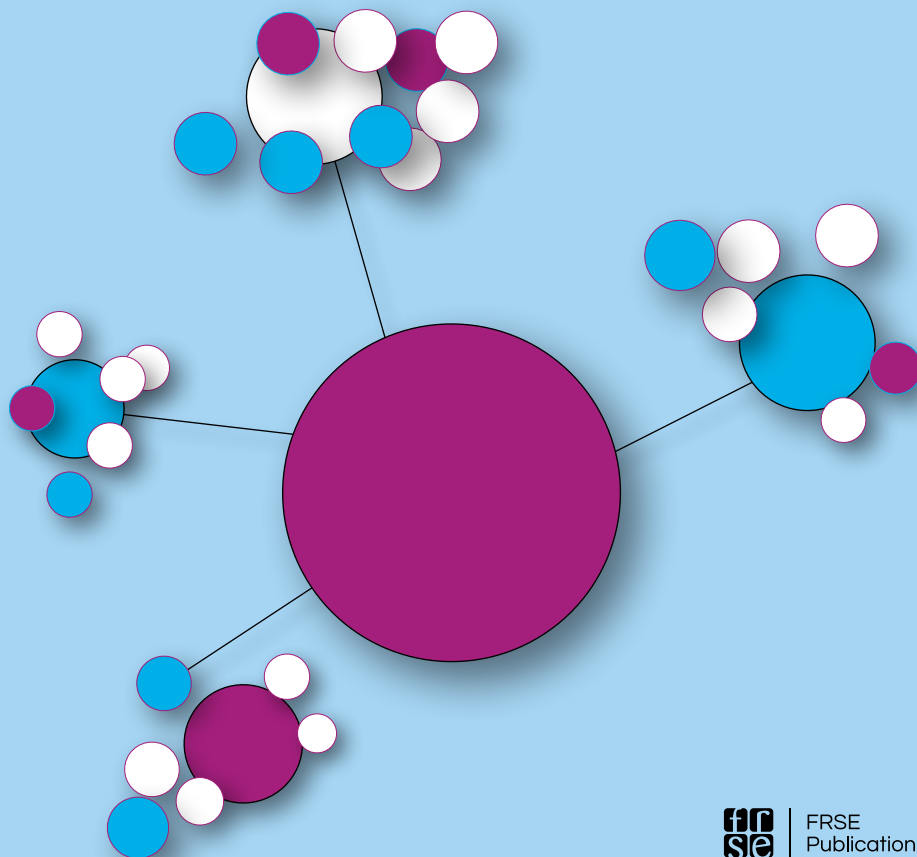


Volunteering team projects under the European Solidarity Corps

Study report on the activities undertaken
by Polish organisations in 2018–2020









Home

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FRSE RESEARCH REPORT 6/2020

**Volunteering team projects under the European Solidarity Corps
Study report on the activities undertaken by Polish organisations in 2018–2020**

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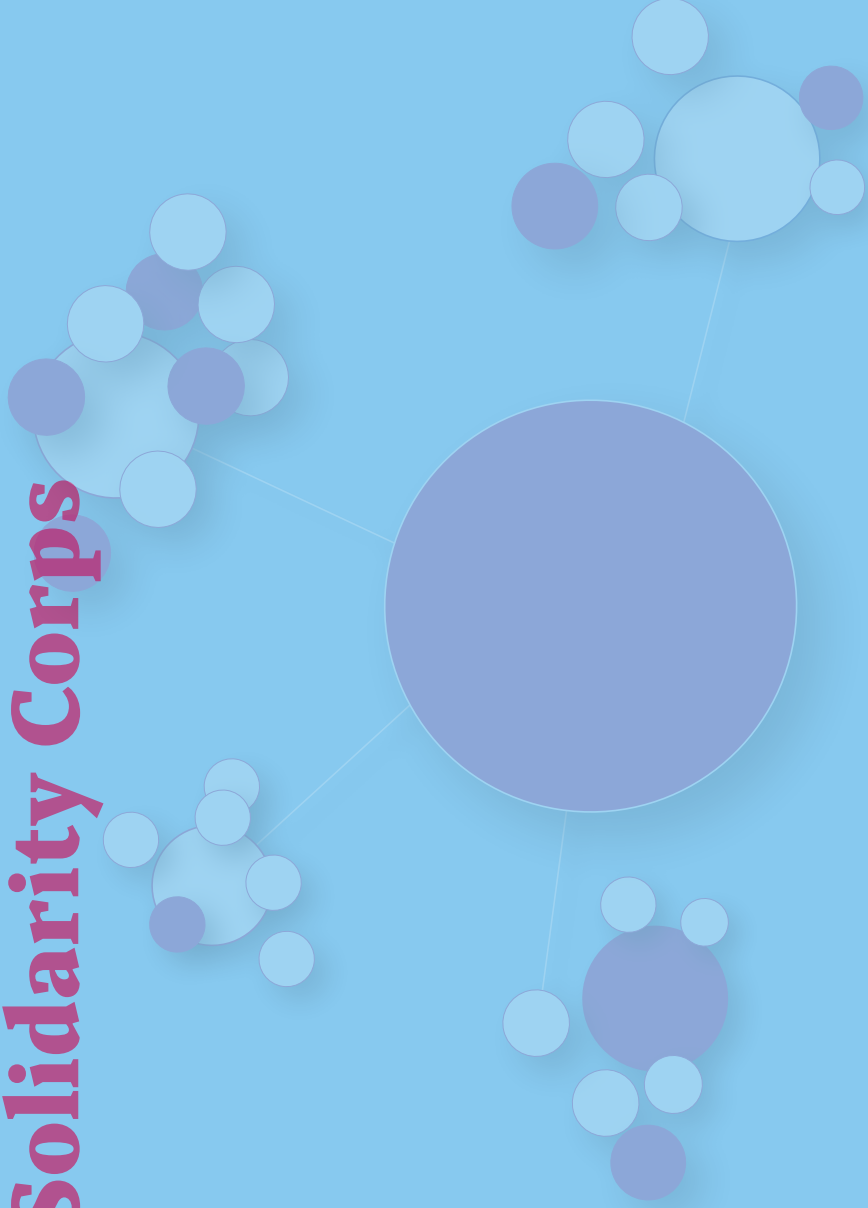
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European Solidarity Corps



Launched in 2016, the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) is an European Union programme promoting solidarity as a value. The ESC builds on previous initiatives – European Voluntary Service and Erasmus+ Volunteering. The programme is addressed to organisations, institutions and companies, which can apply for funding for volunteer activities and subsidies on workplaces for employees and trainees. The aim of the ESC is to facilitate cooperation of entities carrying out social activities with young people who want to serve as volunteers, trainees or work abroad. The ESC activities are carried out at national and international level.

As part of the European Solidarity Corps, organisations, institutions and companies can implement the following actions:

- **Volunteering projects**, as part of which you can invite domestic or international volunteers to cooperate;
- **Traineeships and jobs**, which enable entities operating in the social work and voluntary sector to host domestic and international trainees and employees;
- **Solidarity projects**, as part of which local initiatives are implemented in cooperation with various types of organisations and local government institutions.

The target group of the European Solidarity Corps are people aged 18–30. They are mainly engaged through organisations, institutions, and public or private bodies that undertake solidarity initiatives. Any organisation wishing to start a European Solidarity Corps activity (other than Solidarity Projects) must obtain a Quality Label¹. The label is awarded by the National Agency of the European Solidarity Corps. In Poland, it is the Foundation for the Development of the Education System. The Quality Label certifies that a given institution provides adequate conditions for the young people to participate in solidarity activities, operates in accordance with the principles and objectives of the European Solidarity Corps and other requirements described in the *European Solidarity Corps Guide*².

1 In the case of European Voluntary Service and Erasmus+ Volunteering, the pass to the implementation of projects was an accreditation, which confirmed that a given institution's possessed knowledge of the programme rules. The accreditation made it possible to submit an application for project financing.

2 *European Solidarity Corps Guide*, versions: 2018, 2019 and 2020; bit.ly/3iZ0jaG [accessed: 14/10/2020].

Volunteering projects

In Poland, Volunteering projects are the most frequently implemented form of activity as part of the European Solidarity Corps. In accordance with the rules of the programme, these are solidarity projects which consist in voluntary unpaid work for up to 12 months on a full-time basis (at least 30 hours, but not more than 38 hours per week)³. Through volunteering, young people can become actively involved in the daily work of organisations working for local communities.

Volunteering as part of the ESC programme is the main mechanism for promoting solidarity. Organisations and volunteers help to solve important social challenges and meet the needs of local communities. Thanks to volunteering, young people gain practical experience and develop personal, educational, social, civic and professional skills and competencies. This in turn increases their employability. It should also be a valuable experience for them in the scope of non-formal and informal education. However, volunteering cannot be treated as a traineeship or employment and should be based on a written agreement.

The European Solidarity Corps covers the expenses incurred by the participants in the projects, but does not provide remuneration or other types of material benefits. As a rule, voluntary work should be unpaid, except for possible contribution to travel costs (if the grant does not fully cover them) and additional expenses not related to project implementation. In accordance with the rules of the programme, participants are selected in a fair, transparent and objective manner, and regardless of their ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or political opinions. One cannot require that project candidates hold any specific qualifications, have a given level of education, display relevant experience or knowledge of languages. More detailed selection criteria can be applied if they relate to the type of tasks foreseen for the volunteers or if they arise from the project context.

³ *European Solidarity Corps Guide, op.cit.*

The following types of volunteering projects are funded under the European Solidarity Corps:

INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERING



Duration: from 2 to 12 months

Individual volunteering enables the participants to become involved in the daily work of community-based organisations. It can be served abroad (the activities take place outside the volunteer's country of residence) or at home. The latter type of volunteering can serve as a tool to activate people with fewer opportunities who would not be able to participate in cross-border volunteering, especially in the absence of national mechanisms supporting such activities.

Examples of activities:

- working for the benefit of young people in the local community – organising their free time, teaching them languages, introducing the culture of volunteer's home country.

VOLUNTEERING TEAMS



Duration: from 2 weeks to 2 months

It enables teams of volunteers (from 10 to 40-strong) coming from at least two different countries to perform voluntary work. Such projects facilitate the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in the European Solidarity Corps activities. At least 25% of volunteers must come from a country other than the country where the activity takes place. ESC volunteering teams perform project tasks over a short period of time (usually, but not always): during holidays, semester breaks, the transition from education to the labour market). Although team volunteering projects are shorter, they bring considerable benefits both to the volunteers and to the communities they work for.

Examples of activities:

- organisation of cultural events;
- restoration of cultural heritage sites damaged by natural disasters;
- taking care of endangered species;
- support for education activities in refugee camps.

Literature on volunteering teams

Young people aged 18–30 could participate in team volunteering projects as part of the following programmes: Youth in Action – Action 2; European Voluntary Service – EVS (2007–2013), Erasmus+ Volunteering (2014–2018) and European Solidarity Corps (from 2018). Although such projects have been carried out for a long time, no attempt has yet been made to analyse them in more detail or to examine the impact they have exerted on the organisations and volunteers. There is little information on the effects of such projects in the literature and the available studies are limited to the description of the completed activities.

In 2017, the European Commission published a report entitled *Study on the impact of transnational volunteering through the European Voluntary Service*⁴, which analysed the impact of international projects funded by EVS on its

4 *Study on the impact of transnational volunteering through the European Voluntary Service*, bit.ly/36xOdTI [accessed: 04/10/2020].

participants, organisers and local communities. However, it made no distinction between individual volunteers and their teams.

The Szansa Association for the Development of Children's Activity published a manual in Polish entitled *Volunteers as a chance – cooperation with volunteering teams*⁵, addressed to NGO employees and volunteer coordinators. It discusses a number of practical issues related to cooperation with volunteering teams, such as the selection of volunteers and motivating the group or relations with the coordinators. The authors also presented a set of standards for cooperation with volunteers and analysed the stages of the group process with indicating potential risks. A similar topic has been discussed on the Ochotnicy Warszawscy [Warsaw Volunteers] website⁶, which focuses especially on the principles of cooperation with people younger than 18.

The Instytut Edukacyjno-Badawczy Association prepared a report in Polish entitled *I don't work for free – volunteering as a pathway to success*⁷, which addresses a number of issues related to team volunteering. It identifies the main drivers for volunteers to work for others. The publication also discusses their training and competencies acquired through volunteering.

Volunteering teams in Poland

The European Solidarity Corps is not the only programme under which young Poles can take part in team volunteering. Since 2011, the One World Association from Poznań has organised workcamps – international volunteering projects, as part of which people coming from different countries work in a multicultural environment for the benefit of local communities or non-governmental organisations⁸. Volunteers work six hours a day, five days a week. They provide support to children (teaching them English, organising games and plays), carry out environment-oriented projects, renovate buildings or organise festivals to promote peace, tolerance or ecology. Any person aged 18 or over (there is no upper age limit) who has a basic command of English can take part in a workcamp. Candidates are not required to display special skills or hold specific qualifications.

Team volunteering is also carried out as part of employee volunteering, regulated by the Act of 24 April 2003 on Public Benefit Activity and

5 *Wolontariusze szansą – współpraca z grupą wolontariuszy*, bit.ly/30xefT6 [accessed: 04/10/2020].

6 Ochotnicy Warszawscy, www.ochotnicywaw.pl [accessed: 23/09/2020].

7 *Za darmo nie robię – wolontariat drogą do sukcesu*, bit.ly/2GypxIL [accessed: 04/10/2020]

8 Website of the One World Association; bit.ly/301iE0I [accessed: 23/09/2020].

Volunteering⁹. Employees of companies and institutions work together for others. Their social activities are supported by their employers in terms of content, funding and organisation. Employee volunteering is usually a team activity, which on the one hand increases its effectiveness and on the other hand serves as a tool for team integration¹⁰. The results of the 3rd Poland-wide Employee Volunteering Survey indicate that people involved in this type of activity improve their competencies in the areas of the utmost importance for employers (team communication, teamwork, project management and decision making)¹¹. It should be noted that employee volunteering is not limited to individuals working in a given company. Their families often join such projects, which contributes to building good relationship with the employer. Such activities can be organised both during work and in leisure time, e.g. at weekends¹².

It should also be noted that there are many paid offers for team volunteering abroad. Such opportunities are offered, among others, by Projects Abroad¹³. Volunteers can take part in one of projects abroad listed in an online database. The fee is about PLN 1000 (EUR 230).

9 Act of 24 April 2003 on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteering, O.J. 2003 no. 96 item 873; bit.ly/33X2cze [accessed: 19/06/2020].

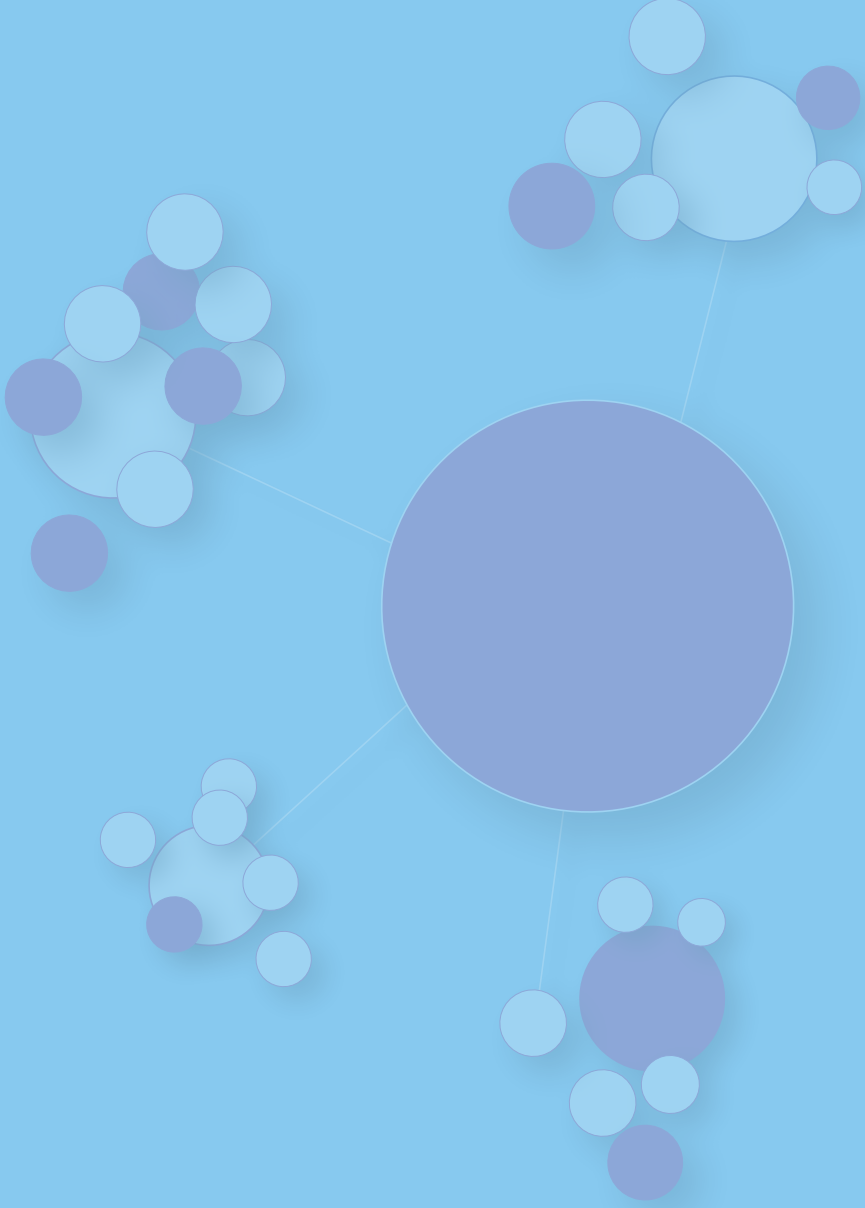
10 Dudkiewicz, M. (2011). *Wolontariat pracowniczy – między emocjami a racjonalnością*. Warsaw: Instytut Spraw Publicznych.

