Good practical examples from Poland and the Netherlands - digital inclusion for elderly volunteers and migrants

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Introduction

People generally grow older and deal with loneliness differently. Retirees are frequently counseled to maintain social connections, pursue new hobbies, and have a good outlook. Indeed, research indicates that those who participate in worthwhile, useful activities with others typically live longer, experience better mental health, and discover a sense of purpose in life. To guarantee that global sustainable development initiatives are owned, carried out, and benefit all people, volunteerism is crucial. The 2030 Agenda acknowledges the indispensable contributions made by volunteers worldwide.

Vulnerable groups often are "invisible" in society (disabled people, elderly people, single parents, migrant women). Creating and promoting learning opportunities among all citizens and generations. Participating in volunteering and adult learning courses is a form of civic participation, which can lead to larger social inclusion and networking. Such benefits are not limited to individuals: better health and increased participation in society mean reduced healthcare costs and a greater contribution to society as a whole. Creating good practices helps to understand the current situation regarding digital volunteering, volunteering opportunities in general and the involvement of older people in volunteering, available training opportunities to promote digital competencies, and initiatives to motivate to use technology, the internet, and appropriate media (smartphone, computer) for seniors, as well as to identify older people's interest in participating in digital volunteering and their desire to improve their skills or learn to use communication technologies, etc. daily activities.

Through the concerted efforts of volunteers, governments, civil society, the private sector, and the United Nations, the Plan of Action seeks to strengthen people's ownership of the 2030 Agenda, integrate and mainstream volunteering into national strategies and policies, and better measure the impact of volunteers.

Picture: https://unsplash.com/s/photos/vulnerable-people
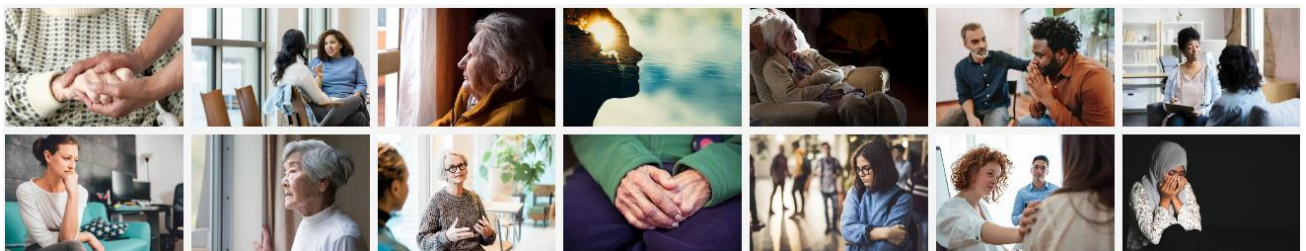
Vulnerable people description

➤ People who are more likely to be harmed, disadvantaged, or excluded because of a variety of issues that could impact their physical, emotional, social, or financial well-being are considered vulnerable. Numerous factors, such as age, disability, health, economic status, social discrimination, and cultural hurdles, might contribute to this vulnerability.

➤ Elderly People: Health problems, decreased mobility, social isolation, or cognitive decline can all make older persons more vulnerable. Their vulnerability may also be exacerbated by diminished social networks and post-retirement income. Individuals with challenges: Access to education, work, healthcare, and social inclusion may be difficult for those with physical, sensory, intellectual, or mental health challenges. Their vulnerability is further increased by discrimination and a lack of accessible infrastructure.

➤ Children & Youth: Young people are susceptible to exploitation, abuse, and neglect, particularly those from unstable or low-income families. For security and support, they mostly depend on social services, caretakers, and educational institutions. Language hurdles, cultural disparities, and legal constraints frequently prevent migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees from accessing essential services and jobs. Additionally, they can encounter prejudice and social exclusion, which would make them even more vulnerable.

➤ Low-Income Individuals and Families: Those who are impoverished frequently do not have access to basic services like safe housing, good healthcare, and education. Additionally, economic hardship raises their risk of social marginalization, poor health outcomes, and food insecurity.
People Who Are Homeless: Those who are homeless have difficulty finding steady housing, accessing healthcare, and finding work. They are particularly susceptible because they are more likely to experience extreme weather, violence, and health concerns.
People with Chronic Illnesses: People who suffer from long-term physical or mental health issues may find it difficult to go about their everyday lives, which increases their reliance on social support systems and medical services.

➤ People Who Experience Racial or Ethnic Discrimination: Systemic discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity can restrict possibilities for social mobility, work, and

education, making people more susceptible to poverty and marginalization.

Survivors of Abuse and Trauma: Individuals who have been victims of abuse, violence, or traumatic experiences frequently deal with psychiatric issues, social stigma, and financial difficulties that affect their well-being and opportunities. LGBTQ+ People: Particularly in places where LGBTQ+ rights are not upheld, members of LGBTQ+ communities may face stigma-related mental health issues, social marginalization, and discrimination.

Volunteering principles and forms

Digital inclusion for vulnerable people is a must and priority to keep them included. To tackle loneliness, the retirees are often advised to stay social, explore new interests and stay positive. Indeed, studies show that people who engage in meaningful, productive activities with others tend to live longer, boost their mood, and find a sense of purpose. Volunteerism is essential to ensure that global sustainable development efforts are owned by all people, implemented by all people, and for all people. The 2030 Agenda recognizes the vital roles that volunteers everywhere are playing.

QUESTION - how to involve vulnerable people in a common digital inclusion, which activities and methods to use? One of way to be involved in participatory learning is by volunteering. Through volunteering people feels useful and important, that's why the motivation to do activities online, and digitally could be better accepted. However, both countries are affected by the pandemic situation notice that vulnerable people are excluded from digital activities, from learning and participating online.

