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STATE OF THE ART REVIEW OF VOLUNTEERISM

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Abstract: *The paper presents a research of the volunteerism in the partner countries of the GGA project - Keep going, reach goals, get an award: Empowering senior volunteerism www.gogetaward.eu. The opportunities and the traditions of voluntary work and the best practices are described. The research includes three areas according to the objectives of the GGA project: Data of volunteers; Volunteering and volunteer training policies; Good practices and organisations that are working with older volunteers. The results of the research show that there is a necessity to develop:*

- an online toolkit for adult educators “Promotion of Older Adults’ Organized Volunteerism”
- a Senior Award Program with bronze, silver, gold awards.
- a Manual for adult educators on how to run the Senior Award Program.

Keywords: *Volunteerism, Volunteering, GGA project, Senior Award Program.*

INTRODUCTION

The research on the State of the Art Review of volunteerism aimed to identify opportunities for older people’s volunteerism, traditions of voluntary work and best practices in the partners countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, Netherlands, Bulgaria) of the project GGA - Keep going, reach goals, get an award: Empowering senior volunteerism www.gogetaward.eu.

A research instrument (questionnaire) was developed. The questions were divided into three groups according to the objectives of the GGA project:

- Data of volunteers;
- Volunteering and volunteer training policies;
- Good practices and organisations that are working with older volunteers.

1) Comparative analysis of data on volunteers in partner countries

What is the total number of volunteers (in respect of the citizens)?

There are surveys on volunteering that include the voluntary organisations and their initiatives in Netherlands (Country report in Volunteering of The Netherlands) and Lithuania (G. Gedvilienė, & S. Karasevičiūtė, 2013) on a national level. The total numbers of volunteers are, respectively, over 6,650,000 (42% of the citizens in Netherlands) and 407939 (14,6% of the citizens of Lithuania) (Fig 1, Fig. 2). Extensive research is lacking in the other partner countries Bulgaria (Research Report. Impact of transnational exchange experiences on senior volunteers and organisations; National Comprehensive Strategy for Active Ageing in Bulgaria 2016-2030, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy), Slovenia (P. Jamsek, 2012), Latvia (The research report in Volunteering of Latvia), although volunteering is very well developed (Fig 1, Fig. 2). Surveys have been conducted by interested organizations on small target groups or with guidelines for youth volunteering.

What is the distribution of volunteers by gender? (fig. 3)

