



Skills acquired through
Volunteering in Sport

**SPORT VOLUNTEERING
IN EUROPE:
Realities, opportunities
and challenges**

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This engagement lays the foundations for future collaboration and action on building and developing the vital sport volunteer workforce.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



+ ABOUT THIS REPORT

European sport can only exist with the active contribution of a very large army of volunteers performing a variety of roles from the grassroots to elite sport events. For this reason, it is important to study, nurture and support this voluntary workforce, and the skills and competences that are acquired and demonstrated through volunteering in sport.

This report is the first intellectual output from V4V, a major three-year collaborative partnership project, co-funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ sport programme, consisting of 12 partners (national and international federations, universities and education bodies, sport and research institutes, and national, European and global umbrella organisations) all of whom have a deep interest in the promotion and development of sport volunteering. V4V was led and coordinated by the European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE).

The report draws on three strands of research:

- Desk research/literature reviews on sport volunteering covering eight European nations with some reference to European and global sport information sources.
- Interviews with 57 practising sport volunteers.
- A major survey of 2 723 sport organisations based in 115 countries across Europe and four other continents.

The purpose of this report is to synthesise the findings of these research activities and present an up-to-date study of the sport volunteer workforce primarily in Europe with the following themes:

- + Status of volunteering in the countries and sports covered by the research (Section 3.1)
- + Laws and regulations relevant to sport volunteering (Section 3.2)
- + Strategies and policies relevant to sport volunteering in the countries and sports (Section 3.3)
- + Definition of volunteering (Section 3.4)
- + Overall importance of the sport volunteer workforce (Section 3.5)
- + Profile of the sport volunteer workforce (Section 3.6)
- + Incentives and barriers to sport volunteering (Section 3.7)
- + Recruitment of sport volunteers (Section 3.8)
- + Training of sport volunteers (Section 3.9)
- + Management of sport volunteers (Section 3.10)
- + Retention of sport volunteers (Section 3.11)

Section 1 provides an introduction to the project and its rationale.

Section 2 summarises the research methodology, its coverage and the profiles of those who contributed through the interviews and survey.

Section 4 provides some overall conclusions from the research.



+ MAIN FINDINGS

DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING

Findings

- > At the start of the research, the partners adopted the definition of volunteering offered by the *Study on Volunteering* in the European Union (GHK, 2010). This defines volunteering as actions which are:
 - Performed with the free will of the individual
 - Developed in the framework of non-profit, non-governmental organisations
 - Non-paid and carried out for the benefit of the community or a third party
- > Through their research, the partners found that this definition was broadly acceptable in the context of sport with the following additions (in italics):
 - Performed with the free will of the individual
 - Developed in the framework of non-profit, non-governmental organisations, *although governmental and private sector organisations can facilitate and support volunteering*
 - Non-paid and carried out for the benefit of the community or a third party, *although compensations for expenses and small non-financial rewards are often provided*

OVERALL IMPORTANCE OF THE SPORT VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE

Findings

- > All strands of research show that volunteering is an indispensable resource for the sport sector
- > Volunteers are in the majority in all key positions in grassroots sport organisations
- > In addition to their unpaid efforts, sport volunteers are also vital in:
 - Bringing energy and enthusiasm to sport organisations
 - Helping to build relationships with local communities
 - Introducing new participants to sport
- > Sport volunteering brings benefits to society in the form of:
 - Social cohesion
 - Solidarity
 - Improved physical and mental wellbeing
- > Sport volunteering also contributes to the personal wellbeing and development of the volunteers themselves in the form of:
 - Social interaction
 - Making a difference to the lives of others
 - Fun and enjoyment
 - Time away from busy lifestyles
 - The acquisition of new knowledge and skills
 - Social and economic mobility

Conclusions

- > Sport organisations simply could not provide opportunities for the general population to engage in sport and health enhancing physical activity without the support of volunteers.
- > Sport organisations need to fully understand and appreciate the potential benefits which volunteers bring or could bring to all areas of their work and to society as a whole.
- > In order to maximise volunteer engagement sport organisations must highlight the positive benefits of volunteering for the volunteers themselves and the wider community when promoting volunteering and seeking to recruit and retain volunteers.



