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Join the dots!

GET CONNECTED: VOLUNTEERING AND SHARED VALUES

SUMMARY BROCHURE : APRIL 2019

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CRYSTAL *"I volunteer because I value the principle of giving back more than I receive. I believe that as much as it can help a community, volunteering can also help us help ourselves...volunteering has helped me get out of my comfort zone and changed my view on my self-worth...I have the time to volunteer, plus it costs me nothing to be kind, but can be priceless to the recipient... I get to meet awesome people from diverse backgrounds; when volunteering; we are all working towards a common goal".*

DAVID *"I find joy in serving others and interacting with them on a personal level especially the most vulnerable in our city. In the past I tried to find joy by taking care of my own needs and pursuing pleasure and entertainment. I have found true joy is achievable by taking my focus off myself and focusing on helping others".*

IVO *"To me, volunteering is an act of creation. When you volunteer, you build bridges and pull people together. You give but you also take. You leave the comfort of your daily routine to erase borders and discover the oftentimes unmapped world of humility, compassion and pure kindness. In today's turbulent times, volunteering is like a lighthouse guiding you to the safe harbour of hope to restore your faith in humanity itself".*

KATARINA *"My aim has always been to make a small difference for at least one person. I found out that volunteering helps me become a stronger person and fight my own demons. I strongly believe it's part of human nature to help each other and even if you need help yourself, helping others still makes you feel better".*

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AMALIJA *"I'm thinking about how narrow our sight is while we are in our own four walls. We see and analyse everything from our perspectives, our feelings, our experiences. I do not know how others see, feel, imagine. It is interesting how we really need to connect, to have fun and take a little care of our own concerns".*

DARIO *"For me, volunteering means giving my own time to others or to organizations that need it...it gives me an opportunity to be among people, to meet some new people, to have new experiences, opportunities. I've met a lot of new people, who I otherwise would not get the chance to meet...that changed the way I saw myself, but also others...it taught me things I did not know before".*



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DEBBIE "All you have to do is wake up your inner child and think about your own skills and interests. In this way, everyone can contribute something, with the right amount of flexibility, receptiveness and empathy".

IVANA "My experience in working with unaccompanied minor migrants has taught me a lot more than I could have ever imagined. I've learned that we do not have to know the same language to understand each other. I've learned that a sincere smile can alleviate jitters and nervousness and do far more than words".

DENISE "I really learn a lot from the kids. Every day is different. It just does your heart good sometimes and the kids are so funny. I'm actually learning to write properly myself, so it's not all give, give, give...even an hour a week can change your life and make you so much happier. Giving is just the way forward".

EKAETTE "Volunteering is giving me the inner satisfaction that I'm giving my time, my services and my expertise to others. It's positive because it's also going to further aid my career. And it shapes my social life".

Quotes from Get Connected Volunteers



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FLORIN *"There are homeless people that need help, and they appreciate it. I like to help people so I'm here".*

IRNYA *"There is a real sense of community at the canal clean-up, it is a real opportunity for me to meet my neighbours. When I first started volunteering, my husband didn't come along but now, he has also caught the bug!".*

CAMERON *"I've always had a real love of working with people and I'm always happy to help and support community activities. The CommUnity Bubble project provided me with an opportunity to be involved in the type of work that I really enjoy".*

JUNE *"I've learnt many new skills through my volunteering and met some amazing people. It has helped me be a better person and to treat everyone fairly. I've learnt some new talents and have been able to share my experiences both in my professional life and my day-to-day life. The benefits I've received from volunteering are helping others to achieve their potential, making a difference in the community I live in as well as helping children and young people in Africa. It also helps me to stay healthy and keep active as working with young people is very fulfilling".*

MAURO *"I thought this was a great way for me to contribute to the important cause of rebuilding communities whilst at the same time allowing me to meet new people. From personal experience, I also know how hard it can be for people coming from abroad to integrate and maybe in the future I can do something about this too".*

MICHAEL *"Volunteering has made me feel more connected to the community and I get a lot of satisfaction out of seeing a smile on the faces of the people that I've helped. I've developed some great negotiation skills...and it's probably shown me that I'm more patient than I thought I was!".*



Making the connections...