Volunteering principles could be described in two ways – from volunteer position and organisation perspective. From volunteer position – enjoying volunteering activities and devoted time. From organization position in which volunteer involved important principles of volunteer – respect, reliability, responsibility, volunteer Well-being. Organisation working with volunteers must to give instructions or training how volunteers should behave and main volunteering rules. For example, volunteers should treat everyone they serve and work with respect, valuing each person's dignity, culture, and individuality. Also, volunteers should show commitments completing tasks to the best of their ability. Volunteers should be trustable person because they are doing work tasks and that's why they should take ownership of their actions and understand the impact of their work. Volunteering should not be done for selfish reasons, but rather out of a sincere wish to assist. Volunteers should be honest about their skills and limitations, steer clear of conflicts of interest, and safeguard the privacy of the organization and the individuals they help. Volunteers should approach their work with compassion, understanding of the struggles and experiences of others, and an open mind. This concept helps to create a compassionate environment where people are respected and understood.

Volunteers should be sensitive to the hardships and experiences of others and approach their work with compassion and without passing judgment. This idea contributes to the development of a caring atmosphere where individuals are acknowledged and understood. Serving others should be the driving force for volunteering, not the desire for material or monetary gain. This idea highlights the selfless aspect of volunteering and the need of supporting a cause bigger than oneself.

The organization's policies, processes, and safety measures should be adhered to by volunteers. Following these rules guarantees the safety of volunteers and the people they assist, as well as the efficient operation of the organization.

Volunteering frequently entails unforeseen difficulties and adjustments. Volunteers should have a positive outlook, be open to learning and growing, and be able to adjust and react to these changes in a constructive way.

Volunteers must to make an effort to do their duties in a professional manner, applying their expertise to have a significant influence. Additionally, this idea places a strong emphasis on continuous learning and growth, which over time helps volunteers become more skilled and deliver better service. Instead than focusing on temporary solutions, effective volunteering aims to make a permanent positive influence. In order to promote sustainable change and enable communities to become self-sufficient, volunteers should seek to identify and address the underlying causes of problems.

Photo made: Stowarzyszenie Wiedza Innowacja, Rozwój

Volunteering that promotes inclusivity should value and appreciate diversity in all of its forms. Volunteers should advocate for fair treatment for everyone and seek to eliminate barriers that keep people from volunteering and utilizing services. Organizations should promote volunteers' mental and emotional well-being because they understand how crucial it is for sustained involvement. Volunteers should prioritize their health, set boundaries, and seek assistance when necessary to avoid burnout. Open, polite communication between volunteers and the organization is essential for understanding responsibilities, setting expectations, and resolving issues. Constructive criticism is crucial for improvement, development, and aligning everyone's efforts with the company's goals.

Volunteering can be a fulfilling and life-changing experience for both the volunteers and the communities they serve if these guidelines are followed. These values provide a framework for civil, significant, and long-lasting volunteer work that fosters constructive social change.

Forms - Volunteering encourages cooperation, teamwork, and common objectives, all of which strengthen a sense of community. Volunteers should make an effort to collaborate well, exchange information, and form enduring bonds with both their teams and the communities they serve.

Vulnerable communities whose needs, struggles, or mere existence are frequently disregarded or neglected by mainstream culture are referred to as "invisible" populations. Due to obstacles that keep them from fully engaging in social, economic, or political life, these groups are especially vulnerable to prejudice, exploitation, and neglect because of their lack of visibility. Fostering an inclusive, egalitarian society requires acknowledging and meeting the needs of these "invisible" groups.

Photo made: Stowarzyszenie Wiedza Innowacja, Rozwój

Online volunteering platforms, older adults can connect with people globally, bridging geographical divides and fostering relationships that combat isolation, which is common among older populations.

Through virtual mentorship, coaching, or tutoring, many elders can impart their vast life and professional expertise to younger generations. Both mentors and mentees gain from this engagement, which offers the chance to share information and form deep connections. Whether it's using video conferencing for online meetings or learning new project management tools, digital volunteering pushes senior citizens to become tech savvy. This ongoing education improves cognitive function and increases self-assurance when utilizing digital technologies. Training sessions are a feature of certain volunteer programs that give senior citizens the chance to learn more about topics including social media, data entry, digital literacy, and customer service.

Adult learning and volunteering: methodology for empowerment

Volunteers are valued and their efforts are celebrated by successful volunteer programs. This idea emphasizes the value of showing gratitude, whether it be by official acknowledgement, a thank-you note, or by offering chances for personal development.

Results of This Methodology for Empowerment. Using this approach, adult learners can achieve a number of life-changing results. Adult volunteers become more self-assured as they learn new skills and witness the results of their labor. Volunteering's cooperative, community-focused atmosphere strengthens social ties, lessens loneliness, and creates a network of support. Volunteers acquire abilities that they can use in their personal or professional lives, which boosts their self-confidence and flexibility in general.

The approach guarantees that knowledge is converted into tangible, constructive contributions to the community, enhancing the volunteer's sense of mission. It is a potent paradigm for social and personal change because it combines the ideas of adult learning with organized, purpose-driven volunteer work to produce an empowering experience that helps both individuals and communities.

Training in digital skills enables adult learners to use technology with assurance. For volunteers who are unfamiliar with digital platforms, this is especially helpful because it gives them access to online information and remote volunteering opportunities.

Photo created with Canva AI

Introduce participants to online collaboration technologies, such as communication platforms and project management software, to let them collaborate remotely and build digital competency, which will be useful in their future careers.

Permit volunteers to take on different responsibilities inside the project or organization. Role rotation helps individuals find their talents and preferences, avoid stagnation, and boost confidence.

Provide a route to leadership by motivating volunteers to assume greater responsibility. To promote a sense of empowerment and accomplishment, volunteers may begin as assistants and progress to project leadership or mentoring.

Active aging through digital activities

One effective strategy for older persons to maintain their social activity, engagement, and connection is through active aging through digital activities, such as digital volunteering. All ages can benefit from chances for community involvement and lifetime learning through taking part in online courses and using social media. Digital volunteering and adult learning can strengthen social ties and heal generational divides by encouraging learning opportunities for all individuals and establishing intergenerational relationships.

In this ecosystem, adult educators are essential because they foster inclusive settings that promote participation in digital learning and volunteer work. A type of civic engagement that promotes social inclusion and helps people create networks and contribute significantly to their communities is taking part in these activities. Crucially, the advantages go beyond individual satisfaction; better health and greater social interaction result in lower healthcare expenses and a more robust, united society.