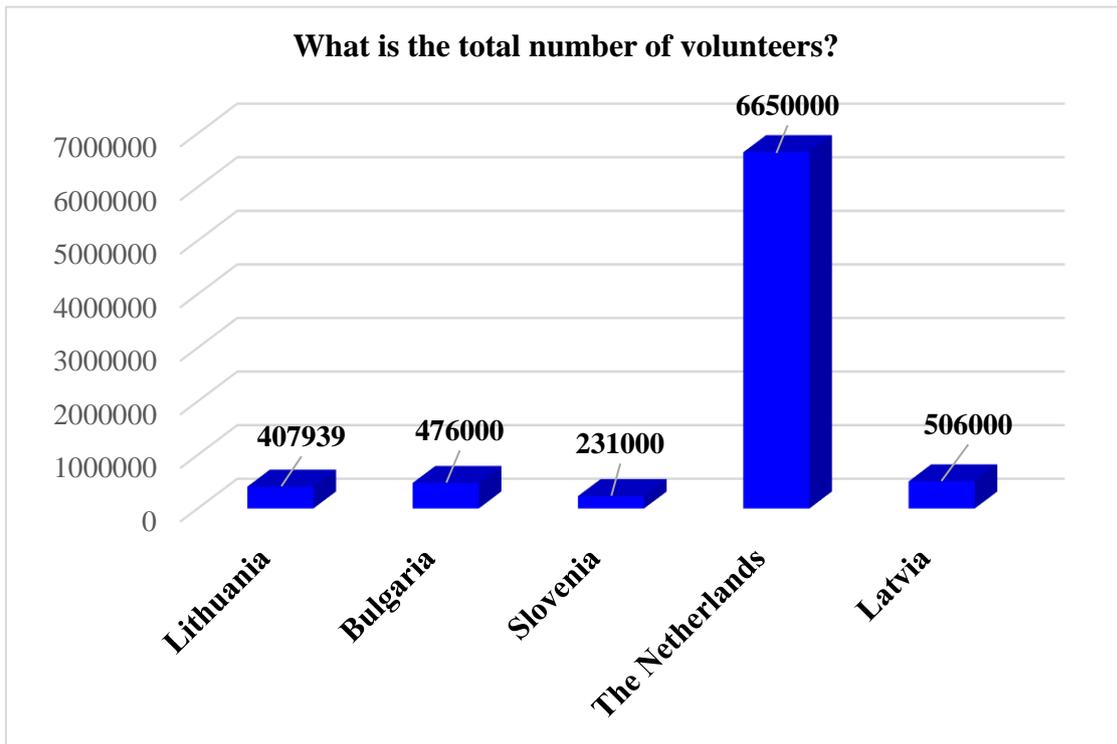


Figure 1

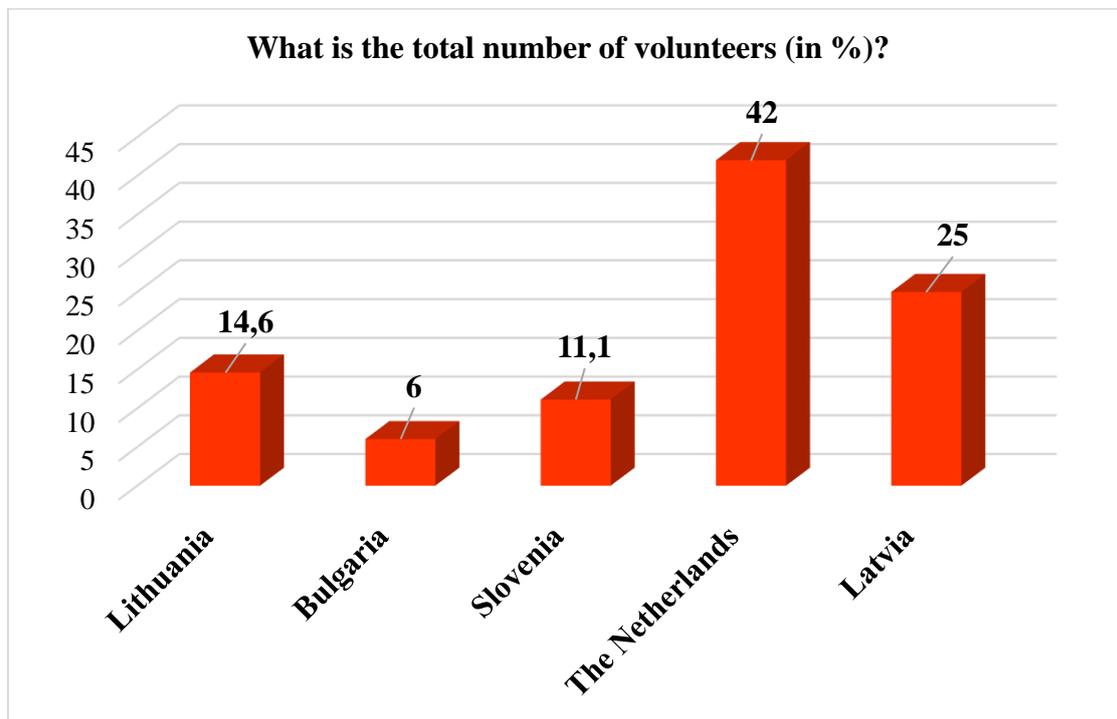


Figure 2

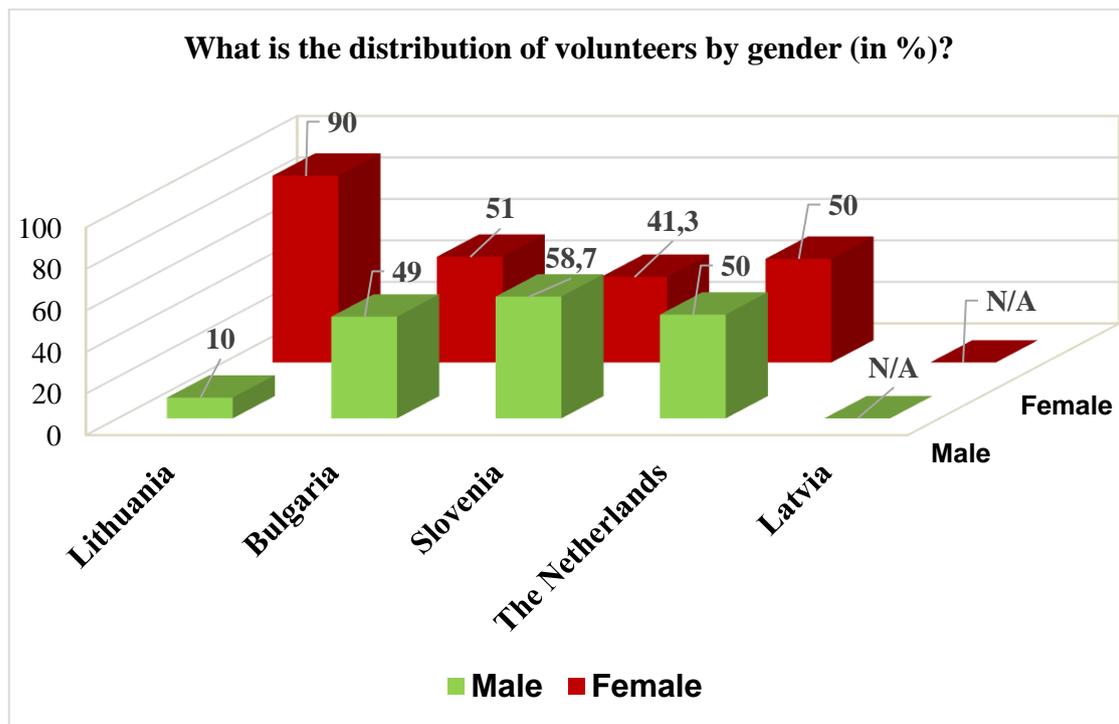


Figure 3

What is the trend in the number of older volunteers?

The trend is increasing the number of older volunteers for the following reasons:

- people learn more about volunteerism and they have more free time after retirement (Latvia: The research report in Volunteering of Latvia);
- the number of senior citizens is growing (Netherlands: CBS).

There is currently a tendency in Lithuania that older people are more likely to volunteer in one-off actions. Many want to volunteer "here and now", but not everyone is determined to commit for a long time. There is no well-developed system of volunteer preparation which would guarantee the proper long-term engagement in volunteerism. This is the reason that older people seldom take part in volunteerism and need a tutor.

The trend in the number of volunteers in Bulgaria is stable (Bulgarian national report on the third review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid international plan of action on ageing and its regional implementation strategy (MIPAA/RIS), 2012 – 2017). For 54% of NGOs the number of volunteers during the past years increased because of the growing popularity of voluntary organisations and their initiatives, improved capacities, offering new knowledge and training to volunteers, and the civil engagement of people. For 35% - the trend remained unchanged, and for 11% of organisations the number of volunteers decreased because of the difficult economic conditions, the lack of adequate stimulation or social appraisal of volunteering.

The Bulgarian NGOs reported that they need training in motivating and attracting volunteers in long-term volunteering activities, creation and attractive presentation of volunteer initiatives, training of volunteers, monitoring and evaluation of volunteer initiatives, supervision of volunteers, delegation of responsibilities to volunteers, organisation of volunteer initiatives.

In Slovenia trend in the number of volunteers has been slightly decreasing which hypothetically could be understood, given the restrictive law on NGOs, considering NGOs ever more as companies with mercantile orientation Findeisen, D. (2013). Members of the NGOs have no right to benefit from NGOs' activities free of charge and cannot use the fees for carrying out their programmes.

What is the geographical spread of volunteering?