PROFILE OF THE SPORT VOLUNTEERING WORKFORCE

Findings

- > Volunteers play seven important roles in sport organisations:
 - Board members and governance
 - Administration and management
 - Coaching, training, instructing and leading activities
 - Officiating (e.g., referees, umpires, judges etc.)
 - Organising and helping to run sport events
 - Maintaining sport equipment and facilities
 - Supporting day-to-day activities (for example, catering, bar and transport)
- > But many volunteers occupy more than one role which has implications for their training and deployment.
 - Around 12m EU citizens over the age of 15 engage in sport volunteering annually, contributing around 97m hours of voluntary work per month, perhaps equivalent to around 600 000 fulltime posts in sport organisations.
 - Levels of sport volunteering vary significantly across European nations with higher levels found in northern and western Europe compared to southern and eastern Europe.
 - Engagement in sport volunteering tends to follow the general volunteering culture in each country and the level of participation of the general population in sport.
 - Sport volunteers tend not to be representative of the wider population; there are more volunteers who are:
 - Male
 - Middle-aged or senior
 - Well-educated
 - Economically active
 - White collar
 - Physically active themselves
- > There are comparatively few sport volunteers with disabilities or mental health conditions.
- > The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have had a negative impact on sport volunteering, but sport organisations and volunteers themselves are resilient and feel optimistic about the future.

Conclusions

- > Volunteers are absolutely vital to European sport, especially at the grassroots level. They are in the majority of all positions in most sport organisations.
- > However, sport volunteering is relatively underdeveloped in many countries. Sport organisations in countries with less well-developed sport volunteering can learn a lot from the more developed nations, but this must be done in a way which is culturally and historically sensitive.
- > The sport volunteer workforce is not demographically representative of the European population as a whole. There are many sections of the community whose full volunteering potential has not yet been realised. These include, for example, women and girls, manual workers, young people, retired people, people who are not economically active and people with disabilities and mental health conditions whose situations could be improved by meaningful activity and social interaction.
- > Sport organisations know they need to diversify the volunteer workforce further, but they need more support to do this.



INCENTIVES AND BARRIERS TO SPORT VOLUNTEERING

Findings

- > The primary incentives for people to become sport volunteers are:
 - Being involved in a sport they feel passionate about
 - Feeling needed, valued and part of a team
 - Being able to socialise with others and have fun
 - Developing further skills
 - Feeling that they are making a positive difference to the lives of others
- > Lack of time is the main barrier to people engaging in sport volunteering.
- > Other significant barriers to sport volunteering are:
 - Potential volunteers not being aware of volunteering opportunities
 - Not knowing what duties are required
 - Not being asked to volunteer
 - Lack of volunteer financial resources
 - Lack of recognition as a volunteer
- > Major sporting events can have a positive impact on sport volunteering, but sport organisations need to find ways of sustaining volunteer involvement in the long run.

Conclusions

- > Sport organisations would benefit from being more aware of the incentives which encourage people to become volunteers and ensure that when they engage volunteers, that these incentives are addressed during volunteer experiences.
- > Equally, sport organisations would benefit from being more aware of the barriers which discourage people from becoming sport volunteers and ensure, wherever possible, that volunteer experiences are flexible enough to meet individual circumstances.
- > Sport organisations would benefit from finding ways to sustain volunteer engagement after their involvement in sporting events.