Communities are strengthened and the importance of active aging for both individuals and society at large is reinforced when older folks continue to share their expertise and ideas through digital platforms.

Photo created with Canva AI

Often referred to as "active aging," digital volunteering is a dynamic strategy that enables senior citizens to stay involved, connected, and cognitively active while using digital platforms to share their knowledge and abilities with the world. The idea of active aging encourages older people to continue meaningful, purposeful activities as more people live longer and healthier lives, which has major advantages for both individuals and society at large. The brain is stimulated and cognitive processes are maintained by engaging in problem-solving, strategic planning, and communication activities. This is good for mental health and memory retention.

Older folks get a sense of purpose when they participate in initiatives and witness the visible outcomes of their labors. Higher levels of contentment and happiness are associated with this sense of achievement.

Because digital volunteering may be tailored to physical constraints, older persons with varying levels of mobility can participate. For people who wish to be active contributors but may not be able to participate in typical volunteer activities, this flexibility is beneficial. It has been demonstrated that regular participation in social and volunteer work helps to lessen the symptoms of anxiety and sadness. Volunteering online provides a purpose-driven, sociable, and productive setting that can improve mental health.

Communities and charity organizations can benefit from the wealth of abilities that older persons have to offer. Older volunteers can help causes like literacy initiatives, healthcare information sharing, environmental conservation, and social support for marginalized groups through internet platforms. By promoting mutual respect and bridging comprehension gaps, older persons who volunteer on digital platforms that promote cross-generational connection improve the social fabric.

Volunteering can improve mental health by lowering stress, loneliness, and sadness, according to research. While migrants and refugees find a platform to express their identities and an outlet for their talents, elderly people frequently feel a revitalized sense of purpose.

Cultural interchange is facilitated by volunteering, which is advantageous to the community as well as the volunteer. Interaction fosters empathy and lessens prejudice as individuals from various backgrounds learn about one another's cultures.

Thus, digital volunteering gives senior citizens a convenient, approachable, and effective opportunity to improve their own lives and well-being while staying active, involved, and connected to their communities.

Volunteering possibilities for elderly people, migrants, refugees

For older adults, immigrants, and refugees, volunteering presents special chances to get involved in their communities. For these groups, volunteering is a means of achieving social inclusion, skill development, and personal fulfillment in addition to being a means of giving back. It fosters cultural interchange, creates resilient, encouraging communities, and aids in bridging gaps between various people.

Younger generations can benefit from the abundance of expertise that many seniors possess. They can share their knowledge in reading, math, trades, and business by volunteering as mentors in schools, youth centers, or professional associations. Seniors can volunteer remotely using online platforms, offering digital administrative help, online tutoring, or video conversations. For people who might have trouble moving around or who would rather stay in their own homes, this kind of volunteering is convenient.

Seniors can provide peer support by volunteering in assisted living facilities, visiting other elderly people who might be lonely, or organizing senior-focused events in their community. In order to provide support and camaraderie to people going through comparable life stages, many also take part in peer counseling groups. Seniors who serve experience a revitalized sense of purpose, intellectual stimulation, and social relationships. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that active volunteering enhances older people's general quality of life, physical and mental health, and both.

Language problems can make it difficult for many migrants to integrate into a new society. Volunteering in language learning programs or cultural exchange programs allows migrants to share elements of their own culture, become more familiar with local customs, and enhance their language abilities. Additionally, this fosters a greater appreciation and understanding of cultural variety within the host community.

A variety of professional talents from their home nations are frequently brought by migrants. Volunteering in fields related to their competence, like teaching, cooking, gardening, or healthcare, allows them to have a significant impact and develop networks that could eventually help them find work.

Migrants have a unique perspective on the difficulties that their communities encounter.

Long-term residents of a host nation can volunteer to help new arrivals by giving them advice, helping with paperwork, or just being there to chat. In addition to providing existing refugees with a feeling of belonging and purpose, this can facilitate the transition for newcomers.

Volunteering for neighborhood groups that support immigrants or aid recent arrivals might enable them to help other immigrants, fostering a sense of camaraderie and speeding up the integration process.

Photo created with Canva AI

By encouraging pride in their culture, refugees can engage in cultural activities that enable them to share their heritage, which helps both the host community and the refugees themselves. Additionally, a large number of refugees volunteer in education-related capacities, such as planning cultural awareness events or assisting kids with their schoolwork.

Numerous nonprofits might gain from the distinct viewpoints of refugees because they interact closely with them. In order to improve the efficacy of services, refugees can volunteer for these groups and provide firsthand knowledge that can inform advocacy campaigns and support initiatives.

Volunteering gives refugees the chance to form a support system, acquire new skills, and regain their confidence. Additionally, it can assist individuals learn the language and habits of their host community, which can lead to long-term stability and eventual employment.

These groups are able to build relationships, meet new people, and feel like important members of their communities through volunteering. By establishing social networks, individuals can prevent loneliness and cultivate a feeling of inclusion.

Volunteering allows people to hone their current abilities or learn new ones. By offering local experience and references, this can act as a gateway to work, especially for migrants and refugees.

Technical background for digital volunteering

People of all ages and backgrounds now have more opportunities to donate their time and skills to worthwhile organizations thanks to digital volunteering. Digital volunteers require a certain amount of technical proficiency to participate effectively, whether they are helping a nonprofit with social media, educating students online, or participating in global data initiatives. In addition to improving the volunteer's capacity to assist, a solid technical background helps organizations optimize the effectiveness of their initiatives. Volunteers should be familiar with the common software applications and the devices they will be utilizing, such as a computer, tablet, or smartphone. An understanding of operating systems, installing software, and basic troubleshooting are essential baseline abilities. Successful digital volunteers must be able to perform online research, use the internet with confidence, and evaluate the credibility of digital sources. For jobs involving data collection, content development, or fact-checking, this ability is especially crucial.

Tools for Collaboration and Communication

Email and Messaging Platforms: To interact with team members and managers, digital volunteers frequently use email and messaging apps (like Slack and WhatsApp). To stay in touch and contribute effectively, one must be aware of proper email etiquette and communication techniques.