Volunteering is well spread in towns but less in rural areas (local communities) because of the big number of the citizens (Lithuania; Bulgaria; Slovenia: P. Jamsek, 2012). There is a good number of volunteers in smaller cities and regions because the local community's attitude toward volunteer activities is valued at a higher level (Netherlands, Bulgaria). There are more adult volunteers in the local municipalities (Latvia).

What is the distribution of volunteers by level of education?

Most volunteers have completed secondary school or higher education. It seems that societies have a larger number of highly educated volunteers or those with a postgraduate degree (Slovenia: D. H. Smith, et al., 2016). Most older volunteers have completed higher education (Lithuania, Netherlands). Mostly volunteers have hold a university or PhD degree – over 70% (Bulgaria: Consolidated Research Report of the Situation with Volunteering in the Bulgarian-Serbian Border Areas, Comparative Analysis; Promotion of the Active Life of the Elderly in Bulgaria. Collection of good practices) Another 27% of volunteers have a high/ secondary school diploma and 3% have attained lower levels of education. Older people in Latvia have completed tertiary studies.

What is the distribution of volunteers by status of employment?

Most of the older volunteers are pensioners (Lithuania, Slovenia).

What is the distribution of volunteers' involvement by sectors?

The most popular area of volunteering is in the social sphere. Volunteers are involved in the following areas: care for children and young people in need, education and training, human rights and freedoms, protection and assistance to victims of natural disasters, crises and accidents, care for the older and disabled people, healthcare, sports, cultural events, environmental protection/ ecology, sustainable development, civil society, blood donation, charity, counselling (Fig. 4). In Netherlands (Volunteering and Wellbeing Among Ageing Adults: A Longitudinal Analysis), the top sectors for men are sports and religion, and for women - education, care-giving and religion.

How much time is dedicated to volunteering?

Volunteers spend different time depending on the specific action (Fig. 5).

2) Volunteering and volunteer training policies

Is there a law on volunteering?

Only organized volunteering is regulated by law:

- Law on volunteering, Lithuania, 2011 (Republic of Lithuania law on volunteering; Law of Volunteering in Lithuania);
- Volunteering Act, Slovenia, 2011, 2015;
- Social Support Act, Netherlands, 2007 (Volunteers program in Europe);
- Voluntary Work Law, Latvia, 2016.

These laws determine volunteering and its meaning together with fundamental principles of volunteering, the conditions to be fulfilled in organized volunteering, rights and obligations of volunteers and voluntary organisations.

There are some specific elements of these laws such as:

- defines organisation of voluntary activities, insurance for a volunteer and reimbursement of expenses and recognition of Volunteering (Lithuania);
- obligations of the State, self-governing local communities, volunteering and non-profit organisations active in the field of volunteering, promoting, registration, developing volunteering (Slovenia);
- application of the law on national and regional levels (Netherlands);

- developing general accounting system of voluntary work, health and life insurance against accidents during performance of voluntary work (Latvia). Due to legal nuances and incorrect interpretation of the law, NGOs are reluctant to involve volunteers in their activities, being afraid to violate the law.