11 *III Ogólnopolskie Badanie Wolontariatu Pracowniczego. Wolontariat pracowniczy w największych i średnich formach w Polsce* (2019). Warsaw: Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu, Stowarzyszenie Centrum Wolontariatu w Warszawie.

12 Dylus, A., Matyjaszczyk, K. (2018). Wolontariat pracowniczy. Istota, forma, przykłady. *Etyka w życiu gospodarczym*, 21(2), 10–12.

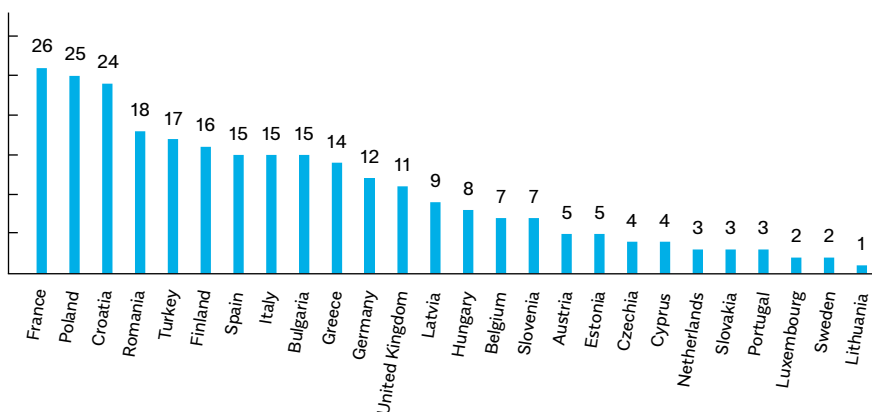
13 Projects Abroad website, bit.ly/3hXYllc [accessed: 23/09/2020].

Study subject



The subject of the study discussed in this report were Polish organisations and international volunteers who carried out team volunteering projects in Poland as part of the European Solidarity Corps from 1 January 2019 to 1 July 2020. Data collected by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System shows that 25 projects of this type were funded (including four that combined individual and team volunteering activities). At the time of conducting the study, 10 projects were completed and 15 were at the stage of recruiting volunteers¹⁴. It should be mentioned that team volunteering is very popular in Poland. According to the European Commission’s data, out of the European Union nations, only France is more active in this field, as it provided grants for 26 projects carried out in 2019–2020.

Number of team volunteering projects per country (2019–2020)

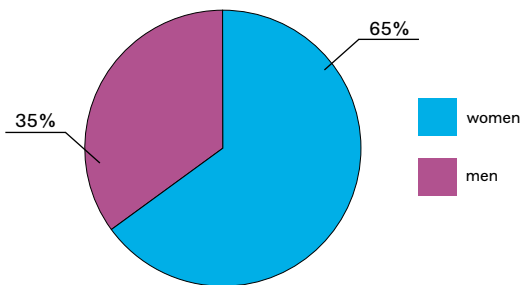


Source: own work based on the FRSE data.

¹⁴ The start of a project is not equivalent to the start of volunteers’ work. Already at the stage of making an application, beneficiaries determine the beginning of the project, which means that they can benefit from the project budget from that date. The indicated date usually precedes the date of the arrival of the volunteers, because adequate preparations must be made before the start of such activities. They include, for example, the selection of volunteers and logistics (e.g. food and accommodation for the volunteers). Duration of mobility (and the activities start time) is counted from the date of arrival of the volunteers.

In 25 team volunteering projects, 638 volunteers were to participate. 240 people participated in the 10 completed projects: 211 international volunteers were hosted in Poland and 29 Poles decided to volunteer abroad. As at 1 July 2020, 36.6% of mobilities planned for 2018 and 2019 was completed. The team volunteering projects were halted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in the closing of borders and limitations to free movement of individuals.

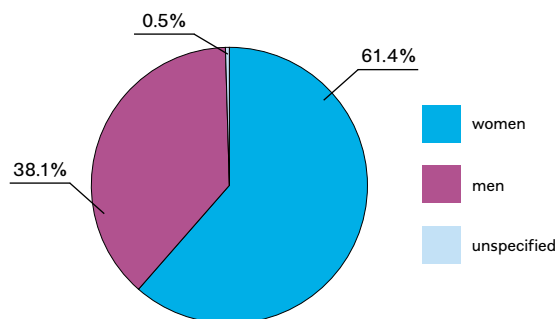
Gender of participants in team volunteering projects hosted in Poland



Source: own work based on the FRSE data.

Among the participants implementing their projects in Poland, women predominated. This trend is also visible across Europe, as almost twice as many women compared to men were involved in voluntary activities. This is demonstrated by the European Commission's statistics on all types of voluntary activities in 2018–2019.

Gender of participants in team volunteering projects hosted in all programme countries



Source: own work based on the FRSE data.

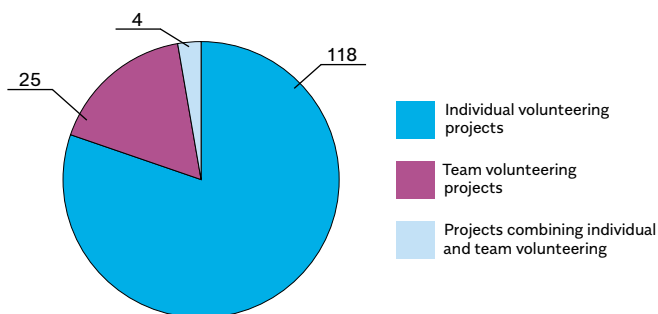
Mainly young people from the Ukraine come to Poland, followed by Spaniards, French and Italians. It is also possible for Poles to participate in team volunteering in our country and they are second largest group of volunteers.

According to data collected by the European Commission, Spaniards are the most active nation in team volunteering projects. They form 9% of all project participants. Italians come second and French take the third place. Poles are in eighth place and constitute 4% of all team volunteering participants. Interest in such projects is growing every year, which is confirmed by the data collected by the European Commission. Between 2018 and 2019, 386 applications for team volunteering projects were submitted across Europe. The funds were allocated to 271 projects (69 in 2018 and 202 in three calls in 2019). In the same period, 32 applications were submitted in Poland. In 2018, 8 projects were co-financed, and another 17 in 2019.

Team and individual volunteering

Team volunteering is less popular in Poland than voluntary work of individuals (in 2018–2019 as many as 118 projects of this type were co-financed in our country).

Projects co-financed under the ESC in Poland in 2018–2019



Source: own work based on the FRSE data.

It is difficult to indicate clearly whether interest in team volunteering among young people increases or decreases. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of several projects co-financed in 2019 was suspended. These projects were to start in spring and summer 2020. Therefore, the comparisons of number of volunteers taking part in projects funded in 2018 and 2019 is not reliable. According to the data collected by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System, 174 people participated in team volunteering in 2019,

and only 66 in the first half of 2020. This is a significant decrease, which is mainly attributable to the pandemic.

The implementation of team volunteer projects in Poland was undertaken by 16 institutions with a varying legal status.

Type of institution	Number of institutions	Number of team volunteering projects carried out
non-governmental organisation	12	18
sports club	2	3
local government unit	1	2
ecclesial legal entity which is a non-profit organisation	1	2

The analysis of grant applications allows to conclude that organisations conducting team volunteering projects have experience in undertaking social activities. They actively disseminate the value of civic activity and volunteering and contribute to the building a civic society whose members take active part in the life of local communities. A common feature of all organisations is that they act for the benefit of their immediate environment, be it a village, district or city. Moreover, each entity engages local residents, cooperates with them and develops educational offer and leisure activities for them. All the institutions address their voluntary activities to children and young people. Some of them expand their target groups to senior citizens, the homeless and people with disabilities.

The analyses conducted by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System shows that team volunteering projects in Poland are mostly carried out by entities that have previously hosted individual volunteers as part of long-term projects.

It is also worth noting that 168 Polish organisations have valid accreditations for hosting international volunteers (obtained before 2018, when the Erasmus+ Volunteering programme was in force), and 123 institutions have received the European Solidarity Corps Quality Label¹⁵. The information contained

15 To submit an application for project financing: as part of Volunteering or Traineeships and Jobs, a beneficiary must hold a Quality Label – a certificate awarded by the National Agency of the European Solidarity Corps. The process of obtaining the label involves two stages. First, an online application is submitted, and then an external expert of the National Agency meets with representatives of the organisation (usually at its seat). Detailed information on how to obtain the Quality Label (in Polish) can be found on the programme’s website under

in the grant applications shows that four organisations which took up team volunteering activities had no previous experience in implementing projects under the Erasmus+ programme.

Objectives of the study and methodology

The primary aim of the survey was to answer the question why Polish organisations engage in team volunteering projects as part of the European Solidarity Corps and what were the benefits of these of activities (both for individual participants and for the institutions), as well as difficulties arising during their implementation. The survey made it possible to identify factors in favour of conducting team volunteering projects by Polish institutions and to analyse the extent to which such activities fit into the mission, objectives and everyday work of these entities. Indirectly, it also showed the reasons for lesser popularity of team volunteering projects in Poland.

The survey was addressed to three groups involved in team volunteering projects and the survey areas were defined by the following questions:

Group 1 (organisations that have carried out or are currently carrying out team volunteering projects)

- What types of organisations host team volunteering projects in Poland?
- Why do organisations carry out team volunteering projects? Do they also engage in long-term volunteering projects?
- What are the volunteers' tasks during a team volunteering project? How do they differ from long-term volunteering activities?
- What impact does the presence of a volunteer team have on the host organisation, its stakeholders and local community?
- What are the benefits resulting from the project for team volunteering participants?
- What are the benefits resulting from the project for the host organisation?
- What difficulties did the organisations encounter during the implementation of the projects?
- What types of activities are best suited for team volunteering and what types are recommended for individual volunteers and long-term volunteering projects?

the Quality Label tab (ex.org.pl/znak-jakosci). The National Agency supports new institutions willing to obtain the Quality Label. It organises induction training for entities interested in the implementation of projects. Last, but not least, it has prepared a publication entitled *Pierwsze kroki w EKS* [First Steps in ESC] (bit.ly/339V7w9).

Group 2 (participants in team volunteering)

- What are the reasons for participating in team volunteering?
(A supplementary question was also asked if volunteers had considered taking part in a long-term volunteering project).
- What were the expected and actual benefits of participating in team volunteering?
- What tasks were team volunteers assigned?
- How did cooperation with the host organisation go?
- How did cooperation with other volunteers go (with Poles and foreigners)?
- What difficulties emerged during project implementation?
- Did participants in team volunteering projects take part in individual long-term volunteering projects after the completion of team projects?
(as a follow-up question, the respondents were asked to identify the reasons for participation/non-participation in such projects and to tell about their future plans in this regard).

Group 3 (organisations which did not carry out team volunteering projects, but did carry out long-term volunteering projects)

- Why organisations, which carry out long-term volunteering projects financed by the European Union do not implement team volunteering projects?

A triangulation of methods was applied to the study: the analysis of the existing data was made (grant applications and statistics of the European Solidarity Corps) and qualitative research was conducted (10 individual in-depth interviews with coordinators of group volunteering projects carried out in 2018–2019). All statements have been edited (mainly to eliminate respondents' interjections, digressions, unfinished thoughts and colloquial language) and abridged (this refers to respondents' long utterances covering a number of topics). A quantitative research was also conducted in the form of online questionnaires addressed to all former volunteers participating in team volunteering projects and to organisations, which in the years 2018–2019 carried out at least one individual long-term volunteering project under the European Solidarity Corps programme (but did not carry out team volunteering projects). Due to the relatively small size of the surveyed sample and the limited range of the phenomenon studied, the analysis had a clear qualitative trait, and its character was descriptive and exploratory.

Limitations of the study

The main limitations of the study were related to the selected methodology and mainly concerned the researcher-respondent relationship. In-depth interviews were commissioned by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System, which is responsible for providing financial and substantive support to the institutions carrying out European Solidarity Corps projects. This fact could affect the answers given by the coordinators of the projects. Due to the adopted methodology, the results of the survey should be interpreted with caution, as the selected sample was neither random nor representative for all such projects implemented in Poland.

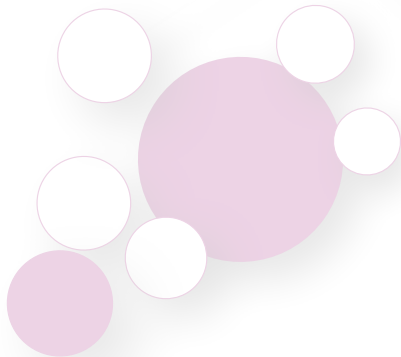
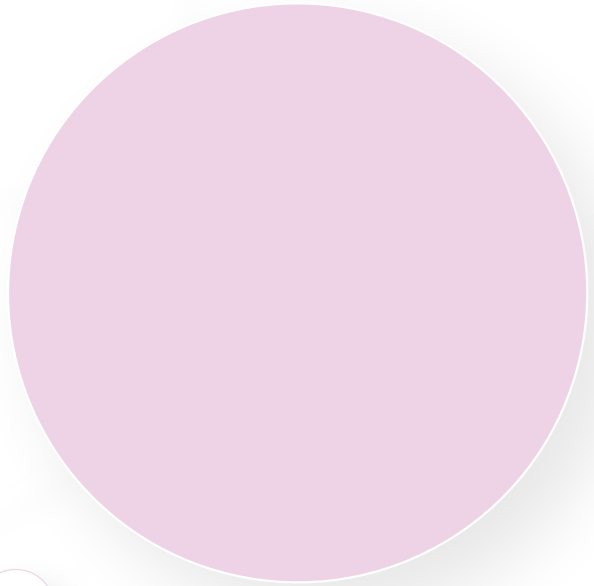
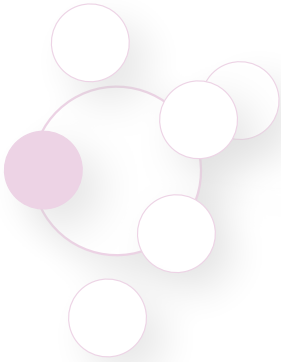
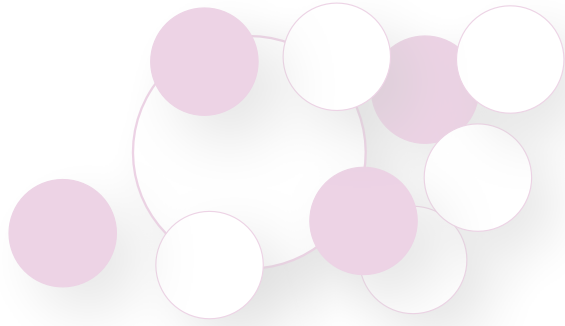
Another limitation was related to the timing of the study. It was conducted between March and May 2020, when an increased incidence of COVID-19 was observed in Europe. This could have had an impact on the return rate of the online survey targeting former volunteers, which was lower than expected.

Sample selection and description

10 organisations from Poland were invited to take part in the qualitative research. From 1 January 2018 to 1 July 2020, they implemented or were in the course of implementing at least one team volunteering project as part of the European Solidarity Corps. Out of these, eight had had experience in carrying out long-term individual volunteering projects under the European Voluntary Service and Erasmus+ Volunteering programmes. Two institutions had previously sent Polish volunteers abroad, and one of them limited its activity to outward mobility as part of team volunteering projects. All organisations committed local residents to voluntary service activities.

Description of the sample of surveyed institutions carrying out team volunteering projects

Type of organisation	Number of employees	Locality	Voivodeship
non-governmental organisation	< 10 staff members	city < 50,000 residents	mazowieckie
non-governmental organisation	< 10 staff members	village	świętokrzyskie
sports club	10–20 staff members	city < 50,000 residents	pomorskie
non-governmental organisation	> 50 staff members	city > 100,000 residents	kujawsko-pomorskie
ecclesial legal entity which is a non-profit organisation	< 200 staff members	city 30–50,000 residents	pomorskie
non-governmental organisation	< 10 staff members	city > 100,000 residents	pomorskie
non-governmental organisation	< 10 staff members	village	podlaskie
non-governmental organisation	< 10 staff members	city > 100,000 residents	podkarpackie
non-governmental organisation	< 10 staff members	city < 100,000 residents	zachodniopomorskie
local government unit	> 50 staff members	city < 100,000 residents	lubelskie



Volunteering teams projects



Organisations implementing volunteering team activities

The organisations implementing volunteering team activities that took part in the qualitative research were predominantly non-governmental organisations, although there was also a public entity and a sports club among them. All of the organisations work for the benefit of their local communities. Some of them have a defined area of activity, such as sports activities, health education or drama productions. Despite having a narrow scope of core activities, these organisations remain open to all members of the local community, offering, among other things, after-school activities for children, occupational therapy workshops or language courses for senior citizens.