Photo created with Canva AI

Due to employment, family obligations, or health issues, many older adults, migrants, and refugees may be time-constrained. These needs can be met by providing project-based volunteering or flexible scheduling.

Video Conference: For online training sessions, virtual meetings, and interactive volunteer work like tutoring or mentoring, it is essential to be familiar with video conferencing platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet. Project Management Tools: Trello, Asana, Basecamp, and other platforms assist digital volunteers in managing their duties, staying organized, and monitoring the status of their projects. Team leaders may assign tasks, keep an eye on contributions, and make sure everyone stays on schedule with the help of these tools.

Social media is used by numerous grassroots and nonprofit organizations to disseminate their messages. An organization's online profile can be greatly improved by volunteers who are adept in running accounts, writing content, or keeping an eye on interaction on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Volunteers with design talent can produce captivating images, marketing collateral, and infographics using Canva, Adobe Spark, or even more sophisticated software like Photoshop. Organizations that employ multimedia content to communicate their goal might also benefit from having a basic understanding of video editing utilizing programs like iMovie or Adobe Premiere.

Volunteers with writing or blogging skills can help by producing press releases, newsletters, blog entries, and website content. Understanding how to use content management and modify writing styles for various audiences

Digitalization in Volunteering

Assisting other volunteers or beneficiaries with online platform navigation is a part of certain digital volunteer positions. For businesses providing remote services, basic technical support abilities like resolving login problems or assisting users with online forms can be extremely beneficial.

Many digital volunteering organizations handle sensitive data, and cybersecurity is crucial. Volunteers should understand the fundamentals of data protection, secure password management, and privacy policies. Volunteers who interact online frequently must be able to spot phishing emails and dubious sites. Organizations frequently offer training to assist volunteers in identifying cyber threats and preventing security breaches.

Since technology is always changing, digital volunteers should be willing to pick up new skills when required. To guarantee that volunteers can adjust to the platforms and tools they will be using, numerous organizations offer onboarding and training. Volunteers can work more autonomously by solving simple technological problems or looking for solutions to software-related queries, freeing up organizational resources for more advanced help.

Numerous charitable organizations offer volunteer webinars, training sessions, or even one-on-one onboarding. This boosts volunteers' confidence in using their technical skills and lets them get acquainted with the equipment they'll be using. Volunteers can improve their technical skills and contributions by receiving recurring seminars or access to online courses (for example, via Coursera, Udemy, or LinkedIn Learning).

Learning and collaboration are promoted when volunteers with high technological abilities are paired with less tech-savvy ones. Volunteers can learn new skills in a nurturing setting through a mentorship model. Guides and Resource Libraries: For volunteers who require quick answers or refresher training, offering textual instructions, frequently asked questions, or brief video tutorials on frequently used products might be a useful resource.

For digital volunteers to work successfully and with confidence, they must have a strong technical background. The need for tech-savvy volunteers is only expanding as more and more groups use digital platforms for activism, education, and outreach. By providing volunteers with technical skills in communication, content production, data administration, cybersecurity,

and digital literacy, organizations may create a strong, capable volunteer force that makes a significant effect through digital channels.

Digital volunteers can create a lasting impact and acquire personal skills that go beyond their voluntary responsibilities when they combine skill-building opportunities with an openness to learning. Both the volunteers and the communities they serve gain from this investment in technological competence, which makes modern volunteerism more digitally empowered.

Volunteering tradition in Poland

Volunteering in Poland is legally standardized through the Act on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism passed on 24 April 2003. The document contains definitions of such concepts as 'volunteer', 'non-governmental organization' and 'public benefit activity'. The legislator also described in detail the rights and obligations of volunteers, as well as the benefits they are entitled to.

Volunteering in Poland has been booming in recent years. According to data from the Central Statistical Office (GUS), already every third adult Pole devotes his or her time to unpaid assistance to another human being. Volunteering was more often done individually (26.5%) than within an organisation or institution (5.0%). Poles gave direct help to their acquaintances, friends and neighbours (22.0%) than to strangers (5.8%).

Volunteers most often performed simple jobs (e.g. clearing snow, sweeping, throwing rubbish or as a chaperone) followed by jobs corresponding to their qualifications, e.g. providing information, promoting knowledge, legal advice, organising and conducting sporting and cultural events, providing support to people unable to cope with life problems and providing care (for children, the elderly, the sick).

The highest number of people involved in volunteering was recorded in the period including the first weeks of the war in Ukraine. For refugees in need, 60% of the public were involved. Organisations, social and cultural institutions worked for war refugees related to, among other things, legal advice, information provision, therapeutic talks, psychological support, as well as collections of clothes and food. (Own elaboration based on data GUS/Poland).

Picture: https://ideogram.ai/g/NyZfwF8ARJKfeFz-pNEETQ/2

Numerous activities are carried out by volunteers to support vulnerable individuals in the community. It can be virtual workshops/webinars, virtual tutoring or mentoring, volunteers can help manage the NGO's social media accounts, creating and scheduling posts, responding to comments, engaging with followers, organizing creative online workshops for beneficiaries, helping them learn and share their artistic skills. Volunteers working with vulnerable people also share personal/cultural/family stories of or success stories to showcase the impact of the project.

Volunteering tradition in the Netherlands

The Netherlands is well known for volunteering long traditions. The Netherlands' social fabric is significantly and inextricably linked to volunteering. The Dutch have a long history of civic involvement, and volunteering is a fundamental part of the national character. In the Netherlands, volunteering is a sign of one's dedication to social inclusion, community well-being, and teamwork in tackling a range of societal issues. Given the deep-rooted habit of giving back, volunteering is an essential component of Dutch society.

In the Netherlands, there are many different types of volunteer work, such as work with social services, environmental projects, healthcare, education, and cultural institutions. In the Netherlands, retirees participate in voluntary activities regularly. Their tremendous impact on communities is a result of their time, skills, and experience being donated to numerous causes. As part of their corporate social responsibility programs, many Dutch businesses actively promote and encourage their staff members to volunteer. All around the nation, there are organized volunteer programs that make it easier for individuals and organizations to coordinate. Nowadays we see that number is decreasing. Based on CBR[1] in 2022, 41% of the Dutch population aged 15 or older have done volunteer work at least once. In 2021 this was 39% and in 2020 44%. Number of volunteers in 2012 was 51% of volunteers.