RECRUITMENT OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

Findings

- > The research has identified the attributes and skills which sport organisations look for in each of the seven volunteering roles played by sport volunteers. These are outlined in Section 3.8.
- > When recruiting sport volunteers, organisations favour personal attributes, in particular:
 - Motivation
 - Reliability
 - Passion about the sport
 - Adaptability
 - Ethical approach
- > They also look for broad transferable skills, in particular organisational and people skills.
- > Technical skills tend to be required at the point of recruitment only in the case of administration/management, coaching and officiating.
- > Recruitment presents difficulties for all the sport volunteer roles with the possible exception of administration/management where only 50% of respondents reported difficulties.
- > Primary recruitment difficulties are:
 - Lack of people interested in the role
 - Low numbers of applicants in general
 - Low numbers of applicants with the right attitudes/attributes



- > Lack of appropriate skills for a volunteer role appears to be less of a difficulty since these can be delivered through training and experience.
- > Sport organisations tend to recruit from those already associated with the organisation, in particular:
 - Former players/athletes
 - Parents/family of young participants
 - Other people already connected to the sport
- > The recruitment methods used by sport organisations tend to be limited to those target groups.

Conclusions

- > If sport organisations want to strengthen and diversify their volunteer workforce, they may consider:
 - Focusing their attention on recruiting volunteers with the appropriate personal attributes and broad transferable skills, except in the case of coaching, officiating and administration/management
 - Reaching out to the wider community beyond their existing members, family and friends
 - Adopting broader and more proactive recruitment methods, including the use of volunteer agencies and platforms
 - Delivering positive messages about the benefits of sport volunteering for participants and for volunteers themselves
 - Negotiating 'win-win' volunteer agreements which take account of the needs of both the organisation and the volunteer.

TRAINING OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

Findings

- > The research has identified the attributes and skills which sport organisations feel are most in need of development for each of the seven volunteering roles. These are outlined in more detail in Section 3.9.
- > Only a small minority of sport organisations regularly review the skills needs of all their volunteers and therefore have little information to prioritise and plan appropriate training.
- > Following recruitment, the greatest training need is to develop technical knowledge and skills required for the role.
- > Sport organisations understand the importance of training both for themselves and their volunteers.
- > However, induction and ongoing training is only mainly provided to volunteers in coaching and officiating roles with some induction training for volunteers running/supporting events.
- > There is little evidence of induction or ongoing training for the other four roles. For these, volunteers are mainly expected to 'learn on the job'.
- > When training is provided, it tends to be infrequent and of short duration.
- > The main reported barriers to training are:
 - Lack of a training budget
 - Lack of time and capacity for training
- > Training is mainly provided by sport organisations themselves and their federations; little use is made of external training providers.



Conclusions

- > If sport organisations wish to grow and sustain their volunteer workforce, they should consider:
 - Providing adequate induction programmes for sport volunteers new to their roles
 - Making sure that all sport volunteers develop the technical skills they need for their volunteering role(s)
 - Giving greater priority to training
 - Balancing their internal resources accordingly, for example by focusing more staff effort on volunteer training
 - Treating training time as part of the volunteer's contribution, not something additional
 - Carrying out skills audits/training needs analysis to identify the skills and knowledge which volunteers need to develop
 - Ensuring all sport volunteers have a personal development plan
- > The organisation of sport volunteer training could potentially be improved by:
 - Sport organisations working more closely together (even across different sports)
 - Pooling their resources and providing training in generic job roles such as board/committee member and administration and in the transversal skills
 - Making greater use of external training providers, universities and colleges
- > National and international federations could broaden their training efforts to ensure training pathways are available for all sport volunteer roles, not only those which require technical sport skills.

MANAGEMENT OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

Findings

- > Positive sport volunteer management practices were identified as the following:
 - Good leadership and communication
 - Suitable methods of compensating volunteers for their contributions
 - Creating a mutually satisfying 'win-win deal' between the organisation and volunteer
 - Being sensitive to the particular characteristics of volunteers as opposed to paid staff
 - Assigning clear volunteer roles
 - Making good use of volunteer time
 - Providing motivational incentives and recognising volunteer achievement
 - Clubs adapting to the needs of volunteers
 - Providing a positive volunteer culture
- > Negative management characteristics included the following:
 - Profiting from volunteer engagement
 - Lack of any form of compensation
 - Organisations not making it clear to volunteers how their work is delivering positive outcomes for others
 - Assigning inappropriate roles
 - Wasting volunteer time
 - Lack of early information about volunteer opportunities