We run a lot of activities related to intercultural education and, in a broad sense, intercultural dialogue. We organise various types of classes and workshops for children and teenagers, such as the Intercultural Children's University in cooperation with local schools and libraries, as well as picnics and festivals. We also organise a lot of events related to topics important to our volunteers, both Polish and international ones. For about two or three years now, we have also been dealing with youth policy – we are striving to create a youth centre and an urban strategy for this group.

[executive director, foundation]

We are a unique example of a sports club. We want to show kids that apart from sport, we can also do other things, so we organise, for example, ecological projects. Physical activity also means injuries, so in order to prevent our players from losing their spirits, we want to show them other avenues of life.

[project coordinator, sports club]

A common denominator of the surveyed organisations, apart from being strongly rooted in local communities, is a rich offer addressed to all age groups: from the youngest to the most senior. They often organise intergenerational activities, including those involving entire families. These organisations do not confine themselves to carrying out basic statutory activities, but instead offer a wider range of activities to meet the needs of their users. Several of them run classes for people with disabilities.

We do not introduce any restrictions – there are young girls here, there are people in their 50s and there are people with various disabilities, including those in wheelchairs, and boys with mental health problems.

[project coordinator, foundation]

Intergenerational activities are particularly important to us, so the recipients can be both seven-year-olds and ninety-year-olds. We look at our community from a bird's eye view, so we see people, their experiences and their competencies as a whole.

[project coordinator, foundation]

There were cases where parents did not agree for their child to take part in the international activities we were organising. They were apprehensive. Working directly with families, including seniors, helps us gain their trust.

[executive director, foundation]

The organisations participating in the study have extensive experience in the implementation of international projects: youth exchanges, training and long-term volunteering. The main recipients of their activities are, as previously mentioned, residents of the areas where these institutions have their headquarters, but some of them carry out nationwide campaigns and cooperate with entities from other parts of the country and from abroad. Almost all of those organisations have been running long-term European Solidarity Corps volunteering projects for many years (previously under the Youth in Action, European Voluntary Service and Erasmus+ Volunteering programmes). An important part of their daily work is the organisation of international training and participation in such events. This enables their employees to increase their competence in the areas of international project management, and working with marginalised people and local communities, as well as to expand their networks and to find partners for future projects.

Although our daily operation focuses on our city, we have a very extensive network of contacts with foreign clubs. We cooperate with Lithuania, Ukraine, Spain and Turkey. We visit each other periodically.

[project coordinator, sports club]

I would like to mention that international cooperation concerns artistic initiatives, but we also have regular, formalised activities between the international festivals. Our partners come mainly from Europe, but we also cooperate with Asian countries. At the request of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, we represented Poland at the EXPO in Milan. Prior to this, we organised workshops at the request of the Ministry of Culture of Taiwan and also led a parade in Zaragoza.

[project coordinator, association]

In each of the analysed cases, work for the benefit of local communities and international undertakings are interwoven. Activities carried out with the participation of foreign guests contribute to the promotion of the organisation and thus increase the interest of the local community and attract new recipients.

Another common feature of all the surveyed organisations is a very well-developed cooperation with local volunteers who provide support both in their daily activities and during special events, such as exhibitions or concerts. Sometimes they are involved in joint activities with volunteers from abroad.

The Foundation is based on three pillars: pro-ecological activities, international cooperation, and work in the local environment. We always try to combine them together.

[executive director, foundation]

A permanent local volunteer group has been established at our theatre festival, but we have volunteers from various parts of Poland who want to help with the organisation and implementation of this event.

[project coordinator, association]

I work with Polish volunteers. I am aware that during the pandemic they helped senior citizens with their shopping. A week ago, we received some donations for the elderly and homeless, and the volunteers offered to help with offloading them.

[project coordinator, foundation]

The entities participating in the study have various sources of financing, such as: private sponsorship (including support from international donors), donations from city or commune offices, and grants from ministries. They also obtain funds from the European Union through the National Agency of the Erasmus+ programme and the European Solidarity Corps, and directly from the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels. Two entities were registered as non-profit organisations and thus receive donations from 1% of the income tax. The respondents rarely mentioned obtaining financial or material resources from private entities.

We rely on the support of the parents of our charges, we also apply for funding from the town hall, district office, marshal's office, Ministry of Sport and various foundations. We also anticipate funds from the donations of 1% of income tax and sometimes we receive other donations. We hardly ever benefit from sponsorship, because we do not conduct business activity and we are not profit oriented. We also apply for European funds.

[project coordinator, sports club]

We benefit from the support of sponsors. Our boss is a very outgoing person, has a lot of contacts, so he often just gets in the car, drives to see potential sponsors and asks for funds.

[project coordinator, foundation]

It is worth noting that almost all organisations benefitted from having good facilities, which is not always a given, especially in the case of the non-governmental sector. Several of them received premises either from the city or municipality or rented such spaces on preferential terms. However, the preparation and equipping of the premises was the responsibility of the organisation's management. The surveyed organisations had sufficient office and training space and did not report any problems with access to equipment or with obtaining materials for the implementation of activities. Survey participants often mentioned the support of local authorities, which in most cases welcomed the activities carried out by the host organisations.

Reasons for implementing volunteering team projects

The surveyed organisations implemented two basic types of activities: permanent ones, targeted at the local community (e.g. weekly workshops, courses at Universities of the Third Age, sports activities for all age groups or activities for people at risk of social exclusion) and occasional events, conducted either singularly or several times a year (e.g. music, film and theatre festivals, concerts, summer activities for children and youth, exhibitions or happenings). With the exception of one institution, all the surveyed organisations hosted both long-term and short-term volunteers. The long-term volunteers were mostly involved in regular activities, while teams of foreign volunteers were invited to assist in one-off activities, mostly during the summer. Therefore, it should be stated that the readiness to carry out team volunteering projects was largely due to the nature of the activities of host organisations, which required additional people available at short notice to assist in preparing large events for the local community. Some entities implemented so many occasional initiatives that team volunteering projects became the core of their operations.

Hosting volunteering teams is a result of the specificity of our city and of what happens here during the summer holidays, when we implement programmes for children, like activities under the "Summer in the City" programme. Our activities attract as many as 150 children a week, so we need many foreign volunteers. The team volunteering projects have a nice pace: we start with a few days of induction training, then for four weeks we organise activities for children, day camps, outreach work, and that's how the two months go by. These projects benefit children from Mińsk, as well as foreign and Polish volunteers.

[executive director, foundation]

We organise a large international football tournament for children with the participation of fourteen football teams, including very well-known ones like Manchester City and Borussia Dortmund. It is nice that children from small towns and villages can compete with such teams. We receive a great deal of help from foreign volunteers – in terms of linguistic issues and preparation of activities, they also have loads of ideas to make sure that all the kids have the best time with us.

[project coordinator, sports club]

For several of the surveyed organisations, volunteering teams was a way to broaden the scope of activities and propose a new offer to the local community. Thanks to the presence of a team of a dozen or so foreign volunteers, these entities were able to organise larger stand-alone events and diversify their regular activities, preparing, amongst others, language classes or culinary workshops. The respondents admitted that it would be difficult for them to organise and mobilise so many volunteers from their immediate surroundings to work at a single event.

Team volunteering projects were also used by host organisations as a tool to meet the emerging needs of the local community, for example, to restore an urban garden destroyed during the construction of a local road.

The expansion of our activities became necessary at certain point. Therefore, we thought that several of our initiatives, such as the theatre festival and carol singing, could involve people from outside. Those projects could bring volunteers a sense of fulfilment, and we would gain actual support and be better perceived in the local community.

[project coordinator, association]

We have noticed that although there are camps and day camps organised in the city, there is no offer for younger children starting primary school. There is a lack of activities involving people from other countries and cultures. We wanted to fill this gap. We have decided to introduce a permanent summer holiday volunteer programme, where volunteers organise intercultural and international workshops for school children.

[project coordinator, association]

In most cases, team projects were preceded by cooperation with long-term foreign volunteers. According to the survey participants, team undertakings required much more complex logistical and organisational preparation and careful planning of each day of the volunteers' work, which made participants perceive them as being more difficult to implement. However, in a few organisations it was the other way around – their adventure with foreign volunteers began with volunteering teams, and then the organisation also began

to invite long-term volunteers who were meant to support the organisation not only in occasional activities, but also in everyday work (especially since the local community had already got used to the presence of foreign guests). Thus, foreigners, through regularly working for these entities, have become a natural part of them.

Recruitment of volunteers and team project preparation

The organisations which were surveyed stressed the importance of a diligently conducted process of recruiting volunteers to a team project. Potential participants must be aware of what their responsibilities will be, and that due to the one-off nature of many of the activities in which they will be involved, the work may go beyond the standard eight hours a day. It is also extremely important to match the volunteers, their skills and predispositions to the tasks they will face. It is necessary to familiarise potential volunteers with the specifics of the country and place where they are expected to volunteer. The surveyed organisations usually started the recruitment several months before the planned start of activities. The process usually took place in two stages: first, candidates sent their CVs to the institution, and the selected people were vetted in more detail, usually during an online interview via an instant messaging application. In most cases, the number of applications significantly exceeds the number of available places in a volunteering team project.

Sometimes there are too many applications for us to be able to accept everyone, especially as we guarantee our guests accommodation, and the number of beds is limited.

[project coordinator, association]

Survey participants emphasised the extremely important role played by the sending organisations, which source and pre-recruit volunteers for a team project abroad. Some organisations used known and trusted foreign institutions, with which they have previously cooperated, to recruit volunteers on their behalf. The support of the sending organisations is important because they are responsible for the preparation of candidates for voluntary work and provide, amongst other, pre-departure training and assistance with issues relating to insurance or obtaining a visa. Some organisations also recruit volunteers through other channels, such as Facebook groups or advertisements posted on websites dedicated to volunteering.

On each occasion the partners receive an info pack from us, containing a full range of information about the project and answers to potential questions that the candidates may have. Foreign institutions cooperate with us, collect applications, and then send them back to us.

[project coordinator, association]

We work with a partner organisation from Ukraine, which helps us with the recruitment. This organisation has contacts with other cultural and youth institutions and universities, and also prepares the volunteers. It conducts pre-departure training, arranges insurance, and sends us a recruitment list from which we select project participants.

[project coordinator, local authority]

An extremely important part of preparing to host a team of volunteers is to provide them with accommodation and food. As most of these types of projects take place during the summer period, when the accommodation facilities reach peak capacity, the survey participants stressed that this aspect of the project should be dealt with well in advance, at least a few months ahead. Volunteers usually live in dormitories or private accommodation. The surveyed coordinators stressed that it is important to ensure their privacy – volunteering team projects are very intensive, their participants sometimes stay with each other for several hours a day, so it is important that they also have time and space only for themselves.

The necessity to provide food for the project participants sometimes proved to be a challenge for the host organisations. Local canteens (e.g. school canteens) were often used in this respect or a decision was made to order lunches with delivery options. Occasionally, the participants themselves cooked lunches for the whole group.

Several organisations have signalled that after the completion of the team volunteering project, the sending organisations were able to re-deploy returning volunteers, using their experience and skills gained abroad for the benefit of local communities.

Some foreign organisations place great emphasis on keeping in touch with volunteers after they return from the projects. They genuinely care about it, organise interviews with the volunteers, post information about their activities on their websites, contact local media. Volunteers share their experience – this is how the European Solidarity Corps promotes its activities.

[project coordinator, foundation]



I think it is very important to maintain contact with volunteers after the project is over. They come to us full of energy, they are focussed and they carry out their tasks with conviction, they have their little victories, they succeed for the first time, and when they start to get the hang of it, it is usually time to return to their homes. In my opinion, at that point in time, the sending organisations should start working on exploiting the potential of the volunteers. However, my experience of working with the sending organisations in this area is not very good.

[project coordinator, association]

Thanks to their involvement in projects as a sending organisation, institutions have the opportunity to recruit new, very active volunteers. After returning from the project, the young people are enthusiastic and willing to act. During the team activities, they gain experience and skills that they willingly share with other volunteers and employees of the institution. After the evaluation of a team project, some organisations try to involve these volunteers in their daily activities. The coordinators stress that the preparation of a post-project 'allocation' plan regarding individual volunteers (in cooperation with them) makes it easier to attract active volunteers for a longer period.

Volunteers' tasks during team volunteering

Team volunteering projects usually last from two weeks to two months, depending on the specific nature of the individual undertaking. There are two types of projects: short ones, lasting few days (e.g. concerts, festivals) and longer ones, lasting several weeks (e.g. day camps for children, "Summer in the city" programmes). The specific tasks in which the volunteers were involved resulted directly from the nature of the project activities.

Usually, after coming to Poland, the volunteers were introduced to the modes of operation of the host organisation. The next step was the presentation of a detailed schedule of activities and the division of roles in the project, in accordance with the previous declarations and predispositions of individual team members. At this stage, integration activities were carried out, and the project participants were provided with basic information about Poland, the immediate vicinity, and the community in which they were to work.

Even in the case of shorter activities which only last few days (e.g. a four-day film festival or a two-day music festival), the volunteers' stay in Poland usually lasted several weeks anyway, as the technical and logistical preparations required to receive them were time-consuming. Moreover, after the end of the event, the guests assisted in cleaning works and supported long-term volunteers in their daily activities.

Our events are short and intensive, but they require a lot of preparation – printing lists of participants, ID badges, logistical coordination, etc. In addition, the volunteers took part in two-day project management training, as we considered that each task is a project in its own right.

[project coordinator, local authority]

The tasks of team volunteers involved in longer projects (e.g. day camps for children and youth, classes as part of the “Summer in the city” programmes or care for a permaculture garden), apart from organisational and technical issues, also included planning further activities and creating a work schedule in cooperation with the host organisation. Some of the organisations gave the volunteers a lot of freedom in this regard, thereby making them feel more responsible for the course of the project and its reception in the target group.

We operate on the principle that our task is not to give instructions to volunteers, but to work with them. In fact, they also influence us in our meetings and show us that we are all part of a larger undertaking, we have specific activities to be carried out and we shape them in the way we feel is best. Non-formal education is precisely about creating a certain framework and providing opportunities for flexible approaches to the learning process. We try to work with them in partnership, although we have to establish and execute certain rules, otherwise everything would become too relaxed. Over time, the volunteers adopt this system and leave us very satisfied. They appreciate that they were able to gather knowledge and express their opinions (which are always taken into account) freely.

[project coordinator, association]

Leisure time is an important part of the volunteers' stay in Poland during a team project. It is especially important in the case of any longer projects lasting for more than a month. The participants usually have seven days off, which they spend, for example, on visiting Polish tourist attractions or meeting with friends. The surveyed coordinators indicated that many volunteers spent their holidays working for the host organisation and the local community. No major disciplinary problems were reported during the stay of foreign guests in Poland.

During the volunteering period, participants have a week off. They can choose the dates, and can use them in any way they see fit – for travelling across Poland and Europe, sightseeing etc.

[project coordinator, sports club]



In volunteering teams, participants do not have much free time. Upon arrival they immediately join the project – for a fortnight they participate in the training sessions, every day from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. There is no time for rest during this period – children are waiting for their workshops, so the volunteers work very intensively. They set their own pace of work. The minimum weekly amount of the volunteers' activities is 40 hours, but they often devote their free time, carrying out additional activities in the afternoons. Sometimes they can get overtired – in such situations we give them an extra day to rest.

[project coordinator, association]

We found very responsible people. For example, when we showed them a specific place to light a campfire, they would follow our recommendations. This is important since we are in a specific area, in a border strip. Our volunteers are aware that there are serious consequences for breaking the existing bans.

[project coordinator, association]

Team and individual volunteering activities

Since the vast majority of the surveyed entities carried out both long-term individual volunteering and short-term team volunteering projects, it is worth discussing the issue of interpenetration of tasks and cooperation between the two types of volunteers, often operating simultaneously in a host organisation.

The majority of project coordinators who managed both short-term and long-term volunteering projects stressed the different nature of the two types of activities and the completely different motivation of their participants. People who carry out long-term volunteering want to prove themselves and perhaps even change themselves. They want to develop, acquire competencies and gain their first professional experience, and therefore have clear expectations regarding the project and its results. Short-term volunteering, on the other hand, is more often associated with fun, getting to know other people, and is seen as a meaningful and interesting way of spending a summer holiday. As a result, the attitude of the participants to the tasks and goals of the project is very different. What counts here is the effect, which is usually quicker to materialise than the results of long-term volunteering.

The long-term volunteers are fully aware that they will have a full-time job's worth of responsibilities ahead of them. They put the performance of tasks first. For short-term volunteers, the opposite is true – for them, fun (even during their working hours) and a good time is what matters most.

[project coordinator, association]

The coordinators also noted that the dynamics of the work and the course of the project in the case of team volunteering and individual volunteering projects differ. Since team volunteering lasts a maximum of two months, it is easier to maintain the motivation of participants and any emerging issues tend to be much more superficial and easier to deal with than in the case of long-term volunteering.