DISCOVER
VOLUNTEERING IN THE NETHERLANDS

Find impactful, fun and social volunteer work based on your interests and causes you care about!

DISCOVER VOLUNTARY OPPORTUNITIES IN YOUR AREA

[2]Photo from https://volunteering.nl/

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[1] https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2022/42/steeds-minder-mensen-doen-vrijwilligerswerk
[2] https://volunteering.nl/

The Dutch government encourages and promotes volunteering through numerous projects and policies. This entails providing funds for charitable endeavors and establishing legislation that supports volunteer work. One strategy to promote social cohesiveness and community involvement is through volunteering. Numerous towns plan activities and initiatives that depend on volunteers' enthusiastic involvement. The Dutch are also involved in worldwide voluntary work, supporting development and global initiatives. A large number of Dutch nationals volunteer overseas, lending their knowledge and abilities to support underprivileged areas. In the Netherlands, volunteers are frequently acknowledged and valued for their services.

Picture: https://www.vrijwilligersaanzet.nl/2023/05/19/cbs-in-2022-deden-vier-op-de-tien-mensen-in-nederland-vrijwilligerswerk/

Digital volunteering has become more popular in the Netherlands as a result of technological advancements. Volunteers use their expertise for a variety of online initiatives while working from a distance. Senior citizens actively engage in volunteer work, making contributions to social services, mentorship programs, and projects that use their experiences and abilities.

Good practical volunteering examples in Poland

1st good example

How volunteers help readers to switch to the digital system. Small action with big results!

Starting January 2023 couple of volunteers at the local library embarked on a help to empower elderly and less tech-savvy individuals by providing personalized assistance with the adoption of the new electronic card system. These volunteers ensuring that every library user received their electronic card with a pin, facilitating seamless access to borrowing books.

Upon visiting the library were warmly greeted by volunteers who exchanged their old paper cards for the new electronic ones, helping users navigate the digital landscape, and ensuring they felt comfortable and confident with the new technology. Additionally, volunteers facilitated access to the library's online catalog, guiding users through the vast collection of available books with ease.

Picture: https://ideogram.ai/g/bqiZ1I92RCyrLJsnzPRH5g/2

The impact of these volunteers extended beyond the mere transition to electronic cards. Through their efforts, they instilled a sense of empowerment and belonging among the elderly and less tech-savvy individuals in the community. By embracing the change, these individuals not only continued their love for reading but also experienced positive transformations in their daily lives.

This practice of volunteering not only bridged the digital divide but also fostered a sense of community and support within the library's ecosystem, leaving a lasting impression on all those involved.

The benefits for people are wonderful. They are not afraid new system, they will be still active readers, their life changes in positive way.

Solidarity Senior Support Corps

The Solidarity Senior Support Corps was an central initiative introduced by government whose main objective was to support people in vulnerable groups in difficult times of pandemonium. In order to reduce their need to go out into the community, a mechanism has been set up to link people who want to help with seniors through institutions that provide such assistance under normal circumstances.

Picture: https://ideogram.ai/g/uB-ew-vfTuWACiqP6CXq7A/1

Who are the Digital Volunteers?

The coronavirus pandemic has made digital competence as necessary as ever. This was especially true for the elderly and others for whom the browser window quickly became the only window to the world. Digital Volunteers are people who have helped others find their way in the digital world. Volunteers were provided with training to enable them to effectively help others to deal with official matters remotely, or to perform other activities where new technologies can be useful.

https://www.gov.pl/web/cyfrowywolontariusz

3rd good example

At the Centre for Senior Initiatives, a group of volunteers helps interested people solve their current digital problems during individual consultations. Step by step, we counteract the digital exclusion of the oldest group of Poznań residents.

Volunteers are invited who are comfortable with the digital world, are not unfamiliar with laptops, social media or phone apps and, above all, enjoy helping others. Anyone of any age can become a volunteer. High school students, university students, working people and retired people can work with us. Volunteers are provided with support and preparatory training.

https://centrumis.pl/wolontariat/zostan-wolontariuszem/wolontariat-w-centrum-inicjatyw-senioralnych/

Picture: https://ideogram.ai/g/hahOQ6RFQ3W0r_MWf7HMVg/2

The E-volunteering programme was created to break the negative stereotype of the Internet and promote initiatives that use the potential of new technologies for social good.

The objectives of the Programme include:

To spread knowledge about the use of modern technologies as a tool of social involvement among NGOs and volunteers.

Changing the image of the Internet, drawing attention to the fact that the Internet can be used in a positive way to engage with others.

Action against digital exclusion, promotion of virtual volunteering among the elderly, the disabled, women working from home, etc.

https://dobrasiec.org/projekty/e-wolontariat-pl/

Picture: https://ideogram.ai/g/fL7_xZm2S-WdadDhyiRwUQ/0

Very good example! Anyone can become a volunteer here, regardless of age, experience or time available.

FINDING A VOLUNTEER

Where to look for volunteering[3]?

If you are just starting your search for an organization, project or initiative that you would like to support, there are many possibilities:

- take a look at Municipal Volunteer PortalBy clicking, you leave the page and select one of the currently available offers,

- ask directly about volunteering by visiting institutions and organizations near your place of residence/work/school,

- if you are a student, ask about volunteering at your university's "career office",

- If you are a senior, you can consult the choice of volunteering with Centre for Intergenerational Activity "Nowolipie"By clicking, you leave the page,

- Browse tab "News"By clicking, you leave the page and get inspired to act - in the news you can read reports from volunteering campaigns, interviews with volunteers and volunteer coordinators and learn about the specifics of volunteering in various institutions and organizations.

WHAT DOES A VOLUNTEER DO

Do you have specific interests that you want to deepen through volunteering? Do you have a specific area of interest in which you would like to act?