- > However, most sport organisations do not have guidelines or procedures for volunteer management and only a minority have a person with the responsibility for managing volunteers.
- > Most sport organisations use efficient digital methods of communicating with volunteers but also rely on in-person meetings which are vital in fostering relationship building, teamwork and a cohesive organisational culture.
- > Only around 50% of the organisations surveyed provide material benefits and compensations, despite their importance in sustaining volunteer engagement (especially for the less affluent).
- > Similarly, non-material benefits/incentives such as awards, certificates, celebrations or other forms of recognition are only provided by just over one third.
- > The greatest difficulty in managing sport volunteers is the unavailability of volunteers when they are needed.

Conclusions

- > When managing sport volunteers, organisations need to be sensitive to the differences between volunteers and paid staff and pay particular attention to the positive practices listed in the findings above, in particular, the provision of compensations and material and non-material benefits to enhance motivation and ongoing engagement.
- > Similarly, sport organisations should ensure the negative management characteristics listed in the findings above are minimised.
- > Sport organisations would benefit from ensuring that at least one member of staff (volunteer or paid) is responsible for their volunteers.
- > Sport organisations would also benefit from having clear policies and procedures for volunteer management. National and international federations could be of assistance.
- > The primary difficulty of sport organisations not having sufficient volunteers available when needed could be addressed by sport organisations:
 - Doing more forward planning and timely communication
 - Building a pool of potential volunteers through sustained communication with interested people
 - Contingency planning.

RETENTION OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

Findings

- > The majority of sport organisations face problems in retaining volunteers.
- > The role with the most difficulty in retention is running/supporting events, with only around 20% remaining for more than three years.
- > Retaining the services of volunteers in the other six roles (which involve engaging more frequently and regularly) is less difficult.
- > Board/committee members and administrators/managers tend to remain for more than three years.
- > However, coaches and officials tend to remain for less than three years and around 20% are gone within one year.
- > There is also a significant 'churn' of volunteers in maintaining sport equipment/facilities and supporting day-to-day activities.
- > The most frequently mentioned reason for retention difficulties were the following:
 - Time constraints
 - Changes in volunteer personal circumstances
- > However, there is also evidence that:
 - Volunteers are not helped to see the long-term benefits of volunteering
 - Volunteers see few opportunities to progress in their roles
 - Volunteers do not feel their contributions are recognised and celebrated.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conclusions

- > Volunteer retention is a challenge for most sport organisations.
- > Volunteers are more likely to remain in roles where there is regular and frequent engagement; therefore it may be helpful for sport organisations to have pathways to enable volunteers to transition from temporary/occasional engagement (mainly supporting events) into more permanent roles.
- > Sport organisations may benefit from monitoring their own retention rates in different roles and identifying the reasons why volunteers leave – for example, through conducting exit interviews.
- > When volunteers signal that they are leaving due to time constraints or changes in personal circumstances, sport organisations may benefit from trying to retain their engagement by offering shorter/more flexible volunteering opportunities.
- > Providing material and non-material compensations are a significant factor in volunteer retention, but it is also important for sport organisations to:
 - Give volunteers more say over the running of the organisation
 - Organise social events and team building activities
 - Offer training so that volunteers can develop their skills



Picture: Bruno Batista

INTRODUCTION TO THIS REPORT



INTRODUCTION TO THIS REPORT

+ 1.1 - THE V4V PROJECT AND THIS RESEARCH REPORT

V4V (full title *Analysing and Making Visible the Skills Acquired Through Volunteering in Sport in Europe*) is a 36-month project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Sport Programme of the European Union. The main aim of V4V is to research and analyse the sport volunteer workforce and use the findings to improve the recruitment and retention of volunteers through innovative online toolkits for sport organisations and volunteers.

This report is the first intellectual output from V4V. It synthesises three interrelated strands of research carried out by the partners in 2021-2022.



