economic status, education, cultural background, age or gender.

Research from NCVO, [Volunteering: A Family Affair?](#), published in Sept. 2020, showed that there are different types of family volunteering and they all reflect how families engage in volunteering and all are important to consider when defining principles and the overall concept of family volunteering. The variety of engagement was found to be not mutually exclusive and many of the families were engaged in a number of types shown below. Even so, some of the families have moved from one type to another, over their life course, depending on personal, family, and organisational circumstances, opportunities, and constraints.



Source: [NCVO](#)

Development of the Family Volunteering Concept

The concept of family volunteering is not new. [16] The 2001 Independent Sector report in Canada found that over half of all volunteers had volunteered with a family member. [22]

The field of volunteer administration has seen a positive trend toward formal family volunteering, with initiatives such as the Points of Light Foundation's Family Matters project [17] and Volunteer Canada's Building Blocks for Family Volunteering tools [24]. Yet, much of the academic literature on volunteering in relation to families has derived from the perspective of the organisation, focusing on organisational benefits and recruitment strategies based on volunteers' family characteristics. [3]

The more recent data include an NCVO research in 2020, in partnership with the University of Birmingham and the University of Salford, which started looking into the links between family and volunteering. Despite the findings, that family volunteering is extensive; the research shows that the involvement of families in volunteering needs attention and nurturing. During the COVID-19 pandemic, families are spending more time together, so the rise of flexible and remote working and the development of online opportunities may help people fit volunteering around their busy family life. However, as with all forms of volunteering, it will be crucial for organisations to think carefully about how inclusive their family volunteering offer is.



"As volunteers at Ajungem Mari, we are involved in the development of children in foster care from an educational point of view. In short, and concretely, to put it simply, we help them with homework, or whatever else they need at school. It's just that in order to achieve this, you have to gain the children's trust, to know them, and for them to know you. Only at the end, you get them to agree for you to help them with something."

I have been doing this activity with my wife for several years, and this brings us immense joy. Seeing them at the window rejoicing when we arrive, and having so many sincere hugs at parting, are priceless joys for us. We chose to do this volunteering together because it is a common need of ours to help others, but also because together we can send children a more balanced message, neither too drastic, like mine, nor too pampering, such as my wife's.

The most beautiful moment is when you see the joy of the children and their sincere smiles when something difficult came out of them. Something they didn't think I could do. They can be math exercises or physical activities. And that, honestly, softens us, and gives us the courage to continue.

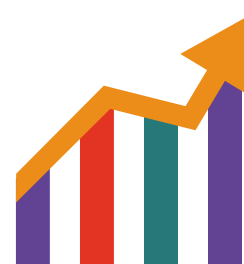
I think there are benefits if both partners believe that volunteering is important, and don't take each other by the mouth. In our case, the most important benefit is mutual support, when you are still demoralised, when you see that although you had high hopes for an initiative, it did not happen. In such moments, you can talk openly, as you might not talk to another volunteer, and thus regain your confidence."

Cetin Ali (volunteering with his wife), Romania

Benefits of family volunteering

Family volunteering benefits organisations, families, and communities. Organisations benefit by reaching multiple generations with their mission and building a larger base of support. It is also an opportunity to engage people who might not otherwise volunteer because it would conflict with family time.

The benefits for families who volunteer together include for example helping parents, foster parents, carers, to instill values with their children, socialising, and helping family members connect with each other. Or in other instances, family volunteering can bridge the generational gap or include socially excluded people.



When families volunteer, it ultimately benefits the community, by bringing people together, creating shared understanding and connection, while increasing the accessibility of volunteering and service. More specifically:

The benefits for volunteer-involving organisations are:

- Successful recruitment of families could increase volunteer resources, with increased potential for long term retention,
- An expanded culture of the organisation,
- An expanded skill-base of volunteers to draw on – organisations will attract new types of volunteers because of the family connection,
- Organisations are better able to meet the needs of beneficiaries with a more varied skill-base,
- A solid potential for the increasing commitment of volunteers, if they no longer have to juggle between volunteering and family interests,
- Sharing the volunteering tasks with family members will ensure consistent beneficiaries' contact, service, and care (greater reliability) of the organisation towards the beneficiaries.

The benefits for the families are:

- They gain a shared sense of accomplishment and satisfaction from giving back to the community,
- They can discuss service and community issues and get to know each other better,
- Creates positive role models for children and youth,
- Volunteering can help families learn about their own community and social issues that affect it,
- Volunteering promotes civic responsibility and enhances a family's sense of community,
- Volunteering builds the self-confidence of family members,
- Volunteering improves communication and builds skills in the family and in the community,
- Volunteering creates a history of family memories,
- Volunteers meet people of diverse cultural and economic backgrounds,
- Volunteers have an opportunity to share time and talents,
- Volunteering experiences carry over into other parts of volunteers' lives,
- Giving to others places a volunteer's own problems in perspective,
- Volunteering forges special bonds between family members,
- Volunteering helps children and teenagers to relate to other generations,
- Volunteering gives families an accessible opportunity to be together and have fun, without spending loads of money,
- Volunteering makes families feel valued,
- Families can make new social contacts,
- Volunteering can show families new ways to solve their own conflicts,
- Volunteering gives families a sense of purpose or belonging,
- Volunteering develops family pride and a sense of gratitude,
- Volunteering can relieve isolation (for newcomers, new parents, migrants, etc).

"We are the Vlačević family. We started volunteering one Christmas, when we decided that instead of buying gifts we give our time to others in need. The whole family has been volunteering every day.

We do puppy socialisation, take the puppy everywhere with us. Kids take the puppy to school, raise the puppy with positive methods and they all see how it is more useful than having fights.

We met a lot of dear people, we help each other. At the same time, we promote volunteering, the benefits of an assistance dog, the use and movement with assistance dogs.

We are all involved with positive energy in volunteering, parents, children, grandparents, little nieces.

All this with a full heart and a big smile."



Vlačević family, Croatia

The benefits for the community:

- Instills good values - a sense of caring makes a stronger community, stronger family connections,
- Promotes socialisation - bridges isolation problem,
- Makes better citizens, more active and engaged,
- Tightens the community net, builds or expands social capital,
- Enables the individual to consider one's good fortune, to get out and get something done, not wait for it to be done for them- essential for community services.



"After a few years, we have noticed that in general volunteers who are part of the same family tend to volunteer for a longer period.

That is because they motivate each other and they consider volunteering as a family activity, as something nice they can do together. For all of them, it is a way to spend some quality time together and offer something back to the community.

In many cases, when one of the volunteers had some difficulties or hard moments, emotionally speaking, the other volunteer was there to cheer him/her up, find solutions, and offer motivation. It is very nice to see how they work together and it's easier because they already share their life and they can communicate better sometimes.

Moreover, from what I have noticed, in cases of family volunteering the motivation to help is greater. It is not just the inner individual motivation, but also the common motivation; it is something all members of the family believe in, both at a personal and at a group level.

Some of them joined our volunteering programme at the same time, but there were few cases when one volunteer was so enthusiastic and wanted to share this experience with another family member and that's how they attracted more volunteers in our project.

For institutionalised children, this is a great positive example of what a family should look like, and for them, it is a great thing to have such examples. And one of the most amazing outcomes of family volunteering is that they understand better these children's needs and there were few cases when a couple of volunteers decided to adopt or become foster parents for 1 or more children and offer them more than a volunteer can, a family!"

Vivianda Nicolae, Lindenfeld Association, Romania

The benefits for the vulnerable adults:

- Gaining skills, knowledge for specific jobs especially if they are unemployed or looking for a job,
- Whatever the reason for belonging to the vulnerable group, volunteering can dispel prejudices, challenge stereotypes their group face in the community and create acceptance of diversity,
- Building the self-confidence if they have been excluded or isolated from the social contacts or events and life in general,
- Creating a social network (acquaintance, friends, etc.),
- Becoming more confident and independent, especially for groups of people who have traditionally been on the receiving end of volunteering.

As it was already mentioned, there are vast benefits for the families including the horizontal value that is bridging the generational gap. A generation gap is commonly perceived to refer to age differences between generations that cause conflict and complicate communication and deepen the lack of understanding among members and in time even a lack of (meaningful) interaction.