On the Municipal Volunteer Portal, you can choose offers using the category filter from the available ones, m.in.:

- education (e.g. tutoring, assistance in conducting scientific workshops for children, conducting music workshops for children from orphanages, teaching Polish to refugees),

- ecology and greenery (e.g. co-creation of a community garden, planting plants, receiving, sorting and distributing food as part of the circular economy project of food management),

- culture (e.g. festival service, assistance in conducting cultural activities and events, writing book reviews, planning cultural events),

- social assistance (e.g. digital support for seniors, individual help and accompaniment of seniors, assistance in conducting creative workshops and therapeutic activities for

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[3] https://ochotnicy.waw.pl/aktualnosci/953-znajdz-wolontariat-dla-siebie-wybor-pierwszego-wolontariatu-w-pytaniach-i-odpowiedziach

people with disabilities, support for people with disabilities in professional and social activation, adaptation of text for the blind and visually impaired, providing books and work from libraries to bedridden people, making minor repairs to dependent people, respite volunteering for families of people with disabilities disabilities),

- civil society (e.g. volunteering for the Warsaw Insurgents – assistance in medical appointments, delivery of meals, accompaniment during ceremonies; involvement in food collections, co-creation of social campaigns and educational materials),

- sport (e.g. support for the qualifying tournament for the Olympic Games, support for running races, support for the organization of blind tennis training for the blind and visually impaired, support for wheelchair rugby training),

- health (e.g. playing with children in oncology wards, hospice care volunteering – visiting the patient at home, helping with daily activities),

- animals (e.g. walking a dog from a shelter, support for hippotherapy classes – horse driving, horse cleaning).

Many organisations and institutions particularly value cooperation with senior volunteers because of their experience, skills and commitment. For retired people, volunteering is a chance to spend their free time in a useful and interesting way, share their knowledge, develop their passions and establish new, warm human relationships.

Volunteering at CAM

more

Cognitive Function Trainings for Warsaw Seniors

more

Digital Volunteering

more

Warsaw Volunteers

more

Volunteering in Praga

more

Audio generations

more

Photo from Volunteering

https://cam.waw.pl/centrum-aktywnosci-miedzypokoleniowej/wolontariat/

https://www.niepelnosprawni.pl/ledge/x/232459

Volunteers can work at: "Nowolipie" Centre for Intergenerational Activity, Warsaw Insurgents' House, museums, community centres, social care centres, nursing homes, schools, hospitals, animal shelters, botanical garden, zoo and many other interesting places.

Good practical volunteering examples in the Netherlands

1 good example

VoorleesExpress aims to promote children's language development by enriching the home literacy environment and enabling parents to support their child's language growth in their own way. Research shows that children who are read to at an early age have an advantage over children without similar reading experiences. It turns out that it has a positive effect on their language development.

For a period of twenty weeks, a volunteer reader pays weekly visits to a family. During these visits, the volunteer reader initially demonstrates shared reading and other literacy-related activities to parents by engaging them in those activities with their child. The parents are encouraged to gradually take over the role of the volunteer.

Picture: website[4] https://voorleesexpress.nl/

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[4] https://voorleesexpress.nl/

2 good example

Maatjesproject - Buddy project

Everyone deserves a buddy.

Buddies come in all kinds. There are buddies who visit. Buddies who help or give advice. Buddies who make others laugh. Or buddies who go with you to difficult things. There are walking buddies, reading buddies, shopping buddies, debt relief buddies, homework buddies, sports buddies. And many more buddies. Would you like to be there for someone else? Or would you like a buddy? SWL mediates and looks for the right match. Buddies are supervised by a professional employee of SWL.

Picture: website [5]https://www.welzijnlochem.nl/vrijwilligers-centrale/

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[5] https://www.welzijnlochem.nl/vrijwilligers-centrale/

3 good example

Do you want to make a difference from your couch? From an impact challenge to online volunteering, with a computer or phone you can do something good from home. Flexible, easy and safe! You can do the test which volunteering work suits you best

https://www.nlvoorelkaar.nl/vrijwilligerswerk-test/

Picture: website[6] https://www.nlvoorelkaar.nl/en/vrijwilligerswerk-vanuit-huis

[6] https://www.nlvoorelkaar.nl/en/vrijwilligerswerk-vanuit-huis
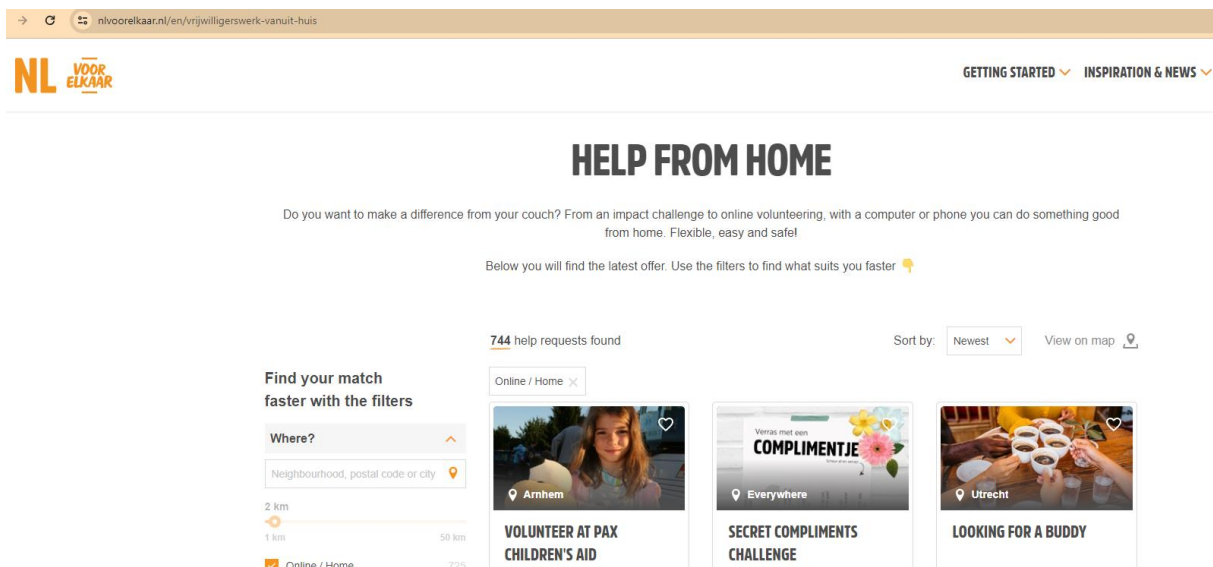
4 good example

You can help once and tackle one project. Your group is then sure to experience a meaningful and well-spent day. But your group may also commit to others for a longer period of time. At present, we hope to start a movement where more and more people take it for granted to look after each other. We see that it works. Through a Present project, something really gets off the ground in one day and encounters of lasting value are created!