Working with a team is much safer for the host organisation. The participants of the project won't have time to burn out or feel a bit down. Our experience with long-term volunteering shows that after two months the participants confront the expectations which they had prior to arrival with what they found on the spot. It is obvious that in such situations something always goes differently than expected. In the case of short-term volunteering, there are no such dilemmas – volunteers leave before they start to have any doubts. Short-term volunteering is very intensive – a lot of great things can be done fairly quickly. When it comes to long-term volunteering, everything is spread over longer periods of time

[executive director, foundation]

In some cases, conflicts have occasionally arisen when team and individual volunteers were involved in joint activities. Such conflicts were primarily related to the responsibilities assigned to them and the difference in experience in working for the host organisation and the local community. The long-term volunteers, due to their longer seniority in the institution, were involved in activities relating to office administration and project coordination, which did not always meet with the approval of the team volunteers. One of the surveyed organisations initially brought together team volunteers and individual volunteers to work on a summer holiday project of a day-camps for children. However, this created tensions. The participants of the volunteering team project felt strongly connected with the whole endeavour, as they were invited to Poland to implement it. Individual volunteers, on the other hand, more readily identified with the host organisation itself, as they had been working there for several months, thanks to which they were able to learn about the Polish reality, the specific nature of the institutions' work and the target groups they were working for. Their attempts to coordinate the work of team volunteers have not been successful.

The 'new' (team) volunteers met the 'old', long-term volunteers who have been with us for five months. It can therefore be understood that the latter have a different set of duties, a little more responsibility, carry out more demanding tasks, tie up and coordinate activities. However, that created a lot of friction – if all of us are volunteers, why should some of us give instructions to others? This situation is a challenge for coordinators, who have two options:

they can demand something or enter into dialogue. In my opinion, both sides must learn to talk to each other. However, in light of our experience, it must be said that it is best to separate the tasks of these two groups.

[executive director, foundation]

Two years ago, we decided not to combine two different types of volunteering. We came to this conclusion when, in one of the projects, long-term volunteers felt that the tasks carried out by short-term volunteers were more attractive to them and therefore started to get involved in them. This, in turn, led to conflict situations – it was not entirely clear what their role was in these activities.

[executive director, foundation]

The participants of the survey also pointed out the need for different planning of the work of individual and volunteer teams, due to the different duration of the projects in which they participate. They also stressed that long-term volunteering involves supporting the activities of the host organisation on a daily basis and building long-term relationships with the local community, while team volunteering is event-oriented and focusses on immediate and visible outcomes.

Working with long-term volunteers is unique. They are with us for a year and this time perspective allows us to plan our activities well. Participants in longer projects have the opportunity to explore a new language and get to know a new culture better. Working with them is spread out over time.

[project coordinator, foundation]

Short-term volunteers can prove themselves faster according to the principle: get involved, do something and leave.

[project coordinator, foundation]

Outcomes and impact of team volunteering projects

The effects of team volunteering projects were often discussed in the context of the long-term achievements of individual volunteers. Project coordinators pointed out that the short-term work of a team of volunteers is often more visible than the long-term work of individuals. However, it is important to be aware that for a volunteering team project to be successful, it takes months of preparation, in which individual volunteers are often involved. The preparatory work is very important in terms of achieving the expected results of a team project.

The coordinators of the projects indicate that these two types of volunteering differ from each other, so the effects are also different. This does

not mean, however, that the long-term work of individual volunteers is less important – they support the host organisations on a daily basis by performing important tasks, albeit tasks not always fully appreciated by the recipients (e.g. office work, running websites or social media).

It should also be added that individual volunteering projects are equally geared towards the learning of volunteers and working for the community and the host organisation, while team volunteering projects aim to quickly obtain significant help with a specific, usually short-term task. A large number of volunteers who join one project at the same time have a strong presence. The representatives of the host organisations agreed that the results of the team's work are immediately visible, which was unanimously considered to be one of the greatest advantages of this type of project. In their opinion, volunteering teams serve the purpose of a one-off event, while long-term volunteering relates to building lasting relations with the environment.

The long-term volunteers have good contact with the representatives of the local community. They are able to make friends with a kindergarten teacher or a school teacher, and because the project lasts a long time, they have time to strengthen these relationships.

[executive director, foundation]

Local community

It is impossible to clearly determine which type of voluntary project has a greater impact on the local communities and the host organisations. The coordinators' answers were polarised on this issue, and their opinions differed depending on the type of activity in which the volunteers were involved. Some claimed that volunteering teams have a greater impact because the events organised within this framework (e.g. concerts or festivals) are both spectacular and memorable. Others stressed that it is precisely the case that without the daily work of individual volunteers, who support the host organisations on a daily basis, many of the activities undertaken would have a completely different reach and course.

In the opinion of the coordinators, team volunteering projects have a very high impact on the local community. Inhabitants of a given area, seeing so many foreigners working in their surroundings, often spontaneously join the implemented activities and learn more about the idea of volunteering.

There are 200 permanent residents in our village. When 20 volunteers arrive at once, they are immediately visible. They are very positively received in the local community. They do a lot of things – they clean up, organise festivals, teach children languages. We have no cause for complaint.

[executive director, foundation]



The representatives of the local community who come to us open up to volunteering. They see that there is no need to be afraid of such activities. Kids develop in terms of their language skills and begin to seek international contacts. They get rid of their fears. It also affects how they see the world – they are more willing to travel and participate in volunteering.

[project coordinator, association]

The survey participants often spoke of activities undertaken jointly by volunteers and the local community. There were cases when the volunteers became aware of some problems and got involved in solving them together with the inhabitants. One example is the development and renovation of the area around the housing estate garages within one of the projects. This action was initiated by volunteers after they noticed that this neglected environment is a popular meeting place for local youth. Together with the young people and their parents, they cleaned the area, painted the garages and asked the housing estate authorities to install a number of benches (which appeared a few days after their departure).

Volunteers worked not only for the benefit of the local community, but also for the participants of organised events (e.g. big concerts), which, especially during the summer holidays, attract guests from all over the country.

The impact of our volunteers on the local community was difficult to measure. Although they were visible in the community (they wore special T-shirts indicating that they were part of the European Solidarity Corps project), they were mainly dealing with tourists and festival participants, including foreign guests.

[project coordinator, local government body]

The coordinators stressed that preparing residents for the arrival of volunteers is of great importance, especially in smaller and more closed communities. One of the cases they described concerned a small village located on a border. If a group of foreigners was to appear there unannounced overnight, the natural reaction would be to inform the border guards. Today the inhabitants of this area know that the presence of a dozen or so foreign guests is a sign that something interesting will happen. And although the sight of groups of volunteers can still be a source of surprise for the local community, foreign guests usually receive a friendly welcome.

When we received ten foreign volunteers, accompanied by several local ones, people joined in their efforts. Although, in truth, they struggled to understand how people from all corners of the world got here, why they came and... why they wanted to help.

[project coordinator, association]

The residents were very happy and, at the same time, surprised that young people are willing to come to us from afar to organise games and play sessions for our children.

[project coordinator, foundation]

What is important is that we made the local community familiar with the project, as early as at the inception stage of its development, when a specific idea was born. We announced that a team of volunteers from different countries would come to us and contribute to making our garden look beautiful again. At first, the residents were very surprised, but then we saw that the project was having an impact on them. One of its indirect effects and its greatest value is that more people are coming forward to work in our garden.

[project coordinator, foundation]

Host organisations

Participants in short-term volunteering projects provided significant organisational support to host institutions. The majority of the surveyed organisations would not be able to achieve the intended results solely on the basis of local volunteers or their own employees, as they would have to hire or mobilise sometimes even a dozen or so people for a few months in order to organise various types of events. Short-term volunteering has also a tangible financial dimension, related to the reduction of the institution's operating costs. The fact that volunteers come from abroad further increases the attractiveness of the offer of host organisations as it attracts new people interested in their activities. In addition, thanks to the high visibility of volunteers' work, organisations reach out more effectively to the local community with their activities.

Our organisation lacks the funds for full-time staff, the club cannot afford to hire coaches. Another important aspect of short-term volunteering is that the work carried out within the confines of the project does not burden our budget.

[project coordinator, sports club]

These are extra pairs of hands, available to work immediately, providing aid to the extent that allows us to carry out the planned activities. Without the help of these fifteen foreign volunteers, it would be very difficult for us.

[project coordinator, association]

We work with people between the ages of 13 and 19 – people of that age rarely get involved in something long-term. It is hard to catch their attention for a greater duration. Usually, their involvement is action-based, ad hoc, and it drops after a short period of time. When we carry out team volunteering, we do not see this. I am shocked that during the summer



holidays, 14 or 15-year olds come to us every day and take care of children. The nature of a team volunteering project makes young Polish volunteers more eager to get involved – they have specific tasks to do and a specific time frame. If someone commits to being with us for a fortnight, they usually stay for the entire summer.

[executive director, foundation]

The presence of short-term volunteers also has a positive impact on the organisation's image and is used to promote its activities. It is also a good way to attract the interest of local media and build relations with partners. According to the coordinators, this is thanks to the international character of the projects and the fact that in many communities people from abroad are still considered to be a big attraction, something 'exotic'.

Having international volunteers is a form of promotion for us. During the project we visit schools where we hand out leaflets with our offer, with a timetable for after-school activities.

[project coordinator, foundation]

Every year, regional television and local radio are interested in the project. Our activities are always accompanied by journalists.

[project coordinator, foundation]

Many project coordinators have noticed that working with a team of volunteers facilitates their own development – it helps them to communicate better in a foreign language, learn how to plan and supervise their activities and become more creative. One of the coordinators also noticed that the effects of his work are more visible and are better appreciated – both by the residents of the city and his superiors. Another survey participant mentioned that thanks to the dynamic activities carried out with short-term volunteers, he had the opportunity to test in practice the new tools and methods of group management, which he had learned earlier during training. Several coordinators pointed out that participation in volunteering teams grants perspective towards yourself and to your work.

Participation in the project certainly has had an impact on me. I have grown as a person and contact with young people from abroad helps me a lot. My wife noticed that I have improved my English a bit.

[project coordinator, foundation]

We are getting older and older, and our volunteers are still the same age. Every year, 19-year-olds come to us from Italy, but each time they think differently and have a different approach to life. We must adapt to them.

[project coordinator, association]

Volunteers

According to project coordinators, short-term volunteers gain a different kind of benefits from participating in mobilities than long-term volunteers. The former learn to work in a group, deal with difficult situations and become more creative in finding solutions. The long-term volunteers, however, after almost a year in Poland, in most cases are able to use the Polish language at a communicative level, develop social skills and professional competencies (e.g. the ability to work with documents, cooperate in a team, take initiatives). And above all, they learn a lot about themselves and get to test their abilities in a new environment.

Participants in long-term projects can comprehensively learn how to carry out certain projects from start to finish. Thus, they learn the principles of entrepreneurship and how to put their ideas into practice. They also learn how to plan the process and make changes to the activities in real time in order to achieve the desired effects. There is no time for this in short-term projects. Sometimes there is a lack of continuity, no time for the 'finishing touches'. Volunteers once told me that they would rather work five times with the same group of children and get a concrete result than do the same workshop for five different groups – they felt they were starting something and not finishing it. The short-term projects certainly allow volunteers to acquire the ability to work in a team, find out how to extract potential from different people and how to involve them in joint activities. However, in a long-term project, they can pursue their goals and learn a lot about themselves, for example, how they deal with crisis situations. There are no such opportunities in a short-term project, everything is happening very quickly, on a positive wave, and there is no time for a crisis to manifest.

[executive director, foundation]

Short-term volunteering projects enable participants to test themselves in a quasi-professional environment, to learn directly, from 'behind the scenes', how to organise, plan and carry out large projects. It is also an excellent school of planning and thinking ahead. Some coordinators have compared volunteering team projects to training – they are both relatively short, very intensive and provide a large portion of information in a condensed form. However, volunteering gives the opportunity to experience in practice what training offers only in theory.

Team projects are very similar to training. However, it should be added that what stays in the theoretical sphere or is simulated during the training courses actually has a chance to be realised in a team project.

[project coordinator, foundation]

We wanted volunteers to help us, but at the same time we also wanted them to learn how to organise large events. Through their involvement in the work in all aspects of the logistics we wanted them to see how it looks from the inside.

[project coordinator, local government body]

The coordinators also mentioned the social aspect of short-term volunteering. Participants of such projects usually quickly began forming a harmonious group, exchanging experiences and views, and at the same time revising stereotypes about other nationalities or religions.

Volunteers have often interacted with each other. They held interesting and varied discussions, among others, on the socio-economic situation, wages, career, life after graduation etc. They were also learning from one another how to find a job, what are the benefits of graduating from university, how is life in a given country – they were exchanging knowledge and experiences.

[project coordinator, foundation]

The majority of the coordinators who took part in the survey stated that participation in a short-term volunteering project triggers a desire for further involvement in voluntary activities. After the team project, many people went abroad for long-term volunteering – mostly within the European Solidarity Corps, but also in other programmes such as UN Volunteers. There were also volunteers who initiated activities in their own countries, which were similar to those in which they took part in Poland.

We are receiving feedback from our former volunteers who participated in short-term projects that they have decided to take part in long-term volunteering projects abroad. Two of them chose Kielce as the location of their project, and even came over to visit us.

[executive director, foundation]

From last year's group of fourteen volunteers, seven embarked upon a long-term project. Three people chose Poland.

[project coordinator, association]

According to the surveys we conducted, volunteers want to 'copy' the cultural events in which they participated in Poland and implement them in their home countries.

[project coordinator, local government body]

Challenges related to team volunteering projects

The surveyed coordinators of team projects unanimously stated that the implementation of this type of project involves extremely detailed preparations. Firstly, a thorough recruitment process should be carried out to ensure that the selected participants of the project are capable of carrying out the tasks assigned to them.

Planning is very important – the more work we put into it before the arrival of the volunteers, the better the project will run.

[executive director, foundation]

The recruitment process is not easy. There has to be a minimum of ten candidates – if too many pull out, the project will not meet the requirements of the programme. It can get quite stressful.

[project coordinator, foundation]

There are instances where during an interview with a candidate, when we inform them that they have qualified for the project, we hear that they have already accepted another offer. Such things happen. Occasionally a volunteer confirms their participation and then disappears from the surface of the Earth. There are also instances where individuals are doing well during the interview stage, but upon arrival it turns out that they are unable to cope with their project tasks.

[project coordinator, association]

Problems arose when organising accommodation for a group of foreign guests. There were instances where the accommodation conditions did not suit the volunteers, which led to conflicts with the host organisation.

Securing double rooms for volunteers was the pinnacle of our capabilities, but I think it may still present a challenge for them.

[project coordinator, association]

We must provide food for volunteers, and they come from different cultures and have different diets. In the first month of the team project we hired a catering company to prepare lunches and dinners, but this did not work because the volunteers did not follow



the fixed mealtimes, they were not disciplined. In the following month we gave them money to organise their own food. This worked much better.

[project coordinator, sports club]

A major logistical challenge is to arrange the arrival of all volunteers on the same day. This is very important, both in terms of commencing activities and integrating the whole group. The coordinators indicated that some of the project participants would turn up a few days after the start of the project, which had a negative impact on the volunteers who had arrived at the scheduled time (they had a greater workload due to there being fewer people than expected). In addition, those who arrived later had difficulties with integrating into the group and received tasks that were less desirable or that had not been filled yet.

If it is not possible to coordinate the arrival of all the volunteers at the same time, we have a problem. This situation makes it difficult to implement the activities and to integrate the group.

[project coordinator, association]

According to the coordinators, a key element in the success of a team project is the attitude of the volunteers, who must be able to separate work from play and remember that they came primarily to support the organisation in the implementation of a specific project. It is equally important to provide the guests with interesting challenges. Coordinators play an important role here, as they have to differentiate their tasks and allocate them according to prior arrangements (taking into account the predisposition of individual members of the team). Several project coordinators mentioned the cultural differences, which had an impact on cooperation with foreign volunteers.

We must be flexible. When a good team arrives, we have no problem with implementing the planned activities. Sometimes, however, we are forced to revise our expectations and change our activities, because the potential of the group is lower than anticipated.

[project coordinator, foundation]

Some volunteers are systematic and meticulous, and some are not, depending on the nationality. For some work is a constant siesta, and others take their responsibilities more seriously. For some volunteers their superiors are their bosses, they listen to their instructions, while the others treat them more like colleagues.

[project coordinator, sports club]

Volunteers must demonstrate the ability to cooperate and to co-exist in a team. Volunteering team projects are very intensive, which is also the case in terms of interpersonal relationships. There are instances where volunteers spend 24 hours a day with each other, which, in combination with cultural differences and communication problems, can cause conflicts.

There are no major problems in our team project. Volunteers take very good care of themselves, spend a lot of time together, get to know each other. Conflicts are rare. The biggest problem I have encountered so far was an argument between two volunteers who threw some plates during their heated dispute!

[project coordinator, association]

The Italians held together and the volunteers from Eastern Europe integrated more slowly, in small steps, keeping their distance. At the end of the project everyone became closer, but overcoming cultural differences required a lot of work.

[project coordinator, foundation]

Conflicts between volunteers can occur, for example over maintaining order in the common spaces. For each of them, the idea of 'clean' means something different. Minor disagreements can also take place between volunteers and project coordinators, but it is never serious.