Older members in the family have different characteristics, but some of the more common ones are: very fixed in views of the race, nationality, or having preconceptions of certain societal groups (gay, lesbian, single parents, multi-cultural families, etc.), the elderly are often isolated because of their health issues, they are retired and living either in families or in elderly homes.

"I remember starting volunteering when I was in high-school. Sometimes I had to babysit my sister (who is 13 years younger than me) and I took her to CVCN. Even if she was just a child and not someone that could really be involved in the tasks, I tried to find something for her, to engage her even if it was a game for her. It helped to spend time and bond with her while doing something useful and meaningful. I never felt that I have to do this, it was nice and fun to do this together."



Sometimes I took her to some of our events as a beneficiary and I had the chance from really close to see that what we are doing there really has an impact on the people that participate in our events. Later when she became a youngster I encouraged her to get involved as a volunteer and she remembered all the nice things we did together and she decided to join the same organisation, which I hope it will be nice for everyone involved because somehow they already have a history together."



"I remember the first time my sister took me to CVCN where she was volunteering. I was about 5-6 years old... I think she tried explaining to me what she is doing there but I don't think I really understood. I just knew that someday I would like to be part of it."

10 years later when I wanted to get involved in new things I decided to volunteer and I chose the same organisation. I saw that Anca had a nice experience at CVCN and this was proof that it will be nice also for me. I already knew some of the people there and it was easier to join the team. It is funny that we started by doing the same activities :) I hope I will meet new people (at least how many she met :)), learn new things/skills, be involved in as many projects, and help as many people as possible."

Anca & Nico, sisters, CVCN volunteers, Romania

The intergenerational component of family volunteering is also very important and can benefit the whole family, younger members as well as older adults. The benefits are:

- **It energises older adults and gives a sense of purpose**, especially when they're sharing their experiences and skills. Working with children can even have health benefits for the elderly.
- **Reduces a sense of isolation for older adults and potentially relieves or lessens depression**. Loneliness and depression are a big concern for today's seniors and youth. By providing a venue for seniors to interact with younger generations, they afford the opportunity to build lasting relationships.
- **All generations learn new skills**. Older adults can build new digital skills, the younger generation and youth can benefit from mature mentoring and recuperate stories from the past, learn about a world they were not part of, but it is worth remembering.
- **Overcomes negative stereotypes** and encourages bonding among generations.
- For children and youth who don't have grandparents or other seniors in their families, engaging with older adults, **fills a social gap**.



"As the volunteer manager for Serve the City, I see tremendous benefit and also significant need for family volunteering. Whilst volunteering alongside COVID continues, one challenge remains keeping the client separate from permissible activities – this is where a husband/wife duo is necessary/handy."

We have emerged from the emergency Community Call type of volunteering in Q2 2020, and now see a need for specialist community support. In this instance, the husband/wife duo again can attend to different tasks in the home, and in the process limit community transmission.

In general, there are some larger projects (garden renovation/painting/home repair), where a team of people will be necessary. In this instance I have considered housemates all living under one roof, as this is easy to schedule and again reduces community transmission."

Brad Wilmot, Serve the City, Dublin

Challenges of Family Volunteering

Any non-profit organisation which needs volunteers' time, energy, and commitment to accomplish its goals faces many ongoing challenges. To attract and retain the volunteers who can deliver what the organisation needs to accomplish can be hard and involves ongoing efforts. Then there is the strategy required to keep volunteers engaged, energised, and focused.

The research in 2002 done by Volunteer Canada revealed that the concept of family volunteering brings many challenges for non-profit organisations the first being that it is not well understood within organisations - they pointed to the need for a clear and current definition of what family volunteering entails, and assurance that such a definition is consistent, readily available and easily accessible to organisations.

Some organisations have a very narrow understanding of the family and do not think of a family beyond the nuclear definition of parents - children. Some organisations do not see family volunteering as an opportunity for their organisation because children simply could not be involved in the type of service provided. For instance, organisations that are working in the health sector see many issues of cost, liability, coordination, and insurance, and due to the sensitivity of their beneficiaries' situations, they excluded involving children as volunteers. Difficulties can be the case, as with any other type of volunteering, in recruiting and retaining volunteers. It's no longer enough to simply expect volunteers to 'arrive and stay' with an organisation for several years.

The 'new breed' of volunteers is more mobile in that they want to do many things that interest them. Volunteers are also more time-constrained and are experiencing greater pressure from their work and family responsibilities. None of this can be accomplished without addressing the needs of the organisations themselves.



Some other concerns organisations have, especially the ones that would like to include vulnerable groups, are the lack of experience of working with a specific target group and consequently being fearful of involving them in volunteering. Also, the management of these volunteers can be more demanding in terms of knowledge and time use. There are often stereotypes and preconceptions that exist within the organisation or society that can hinder the engagement.

NCVO research, *Volunteering: A Family Affair?* published in Sept. 2020, showed that challenges for volunteers/families can be overbearing and can have a serious impact on the level of frequency and motivation for volunteering. The majority of families have different roles and responsibilities in their social, business, and family life. For adults, there is pressure from paid work, combined with a growing array of children's sporting activities, clubs, and interests or care for elderly or family members who are vulnerable. For some, the juggling and meeting of volunteering commitments can get too much, particularly when volunteering roles carry considerable levels of responsibility and/or at times when the demands from other roles are especially intense.

There is also an issue of the type of activities that can accommodate and keep interest for all family members involved and also an issue of costs, such as transportation, gas, parking, insurance, childcare and meals.

For vulnerable groups inclusion through volunteering might be challenging and sometimes could prevent them from applying for volunteering on their own. Besides a lack of general knowledge on what volunteering is, there is also a lack of awareness about available volunteer positions (vulnerable groups often do not know they can volunteer and if they do, they do not know where to start).

Due to the lack of experience and examples from the societal circles, they can also experience apprehensiveness and feeling that they would not be welcomed in an organisation as volunteers, because of a lack of self-esteem and confidence. On the personal level, there also might be fear of being asked to do too much, fear of prejudice, and being judged. For some, fear of losing welfare benefits and people with disabilities finding physical barriers and not being able to access volunteer places are also very real concerns and need to be addressed.

Types of Family Volunteering Engagement

Organisations may offer different activity options for families. Distinct activities for youth or children in a family – family volunteering opportunities may be more appealing to youth if activities are available which are unique to their age group.

Generational pairing – Different families can be paired together around a variety of tasks. This can be a fun exchange for children or youth, providing them with an opportunity to volunteer with other people of a similar age.

Group activities – There are a number of group opportunities that can be made available by an organisation to a family. This can sometimes be a more favourable option, as it can require less coordination, since parent figures can be directly involved with supervising their family members.

Cross-generational pairing – Volunteering can be a way to bring different family members together. Grandparents can be involved in volunteering activities with their grandchildren. Aunts or uncles - with their nieces or nephews. There are many possible opportunities and arrangements that can be both fun and promote family bonding.



"In our family, volunteering started about 15 years ago, when my husband, Mircea Ilie, together with 2 other colleagues, founded ViitorPlus, the association for sustainable development, an NGO that runs environmental education programmes, social entrepreneurship, afforestation, reuse, and recycling, environmental volunteering, eco-tourism, construction of solar panels.

We participate with the whole family in the plantings organised by ViitorPlus, spring, and autumn, every year since our children were 1 year and 5 years old. Our daughter, Maria, also started volunteering at "Ajungem Mari" this year and works with a 5th-grade boy in math lessons. She is very happy with it and tells me that it is going well!

Why did I choose to do this? First, my husband's passion for volunteering was a real inspiration for me, and, secondly, because I like working with children.

The children in the centres are eager to interact, to share their fears, joys, emotions with the volunteers. We don't just do homework, we also talk about what they have done, what they have read, about visits to parents, about siblings, about school, about their passions.

I am very happy when they open up to me and tell me stories or when they ask me: "When are you coming, madam?"

The benefits of family volunteering are immense. First of all, the activities were done together to strengthen the family relations and then we manage to transmit to our children some values through facts, not only through words. In addition, we get to know many nice people."