Picture: website[7] https://stichtingpresent.nl/denhaag/wat-wil-jij-doen/

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[7] https://stichtingpresent.nl/denhaag/wat-wil-jij-doen/

5 good example

A new coalition agreement, changes in the law or the introduction of European regulations have consequences for volunteer work. On the Legislation and Regulations pages we exchange information, discuss positions and coordinate responses. Sometimes we write joint responses to policy changes or bills.

Picture: website[8] https://vrijwilligerswerk.nl

Picture: website[9] https://vrijwilligerswerk.nl/themas/wettenenregels/wenr-inzicht/default.aspx

[9] https://vrijwilligerswerk.nl/themas/wettenenregels/wenr-inzicht/default.aspx

6 good example

Discover all volunteer work in the Netherlands. Use the filters to find your favorite one free and easy.
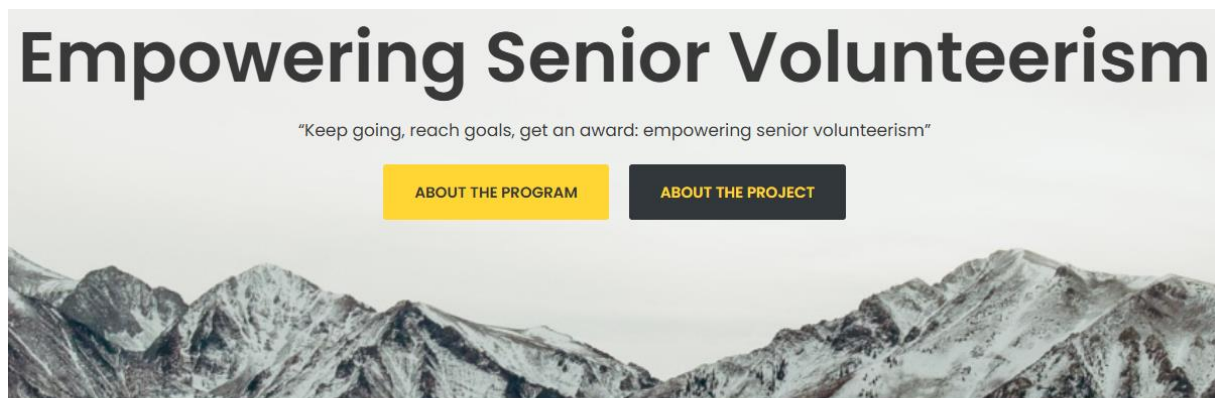
https://volunteering.nl/

FIND VOLUNTEER WORK IN...

Amsterdam | Amstelveen | The Hague (Den Haag) | Delft | Rotterdam | Utrecht

or

EXPLORE YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Inspiring volunteering examples across Europe

The project "Keep going, reach goals, get an award: empowering senior volunteerism" created an innovative Senior Volunteering Award Program that adult educators, older people and local communities can use as possible encouragement and awarding. Due to the common efforts of the partners and to the mutualizing their knowledge and skills several results will be attained.

https://gogetaward.eu/

Inspirational videos

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86KztpfHKMQ

Vulnerable people digital inclusion through digital volunteering

Žiūrėti vėliau

Digital volunteering - you can be helpful

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4GC34RF9F4

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjtcNHsCYpo&t=2s
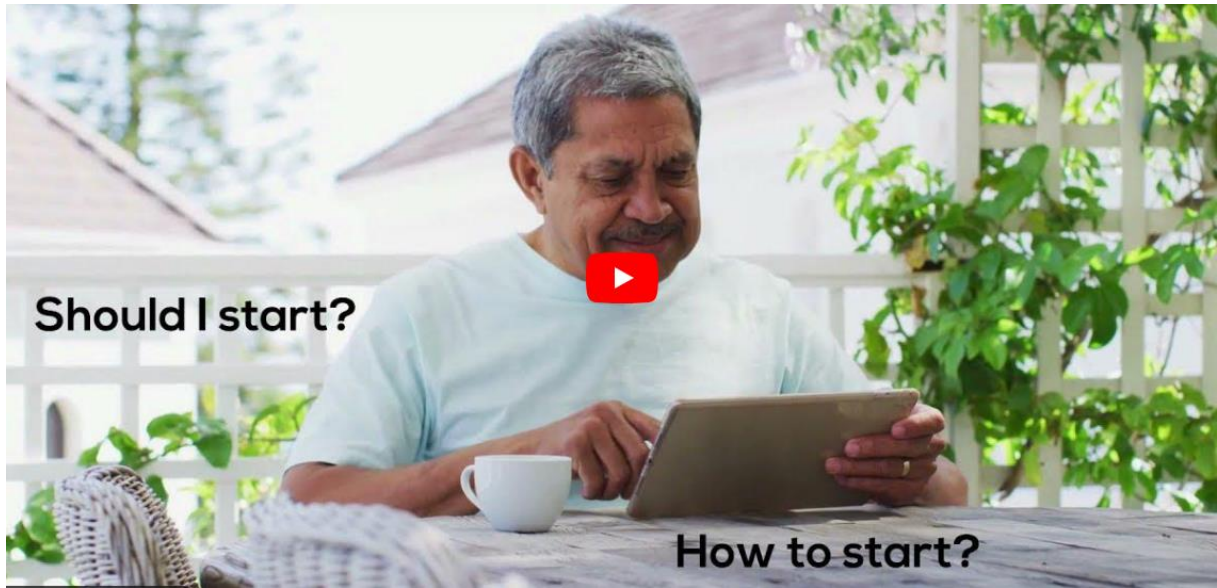
Test your volunteering