+ 1.2 - THE V4V PARTNERSHIP

The V4V partnership is made up of the following organisations:



European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE)

France / Europe - Coordinator
www.eose.org



World Rugby

Ireland / Global
www.worldrugby.org



Finnish Athletics Federation (SUL)

Finland
www.yleisurheilu.fi



Estonian Foundation of Sports Education and Information (FSEI)

Estonia
www.spordiinfo.ee/eng/



Leeds Beckett University (LBU)

United Kingdom
www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk



International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)

Denmark / Global
www.isca-web.org



International Judo Federation Academy Foundation (IJF)

Malta / Global
<https://academy.ijf.org/>



Sport and Recreation Alliance (SRA)

United Kingdom
www.sportandrecreation.org.uk



National Institute For Sport Research (NISR)

Romania
www.sportscience.ro



Centre for European Volunteering (CEV)

Belgium / Europe
www.europeanvolunteercentre.org



Romanian Football Federation (FRF)

Romania
www.frf.ro



Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ)

Portugal
www.ipdj.gov.pt



Hungarian University of Sports Science (HUSS)

Hungary
www.tf.hu

+ 1.3 - DEFINITIONS ADOPTED BY THE PROJECT

1.3.1 - DEFINITION OF SPORT ADOPTED BY THE RESEARCH

The research embraces the Council of Europe definition of Sport as *“all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental wellbeing, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels”*.

Sport and physical activity (referred to as sport in this report) is recognised by the EU and many other international and national organisations as a sector of significance with real potential to address wider European and government agendas such as health, social inclusion, education, employment and economic growth.

1.3.2 - DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING ADOPTED BY THE RESEARCH

The research adopted the main elements of the volunteer concept in laws and regulations adopted by EU member states. For the purposes of this project, it was agreed that volunteering describes actions which are:

- > Performed with the free will of the individual
- > Developed in the framework of non-profit, non-governmental organisations
- > Non-paid and carried out for the benefit of the community or a third party¹

However, as the research progressed various suggestions were made to improve this definition. This is covered in Section 3.4.

+ 1.4 - BACKGROUND FOR THE V4V PROJECT: SPORT VOLUNTEERING AND ITS CHALLENGES

Sport, as defined above, can only exist with the active contribution of a very large army of volunteers performing a variety of roles from the grassroots to elite sport events. For this reason, it is important to study, nurture and support this voluntary workforce, and the skills and competences that are demonstrated through volunteering in sport. That is the main purpose of the V4V transnational initiative.

According to the European Commission *Study on Volunteering in the European Union*¹, “the sport sector is the largest voluntary, non-governmental organization activity throughout Europe with the most volunteers involved”.

In terms of health, fitness and social integration, children and young people are by far the most important beneficiaries of these volunteer services.

EOSE’s research in 2018 – 2019 through a *European Employer Skills Survey* as part of the ESSA-Sport² project (3 800 respondents) demonstrated the vital importance of volunteers to sport organisations:

- > 82% of all sport organisations reported that they regularly or occasionally engaged volunteers
- > This represents 93% of the not-for-profit sport clubs who took part in the survey
- > Largest numbers of volunteers are found as sport officials (75%), sport coaches (47%), operational staff (40%), managers (37%) and clerical staff (33%)
- > Expectations are high – nearly 60% of organisations said they expect the same of volunteers as they do of paid staff in terms of activities and skills
- > Performance of volunteers is highly appreciated with 61% rating volunteer performance as excellent or very good.

1 - Study on Volunteering in the European Union, GHK (2010)

2 - ESSA Sport Project: <https://www.essa-sport.eu>

For sport and sport organisations, the contribution of volunteers satisfies human resource needs, enables knowledge transfer and enriches diversity. Volunteering also delivers great benefits for communities and the individuals involved.