Elena Ilie (volunteering with her husband, Mircea), Romania

The NCVO research, Volunteering: A Family Affair? published in Sept. 2020, suggests different types of engagement, as we have shown before, now also with some examples for each case:

Do together

A family walking challenge to raise funds.

A litter picking event.

A family volunteering holiday.

Do alongside

A mother who volunteers at a museum's library while her daughter volunteers in a different role in the same museum, as part of The Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Bring along

A festival volunteer able to take his children with him.

A volunteer who comes to help with some admin tasks at a community centre with her baby.

Do for

A parent who volunteers at their child's sports club.

A parent who runs the Scouts group attended by their children.

Do separately

A father who volunteers for a local food bank and their partner for a national conservation charity.

Source: <https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2020/09/28/volunteering-a-family-affair-our-research-findings/>

Volunteer positions vary in duration, flexibility, extent of contact with recipients, subject area, and intensity and all these should inform organisational planning of positions. Families' episodic or short-term volunteering, for example, gives individuals the flexibility to volunteer when they are able and to quit at any time. When applied to family volunteering, these positions can give families the flexibility they need to work around each member's daily schedule.

Short-term commitments may also be best for families that are facing difficult challenges or do not have a set routine. Furthermore, short-term opportunities allow families to ease into volunteering, which may make the experience less stressful and may even encourage them to volunteer again in the future.

One of the most convenient places to organise family volunteering are schools that have extra-curricular activities for children (and often one of the activities is the school's volunteer club) and they could easily include parents as volunteers in those (for example in various events, school plays, day trips, etc.). Additionally, families could also participate in nature and environmental activities (in national parks or in schools) keeping in mind all safety standards.



Animal shelters and zoos could also offer volunteer programmes for families - children along with their parents could help feed animals, take them out for walks (if they are in a shelter), etc. This way, children can learn about responsible behaviour towards pets and other animals in general.

Some basic volunteering ideas for families are helping older people, programmes for children and young people, church groups, sports, and school programmes, environmental projects, and aid to the homeless.

"I chose to volunteer in the field of education for children in placement centres because discovering that they have developmental needs that require the support of people from outside the system, I wanted to help. I chose to volunteer with my husband because we both had the same motivation to help, and together, knowing our abilities, it is easy to team up and come up with new and challenging ideas for children."

So when looking for potential partners to build a family volunteering programme, you may contact:

- Homeless shelters
- Organisations that prepare and distribute food
- Animal shelters
- Environmental organisations
- Youth organisations
- Churches
- Sport clubs
- Boys/Girl Scouts
- Therapeutic horse ranches



It brings us a lot of joy to see children and young people, who at the beginning of our activity were quite demotivated and with little confidence in them, smiling, confident, specifically wanting their development in certain areas, happy with the results they get. Being a spent time outside the home it is very good to be able to understand the other's motivation to be involved and to give time to such an activity."



"I chose to do this to offer something back from what I also received, "knowledge and good advice", to show them and explain to them the world outside the placement centre.

I do this together with my wife because that's how it was, we complement each other and our different interests and fields give us the chance for the team to cover a larger area of children's knowledge needs.

The advantages of being a volunteer together are many, perhaps the most important is the power of example, the fact that we go together gives children the opportunity to see what collaboration means, discussing situations with different opinions, sharing tasks, responsibility, and last but not least, understanding the other. It is special to participate with my wife in a beautiful activity, that of sharing.

Being together in this activity gives us the opportunity to discuss the different situations encountered "in the field", another perspective being always welcome."

Maria Sanda and her husband, Andrei, Romania



CrossChoice Puzzle of the Family Volunteering Opportunities

First steps – thoughts to start from

After getting a deeper understanding of the benefits and principles of family volunteering, we've come to a list of specific questions.

Volunteer involving organisation should be interested in the following:

- What is the organisation's main benefit of organising volunteering for families?
- In which area of the organisation's operations is family volunteering preferable:
 - Contribution to core activities
 - Contribution to internal processes and employees
 - Contribution to the community services
 - Contribution to beneficiaries
 - Contribution to the organisation's public image
- What are the potential risks?
- What are the available and potential resources for a family volunteering programme?
- How to identify and synchronise “pros” and “cons” attitudes about the family volunteering programme within the organisation?

Volunteer involving organisation should be interested in the following:

- How to motivate children and young members to share similar values and interests with the adults?
- How to create a time schedule considering the variety of individual plans and agendas?
- How to financially support basic costs of volunteering (e.g., travel, food, equipment, material, or others)
- Do we know exactly what we are trying to achieve in our family with volunteering?
- Does our plan come out of a need for prevention or correction of certain behaviours, improving and strengthening of family relationships, behaviour, or values? Does it create the family quality time we would desire?

Young volunteers would probably face questions like:

- How to involve other family members when they are negative or not interested in volunteering?
- Why volunteer together with their parents or adult family members?
- How to relate school or peer community with their family?
- Which type of family volunteering to choose? – Are there common interests within my family?

A quality family volunteering programme should provide solutions and answers for the majority of the listed and other justified questions. The main responsibility lies in the hands of volunteer-involving organisations. They should define motives and resources, before designing a family volunteering programme. The approach could be either a simplified one or a more complex one.

A simple approach is to choose from a series of common volunteering activities:

- Humanitarian activities
- Inclusion of potentially marginalised groups, such as children, elderly, persons with disability, homeless, etc
- Environment and sustainable development
- Animal protection
- Sports
- Culture
- Tangible and intangible heritage promotion

Family members as a route to volunteering: the Brown family [19]

The Brown family – mum (Tina), dad (Alistair) and two children (Anna, 14 years old, and Emily, 6 years old) have all been involved in volunteering at Little Village to varying degrees. Tina has been quite heavily involved after first hearing about Little Village through another family-oriented charity. She is described by the family as the ‘linchpin’ who got them all engaged in different activities for the organisation, mostly in an ad-hoc way for Alistair, who helps out with some activities, and Emily, who is brought along sometimes.

Anna was initially brought along by her mum, but has since been undertaking her own volunteering at Little Village as part of The Duke of Edinburgh Award [8].

Initially, she felt her involvement was more motivated by her mum and less by her own choice, but having got more involved, she feels more self-motivated and especially enjoys coming with her friends, though she also sometimes participates with one of her parents.

“I feel like it’s 60% my choice and 40% my mum’s...if a teacher had suggested, “Why don’t you pop along?”, I would have said no, but I’m definitely glad I have. In the beginning, it was probably 80% mum and 20% me, but it has grown, and I definitely choose to come here...it’s a really good way to catch up with friends and in the end, you feel satisfied you’ve done something really good, so I really enjoy coming.”

More complex family volunteering programmes could be developed within the area of:

- Education
- Social inclusion
- Psychosocial assistance
- Raising awareness on social values

Serve the City (Dublin), Ireland

Serve the City [7] seeks to improve the well-being of marginalised and vulnerable people across Ireland, with a focus in Galway City and County Dublin. Their 'traditional projects', mostly on hold in 2020 due to COVID-19, include garden overhauls and DIY / Home Improvement projects (including deep cleaning, decluttering and de-hoarding). Serve the City also coordinates specialist social inclusion projects each year to empower, upskill and uplift the lives of migrant workers and those seeking asylum in Ireland.

In 2020, the organisation adapted to the need across Ireland for community support during public health restrictions associated with COVID-19 and launched several new projects including hot meal delivery, book parcel delivery, supermarket shopping, essential home repairs, specialist befriending and emergency food banks.

Whilst family volunteering is typically best modeled around 'traditional projects', Serve the City plans on replicating this for projects associated with COVID-19 support, and their pilot volunteering programme "Bubble Buddy" has had some success in 2020.

For the last 2 years, they have been providing opportunities for different types of family volunteering, but informally:

- Family 'R'. This is a husband and wife team, where one person is a Garda vetted [18] project leader and the other is a volunteer/beneficiary coordinator. Several projects have run successfully with this duo, where home improvements are undertaken by the husband and his wife tends to look after the client.
- Their hot meal delivery project involves a family 'WR' – a mother and her three children (>18). They have adopted a rota system to deliver meals to marginalised and vulnerable groups in the community, on different days of the week, in order to fully complete one week assigned to the family.
- Bubble Buddy practical volunteering involves some mother/daughter combinations. One example is one where the mother assists beneficiaries in a specialist manner (as she is a qualified occupational therapist in the area of social welfare), and the daughter attends to emergency matters in the house, such as changing light bulbs for the same beneficiaries with limited mobility.