[executive director, foundation]

The project coordinators mentioned rare instances of conflicts with the local community and isolated cases of irresponsible behaviour of volunteers in their free time.

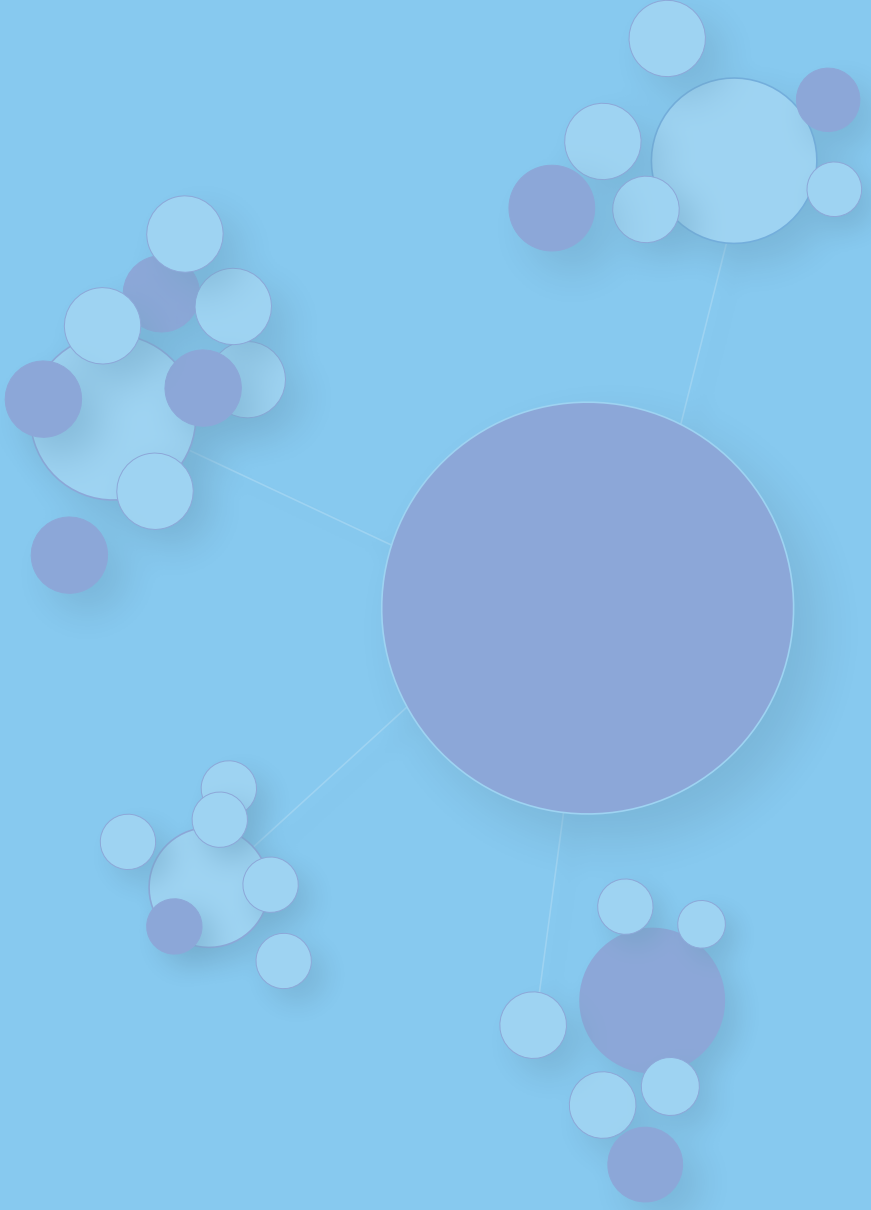
Volunteers know that any misconduct on their part can, in such a small community, cost us our image and trust. This also translates into the attitude of the local community towards the volunteers. The absence of incidents entails a warm welcome for the guests. There are admittedly a few people who are averse to us, but they simply do not get involved in our activities.

[executive director, foundation]

There are instances of irresponsible behaviour among volunteers in their free time. I remember, for example, that during one of their trips to the mountains they spent the night alone in the forest. They are here only for a brief time, in 'holiday mode', so they think they can get away with more.

[executive director, foundation]

Volunteers

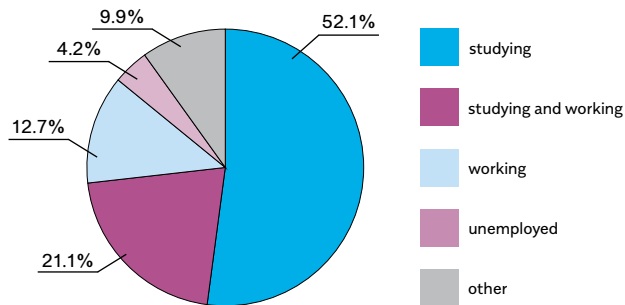


Basic information

According to the data of the Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE), between 2018 and 2020, 211 volunteers participated in volunteering team projects in Poland. All of them received an invitation to participate in the survey, and 71 of them (33.5%) completed the questionnaire about their project.

The average age of the surveyed participants of team volunteering projects in Poland is 23 years. Only one in seven was under 20 years old. The vast majority of the respondents studied on a daily basis (51.1%) or combined classes at a higher education institution with work (21.1%).

Main occupation of volunteers during the year in which they took part in a team volunteering project in Poland (N=71)¹⁶

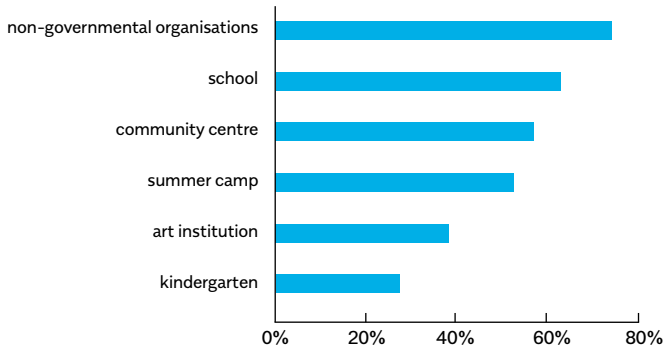


Most of the survey participants (62%) had previously taken part in voluntary work. Most often they were involved in work for non-governmental organisations, community centres or schools, and helped during summer camps. They were least likely to support libraries, kindergartens and art institutions.

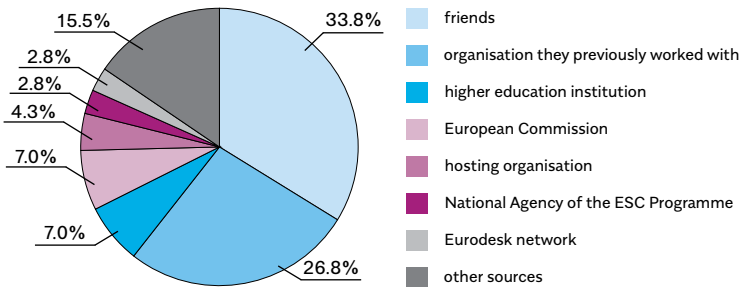
The volunteers most often learned about the possibility of taking part in foreign volunteering team projects from their friends (33.8%). Every fourth person received such information from an organisation or institution with which they cooperated in their home country. A small percentage of respondents used the website of the host organisation (4.3%), the Eurodesk network and the National Agency of the European Solidarity Corps (2.8%). None of the respondents found out about the volunteering team project at their workplace, and 15.5% of the respondents indicated other sources of information – usually Internet forums.

¹⁶ In the graphs illustrating volunteers' answers, the letter 'N' indicates the total number of questionnaires analysed. Where appropriate, the number of answers to a given question is also provided. This is marked with an 'n'.

Place of volunteering prior to arrival in Poland (n=44)

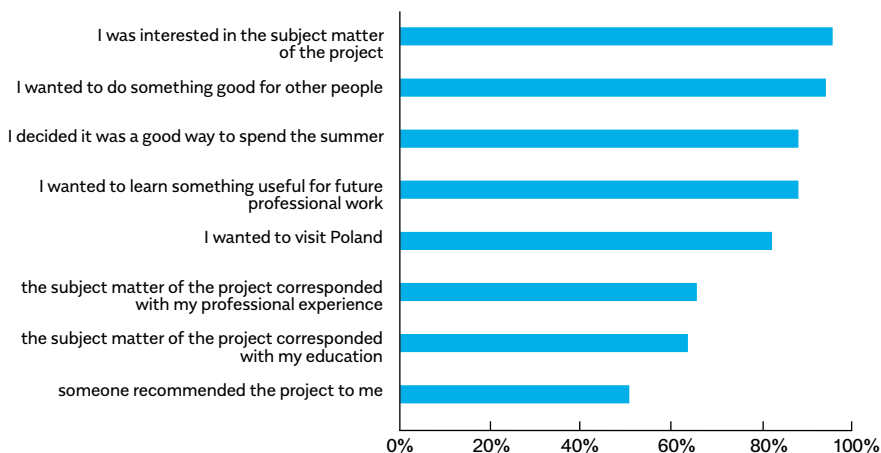


Sources of information about team volunteering projects indicated by the respondents (N=71)



There were various reasons for joining in volunteering team projects. The respondents indicated that, above all, the subject matter of the project was of interest to them (95.8%) and that they wanted to do something good for others (94.3%). The participants of the survey also considered that volunteering is a good way of spending holidays (88.2%) and exploring Poland (82.4%). It is worth noting that many volunteers (88.2%) were hoping to acquire competences and skills useful in the labour market. In the open responses, many also indicated their willingness to broaden their horizons, meet interesting people and learn new things.

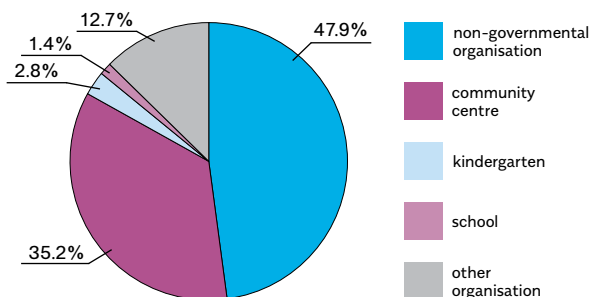
The reasons for participating in a team volunteering project indicated by the respondents (the sum of responses 'I strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree', N=71)



Team volunteering project

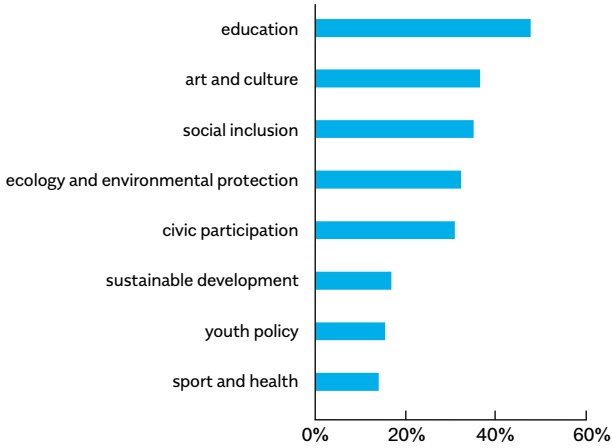
The surveyed volunteers most often took part in a project organised by NGOs (47.9%) and community centres (35.2%). Among the entities in the “other organisation” category (12.7%) there are: a sports club and a church institution. A marginal percentage of volunteers were sent to schools and kindergartens.

Type of organisation hosting a team volunteering project (N=71)



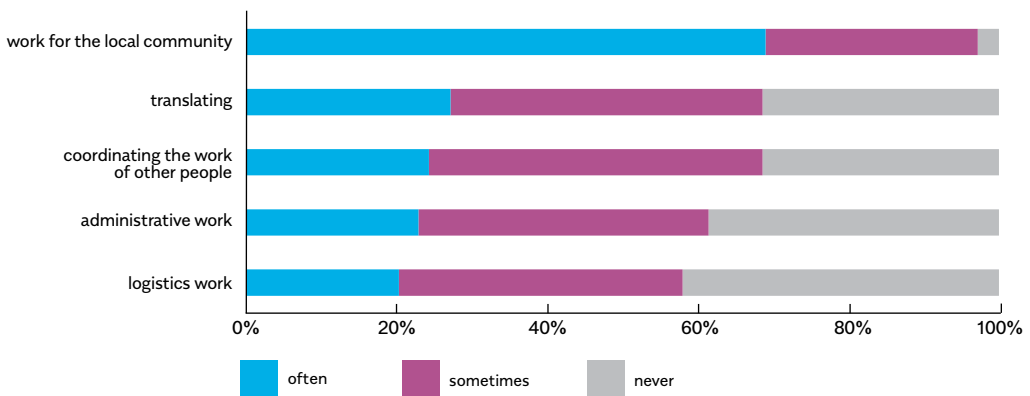
The most frequently indicated subject matters of the project were: education (47.9%), culture and art (36.6%) and social inclusion (35.2%).

Subject matter of a team volunteering project (N=71)



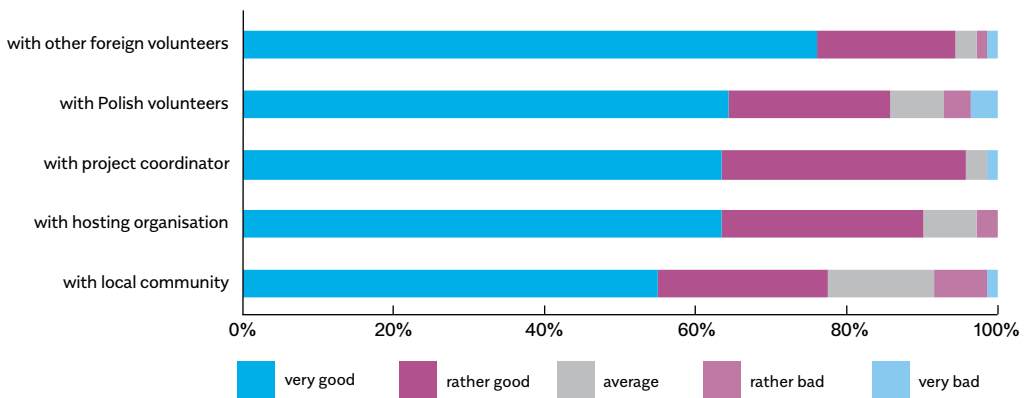
The most frequent task performed by volunteers was work for the local community (28.2% of respondents performed it sometimes and 69% often). The respondents declared that they were least often involved in logistics and administrative work. In their open responses, they also mentioned photo coverage of events and running the host organisation’s websites and social media.

Types of tasks performed by volunteers and their frequency (N=71)



Tasks carried out within the project involved cooperation with the project coordinator, employees of the host organisation, the local community, and in some cases also with Polish volunteers. The respondents rated the cooperation with other foreign volunteers and with the project coordinator as the most positive. It is worth noting that high scores were also given to cooperation with the host organisation (none of the respondents gave the lowest rating). The most polarised opinions concerned the cooperation with the local community and with Polish volunteers, although these two aspects of the project were also mostly evaluated positively.

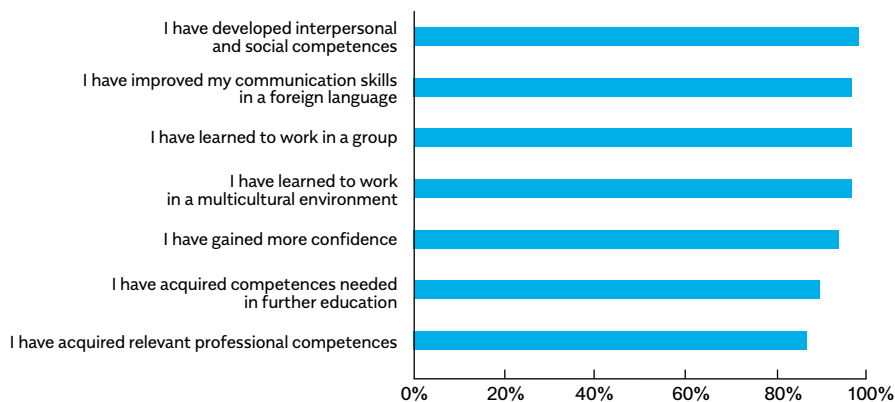
Evaluation of the cooperation of volunteers within the project (N=71)



The impact of the project on volunteers

According to the respondents, participation in volunteering teams had a significant impact on their development. As many as 98.6% of them stated that the project increased their interpersonal and social competencies, and 97.2% declared that they improved their communication skills in a foreign language and learned to work more effectively in a team. Every ninth respondent admitted that they had acquired competencies useful in further education and working life.

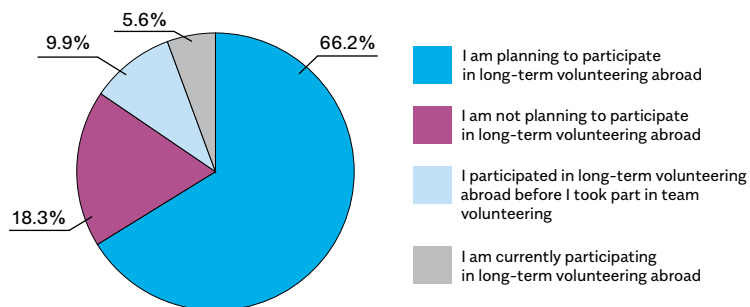
**Evaluation of the impact of the project on the competencies of volunteers
(the sum of the answers 'I strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree', N=71)**



When asked whether they are considering engaging in long-term foreign volunteering, the majority answered yes (66.2%). Positive experiences from volunteering in Poland were a stimulus for them.