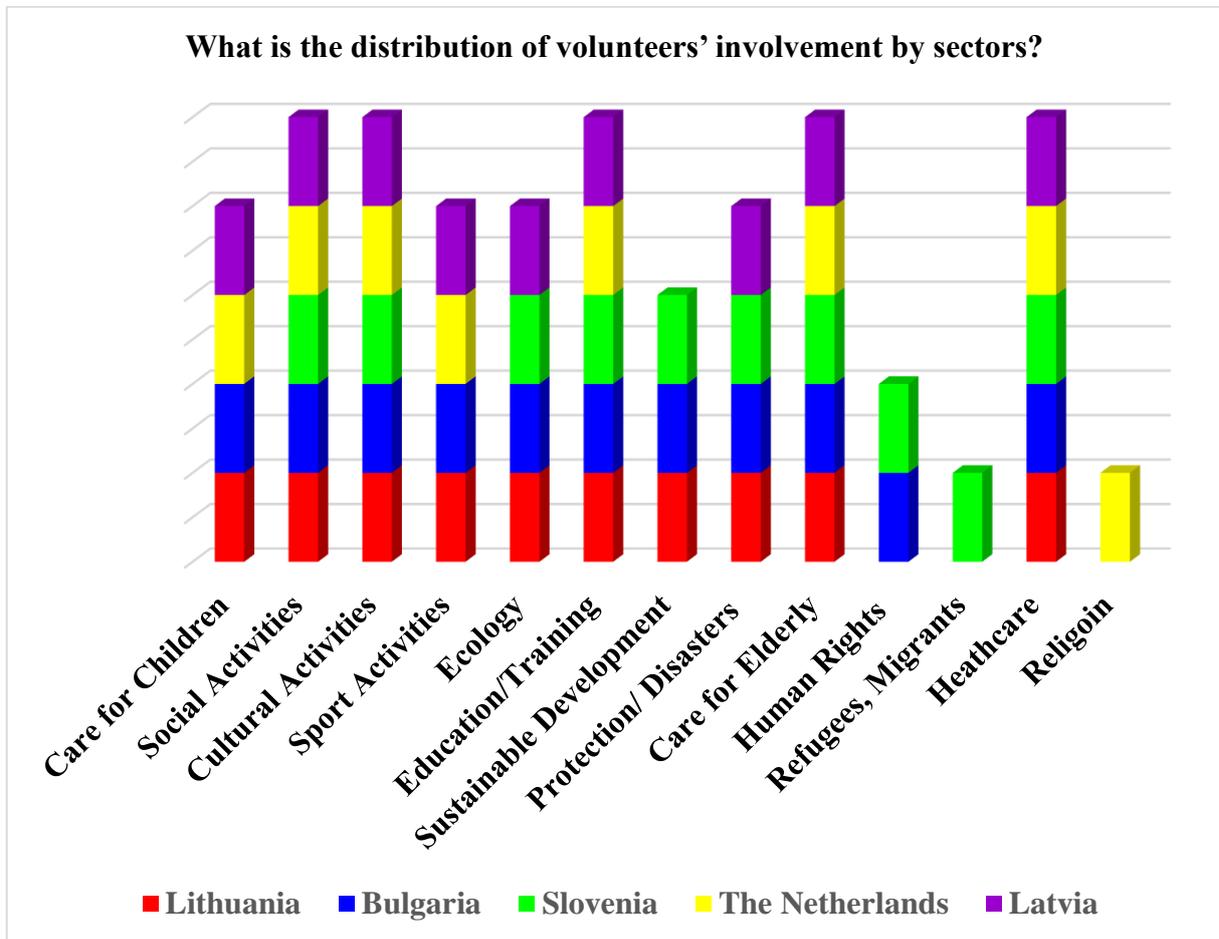


Figure 4

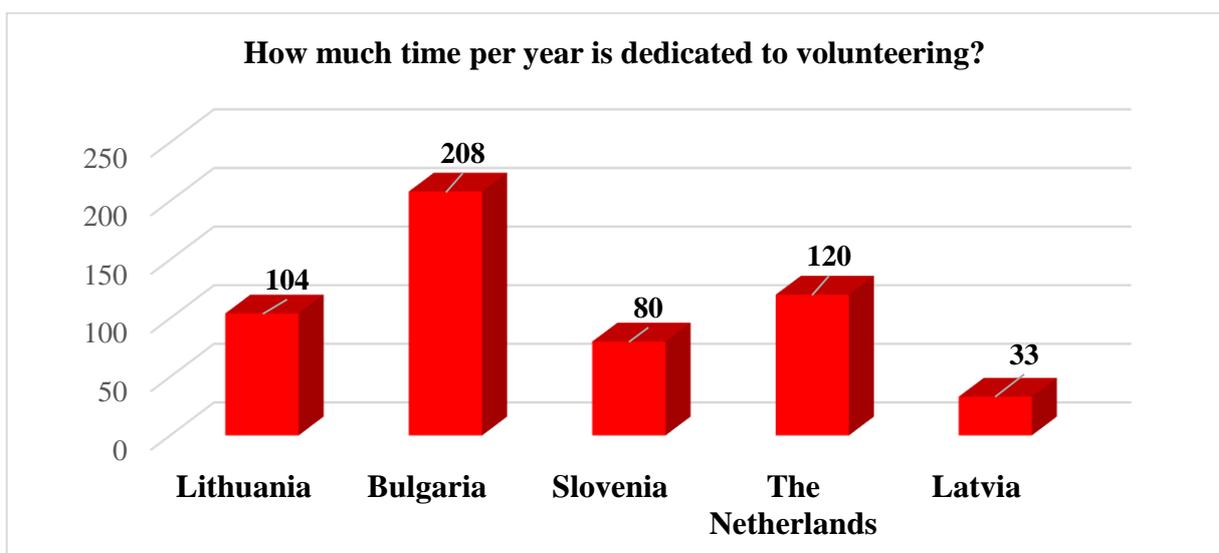


Figure 5

A law of senior volunteering does not exist in Bulgaria. The volunteering organisations use: Crisis Management Law (2005); Law for the Bulgarian Red Cross (1995); Law of the Cultural Houses (1996); Ethical Codes of NGOs. There is a law only for youth volunteering.

Is there a public body responsible for volunteering from a regulatory or institutional perspective?

They are: Ministry of Social Security and Labour (Lithuania); There is no public body responsible for seniors volunteering in Bulgaria. There are only for youth volunteering - Ministry of Youth and Sports, Human Resources Development Centre; Ministry of Public Administration of the Republic of Slovenia; Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport in Netherlands; Association of Dutch Voluntary Work Organizations (Netherlands); Foundation Volunteers Management (Netherlands); Certificate of Good Conduct; Municipalities (Netherlands).

Are there any other public bodies involved in volunteering?

They are: Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (Lithuania); Employment Service of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania; Information and Consultation Centres across Bulgaria; Ministry of Education, Science and Sport the Republic of Slovenia; Ministry of Work, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Slovenia; Municipalities (Bulgaria, Netherlands); State Employment Agency (Latvia); Society "RASA" - Riga active seniors alliance" (Latvia); Integration.lv (Latvia); Society "Shelter "Safe House"" (Latvia); Lutheran Church of Latvia.

Are there any organisations that promote volunteering, facilitate cooperation and exchange of information?