However, the most comprehensive direction for the family volunteering programme is provided by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [23], within the areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet:

- **People** - to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.
- **Planet** - to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources, and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.
- **Prosperity** - to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social, and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.
- **Peace** - to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

The Sustainable Development Goals (17) and their multiple targets agreed upon globally within the 2030 Agenda provide the most suitable and relevant direction for the possible actions within a quality family volunteering programme.

It is crucial to justify the volunteer programme and to be transparent in communicating the importance, purpose, expected outcomes, and outputs of the undertaking actions that include volunteering of both children and their adult family members.

Even low-scale short-term community action could contribute to the development of higher acknowledged social principles and standards. On the other side, it could create a risk of responding to specific values that are not socially accepted or could even contribute to extreme attitudes, not necessarily obvious at the first sight.

After understanding the direction and basic rules, now comes the creative part: **what to do and how to choose?**

For a more detailed and practical outlook on the ways to design a family volunteering programme, please see our [Step-by-Step Guidebook on Family Volunteering](#).

There are general characteristics that differentiate volunteer-involving organisations and consequently their family volunteering programmes.

Potential for family volunteering in different types of activities and volunteer-involving organisations

For public institutions

Public institutions generally have the capacity to organise volunteer programmes, including family volunteering. They have ensured logistics, continuous operation, and mostly stable budgets.

Obstacles are often caused by the lack of motivation of employees, because volunteering has been perceived as a deviation from core activity – education, health protection, provision of social service, provision of cultural programmes, etc. Therefore, it is crucial to have a commitment at decision-making level and high motivation of the staff member/s who could influence the organisation's management and the final decision in setting up a family volunteering programme.

For educational institutions

Kindergartens, elementary schools, or high schools are, by the nature of their function, oriented to families. Children are students, and their parents or guardians are involved in the process of their education. Based on the established relationship, it is convenient to increase the participation of families in volunteer programmes that could improve the quality or conditions of education. It could contribute to a stronger involvement of the school in the community and vice versa. In cases when educational institutions already have developed volunteer programmes or clubs, they open a wider area for family volunteering.

Family volunteering programmes examples:

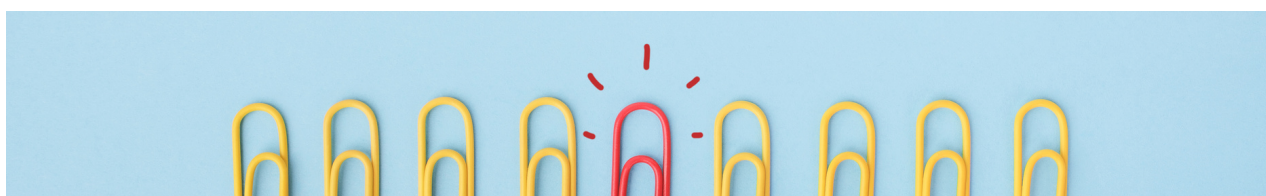
Humanitarian events or sales: students together with family members create or collect articles in exchange for donations. Fundraising should have a specific purpose, such as to assist other families, students, to contribute to the specific community need. There are various events that could be organised - some could be more focused on the provision of support to specific groups or persons at risk of social exclusion. Eg. a humanitarian event where parents bake cakes, or make souvenirs/crafts and sell them for specific purposes (to help a student who comes from a family of lower socioeconomic status or to contribute to the specific association dealing with one of the vulnerable groups) at different fairs.

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Awareness-raising campaigns: students and their family members with support from the school staff, participate in the promotion of values such as – non-violence (e.g. anti-bullying campaign), health and the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle, the importance of reading, tolerance towards other individuals or groups, the synergistic action of school and the community, etc.

These activities are mostly short-term and could be organised multiple times. In some cases, they are organised on specific days (such as Pink Shirt Day, Make a Difference Day, etc) and could become traditional.

There are many examples of cooperation of family members with schools and they are not perceived by families as volunteering, but rather as their own contribution to the schools of their children. Family participation could be basic in relation to the type of activity (such as baking cakes, collecting and distributing humanitarian aid, painting branches or planting flowers in the schoolyards, etc.) or much more demanding and sophisticated (such as translating written materials, providing support in IT activities, participating in providing group support, writing projects to offer training opportunities to the teachers, etc.).



For social services

Social institutions are in general open to volunteering, but there are still not many examples of engaging families in volunteering for social services.

The majority of volunteering activities are aimed at enhancing social inclusion, decreasing risks of poverty or even increasing soft skills and other competences of beneficiaries. Volunteer programmes are also organised to improve living conditions in institutions.

Family volunteering programmes could be designed to meet similar needs. It is of great importance to design programmes that respect the specific needs of beneficiaries, as well as of adult and underage family members who act as volunteers. Family volunteering programmes have to be attractive and safe to all included in them, which creates a demanding task for the volunteer-involving organisation.

Family volunteering programmes examples:

Spending free time with beneficiaries – In order to include social institution beneficiaries in a community, a variety of activities have been organised outside of institutions' premises. It is popular to invite children from foster care homes to spend a weekend with a volunteer family, or to attend events such as sporting or cultural events, picnics, community days, other public events, etc. There are a variety of options and some could even be organised within the institutions. It is similar with other beneficiary groups – elderly, people with disabilities, patients, etc. These family volunteering programmes require careful preparation, monitoring, and evaluation and a special focus on the impact of direct contact with beneficiaries, especially on the younger family members.

Activities within institutions – There are ways to socialise beneficiaries with volunteers or volunteer families within the institutions, such as cultural, sporting events, social games, workshops, activities in agriculture, or in repairs and reconstruction. Many of them are short-term, but some are designed as a type of vacation programme for volunteers and volunteer families. If it requires the travel of volunteers to other places or countries for more than a day, for a weekend, or during vacations, there we come to voluntourism - activities that have been organised within the industry of sustainable tourism [13],[23].

Long-distance adoption – This is a specific humanitarian fundraising activity for targeted persons or families in need. The donor family members participate in a variety of financial or psychosocial support to recipient/s or in giving assistance such as support in education, payment of training, purchase of school or other equipment, but also for more personal situations or events. They establish relationships that sometimes develop into life-long friendships.



Family support: The Williams family

The Williams family consists of mum (Edith) and her two daughters (Jessica and Amelia) who are in their late 20s / early 30s. They all work and volunteer in a range of healthcare and educational roles across the local community. Edith's parents were a big influence on the whole family's volunteering: her dad used to volunteer at a day-care centre and at the church they attended, while her mother was a Brownie leader [2].

Edith used to help out with both. This has led to a lifelong passion for and commitment to volunteering and community support: she has been involved in the Brownies ever since. Edith is also heavily involved in St John Ambulance [21], a role that her daughters support her in, both emotionally and practically.

Jessica and Amelia, for example, both help to deliver youth work activities when they can, and when they can't attend sessions with their mum, they help her with the preparations for the session at the weekend. Talking about everything together also helps to take the burden off each other if things do get too much.

They describe it as using each other's talents and interests, as working it out between them to make it happen, and as being reflective of a wider sense that they have 'got each other's backs'. They describe themselves as a close-knit family who is intuitive about each other's needs. They reflected that not only does volunteering together 'feel good, and represent a 'constructive use of time', it also 'teaches you a way of living and learning' and has contributed to them being a 'small family with big networks'. Enjoyment, they suggest, is key."

For medical institutions

Volunteering in medical centres is a typical volunteer programme in societies with developed volunteerism and developed democracy. In these cases, the medical system tends to be well organised and safe for patients, thus volunteering in general could be a challenge for institutions' management, unless there are clear procedures in place and a great degree of trust.

Fortunately, there is a consensus about volunteering with children patients in hospitals/clinics/health centres. Family volunteering is an option, but still not that popular.



Natural progression: Family volunteering at St John Ambulance

As a large organisation that is heavily reliant on volunteers, St John Ambulance has a broad range of opportunities. As well as being focused on different activities/practical tasks, opportunities carry with them various levels of responsibility and require different skills, competencies, and time commitments. This is seen to facilitate the involvement of multiple family members within the organisation, while also enabling the progression of individual family members, both of which contribute to volunteer retention.