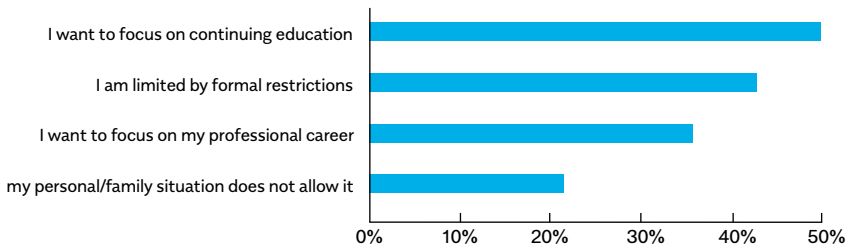
One in ten of those surveyed had participated in long-term volunteering before arriving in our country and each of them stated that this impacted upon their decision to engage in a short-term team project. When the survey was conducted, more than 5% of those surveyed declared current participation in long-term foreign volunteering.

Participation and planned participation in long-term foreign volunteering (N=71)



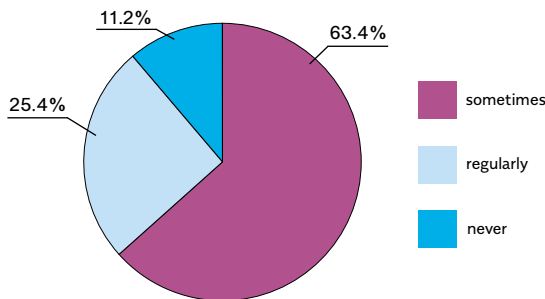
18.3% of the respondents do not plan to go abroad for long-term volunteering. The most frequently indicated reasons for such a decision were the desire to focus on further education (50%) or on a professional career (35.7%). Nearly half of the respondents were not able to participate in long-term volunteering abroad due to formal reasons (e.g. because of their age or due to a restriction on earlier participation in long-term volunteering abroad).

The reasons for the lack of involvement in a long-term volunteering project abroad (the sum of the answers 'I strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree', n=14)



The vast majority of respondents declared that they work as volunteers a couple of times a year (63.4%) or regularly (25.4%). Only one in ten was not involved in such activities.

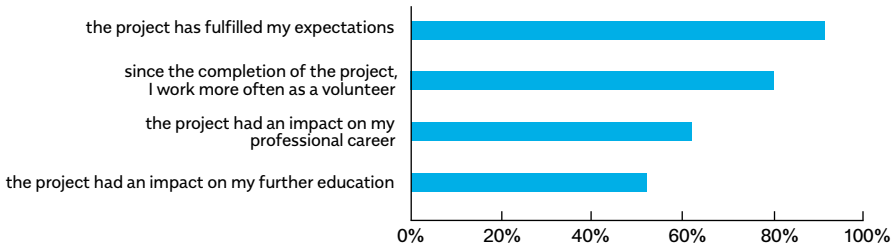
Current involvement of the respondents in voluntary activities (N=71)



The vast majority of the respondents agreed with the statement that the project implemented in Poland influenced their decision to further engage in voluntary activities (80.3%). 62% of the respondents admitted that the project had a positive impact on their professional career, and over half of the respondents indicated that it had a positive impact on their further education. As many as 91.6% of the respondents stated that working with a volunteering team fulfilled their expectations.

Long-term impact of a team volunteering project

(the sum of the answers 'I strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree', N=71)

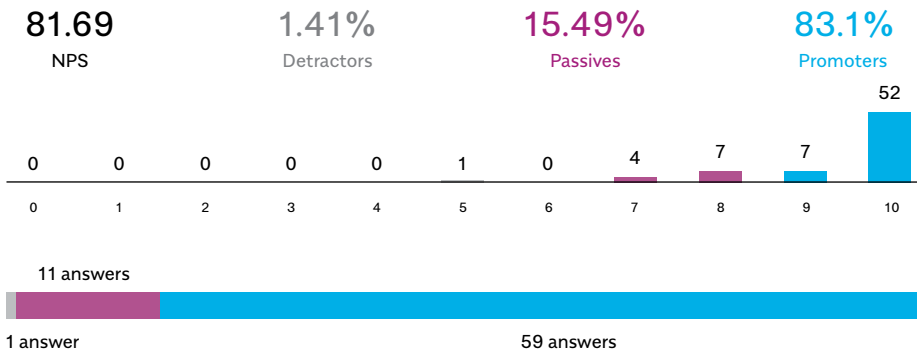


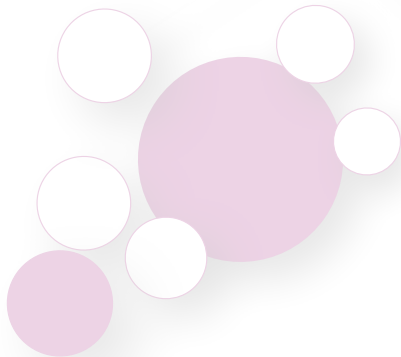
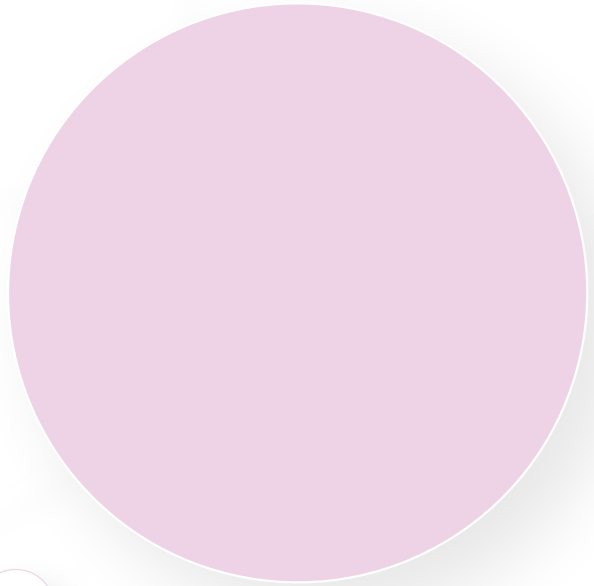
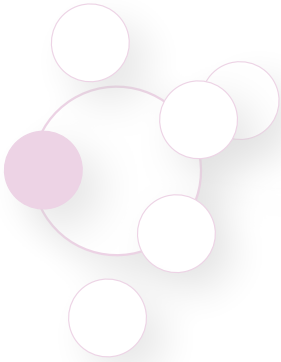
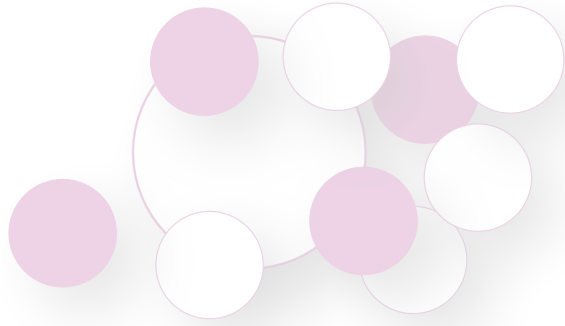
As many as 83.1% of those surveyed would recommend to others to take part in a foreign volunteering team project within the European Solidarity Corps (97.2% of them have already done so in their own communities).

A tool used to assess loyalty to a given product or service is the Net Promoter Score (NPS) indicator, which shows to what extent it would be recommended to other people. Respondents are divided into three groups: Detractors, Passives and Promoters. Detractors are a group of people who on a scale (0-10 points) indicate a value between 0 and 6 and whose responses indicate that they would not be willing to recommend a given product or service to others. Passives are those who have chosen on a scale of 7 or 8 and, despite relatively high ratings, are considered to be neutral. The last group are the Promoters who have chosen on a scale of 9 or 10 and are strong enthusiasts of the solution.

After subtracting the percentage of the Detractors from the percentage of the Promoters, we get the NPS index. For volunteering team projects assessed by volunteers, it has a value of 81.69 (considered to be excellent).

Net Promoter Score for team volunteering projects (N=71)





Organisations implementing individual volunteering projects

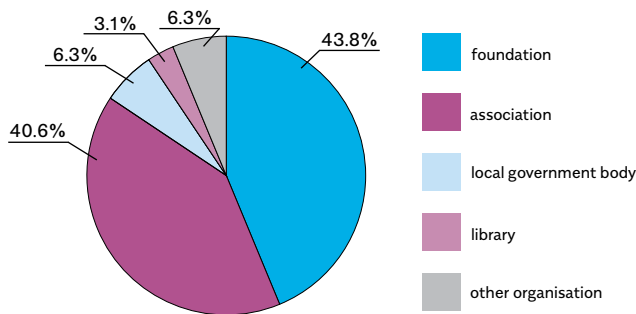


One of the objectives of the survey was to find out why organisations successfully carrying out long-term individual volunteering projects do not decide to host short-term volunteering team projects.

Out of more than 100 organisations and institutions which carried out projects financed by the European Solidarity Corps between 2018 and 2020, as many as 80 carried out only long-term projects. Despite their extensive experience in this area, these entities did not decide to invite volunteers for a short-term team project. Representatives of 32 institutions took part in a survey, sharing their viewpoints on this matter.

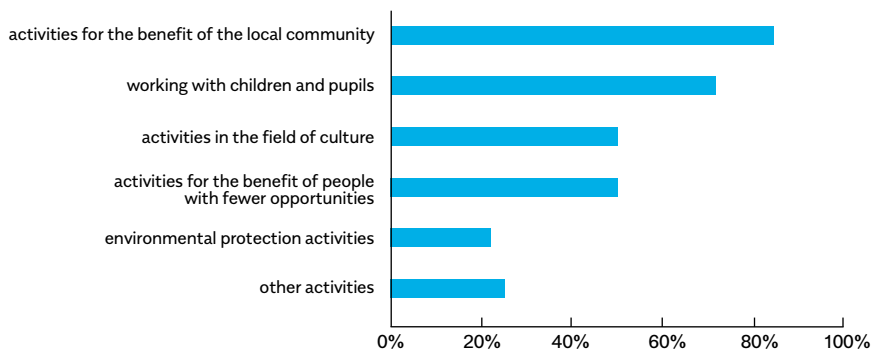
The vast majority of the surveyed entities involved in the long-term individual volunteering activities was made up of non-governmental organisations – foundations (43.8%) and associations (40.6%). Local government bodies (6.3%) and libraries (3.1%), as well as an ecclesial legal entity and a higher education institution also participated in the survey.

Types of organisations carrying out individual volunteering (n=32)



The surveyed entities most often conducted activities for the benefit of the local community (84.4%) and organised activities for young people (71.9%). Half of the survey participants also declared activity in the field of culture and support for people with fewer opportunities. Some of them dealt with intercultural education, foreign cooperation, and charity work.

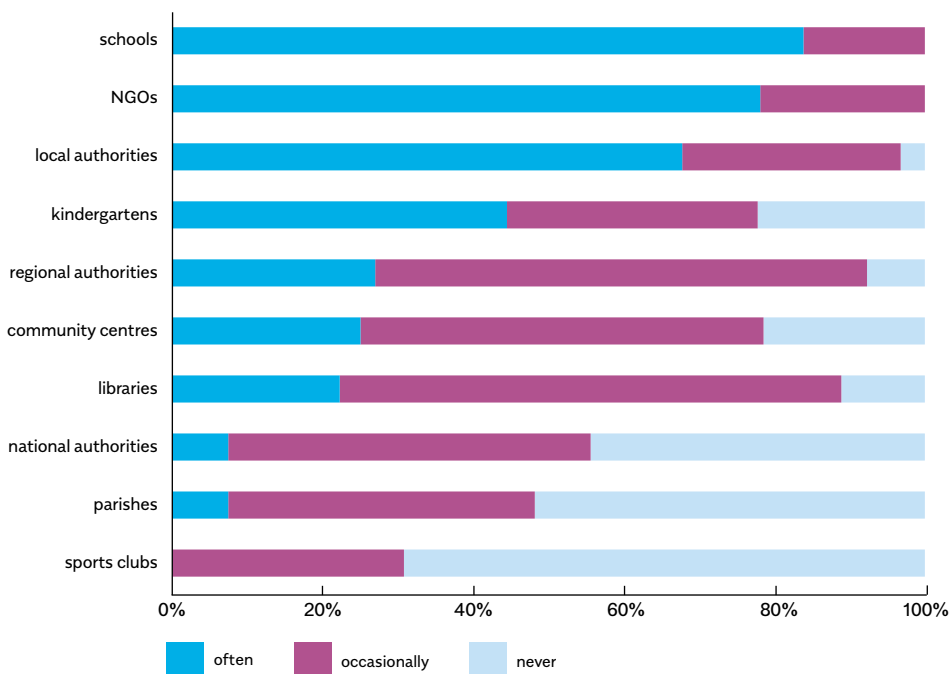
Scope of activities of organisations carrying out individual volunteering (n=32)



The surveyed organisations operated at local (62.5%) and international level (56.2%). The smallest number of them (34.4%) declared that they carried out activities on the national level¹⁷. Most often they cooperated with schools and non-governmental organisations, as well as with the authorities – mostly on the local level, and sporadically with the central authorities (nearly half stated that they had no contacts with the top-level authorities).

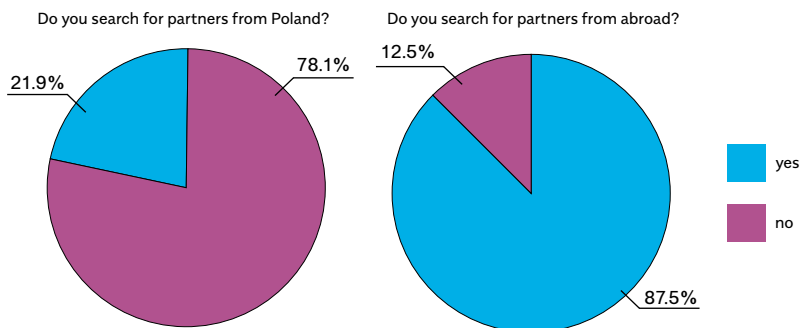
¹⁷ The results do not add up to 100% as it was a multiple-choice question.

Entities cooperating with organisations carrying out individual volunteering (frequency of cooperation) (n=32)



Most of the surveyed organisations (87.5%) were looking abroad for potential partners to implement joint activities. Only one in five entities was interested in cooperation with a Polish institution.

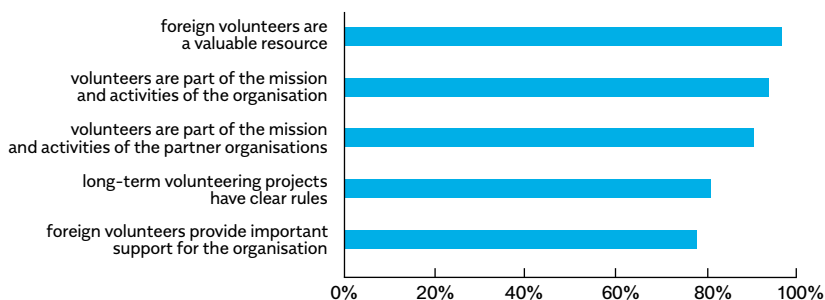
Location of search for cooperation partners (n=32)



The majority of the respondents (96.9%) claimed that volunteers in long-term projects are a valuable resource for the organisations and are a part of the mission and activities of both host organisations (93.8%) and partner organisations (90.6%). These were the main reasons why Polish organisations invited guests. More than three quarters of the respondents declared that long-term foreign volunteering projects are an opportunity to gain support for their institutions.

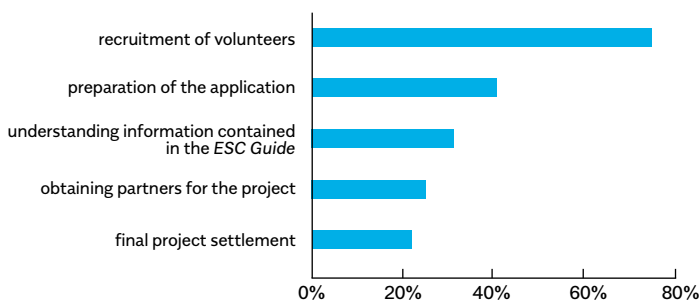
Reasons for inviting long-term individual volunteers

(the sum of the answers 'I strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree', n=32)



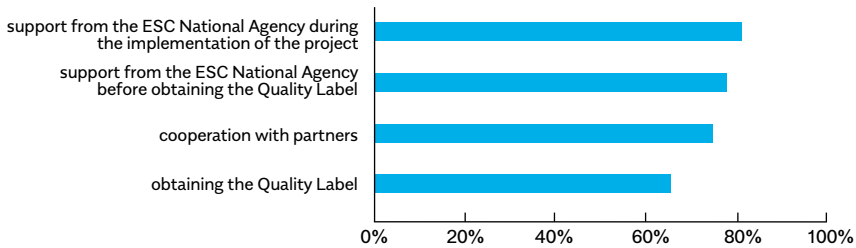
The majority of difficulties during long-term volunteering occurred at the stage of recruitment of candidates – such indications appeared in three quarters of the examined organisations. The implementers also had problems with administrative issues (during the preparation of the application and during the final settlement stage of the project). The clarity of the information contained in the *European Solidarity Corps Guide* was also assessed negatively – one in three respondents found it hard to understand and no one gave it the highest rating.