The Expert Group on Human Resources Development in Sport – Volunteering Report³ identified the following benefits:

> For the community:

- More cohesive communities, and a more integrated society
- Strengthening the sense of belonging among citizens
- Stimulating growth and employment
- Economic value of voluntary work
- Promotion of European values (tolerance, fair play, respect)
- Promotion of intercultural dialogue

> For the individual:

- Integration into society
- Personal development

And for the individual, we can add an improved employability and career development as a positive aspect of volunteering with its potential for acquiring new skills and knowledge. A recent Danish study, **Voluntary Work and Youth Employment⁴**, attached considerable importance to volunteering's contribution to employability *"In particular, voluntarism focuses on informal learning, meaning that voluntary organizations can help the unemployed back to work thanks to the use of networks – or at least help them develop their skills."*

Volunteers, therefore, make a huge contribution to the running and delivery of services across the sport sector, and they have an important role to sustain the level of sporting activities at all levels. Some realities, however, exist and constitute a set of challenges which cannot be ignored.

These can be summarised as follows:

Challenge 1:

Sport volunteering is in decline and not well developed in many EU member states

Whilst the volunteering workforce is huge, *Eurobarometer 472* suggests it is in decline, diminishing by at least 1% in the period 2014-2017. If this trend continued for another 10 years and no remedial action taken, we could reasonably expect a significant reduction in sport volunteering, a situation that may lead to a crisis in the sector resulting in a corresponding decline of sport and physical activity participation – especially, but not exclusively, at the grassroots level for children and young people.

Additionally, the level of sport volunteering is not uniform across Europe. Eurobarometer 472 found that Sweden and Denmark have high numbers of sport volunteers (both representing 19% of the total population). Luxembourg, Finland, Ireland and Slovenia also have significant unpaid sport workforces (all between 10% to 12% of the total population). On the other hand, volunteering in the sport sector in other countries seems to be less significant. Portugal, Italy, Romania, Lithuania, Slovakia, Greece, Poland, Bulgaria and Croatia, for example, all have somewhere between 1% to 3% of their populations actively engaged in volunteering in sport. The probability is that the sport sector in countries with low volunteer rates could benefit from greater engagement and that there are lessons to be learnt from the more 'voluntarist' nations.

Challenge 2:

The impact of COVID-19

A further factor which emerged in the early months of 2020 was the COVID-19 pandemic. This froze participation in most sports in grassroots clubs for many months and is likely to have had a significant impact on sport volunteering both in the short- and medium-term. Volunteering, due to its significance, will be vital to the recovery of sport participation in the years to come, and the sector needs to be ready to respond to this.

3 - EU Workplan for Sport 2014-2017, Expert Working Group on Human Resources Development: Recommendations to encourage volunteering in sport, including best practices on legal and fiscal mechanisms

4 - Jensen N.R. (2015), Voluntary Work and Youth Employment, Cursiv, Aarhus, Denmark.

Challenge 3:

Lack of reliable and detailed information on the sport volunteer workforce, its characteristics, realities and challenges:

Although EOSE has been able to collect and analyse quite detailed data on the paid (employed and self-employed) sport labour market (www.essa-sport.eu), no similar study has been undertaken for the volunteer workforce.

Studies undertaken by the EU, such as the *Special Eurobarometer 472* research, while useful, really only cover some headline estimates. There are no hard data overall or a breakdown by, for example, age, gender or level of educational attainment. Neither do we know much about the motivations and aspirations of sport volunteers, whether they have career goals in mind regarding the sport sector or whether they are able to realise their goals.

Challenge 4:

There is a need to retain and develop the sport volunteer workforce:

Despite the goodwill of volunteers and the heavy dependency of sport organisations in Europe on their unpaid work, there are question marks over how well volunteers are managed and how appropriately their contributions within sport organisations are acknowledged and rewarded. One of the key recommendations from the GHK study on volunteering⁵ is for the sports sector to address the issue of human resource management.