As one person reflected: *"So, you can bring your whole family to Saint John because we have offers for different ages, we have offers for different intensities. Because we work outside of the working day, in the evenings and the weekends and stuff, it is something you can do on family time."* Another said: *"So, the structure, if you like, is quite volunteer-focused and volunteer-led, so there are lots of opportunities for volunteers to progress and take increasing responsibility in the charity, which is probably one of the things that open up this kind of sense of where families can get involved in lots of different ways, lots of different areas, etc."*

While the organisation has never had a specifically designed scheme for family volunteering, it is welcomed, encouraged and celebrated: *"But, we celebrate it, we talk about it wonderfully, it's an organisation that celebrates and recognises long service, it's an organisation that recognises the value of this and that holds up young people as these wonderful examples to society and to a future."*

Recently, St John Ambulance has done more to actively encourage parents of children attending the youth groups to become leaders through, for example, the 'three-week challenge'. As one person explained: *"you say, 'Can you come and help us for three weeks?' and the chances are by three weeks you've either fallen in love with it or somebody has press-ganged you into doing something else so then that's it, that's how you do it, you recruit by stealth!"*

Family volunteering programmes examples:

Psychosocial support to patients and their family members - Volunteers who have similar experiences provides information and support to family members/parents whose children are in treatment. It is possible to combine volunteering with the provision of psychosocial support to parents of sick children and, at the same time, to their children through workshops or storytelling.

Workshops - art workshops, board game groups, and school tutoring are also activities that could be adapted for volunteering of several family members together.

We grow up!

Lindenfeld Association [1] from Romania develops the educational programme Ajungem MARI – We grow up!, which was born from a great desire to help the children in the placement centres to grow up, become responsible, independent, and safe people on their feet. Through their projects, they aim for these children from social centres or from disadvantaged backgrounds to gain confidence in their strengths, to open their perspectives, and to be able to dream of a bright future. They believe that through long-term educational programmes tailored to their needs, they can overcome the trauma of institutionalisation or life in disorganised families, where abuse and injustice frequently occur.

Within their programme, they don't have a specific role or tasks for family volunteers. Nor did they develop a specific recruiting process for volunteers who are members of the same family. They are just like any other regular volunteer and it just happens for some of them to be related, volunteering together and alongside.

Their volunteers help and support the education of children and teenagers in foster care centres, through creative workshops, school preparation sessions, social-recreational activities. Volunteers organise interactive lessons and workshops on various themes such as health education, civic education, financial and entrepreneurial education, online safety.

Volunteers accompany children to outings and help them discover the world outside the foster care centres, they constantly encourage the children and offer them guidance to discover and pursue their passions, they talk to them and listen to their problems, offer advice, play, and learn together, they help children with their homework or exams. Volunteers accept them the way they are and they try to offer them unconditional affection.

For cultural institutions

Cultural institutions could have a variety of methods to involve volunteers, even as families. Potentially they could participate in the organisation of events, city tours, research activities, promotion of film festivals or other cultural events, acting as museum guides, creating exhibitions about the monuments of a city or its important landmarks, organising city treasure hunts, etc.

For natural parks and protected areas

Nature parks have a huge potential for organising family volunteering, as they manage very interesting natural elements, content and location. They could also offer interesting volunteer positions for family volunteering: restoration of dry stone walls, research of different species, nurturing of the plants, volunteering on the info desk, etc.

Family volunteering programmes examples:

Observing and protection of animals, birds, plants – Bird watching, monitoring of animals, inspecting and cleaning beaches - these are just some of the very interesting contents of a potential family volunteering programme. It is up to the institution in their area of expertise to find the best set of activities that fit the profile of the families attending. It is of crucial importance to inform and train volunteers for specific themes.

Planting forests – there is a great potential for family volunteering in planting forests. Besides nature protection institutions, it requires the involvement of other stakeholders, such as state authorities, civil society organisations, businesses, media, local administration, agencies. The programme could be organised as one event or a long term campaign.

Clean-up - Cleaning of public parks, beaches, riverbanks, or other locations provides a motivating activity for each family member who will spend time outside, in a group, with a clear purpose and possibly with full consensus within the family. It could be organised at a low scale or as large or even global campaigns. Examples of large-scale campaigns are World Clean-up Day or Let's do it!



For civil society organisations

Although civil society organisations (CSOs) have limited resources at disposal, they are still the major community mobiliser, very creative in the identification and usage of local resources. Members or other citizens support their activities and volunteer in organised or spontaneous actions. Often family members volunteer in CSOs. Still, it is not perceived as a specific volunteer programme, nor are positive effects for the family, community, or the organisation widely recognised.

Organising actions with a focus on family volunteering is more an exception than a rule. Still, there are inspiring examples of successful family volunteering initiatives run by CSOs.

Cluj-Napoca Volunteer Centre

The Cluj-Napoca Volunteer Centre or Centrul de Voluntariat Cluj-Napoca (CVCN) [5] was legally founded, as an independent organisation, in December 2004, in Romania. The mission of CVCN is to develop volunteerism as a means of involving citizens in solving the problems of the Cluj community.

Their experience of family volunteering involves members of the family volunteering alongside. Anca & Nico (sisters) were mainly involved in daily office activities and different projects. They both started by coming to the office 1-2 times per week to help with different office tasks, just that they did it with a 10 years difference.

It is very interesting how Anca came 13 years ago for the first time and 10 years later Nico joined the team for the same position. Meanwhile, Anca found a job, and unfortunately, her involvement in the organisation's activities has been reduced a lot.

They both started with the same office tasks: copying papers, centralising and reporting questionnaires, and other small but important tasks. Anca has developed different skills and was able to be part of a lot of organisation's projects, including coordinating local and international projects. Now she helps us as a mentor for our EVS/ESC projects and keeps contact with local volunteers and NGOs. Nico is at the beginning of her journey as a volunteer, still at the office tasks, but who knows where her journey will go.

Now they meet each other at different events, but from different perspectives: Anca as a special guest and Nico as part of the organisational team.

"I never imagined that the high school student who signed up with us as a local volunteer in 2007 for administrative activities will have such an important role and impact in the life of the organisation. And this is not because I can't afford to dream, or because Anca would not have extraordinary qualities, but simply because it has never happened before that a volunteer who starts activities at 15-16 years old is involved very long term as an adult, deep and constant in the life of the organisation. Anca is a balanced person who manages to accomplish the tasks and at the same time to develop his consistent skills. Anca is one of the people who does not talk about personal development, but lives it, puts it into practice.

I think that Anca is one of the most open people for change, development, acceptance, and a teammate you can count on. Trust is one of the traits that govern the relationship between CVCN and Anca, and now the relay is taken over by Nico, who has not only a voice similar to Anca's but also similar qualities.

This is one of the most beautiful experiences of CVCN which is proud to impact the lives of its volunteers and their families."

Nicoleta Chiş-Racolţa, CVCN, Romania

Hosting of refugees and foreigners – In order to ease coping in a new social context, local families host refugee families, or family members, maintain regular contact, and assist in daily situations; it is in some cases organised as short term volunteering, such as one visit, or as a long-term support programme.

Family Volunteering with Refugees from Ukraine - DKolektiv, Croatia

At the end of February, beginning of March, refugees from Ukraine, mostly mothers with children began coming to Croatia. In Osijek, most of the services for refugees were organised by local authorities in cooperation with local institutions and some other organisations such as living, schooling, legal conditions, food and other needed supplies.

Once the primary needs of refugees have been settled, other associations stepped in, organising different social activities for mothers and children.



DKolektiv – organisation for social development started Ukrainian women's social club every Saturday in the premises of their social centre "Social Atelier", inviting local volunteers and women from Ukraine with their children situated in Osijek every week to meet each other in order to provide support to refugees.

A few weeks ago, one local family (mother and a 9-year-old daughter) came to Social Atelier as they met one of the Ukrainian families at the local playground and found out for these activities.

They decided to join the group as volunteers and for the last few weeks they been coming to Social Atelier to meet the Ukrainian families, talk to them, providing support and basic information relevant for getting to know the town better (like where are relevant institutions, where to buy some specific things, where to take children for some fun, etc.).