Elements that cause the greatest problems for long-term volunteering project implementers (n=32)



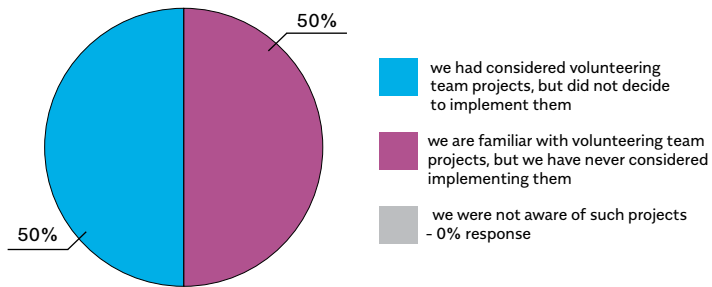
The surveyed organisations were satisfied with the support of the National Agency of the European Solidarity Corps during the implementation of the projects (81.3%) and in the process of awarding the Quality Label (78.1%). No major problems were reported concerning cooperation with foreign sending organisations or partners from Poland.

Positive aspects of implementing a long-term volunteering project (n=32)



The organisations participating in the survey have been carrying out long-term volunteering projects on average for seven years. One in ten of them had more than a decade of experience in this area, which means that they had applied for the Youth in Action and Erasmus+ Volunteering programmes which preceded the European Solidarity Corps. All the entities surveyed had knowledge of team volunteering projects, but none of them decided to carry out such an undertaking.

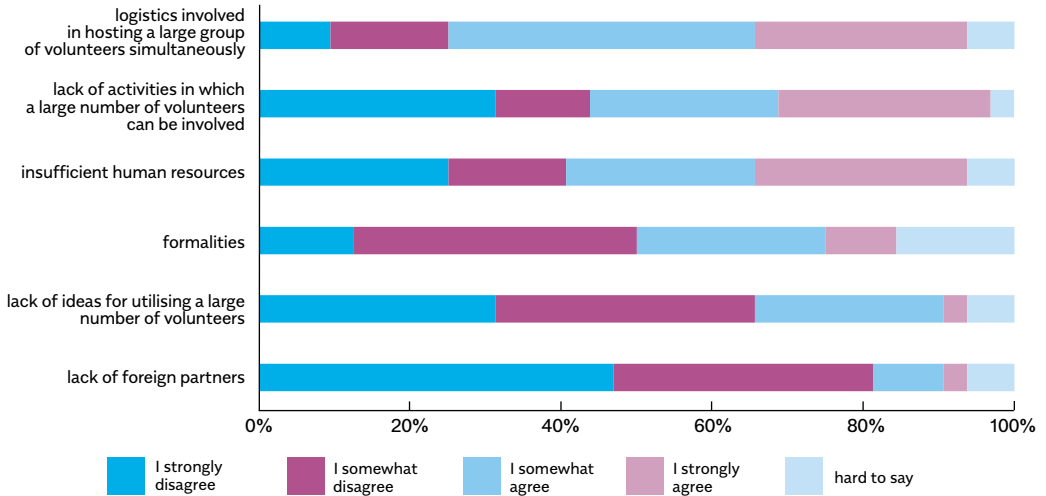
Knowledge of team volunteering projects among organisations (n=32)



The decision of the institution to not implement volunteering team projects was most often related to concerns about the logistics and lack of adequate human resources. Nearly half of the surveyed entities do not carry out activities that could engage a group of several volunteers. In turn, almost half declare

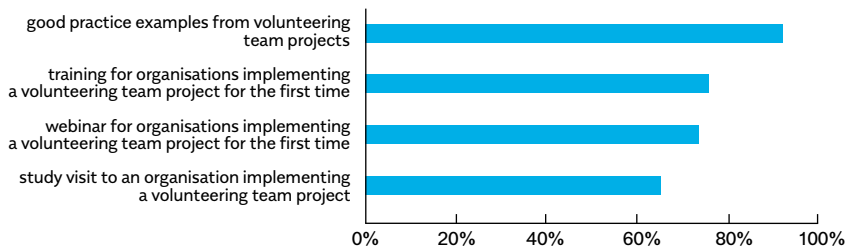
that they have an idea for a volunteering team project and could find a partner abroad to carry it out.

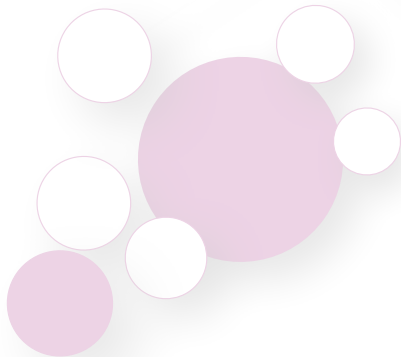
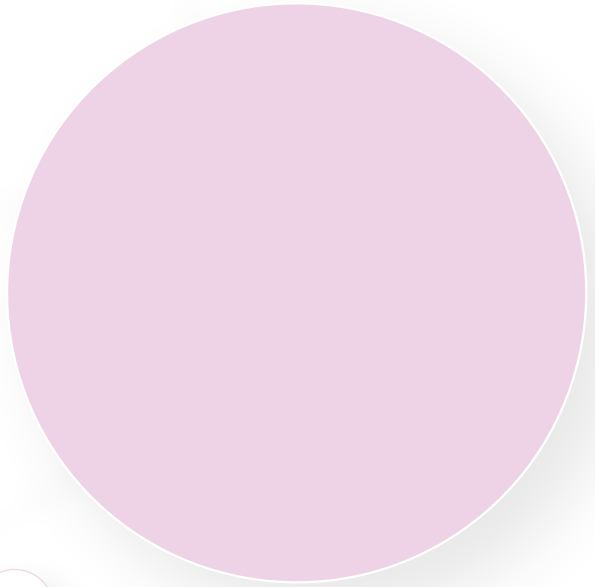
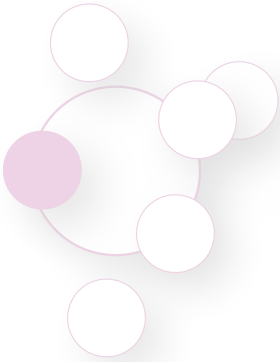
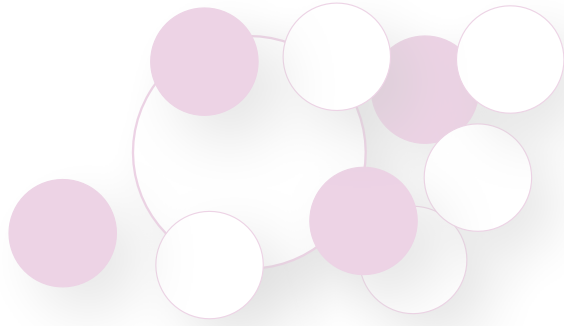
Reasons which led the organisation to choose not to host a volunteering team project (n=32)



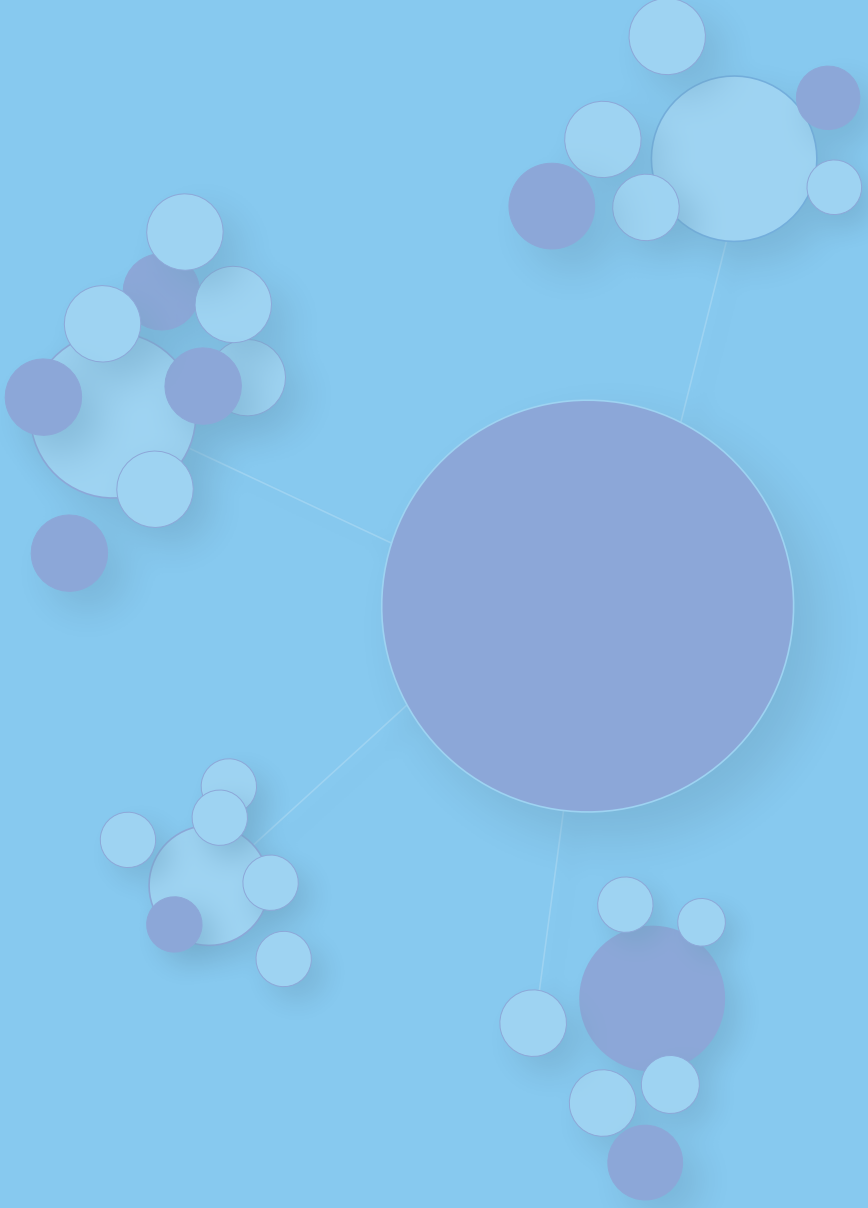
When organising volunteering teams, the respondents indicated that they expect support from the National Agency in the form of: examples of good practice (92.3%), training (76%) and webinars (73.8%) for organisations implementing a volunteering team project for the first time.

Expected support for project implementers (n=26)





Conclusions



Organisations hosting team volunteers

Volunteering teams were mostly used by the surveyed host organisations **to stage occasional events that complemented their daily operations.** Therefore, the readiness to undertake such initiatives was to a large extent due to the specific nature of an institution. Usually the help of volunteers was used by the entities, which needed **extra hands to work, which will be available at a short notice** to prepare a large-scale event for the local community. Without help from volunteers, the implementation of the planned initiatives would prove impossible in many cases, due to staff shortages in the organisation. Some institutions undertake so many one-off activities that team volunteering projects have become the core of their operations.

The surveyed organisations emphasised the importance of a reliable process of volunteer recruitment for the project. Candidates for volunteers must be informed in advance of the tasks awaiting them and that the work in a team project may go beyond the standard eight hours per day. It is also very important to match the volunteers – their skills and predisposition – with the tasks they will perform. This is quite a challenge for organisers, especially in the case of online recruitment, when the capabilities and potential of prospective volunteers cannot always be fully tested.

As each **project is short and intensive**, most of the interviewees stressed that **there is no time to work on improving the skills and significantly develop the competencies of the volunteers.** For this reason, their selection in terms of experience and skills and the most accurate presentation of the scope of tasks to them become a guarantee of project success.

Representatives of all the surveyed organisations stressed the role of the sending organisation, which is involved in the search for volunteers abroad and their initial recruitment to participate in a team volunteering project. Many Polish institutions have benefited from the help of befriended and trusted organisations, which have cooperated with them and helped them find volunteers abroad.

An essential part of preparations for hosting volunteering teams is to provide them with accommodation and food. As most of these types of projects take place during the summer period, when the accommodation facilities reach peak capacity, it is important to address this issue well in advance, at least several months before the volunteers arrive.

Since the vast majority of the surveyed organisations carried out both long-term individual volunteering (which served to support their regular every day operations) and short-term team volunteering projects, it should be mentioned that **the two types of volunteers** could be found in the host organisations at the same time. The coordinators, who managed both short-term and long-term

volunteering projects, underlined the different nature of the two activities and completely different motivation of their participants. They also noticed different dynamics of work in team and individual projects, as well as different course of these two types of undertakings. Since team volunteering projects last up to two months, it is easier to maintain the motivation of volunteers and emerging crises are more shallow and easier to deal with than in the case of long-term volunteering.

In some cases, the involvement of teams and individual volunteers in joint activities caused conflicts due to varying scope of responsibilities assigned to them and the difference in experience in working for the host organisation and the local community. Long-term volunteers, due to their longer seniority in the organisation, were involved in office administration and coordination activities, which did not always meet with the approval of newly arrived team volunteers who were assigned with technical tasks or physical work.

The survey participants also pointed out the **need to differentiate the work schedules of individual and team volunteers**, due to the different length and specificity of their projects. They also stressed that **individual long-term volunteering focuses on a day to day support for the operations of the host organisation and aims to build long-term relationships with the local community, while team volunteering is oriented on a specific event and focuses on a quick, visible effect.**

The results of team volunteers' work were often compared by project coordinators to those of individual volunteers. The respondents pointed out that one-off activities of team volunteers had a stronger presence than the long-term work of an individual volunteer. They stressed that the two types of projects had different objectives and, consequently, different results. The large number of volunteers working simultaneously on a team project makes their activity visible practically from the first day of their arrival. The surveyed representatives of the host organisations considered it to be one of the greatest advantages of team projects. In their opinion, such projects have a very high impact on local communities. The presence of many foreigners operating in a given area makes its inhabitants spontaneously engage in the implemented activities, and learn more about the concept of volunteering.

For representatives of organisations that have not previously carried out long-term projects, the point of reference was not other volunteers (e.g. people acting locally), but the date of starting the first project. They compared the quality of their events before and after the arrival of international volunteers.

Team volunteering projects form **a major organisational support** for host institutions. It would be difficult for the majority of surveyed organisations to achieve the intended results solely on the basis of local volunteers or their own

employees. Team volunteering **relieves the budgets of host organisations** to a large extent (there is no need to hire new staff to carry out specific tasks). The presence of guests from abroad also has a positive impact on the **organisation's image and serves to promote its activities**, as well as facilitates reaching out to local communities. Team volunteering projects attract interest of local media and facilitate building relations with partners.

Volunteers

The majority of surveyed project coordinators stated that short-term volunteering **gives rise to a desire in the participants for further social activity**. This was reflected in the declarations of the majority of volunteers who said that after returning from Poland they regularly engaged in volunteering activities or did it at least several times a year. Only one in ten respondents claimed that they did not engage in such activities any more). Every third respondent admitted that the team projects influenced their professional careers and every second participant said that they impacted on their further education. As many as 91.6% of respondents believed that volunteering met their expectations.

Most often, the respondents learned about the possibility of taking part in a team volunteering project abroad from their friends. One in four obtained such information from an organisation or institution with which they cooperated in their home country. A scanty percentage of respondents indicated other sources of knowledge about the project: websites of host organisations, the Eurodesk network and the National Agency of the European Solidarity Corps.

The reasons for joining volunteer teams most frequently indicated by the respondents were: interesting subject matter of the project (over 95%) and willingness to act on behalf of others (94.3%). A significant number of respondents admitted that volunteering was a good way for them to spend their holidays and to get to know Poland.

When considering individual elements of a team volunteering project, the respondents most positively assessed cooperation with other international volunteers and project coordinator. It is worth noting that the host organisations were also highly rated. The most polarised opinions concerned cooperation with the local community and Polish volunteers, although these two aspects of the project were mostly positive.

In the opinion of the respondents, participation in a team volunteering project had an impact on the development of many competencies. Almost everyone said that thanks to the project they developed interpersonal and social skills, learned to communicate better in a foreign language and to work in a group. Every ninth surveyed volunteer admitted that they acquired

the competencies necessary for further education and useful in their professional life.