TEST PREDISPOSITIONS Test to test your predisposition to volunteering

1. Do you feel satisfaction from helping others, even if it requires a sacrifice of your time and energy?

a) Definitely yes

b) Rather yes

c) Rather not

d) Definitely not

2. How do you react to situations when you have to work with people with different needs and life difficulties?

a) I feel motivated to to help

b) I try to understand their perspective and adapt my actions

c) I have some concerns, but I am open to such challenges

d) I avoid such situations, because I don't feel up to it

3. How do you cope with how do you manage your time when you have different tasks to perform, both
personal and voluntary tasks?

a) I can organise my time and priorities well organise my time and priorities well

b) I sometimes have difficulties, but I try to find a balance

c) I often have problems reconcile all my responsibilities

d) I have great difficulty with managing my time, especially when I have additional tasks

4. Are you able to work as part of a work as a team and cooperate with other volunteers to achieve a common goal?

a) Definitely yes, teamwork motivates me teamwork motivates me

b) Usually yes, although sometimes I prefer to work alone

c) I find working in a team sometimes difficult for me, but I try to adapt

d) I prefer to work alone and I avoid teamwork

5. How do you react to unforeseen difficulties or changes of plan during your voluntary work?

a) I treat it as a challenge and look for solutions

b) I try to adapt, although sometimes it can be stressful

c) I often feel discouraged, but I try to carry on

d) Changes and difficulties make me lose motivation

Interpretation results:

Prevalence of responses a): You have a strong attitude for volunteering and you are ready for the various challenges of working with people in vulnerable people.

Response prevalence b): You have a good aptitude for volunteering, although you may need support in some situations.

Prevalence of answer c): Although you have some predisposition, you may encounter difficulties that are worth discussing before making a long-term commitment.

Response prevalence (d): Volunteering may be a You may find volunteering challenging, so it is worth considering other forms of involvement or working
on developing the skills you need.

 2. Exploring Your Strengths

Self-assessment: What are your skills and passions?

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Matching attitudes with appropriate forms of volunteering.

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3. Understanding Vulnerable Groups

Specificities of working with older people older people.

Challenges and needs of Lonely people.

Support for migrants and promoting social integration.

4. Effective Communication and Relationship Building

Active listening techniques.

Building trust and empathy.

5. Tools and Technology in Volunteering

Use of social media and online platforms.

Organisation of time and task management.

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Test your digital skills!

Get started!

https://europa.eu/europass/digitalskills/screen/questionnaire/generic

6. Practical aspects of volunteering

How do I find the right projects and organisations?

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Ethical principles and Volunteer responsibilities.

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7. Building and maintaining Volunteer communities

Networking with other volunteers.

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Sharing experiences and peer support. Discuss with experienced volunteers.

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8. Summary and Next Steps

How to continue your adventure with volunteering?

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Next Steps that I have to do.

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Recommendations for adult educators

➢ Provide instruction in subjects like computer literacy, communication, and fundamental project management that are directly related to volunteer possibilities. Include instruction in social networking, content production, and online collaboration tools for individuals who are interested in volunteering digitally.

➢ Language instruction specific to the volunteer setting (e.g., professional vocabulary, conversational skills) can be very important for migrant and refugee learners. They can more easily integrate and feel at ease volunteering if they attend cultural orientation workshops, which can help them comprehend local cultures and social norms.

➢ Communication, cooperation, and problem-solving skills are frequently needed when volunteering. By include exercises that foster resilience, empathy, and confidence—all of which are critical for successful volunteering—teachers may help students develop these abilities.

➢ Ask seasoned volunteers to share their experiences and insights, particularly those with comparable backgrounds. This not only motivates students but also provides them with knowledge about actual volunteer work. As they negotiate their first volunteer positions, matching them with mentors from comparable backgrounds can provide direction and encouragement.

➢ Introduce students to online resources that offer volunteer opportunities.

➢ Training in basic tech skills, such as email communication, virtual meetings, and the use of collaboration tools (like Zoom and Google Workspace), can provide organizations with little to no digital expertise with access to a wide range of accessible and flexible online volunteer possibilities.

➢ Start with low-commitment or short-term volunteer work if you're scared to get started. Longer-term involvement is facilitated by gradual engagement, which boosts motivation and confidence.

➢ Give examples of how volunteering can help the community and the person. Stress how it develops social skills, opens doors to other opportunities, and provides skills. Volunteering becomes more worthwhile and accessible when measurable results are displayed, such as success stories from other vulnerable groups.

➢ Create volunteer positions that are accessible to disadvantaged groups by working with neighborhood nonprofits, community centers, and advocacy organizations. This collaboration may result in low-barrier, inclusive, and inviting opportunities.

➢ Increasing volunteering among disadvantaged groups necessitates a comprehensive strategy for adult educators that incorporates skill development, motivation, and hands-on assistance. Teachers can enable students to overcome obstacles and participate fully in their communities by developing their technical, interpersonal, and leadership abilities. Volunteering strengthens the community by bringing a variety of voices and skills to common concerns, in addition to helping vulnerable people by boosting their self-esteem and creating connections. By using these tactics, educators may play a crucial part in ensuring that volunteering is meaningful and accessible to all.

Summary

Identifying the opportunities for digital volunteering and its preferred possible forms and types as well as existing practices in partner countries gives an overview of volunteering experience.

Through volunteering people feel useful and important, and that's why the motivation to do activities online, and digitally could be better accepted. However, both countries are affected by the pandemic and notice that vulnerable people are excluded from digital activities and learning and participating online. In the Netherlands elderly people volunteering is well developed however, digital inclusion volunteering is not well developed neither in the Netherlands, neither in Poland. Older people in the Netherlands are involved in different volunteering activities, however, digital volunteering is a new approach to most vulnerable groups (disabled people, migrants) who are mostly isolated because of immobility.

https://digitalvolunteering.eu/

Partners

https://safeprojects.eu

https://www.stowarzyszenie-wir.eu/