While the daughter is playing with other children, mother is providing support to Ukrainian women, making them feel comfortable in Osijek and making some new friendships as well.

Training/hosting working dogs (assistance dogs) – Families with skills and capacities to raise and train dogs, keep puppies for a period of time with the supervision of experienced dog trainers, and prepare them for family life. After the preparatory period, the dog is sent to a training centre to pass a specific training before joining the family of a person in need of assistance.



Rehabilitation Centre Silver, Croatia

The Rehabilitation Centre Silver [4] is a particular institution of social care in this region of Europe, which trains assistance dogs to be used in the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and children with developmental difficulties. The basic programmes of the Centre aim to ensure autonomy, independence, and a higher quality of life for persons with disabilities, children with developmental difficulties, and their families. The founder of the Centre is the City of Zagreb.

The activities of the Silver Centre include programmes for: visually impaired persons; persons with mobility difficulties or persons who use wheelchairs; children with developmental difficulties (cerebral paralysis, autism, blindness, children at risk of neurological disorders, ADHD, etc.); persons with physical or intellectual disability, or mental disorder.

Training and assignment of assistance dogs is based on the Breeding and Puppy raising programme. Both include volunteers who take care of breeding dogs and raise puppies. Those volunteers also include families, since the Centre Silver was founded, in 2008.

- Puppy socialisation - Puppy raising programme includes socialisation of young puppies 2 months old – future assistance dogs who live in volunteer families till age of 16 months. During that period the family members, in their home, beside basic dog care and nurturing, under guidance of Centre Silver professionals – they raise puppies and provide dog handling in accordance with assistance dog requirements. Families with children/grandparents are very welcome, because puppies get used to living and being handled by different generations.
- Advocacy of accessibility of assistance dog clients - Centre Silver teaches and supports advocacy activities to promote accessibility of assistance dog clients – which starts in puppy raising programmes, where volunteers in daily life educate and aim to increase the sensitivity of individuals and the wider public. Children educate peers in school, parents educate their work colleagues, family friends and the local environment.
- Puppies' early socialisation (3 - 6 weeks old) – is provided by trained volunteers (families) who learned how to provide very specific and gentle activities of early socialisation with puppies.
- Promotion of volunteering – participating in the development of promo materials and activities about the Puppy raising programme and the role of assistance dogs in the life of persons with disabilities.
- Support to other (new) volunteers – puppy raisers - experienced family volunteers help and support new volunteers in new challenges and finding solutions in puppy raising.

It may be difficult to present exceptional examples of volunteering programmes appropriate for family volunteering. Instead of that, it would be better to encourage all volunteer-involving organisations to promote family volunteering, to adapt existing volunteering programmes or to design volunteer positions appropriate for family members of different age groups, especially for families that include children or youth.

Voluntourism

International or smaller non-profit organisations have developed volunteering in underprivileged countries and areas, where they organise various volunteer programmes aimed at assisting communities such as building schools, orphanages or similar community development actions.

Despite the high importance to those communities, such volunteer programmes bring a risk of misuse of local values and resources. Here, we would like to point out the need to organise voluntourism programmes in line with the real spirit, values, and standards of volunteering.

In this case, special attention should be given to the way the voluntourism programmes are designed, the motivation and expectations of the family volunteers, and the way the process is being promoted and communicated [13],[23]. Many of these programmes are designed for families and include travel and other tourist services.

Tourism and volunteering could be a great way to motivate people to get involved with charities, as they have the opportunity to learn about different parts of the world and be satisfied with the good deed they were performing.

There is a great potential in developing sustainable and responsible tourism, based on destination management but with ensured high-quality standards and a priority to serve the local community. The sustainability of communities and societies requires abiding by a coherent connection with the UN Agenda 2030 and meeting global development goals. Local resources and local population should be supported with a volunteer programme having in mind long-term effects and the 4P principles:

People – potentials, dignity, prosperity;

Planet – protection, sustainably managing resources;

Prosperity - prosperous and fulfilling lives to all; economic, social, and technological progress in harmony with nature.

Peace - peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, which are free from fear and violence

Traveling and volunteering to local communities is a situation where families could find ways to meet their own needs, such as prevention or correction of certain behaviours, improving and strengthening of family relationships, behaviour, or values, and also spending family quality time together.

Quality elements of Family Volunteering Programmes

Even if readers may be looking here for a recipe for a qualitative/well-designed family volunteering programme, in fact, what is possible for us is not to hand out a detailed step-by-step failure-proof plan, but rather to provide a proposed structure for creating such a programme and to remind readers of the questions from the introductory part of this chapter. The prevention or correction of certain behaviours, improving and strengthening of family relationships, or sharing values, and also spending family quality time together.

An example of drafting a family volunteering programme, based on sustainable development goals:

Area of volunteering	SDG it supports	General objective of the volunteering activity	Specific objectives for community (c), organisation (o), and family (f)	Expected outcomes
Education	Peace - to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence.	To ensure a sustainable, tolerant and supportive community in town x, through the school system	<p>(c) Contribute to the successful integration of families with children coming from other countries, with special attention to refugee families.</p> <p>(o) Enhance coping mechanisms of the school in the process of integration of children with potential difficulties; improve public and self-perception of the school.</p> <p>(f) Ensure supporting family assistance to each family coming from other countries, with special attention to refugee families, during initial phases of integration.</p>	<p>Each student from the target group will be assisted and provided with an out-of-institution support of school's volunteer families.</p> <p>Volunteer families will be motivated, selected, monitored in the process of support provision and maintained as an asset of the school.</p>

After making a decision about an approach, the next step is the demanding phase of FV volunteer programme design. There are no limits but there should be a respect of values and quality standards.

Since this is an important topic, the project partners have designed a completely separate handbook to deal with the topic of programme design - so we invite you to discover it [here](#).

III. For inspiration and encouragement – Why do it?

Project Pilot Activities From Partner Countries

Within our Strategic partnership project that allowed us all to study the concept of Family Volunteering, we also wanted to test how family volunteering goes and feels in practice. This resulted in over **40 pilot Family Volunteering activities** implemented in 6 European countries, in 2021. You can discover below more about all these pilot activities to get a taste of what you could also implement in your community and with your partners and volunteers.

Belgium - project partner - CEV - European Centre for Volunteering

Hosting organisation: City Farm - Ferme Maximilian Brussels

Pilot period: July-August 2021

They hosted 5 FV activities, whose direct beneficiaries were the many families, individuals, schools and other groups who use the farm for educational and recreational purposes.

4 young housemates volunteered together at the City Farm, for one day, caring for the animals, feeding and exercising them and cleaning their sleeping areas and enclosures.

The participants agreed they learned some practical skills in animal care, but also about themselves as a group, how they act as a team and react as individuals or collectively to new and unexpected or unusual situations “out of their comfort zone”.





Two families made up of a married couple with two young children volunteered together at the City Farm - for half a day each family, getting involved in taking care of the animals, feeding and exercising them, and cleaning their sleeping areas and enclosures.

They were also involved in some gardening.

The volunteering tasks were adapted to the ages of the children and some tasks were done together as a family and some individually, the children being accompanied by a parent or the volunteer coordinator.

The families succeeded in their aim to do a fun activity together and to learn and teach the children about nature, food sources, and food production.



A single parent with one child volunteered together at the City Farm - the activity lasted for two consecutive half days and involved gardening in the common spaces of the park and in the vegetable-growing areas.

The family confirmed they had a lot of fun while learning about nature, how we can make food, and where we get our food from.

Hosting organisation: Natural Reserve Watermael-Boitsfort Brussels

Pilot period: November 2021

The activity lasted for half a day and involved clearing invasive plants from the natural reserve. The male adult family members are work colleagues and their families included a couple without children, a couple with two small children, and a stepfather and older stepson. The tasks were adapted to the different physical abilities depending on the strength, size, and age of the volunteer. Therefore, the adults did the digging with the proper tools, while the children dragged the un-needed plants and weeds to the trailer to be taken away.

The environment offered plenty of variety of tasks, ensuring that everyone had something to offer, even the smallest children, and all could feel a sense of achievement and satisfaction with their contribution at the end of the activity.