Indeed, the study points out that: ***“Practices in the management of volunteers must be improved. Voluntary organizations should be encouraged to make better use of Human Resource Management tools, which are too often considered as belonging to companies. Professionalisation of HRM practices need to develop, so does the recruitment and management of volunteers.”***

Moreover, the same study also underscored the lack of recognition for volunteers: ***“There is an assumed lack of recognition of the importance and impact of the work of volunteers. This recognition (by civil, education sector and the employers) of voluntary activities (both societal approval of the importance of volunteering, and also the recognition of the informal learning achieved) can be essential for the participants of voluntary activities or in the recruitment of new volunteers.”***

Challenge 5:

Sport volunteers rarely get recognition for the skills, competences and attributes they gain through volunteering:

Volunteering in sport is an important incubator for new skills, competences and attributes, for example, in leadership, coaching, administration and community engagement. Many of these skills, competences and attributes are directly relevant to paid employment in the sport sector and other areas of work, but they mostly remain ‘unseen’ and therefore unrecognised. This lack of visibility makes it difficult for experienced volunteers to lay claim to these skills and obtain jobs as a result.



5 - Study on Volunteering in the European Union, GHK (2010)



Skills acquired through
Volunteering in Sport



Skills acquired through
Volunteering in Sport

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



The V4V's research consisted of three interwoven strands:

- > Desk research/literature review covering the countries and sports represented in the project
- > Interviews with 57 sport volunteers in the partner countries and sports
- > A major, first-time European skills survey of sport organisations across the EU and beyond (2 723 respondents) on the topic of volunteering

Strand 3 was the main research activity. Strands 1 and 2 were primarily used to inform the development of the survey questionnaire, 'set the scene' and illustrate through qualitative research many of the survey findings.

+ 2.1 - DESK RESEARCH / LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1 - DESK RESEARCH/LITERATURE REVIEW OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this desk research phase was to collate as much information as possible to identify realities and challenges of volunteering in sport in the different countries represented in V4V and to highlight examples of good practice in the engagement and deployment of sport volunteers.

All partners conducted desk research using existing sources (*for example: statistics, research studies, papers, government policies, legislation etc.*) on volunteering in general and volunteering in sport in the country of focus and collected references to the identified sources of information. If the partners were unable to find sources relevant to some of the questions, they were encouraged to apply their expert knowledge and experience of the field.

2.1.2 - DESK RESEARCH/LITERATURE REVIEW DESIGN

A common template for partners was developed to collect and organise relevant information concerning volunteering and sport volunteering in particular. The template consisted of the following sections, each of which had a number of specific questions.

- > Respondent profile
- > Status of volunteering in a country or federation
- > Quantitative data and information on volunteering in a country
- > Recruitment, engagement and retention of sport volunteers in a country
- > Further information

National partners of the V4V project were requested to go through all the questions in their template and give answers in regard to their own country.

Global Sport Federations and Association Partners were requested to collect information and data with a focus on their international network systems and give examples in reference to as much of their national members in different countries as possible.

+ 2.2 - SPORT VOLUNTEER INTERVIEWS

2.2.1 - INTERVIEW OBJECTIVES

The interviews were the second strand of the research. Researchers collected qualitative information from a sample of sport volunteers on their volunteering experiences, expectations, feelings and future intentions.

The interviews were not intended to be a quantitative survey which would be broadly representative of sport volunteers in general and from which statistically valid conclusions could be drawn. Nevertheless, the interviews served their main objectives of validating and 'bringing to life' some of the findings from the survey of sport organisations.



2.2.2 - INTERVIEW AND SAMPLE DESIGN

The interviewers used a common interview script which consisted of 46 questions organised in five sections:

1. Volunteer profile,
2. Volunteer's past and present involvement in sport volunteering,
3. Types of sport organisations and events in which the volunteers took part,
4. Volunteer's engagement in sport volunteering, perceived benefits and barriers,
5. Volunteer's reflections on and recommendations for sport volunteering.

In order to achieve some level of diversity interviewers were encouraged to include:

- > A volunteer selected from a large sport organisation/club and a volunteer from a small sport organisation/club,
- > A volunteer selected from a local small club attracting mainly local residents with a sports participation focus and a volunteer selected from a large club attracting nationwide athletes with an elite competition focus,
- > A volunteer selected from the sport in which they participate, and a volunteer selected from sports other than their own,
- > A volunteer selected who lives in a capital or large city and a volunteer selected who lives in a smaller town or village,
- > A volunteer selected who is relatively new to volunteering in sport and a volunteer selected who is more experienced (multiple occasions).