Our values are a fundamental part of our identity. They are the things that are important to us, the characteristics and behaviours that motivate us and guide our decisions. Many of our values are shared by others and these common values can bring us together and unite our communities and wider society.

Living out our values is not always easy. Sometimes it can be difficult to act on the things that matter to us the most. Volunteering can provide such an opportunity. It can bring people and communities together and enable us to explore and strengthen our values.

Over the last 18 months, Serve the City Brussels (Belgium), Volonterski Centar Osijek (Croatia), Dublin City Volunteer Centre (Ireland) and Volunteer Scotland (Scotland) have been exploring how volunteering – including the way it is supported and organised – influences our shared EU values.

Volunteers from all four countries have been documenting their journeys and their experiences of volunteering to provide a closer look at the impact that volunteering can have on people's values, attitudes and their feelings of connectedness to other people and places.

The project...

Funded by the European Commission's Europe for Citizens Programme, the Get Connected project is all about connecting communities, helping people to find meaningful experiences through volunteering and sharing people's personal stories to inspire others.

Key Project Components

24 Conversation Salons (Community Bubbles in Scotland) took place, cultivating conversations on: catalysts to begin volunteering, local community, the international community, personal values and volunteering experiences.

6 Digital Media Workshops Delivered.

139 People started volunteering as part of the project.

274 'Before' and 'after' surveys completed (to examine the impact of volunteering)

1 Research report produced conducted into the infrastructure and policy context in each country.

The values...

So what are our shared values? The project has identified 10 key values that people tend to identify with on both a personal and a wider 'shared' level:

Active citizenship: being able to act on social and political issues, such as crime prevention in your local area, cleaning up your street, etc.

Civic responsibility: carrying out civic duties that benefit the whole of society, such as obeying the rule of law, voting in elections, jury duty or becoming a charity trustee.

Courtesy: treating people with warmth, politeness and respect.

Empathy: understanding and sharing the feelings of others.

Environmental protection: looking after the natural environment for the benefit and enjoyment of everyone.

Equality: treating people equally and fairly, regardless of their background, identity or personal circumstances.

Respect for other cultures: recognising, appreciating and valuing other cultural, racial and ethnic groups.

Self-fulfilment: being able to make yourself happy through your own efforts, such as using your skills and talents to achieve your hopes and ambitions.

Solidarity or support for others: the strong bond formed between people who support each other and/or have a shared purpose, such as campaigning to stop a school closure.

Tolerance: the willingness to accept different behaviours, beliefs and opinions.

Joining your own dots...

10 Key Policy Observations

What findings do we believe are fundamental for living shared EU values through volunteering?

- 1 Volunteering is a free choice of a wide spectrum of activity, and the needs and interests of volunteers requires support.
- 2 European values such as solidarity are directly lived and experienced through volunteer activity, and volunteers will express the meaning of this in their own words and feelings.
- 3 Methods of conversation and dialogue with citizens about values and actions are critically important. Taking the time and effort to initiate these is essential to fill the current gaps in coming together to look out for each other.
- 4 'Get Connected' is a theme that was highly effective in cross country collaboration, in inviting citizens to meet and talk, in connecting volunteers with voluntary actions and experience, and understanding EU values.
- 5 The disconnections are an important agenda for inquiry. Who is not involved? What places are not coming together? Where is there conflict and tensions? What is dividing us and where is the power? This focuses on the urgent need for new starting points and new connections in difficult contexts.
- 6 The power of listening. Creating a space to reflect and have a voice for often powerless people to be listened to is an essential building block for finding common ground and common purpose.
- 7 Volunteering has its own set of intrinsic values: reciprocity, mutual respect and trust. These provide the building blocks for wider EU values.
- 8 The findings from the project support the United Nations definition that the key characteristics of volunteering are:
 - Mutual support and self organizing
 - Formal service
 - Civic participation and campaigning
- 9 Volunteering roles need to be co-designed to meet everyone's needs.
- 10 Finding growth and inclusion in volunteering will be found in the mix between people, places and pursuits and the nurturing of trusting relationships – an important agenda for Government and policy makers.

Further information and contacts

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