The families agreed that it was nice to spend time with each other out of the work environment and with each other's families. They also learned a lot about local flora and fauna for the ecosystem and the importance of the natural environment in the city, for the air quality, the general health and well-being of the population as well as the preservation of the natural environment.

Croatia - project partner - [Croatian Volunteer Development Centre](#)

Hosting organisation: [Association MOGU, Osijek](#)

Association MOGU (I can) is an experienced association working in the field of therapeutic horseback riding, several times awarded for good volunteer management and involvement of volunteers, and is situated in the eastern part of Croatia. It has over 200 beneficiaries of therapeutic programmes. The therapeutic riding programme includes socialisation of children and youth with disabilities and realisation of individual potentials of each beneficiary.

Recruitment of family volunteers started spontaneously, not consciously planned, and currently, they involve 2 families in a variety of activities, such as taking care of the horses and cleaning, preparation of the horses for therapeutic riding as well as accompanying beneficiaries through the process of therapeutic riding.



Both families developed a passion for volunteering through their daughters' experiences. That's how it all started and they joined the team but volunteered in different volunteer positions.

Male members of the family mostly volunteered regarding maintenance and physical activities that request physical strength, as well as some specific knowledge regarding the housekeeping and barn keeping works. The concept of family volunteering within the association is perceived as a great way to involve more volunteers, contribute to the better understanding of the social needs of specific target groups and beneficiaries, and by that bringing family more closely. In modern times when families encounter a lack of time spent together, this is a perfect way to do something useful for the community and to bring families closer.

"I was surprised with the amount of love and a strong commitment to the Association. It was nice to see the strong attachment among family members that believe in the mission of the Association. Family volunteering definitely brings families more closely to a good cause. Besides that, family volunteering gives a new perspective and role to the associations: they bind and connect families."

Marijana Koprivnjak - volunteer coordinator

Germany - project partner - Augsburg Volunteer Centre

Hosting organisation: Volunteer Centre Weilheim-Schongau, in cooperation with Gmünder Hof - social farming project.

Pilot period: July-October 2021.

The family volunteering was set up as a recurring activity every Wednesday afternoon for several weeks. Two families - one single mother with her twins and one mother with her son - took this opportunity to help on the farm. They took care of the outdoor area and helped with gardening and repairing. They also handcrafted some decorations for the farm. As two of the children were already in primary school and joined by one parent, it was easy for them to do activities almost independently.

For three weeks the families showed up on a regular basis, afterward becoming more irregular, as the kids were involved in other activities also. The mothers also reported that it wasn't very easy to integrate volunteering in their family life if the actions take place during the week.

Hosting organisation: Volunteer Center Neustadt an der Aisch

Pilot period: July-October 2021.

They organised a remote family volunteering activity via the app "ActionBound", which allows one to create and implement rallies. The rally was called "Out and about with a snack and garbage bag" and families all around that certain neighbourhood could go for a walk, explore nature and answer a quiz while cleaning up the area they're walking through.

Three families took part in this activity. They all really enjoyed the activity and answered the questions which were also published on the app. This form of family volunteering combined with a form of remote volunteering could have a huge potential and activate many families.



What is important to have in mind is that communication and marketing for this kind of volunteering is key, especially when people aren't very familiar with this app.

Hosting organisation: youfarm Augsburg

Pilot period: July-October 2021.

youfarm Augsburg focuses on experience-oriented learning, on their 1-hectare large Playground. Their activities took place on several Saturdays. During the whole day, families could join whenever they wanted. These activities were a huge success.



On the 4 dates of activities, all in all over 90 volunteers joined, representing all ages - from babies to grandmas. As this organisation could provide many staff members (except for 2 employees, all of them were volunteers), it was no problem to also support the youngest family members. The activities set up were building insect hotels, restructuring and optimising the area and handcrafting decorations.

As this organisation was already used to working with children and being very flexible and spontaneous with their activities, it was easy for them to adapt to the family volunteering situation. Even though the activities were planned and set up, the volunteers were quite free to go for whatever they wanted and for how long they wanted, similar to the Montessori educational concept.

Part of the success was for sure the intense marketing process that was done. There were articles in the newspaper, website posts, and Facebook advertising which in fact had the biggest success.

Ireland - project partner - Volunteer Ireland

Hosting organisation: Flossie and the Beach Cleaners

Pilot period: November 2021.

Flossie and the Beach Cleaners is an Irish marine environmental charity and an ever-growing group of marine enthusiasts. They are passionate about saving our seas and sea creatures from the ravages of plastic pollution.

Through regular fun beach cleaning, junior and senior school workshops and clean-up events, they aim to do what they can to make a real difference whilst educating children in a fun, stress-free way. This is their future and the organisation team believes that with positivity and focused action, our oceans and sea life can continue to flourish.



Flossie Donnelly, aged 14, is the inspiration and patron of the charity talks and is passionate about fighting plastic pollution and the love of marine life. When she was 12 years old, Flossie traveled to Indonesia to visit one of the world's dirtiest rivers and learned that solving the plastic problem is a very hard task.



Flossie and the Beach Cleaners was set up by Flossie and her mother Hariot, our first example of a Family Volunteering project from the outset.

During the year a number of clean ups take place and in late 2021 and 2022 more and more groups are being set up around the coast of Ireland.

Climate change is a global issue. Environmental volunteering and clean-ups are a great way for families to get involved and play their part. The programme offers corporate volunteering, Family Volunteering, and volunteering for individuals. They have developed a new inclusive volunteer policy, during the pilot activity, to promote volunteering practice and have linked in with their local volunteer centre and Volunteer Ireland for additional support.

Families have got involved where an individual got involved, such as a young person through their school or an adult through corporate volunteering. While volunteering, they discovered that they could volunteer with a family member and returned again to volunteer as Family Volunteers.

The programme is inclusive, diverse, and very welcoming to family volunteers and they hope to expand the programme more in 2022 beyond the pilot phase.

Family Volunteers reported that the experience of volunteering was a very positive one and the practical element of volunteering was a positive attraction to get some exercise in the great outdoors while volunteering and making a positive impact on the oceans and seas around us.

Hosting organisation: Making Connections, Clonskeagh, Ireland

Pilot period: September-November 2021

Making Connections is a volunteer-led organisation providing Befriending & Wellbeing Supports for people over 65 years. Their mission is to alleviate loneliness and isolation by offering supports that facilitate people to remain healthy and socially connected.

They do this in partnership with Health Service Executive (HSE) and in collaboration with local government and organisations. Making Connections' work aims to alleviate loneliness and isolation by offering supports that facilitate people to remain healthy and socially connected.

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Their supports include:

- **Befriending Visits:** Through regular visits, Befriending Volunteers provide invaluable social engagement from which they also benefit
- **Phone Support:** Regular social calls provided by fully screened volunteers
- **Community Meal:** In partnership with (HSE) and Airfield Estate they provide 'Good Food Delivered.' Their Volunteer Drivers offer more than a delivery service – they also provide a friendly face, a happy wave, and the joy of chats on the doorstep.



During the family volunteering pilot activities, Making Connections engaged with a number of local schools and the student's parents got involved to meet with and volunteer with those most isolated in the community.

The family volunteers reported that the experience of family volunteering was a very positive one which helped the young people and adults to form better bonds and relationships through volunteering.

Norway - project partner - Vestre Aker Volunteer Centre, Oslo

Hosting organisation: Vestre Aker Frivilligsentral (VAFS)

Pilot period: July 2021

Summer is a difficult time for many seniors. The senior centres are closed, and relatives are on vacation. The result is loneliness, often accompanied by malnutrition. The activity is designed to create a meeting place for seniors where they can both meet friends and be served healthy and enjoyable food. The activity is perfect for Family Volunteering.



During the summer, there were 2 different families volunteering. The first family was made up of three generations. The facilitator of the activity, part of the middle generation, was also the facilitator of this activity - as an adult educator.

He brought along his daughter, nephew, and mother. The second family involved was a married couple, both seniors themselves. Both families were socially adapted and well-adjusted in society. Before the activity, they undertook a thorough training in nutrition for elderly people and a more general introduction to challenges the elderly face in their everyday life.