They are: „Food bank“ (LT "Maisto bankas") (Lithuania); „Silver line“ (LT "Sidabrinė linija") (Lithuania); Bulgarian Red Cross; Bulgarian Red Cross – Youth; National Alliance for Volunteer Action (Bulgaria); Unions and Clubs of Pensioners (Bulgaria); Cultural Houses in every town and village (Bulgaria); Slovene Philanthropy (Slovenia); More than 360 organisations that support voluntary activities (Netherlands); Centres in every municipality (Netherlands); The Samaritan Association of Latvia.

Is there an affiliation with European umbrella organizations/ networks?

They are: Red Cross (Lithuania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Netherlands, Latvia); Caritas (Lithuania, Bulgaria, Latvia); Lithuanian Malta Relief Organisation (Lithuania); National Alliance for Volunteer Action (Bulgaria); University of Third Age (Slovenia); Serve the City NGO (Latvia).

How well is youth volunteering developed?

Having taken into account that older people's volunteerism is not very popular, most of the volunteering programs are designed for the youth (Lithuania).

The policy for youth of the Bulgarian Government including volunteering, is conducted by the Ministry of Youth and Sports with support from the Human Resources Development Centre (National Erasmus office). The role of youth volunteering is recognized in the National Strategy for Youth (2010-2029). 42 % of the voluntary organisations, National agencies, Volunteer Centres in Bulgaria have a program or a plan for training youth volunteers.

Today Slovenian as compare to 1995 youth are significantly more active in the voluntary sphere that improve their status and social inclusion. Young people prefer personal to organized volunteering.

A big share (32,6 %) of young people in Latvia are involved in voluntary activities. The policy for youth volunteering is included in Youth Policy State Program for each current year (no specific plans on national level). There are many organisations that work with youth volunteers.

The younger age groups of volunteers in Netherlands are becoming smaller.

3) Good practices and organisations that are working with adult volunteers Which are the key programmes that stimulate volunteering at a national level?