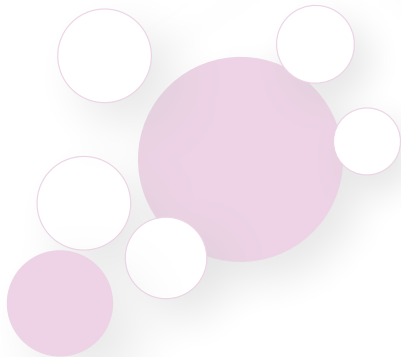
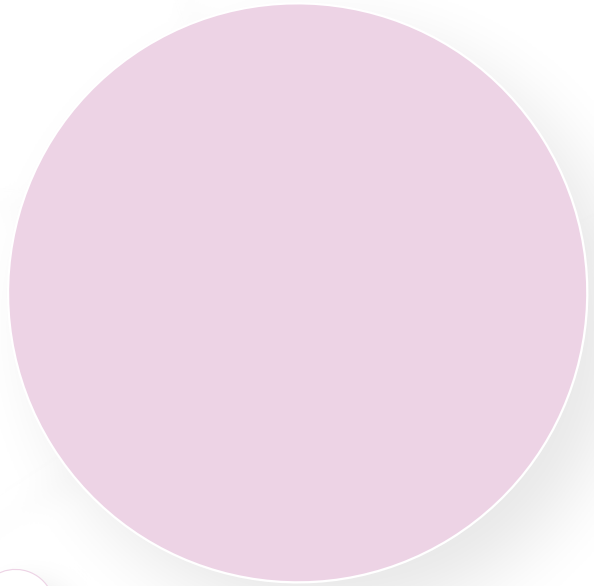
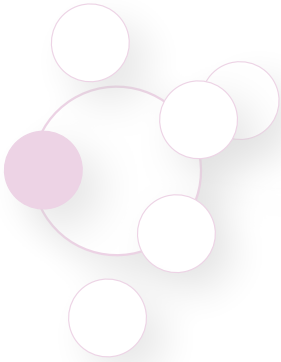
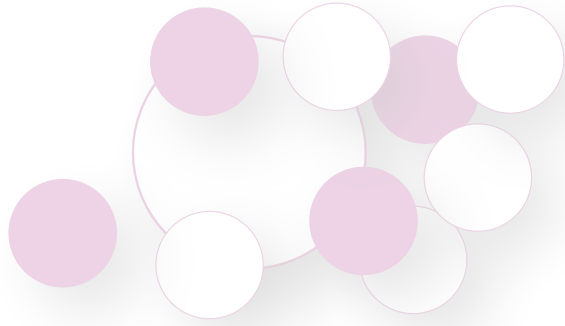
More than 66% of participants in group projects consider engaging in long-term volunteering abroad. Such a decision was influenced by their positive experiences in team volunteering in Poland. One in ten of the respondents prior to a short-term volunteering in Poland had conducted voluntary work as part of long-term volunteering. More than 5% of the respondents at the time of the survey served as long-term volunteers abroad.

The level of satisfaction with participation in group volunteering under the European Solidarity Corps is reflected in the fact that more than 80% of respondents would recommend such projects to others and 97.2% have already done so.

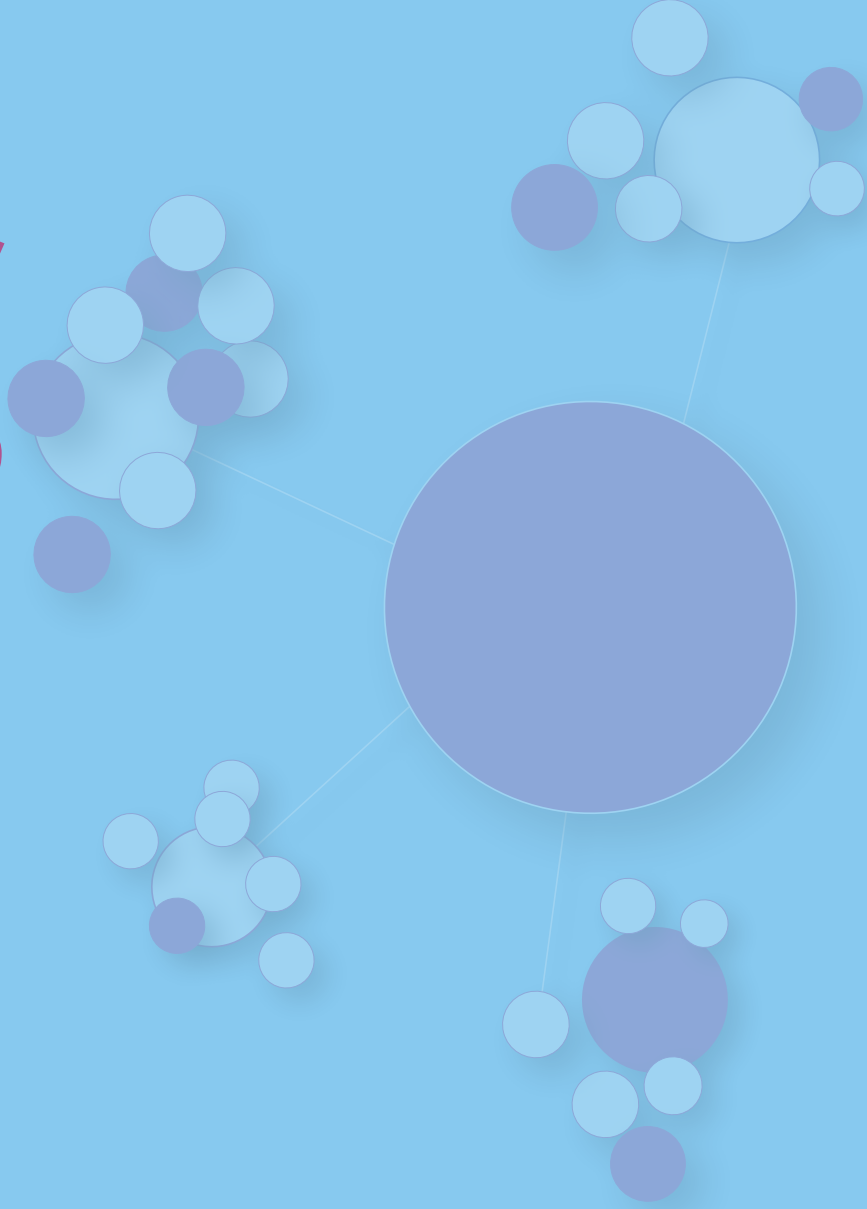
Organisations hosting individual volunteers

The fact that international volunteers are a valuable human resource and become a part of the mission and activities of both host organisations and their partners was quoted as the main reason for the implementation of long-term projects. More than 75% of the respondents declared that long-term volunteering projects with the participation of foreign volunteers was a method to gain support for their organisations.

The institutions did not host foreign volunteer teams due to their concerns about the logistical part of the project and staff shortages. Moreover, nearly one half of the organisations did not carry out activities in which a team of volunteers could be involved. A similar percentage of organisations would have an idea for a team volunteering project and could find a foreign partner to implement it.



Recommendations of the National Agency



1

The key to a successful team volunteering project is to carefully plan it from the development of a concept to the evaluation of volunteers' work. Already at the stage of preparing an application, an organisation should carry out a thorough analysis of its needs and should answer basic questions: What activities can group volunteers be involved in? How many people do we need? Do we have sufficient human resources to deal with a big number of foreigners staying over a short period of time? Who will be responsible for this? Are there suitable hotel and catering facilities in the area to accommodate and feed the participants?

2

The scope of volunteers' responsibilities must also be carefully planned and the tasks carried out must not exceed the project time frame. You cannot require from volunteers that they hold specialist competencies. A question that needs to be carefully considered a few months before the project starts is accommodation. Ensuring a sufficient number of rooms close to the project venue and keeping all participants close to one other (if possible) are important both for the volunteers and organisers.

3

Project organisers should also foresee potential crisis situations and develop a catalogue of intervention actions. The most common problems relate to volunteers' health. It is worth knowing which pharmacies are open 24/7, and where you can find a physician who speaks English. It is also worth considering cultural differences and possible conflicts resulting from them.

4

It is good to develop a plan of team activities. Research shows that projects carried out regularly during the summer holiday prove the most successful. The cyclical nature of such activities facilitates their inclusion in the institutions' annual work schedules. Local communities are more likely to welcome foreigners and larger groups of volunteers in the summer. At this

time children and young people can be involved in project activities and international cooperation. The development of an action plan works well when an organisation wants volunteers to provide support to its permanent, daily operations. Representatives of more experienced institutions point out that sometimes it is worthwhile to show courage and change the existing patterns. This results in new, unexpected ideas, breaking the routine and innovative solutions. Organisations wishing to involve volunteers in new initiatives should develop a detailed action plan. It will make the work of coordinators easier and will prevent chaos when working with a larger group of volunteers. It will make the recruitment process more effective and the volunteers who learn about their responsibilities will not be disappointed when they arrive in Poland.

5

It is worthwhile to involve local community and local volunteers in team activities. This is an additional dimension of the project – foreigners get to know the environment in which they work and at the same time familiarize the residents with an unusual form of activity for them, which is international volunteering. It is therefore both an opportunity for social and cultural integration and the promotion of the idea of volunteering in the local community. Foreigners arouse young people's interest in international activities, which can be treated as a special kind of non-formal education. The interaction between the two groups should be carefully thought out and planned. It should involve cooperation or mentoring.

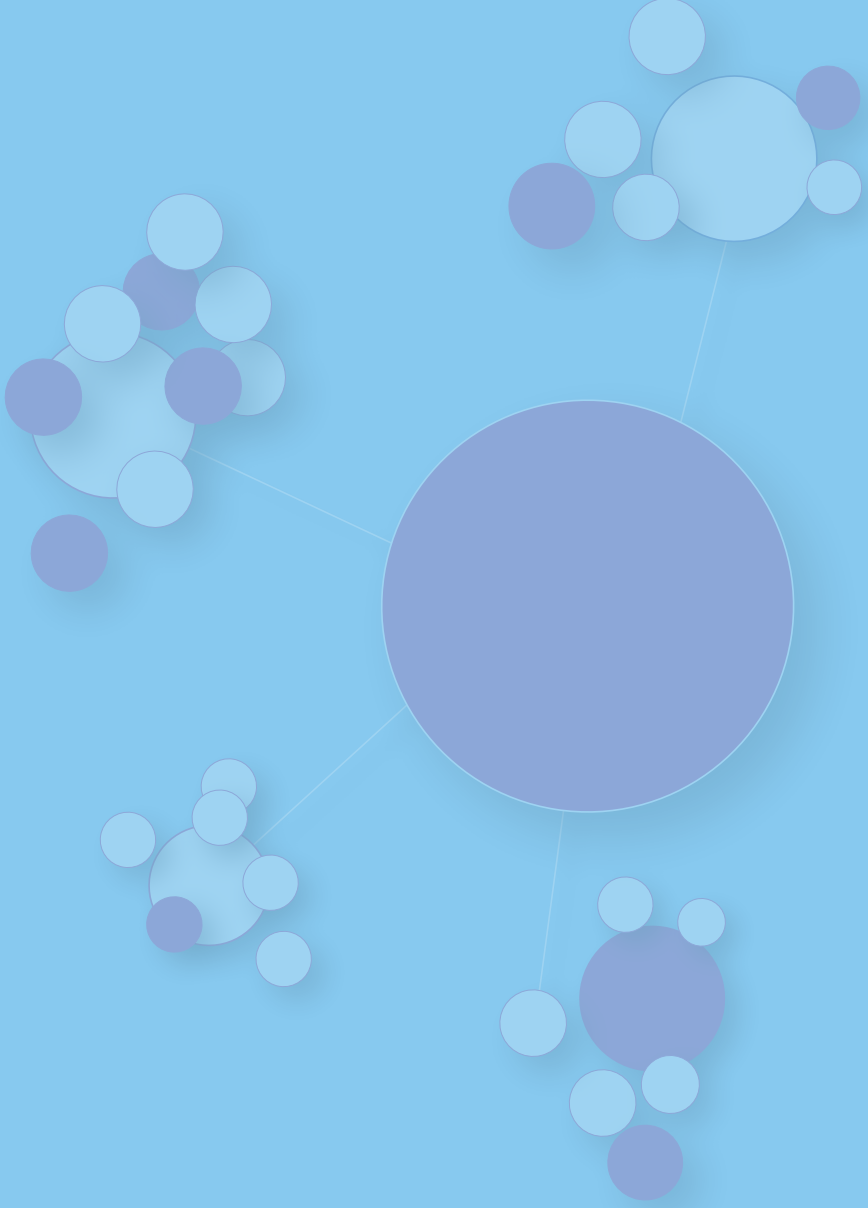
6

Organisations sending volunteers from Poland to implement projects abroad indicated that upon their return young people were 'charged' with energy to work for others. They were willing to share their experiences and had ideas for their continuation. The involvement of this group in the organisation's activities opens up new opportunities. Volunteers have varying experiences, skills and concepts. Their use results in new proposals to improve everyday work and help make it more attractive. However, the organisations' representatives stress that volunteers also need support and a clear action plan. Otherwise they burn out very quickly.

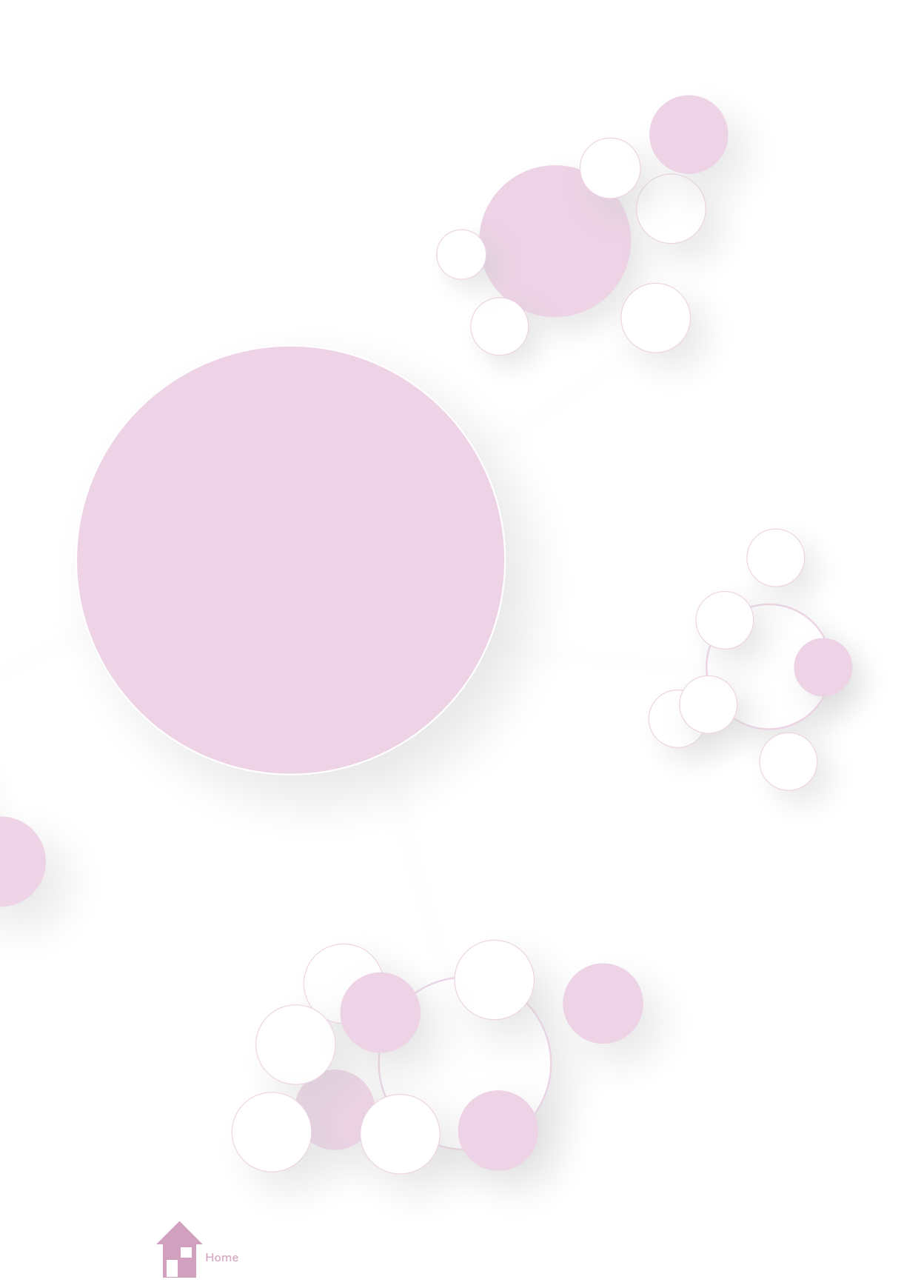
7

Combining the work of individual volunteers and their teams requires special attention from the organisation and coordinator. It is necessary to carefully plan the activities, set the time for their commencement, establish the scope of responsibilities and outline areas of possible cooperation. Activities can be coordinated in such a way that team volunteering projects (whose participants return home after two months) and long-term volunteering projects start at the same time.

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Home

Volunteering Team Projects under the **European Solidarity Corps (ESC)** enable groups of volunteers to perform voluntary work for up to two months. The main aim of the research presented in this report was to verify why Polish organisations decide to host team volunteering projects within ESC. The research also allowed for identification of advantages of such projects (for both volunteers and hosting institutions) as well as potential difficulties that might occur over the course of such initiatives.

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Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE) operates since 1993 and is the Polish National Agency of the Erasmus+ Programme implemented in the years 2014–2020 as well as the Polish National Agency of the European Solidarity Corps. FRSE is also responsible for other European educational and information initiatives in Poland, such as: eTwinning, Eurodesk, Eurydice, Europass, ECVET and EPALE. The Foundation also supports cooperation with countries in the East via the Polish-Lithuanian Youth Exchange Fund, the Polish-Ukrainian Council of Youth Exchange, SALTO-EECA Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre. Since 2014, FRSE has been involved in the implementation of the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development.