All family members joined in the food preparation. It was especially aimed for the youngest to use in practice what they had learned during the training. Furthermore, the task itself was something the families enjoyed doing together. Serving and socialising with the guests was also an important task they all took part in. After the activity, conversations with the families showed that they all found the activity enjoyable and meaningful.

Even more interesting is that they all felt doing this together strengthened the bond between them. Both families described their family bonds in advance as strong, but they felt this gave them a new dimension to their family. The youngest felt they were a part of something on an equal footing, rather than being the juniors, as they usually are in their family relations.

Both families have been part of several more similar activities since the pilot, and they have also recruited other family members to volunteer.

Hosting organisation: Ullern Frivilligsentral (UFS)

Pilot period: September 2021

One surprising fact of Norwegian volunteering is that 8% of the population between the ages of 16 and 79 states they are not volunteers and the main reason for this is that nobody has asked them.

On the other side of the volunteering sector are the beneficiaries, or rather they potential beneficiaries - these are the people who don't ask for help, the ones that stay at home because they believe that there is nothing for them outside.

Volunteer Day is an event meant to combine these two issues and create a solution.



All organisations in the municipality are invited to show off their organisation and activities. As a result, the event consists of music, sports, crafts, and numerous hobbies.



This is an event that has been done for several years. In 2021 UFS, in cooperation with the Family Volunteer partner Vestre Aker Frivilligsentral, used the framework of Volunteer Day to focus on recruiting families to volunteer together, helping to organise the event. The tasks they performed ranged from working on social media to promote the event and giving out flyers, to manual labour, cleaning, selling food, and many other administrative tasks that have to be done during and after a festival.

A number of families joined in, and their social profile was everything from the well-situated to families with fewer opportunities, having an immigrant background. There is a tradition for this in Norway, even a word for it - Dugnad. In a dugnad, the factory owner volunteers doing manual labour next to the unemployed, in a dugnad their social status does not apply. Showing this concept in a family context proved to be very enlightening. Especially the younger family members connected on a basic level and now, quite a few months later, several tell us they are friends.

Hosting organisation: Ullern Frivilligsentral (UFS)

Pilot period: November 2021

This is a yearly event where volunteers knit scarves. This work is done all year and on November 1st they are all handed out. The goal is that the scarves become a physical token of us, people, taking care of each other.

The event was used to try out family volunteering in the two contexts, production and handing out the scarves. During the production phase, the volunteers - mother and daughter (and even a grand-daughter) - were taught how to knit and they enjoyed social time together doing it.



One thing we especially noted was that everyone told us that spending time doing this gave them time to talk- there was no telephone or iPad taking up their attention. UFS concluded that learning and doing handcrafts is very well suited for families struggling to connect, due to interference from the modern world.

Hosting organisation: Ullern Frivilligsentral (UFS)

Pilot period: December 2021

One of the many challenges one meets when arriving in a new country is culture shock. The differences between Syrians and Norwegians are numerous, but often very shallow when taking a closer look.

The Christmas event is such a closer look.





It is meant to show the refugees what values lie behind the overwhelming decorations and consumption the Christmas celebration in Norway includes.

One of the many challenges one meets when arriving in a new country is culture shock. The differences between Syrians and Norwegians are numerous, but often very shallow when taking a closer look.

Before the event, the volunteers collected Christmas gifts from private persons and businesses. During the event, traditional Norwegian Christmas food and drinks were served and the gifts were handed out. Combining this event with Family Volunteering has shown that families are very well suited to making refugees feel welcome.

Many of them have left or lost their family and even the ones that have not said that it felt more safe seeing that families helped together - it felt like a community.



Romania - project partner - Pro Vobis National Resource Centre for Volunteering

Hosting organisation: Mansio Association, Baia Mare

Pilot period: August 2021

Mansio, an organisation focused on delivering a variety of services for the children in a rural community, has embraced family volunteering by launching a series of 4 mother-daughter-led activities.

First they met with the community and found out what they would like to learn or do and decided to organise 4 workshops:

- Learning the art and craft of wool knitting,
- upcycling with various materials,
- a course about insects, including microscope observations which greatly fascinated the kids and finally,
- an outdoor sport event using trampolines.



Each one was prepared and delivered by a different mother-daughter team and this was an opportunity for them not only to work together but also to acquire new skills, such as performing a needs analysis, planning an activity, organising the logistics and gathering resources.

In the end, everyone had fun participating and both volunteers and the beneficiaries got to learn useful skills.

The family volunteers declared afterward that spending time together in this manner had made them feel closer to each other and more connected.



Hosting organisation: Municipal Library Medgidia

Pilot period: July-October 2021

The public library in Medgidia has engaged the community in crafty activities and personal development workshops. Their 2 teams of family volunteers consisted of a grandmother-mother-daughter trio, as well as a mother-daughter team.



The personal development workshops were prepared and delivered by the mother-daughter team, making use of the professional psychology background the mother possessed. The young participants learned about recognising and managing emotions in various situations.

The other family volunteers implemented a series of crafty workshops through which they taught tailoring skills, how to use a sewing machine, and make their own personalised T-shirts.

The grandmother led the tailoring workshops, teaching everyone how to use a sewing machine. By the end, everyone managed to create their own phone covers from scratch.

The mother led the T-shirt's personalization sessions, while the daughter supported both of them with the planning and organisation of the workshops.



The families enjoyed the time spent together, they connected differently while overcoming the age barrier and they had a plan together for a longer period of time. For example, the grandmother-mother-daughter team has met with the beneficiaries for 11 creative sessions over the course of 4 months.

The volunteers also declared that they had seen new qualities in each other and that it made them feel valued to be perceived differently, as knowledgeable and skilled persons, by their own family members. Moreover, one of the volunteers was battling illness, and having this project brought extra motivation and supported her mental health and positivity.

Hosting organisation: Town Library Ovidiu

Pilot period: August-December 2021

In Ovidiu, a town located on the shoreline of the Black Sea, the local librarian decided to fully take advantage of the geography and transformed the esplanade into a meeting place for families.



She activated a few volunteers from the community and they organised a series of events dedicated to families with children. They selected a few books for children to read together, they held a workshop for crafting Christmas decorations and some young volunteers from the local Coding club prepared a few fun physics experiments to do together with the smaller children.

The event attracted many families with children who benefited fully from the fun and diverse activities. For the volunteers, this was a new form of engagement through which they learned to work together and develop new skills.

Hosting organisation: Cluj County Library

Pilot period: July-December 2021

In Cluj-Napoca, the county library coordinated 2 teams of family volunteers who engaged in various activities with 2 different beneficiary groups: senior citizens from an elderly daycare home and teenagers in need of assistance for school subjects. One of the volunteers has also held an online graphic design class for the youngsters.

One of the families was made up of 3 adults - mother and 2 of her daughters, while the second family included 2 adults and 2 children.

The activities planned for the seniors were quite diverse: the volunteers taught language classes - English and Japanese - online, due to the Covid pandemic, which made it more accessible for the beneficiaries; they created bracelets to donate, they also visited the center on multiple occasions to socialise, play board games and read together with the seniors.



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This publication has been created as part of the “Follow your Vision - FAMILY VOLUNTEERING, a new form of engagement” project, which is an Erasmus + Strategic Partnership that aims to be a strategic answer to a mix of needs, interests, and combined opportunities.

The project duration is December 2019 - May 2022, being funded by the European Union within the Erasmus+ Program, Adult Education Strategic Partnerships, under the contract number: 2019-1-RO01-KA204-063802.

Learn more about this project on our web page: www.familyvolunteering.eu.

The information and views set out in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies, nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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The strategic partnership implementing the project is made up of 6 organisations with vast experience in volunteering and developing quality volunteering programmes:

- CEV-European Center for Volunteering from Belgium - europeanvolunteercentre.org;
- Croatian Volunteer Development Centre - hcrv.hr;
- Volunteer Centre Augsburg, Germany - freiwilligen-zentrum-augsburg.de
- Volunteering Ireland - volunteer.ie
- Vestre Aker Frivillighetssentral, Norway - vestreaker.frivilligsentral.no;

and the applicant organisation – Pro Vobis– National Resource Centre for Volunteering from Romania - provobis.ro.