They are:

- “Increasing Social Inclusion and Combating Poverty” (Lithuania: How to Volunteer as a Senior?);
- “Time for a change” (Lithuania: Effects of Volunteering on the Well-Being of Older Adults);
- A Program of the Bulgarian Red Cross (Bulgaria);
- A Program of the Union of Pensioners – 2004 (Bulgaria);
- A Program of the Network of Cultural Houses (Bulgaria);
- Social Network of Intergenerational Programmes for Quality Ageing and Solidarity Co-Habitation of Generations at Anton Trstenjak’s Institute (Slovenia: Factors Affecting Volunteerism Among Older Adults; To volunteer or not: the influence of individual characteristics, resources, and social factors on the likelihood of volunteering by older adults);
- Cultural mediators in public institutions of the Slovenian Third Age University network (Slovenia: D. Findeisen, 2013);
- Older people for older people of the Slovenian Federation of Pensioners’ Associations, ZDUS (Slovenia: Principi, et al., 2014);
- A program of the Red Cross (Netherlands);
- A program of the Union of Institute of Volunteers (Netherlands);
- A program of the Voluntary organisations in the care sector (Netherlands);
- “Let us be active!” (Latvia);
- A Program of the society “Be good” (Latvia);
- A Program of the society “Brīvprātīgais.lv” (Latvia);
- A new program of the movement “Stay at home” (Latvia).

Which are the benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries?

The main benefits for senior volunteers are: Personal development; Social inclusion at different levels; Awarding Knighthood or a medal; Improved quality of life in the community in some way; Obtaining new knowledge and developing new skills; Building social networks among people of the same age and with younger generations; Sharing knowledge/ skills / experience; Meaningfully spent free time; Building a positive attitude towards older people; Being a real world-improver; Doing voluntary work for themselves.

The key emotional benefits of volunteering are: Satisfaction; Happiness; Psychological equilibrium; Optimism; A feeling of self-actualisation; Freedom; Sense of social usefulness.

The benefits for the communities are: Social integration; Stronger and more active communities; Improve quality of life of the local community; Intergenerational solidarity; Transmission of traditions, customs, and crafts to the new generation; Reducing the distance between the community members; Providing additional help for social, cultural, educational and health providers.

For direct beneficiaries, volunteering contributes solving problems in the following areas: Personal development; Local/regional development; Sustainable development; Environmental protection; Intercultural and intergenerational dialogue; Common societal values; New job.

Is there a recognition of volunteers’ skills and competences within the national educational and training systems?

Recognition of Volunteering is defined in the Law of Volunteering in Lithuania as: practical work and/ or learning experience of a volunteer; social activities under general teaching plans with credits.

In general, the volunteers’ skills and competencies acquired during the course of their voluntary work are not yet recognised by the national education and training systems of Bulgaria,

Slovenia, Latvia. Education and training opportunities for volunteers are carried out in organisations with volunteering programmes and are related to the main areas the organisation deals with. Some of these organizations are the Bulgarian Red Cross, some Bulgarian universities, Slovene Philanthropy, Anton Trstenjak's Institute, Miss – Youth Centre, Nefix - dealing with Youth, Slovenian Third Age University (Volunteering at Slovenian Third Age University), etc. certificates are recognized only for specific voluntary activities.

Which organizations support older people's voluntary work?

Volunteering of older persons is generally in the social services and includes preventive actions aimed at preventing and identifying problems, followed by activities aimed at improving the quality of life, and prevention activities.

The older people's voluntary work is organised and supported by the Third Age Universities in Lithuania, Union of Pensioners "Bočiai", Senior initiatives centre, "Senior hive", Older people's clubs.

This kind of work in Bulgaria is supported by organizing different social, cultural and education activities of the Bulgarian Red Cross, many Unions of Pensioners, the University of Ruse – Centre for Education of Third Age, the National University of Third Age, the National Network of Cultural Houses, Municipalities, NGOs, and the Government.

In Slovenia it is organised and supported by means of education by the Federation of Associations on Pensioners (Older people for older people), it is devised, organised, researched and supported in public by Slovenian Third Age University (Cultural mediators, garden volunteers, cultural mediators in hospitals and museums, educational network of tandems Each-one-teach-one, network of sharing older people's knowledge), Slovenian Institute for adult education, SIAE (network of study circles).

Senior Volunteerism is carried out in Latvia by 2 non – governmental organisations – RASA (Riga Active Seniors Alliance) and NGO Grannies.lv. There also are regional NGOs and churches, Day care centres, Latvian Red Cross, Animal shelters, soup kitchens, cultural institutions.

Which are the levels of volunteering?

There are three levels of objectives of the volunteering and volunteer work.

The first level is personal development because volunteering is to learn new skills, disclose and develop the existing potential, develop self-control, learning tolerance and learning about teamwork.

The second one is to solve specific social problems through local and global volunteer actions. There are activities with marginalized groups, children with special needs, work to promote human rights and to assist the older people and infirm, the poor and disabled, providing assistance in schools, kindergartens, hospitals and other health and social institutions, work on the preservation of natural, cultural and historical heritage, etc.

The third level is social development including self-initiative, human development and reinforcement of the civil society.

Best practices and best structures work in networks simultaneously on all three levels and also on international or global level.

Is there an award-based program, which empowers senior volunteerism?

Every year on December 5, Latvia celebrates Volunteers day. The Ministry of Education and Culture selects volunteers who receive recognition as the Volunteer of the Year. The awarding is with Knighthood or a medal.

The volunteer's organisations very often give certificates or gifts to the seniors – participants in their activities. There are not any other programmes which empower senior volunteerism.

Is there a training program for adult educators of older volunteers?

“No, or better yes” (Volunteering at the Slovenian Third Age University) – a program that the University developed for museum curators and museum staff wanting to act as museum mentors to older students from Third Age University wanting to become volunteers. The programme was devised by Slovenian Third Age University and is meant for educators and volunteers at the same time.

CONCLUSIONS

Each project partner found it difficult to present reliable data for the comparative analysis because of several reasons:

- there are no unified data systems of organizations that use volunteers;
- volunteering is not being paid and therefore there are no registrations of volunteers (Bulgaria);
- there is no system for training of managers nor tutors of volunteers;
- there is not enough research on volunteering to cover large groups of adults;
- there is no system for training older volunteers to ensure proper long-term participation in volunteering.

As far as the available data allow, it can be summarized that the number of volunteers in the partner countries is between 231,000 (Slovenia) and 6,650,000 (Netherlands). Netherlands has the most volunteers in relation to the population of the country and the least in Bulgaria (475,000).

There is no clear general trend in the development of volunteering in the partner countries.

Adult volunteers are equally men and women. They live in bigger cities. They are retirees who have completed secondary or higher education, even with a PhD degree. The main sectors in which they are involved are: social, cultural and sport activities, education, care for children, older and disabled persons, healthcare, environmental protection. They spend an average of 109 hours a year volunteering.

In all countries there are either laws on adult volunteering (Lithuania, Slovenia, Netherlands, Latvia), or other laws are used for this activity (Bulgaria). There exist public bodies responsible for volunteering from a regulatory or institutional perspective.

There also are public bodies involved in different ways in volunteering and many organisations that promote volunteering, facilitate cooperation and exchange of information in the partner countries. The largest volunteer organizations are recognized by the European Volunteer Center.

The youth volunteering is very well developed with an increasing trend.

There are many kinds of key programmes that stimulate volunteering at a national, regional and local levels. There are many key benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries. But only in Latvia is there a rewarding of volunteers with a medal or Knighthood by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The voluntary work of the older people is on three levels: personal development; solving specific social problems; social development.

Up-to-date programmes are needed to engage older people in volunteering, which will benefit both them and their society.

There is not any program for training adult educators. There is a need for specialists with new knowledge and skills according to the new world pandemic situation who can deal with senior citizens to motivate them to engage in volunteering and in lifelong learning activities.

Voluntary organisations need training in: motivating and attracting volunteers in long-term volunteering activities, organisation of volunteer initiatives, training of volunteers, monitoring and evaluation of volunteer initiatives, supervision of volunteers, delegation of responsibilities to volunteers.

The development of volunteering in the partner countries requires research, exchange of experience, development of tools and experimentation with them for the training of teachers for adult volunteers.

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