In practice one interviewee could satisfy more than one of these criteria.

2.2.3 - INTERVIEW IMPLEMENTATION

The national researchers conducted interviews with volunteers in European countries. The involvement of the global researchers also provided the opportunity to reach out to some volunteers beyond Europe. 15 countries were covered which included the partners' nations (based in the EU and UK) and countries from beyond the EU (Argentina and Russia).

2.2.4 - INTERVIEWEE PROFILES

34 of the interviewees were female and 22 were male with one case where gender was not reported. Compared to information collected in the desk research and the later survey of sport organisations which suggests men are more likely to volunteer in sport than women, females may be overrepresented in this sample.

The highest proportion of interviewees fell into the middle years (30-49 years) which tends to align with information derived from the desk research and the later survey.

Most of the interviewees (91%) had education qualifications at level 5 and above with 47% at postgraduate level. Although the desk research indicated that those with higher levels of education are more likely to volunteer in sport, the interviewees may have been more educated than sport volunteers in general.

The largest proportion of interviewees were fulltime employees (61%), i.e., the group perhaps with less time to contribute to volunteering whereas those who may have more time to offer (part-time, unemployed, students and retirees) only represented 31%. This balance tends to reflect information and data collected during the desk research and sport organisation survey.

Most interviewees lived in large urban areas with many having main occupations related to the sport sector. Those whose main occupations were outside the sport sector tended to occupy leadership positions, for example, national managers, CEOs, directors in different areas, project managers, chief specialists and senior officers. Once again, this tended to align with the desk research findings.

2.2.5 - INTERVIEWEES' INVOLVEMENT AND HISTORY AS SPORT VOLUNTEERS

It is interesting to note that almost all of the interviewees reported that they were either currently involved in sport either as an athlete or as a leisure participant or had been in the past (96%).

The intensity of sport and physical activity involvement was also looked at and showed that the majority of interview respondents lived a rather active lifestyle. About 75% of the interviewees were taking part at least 1-2 times a week in sport or physical activity which aligns with the desk research. However, often their regular participation in sport and physical activity reflected their occupation, for example, as professional coaches and physical education teachers.

Nearly half of the volunteers had been active in their sport organisation for more than five years.

Table 1: Length of volunteer service by interviewees

More than five years	56%
Two to five years	13%
One to two years	12%
Six months to one year	6%
Less than six months	13%

The interviewees were not only long serving, but many also volunteered frequently, with over one third carrying out volunteering activities several times a week.

Table 2: Frequency of interviewees' volunteer service

More than once a week	39%
Once a week	11%
Twice a month	14%
Once a month	16%
Once a year	20%

+ 2.3 EUROPEAN SURVEY OF SPORT ORGANISATIONS ON VOLUNTEERING

2.3.1 - SURVEY OBJECTIVES AND TARGET GROUPS

Using analyses of the key findings from the desk research/literature review and sport volunteer interviews, the project then progressed to the third strand of research, a major (possibly unique) online Europe-wide survey on the topic of sport volunteering aimed at sport organisations. In order to broaden the perspective of the findings, it was agreed to extend the survey beyond the EU, taking in other non-EU countries where possible.

Overall, the goal of the survey was to be as inclusive as possible, to collate the highest possible number of contributions from the EU and beyond. Its broad objectives were to:

- > Gather relevant data on the extent of sport volunteering and the demographics of sport volunteers; this was useful to supplement the data gathered during the desk research/literature review and interview strands.
- > Reach out to grassroots sport organisations.
- > Collate opinions and views from sport organisations about volunteering and its importance to the whole sport and physical activity sector.
- > Focus on the different roles that volunteers play in sport organisations and the related skills they need to perform in their roles.
- > Gather concrete information about the way sport organisations recruit, train, manage and keep their volunteers, but also the challenges they face (including COVID-19) and if possible, to get information about existing good practices in the area of sport volunteering.

The types of sport organisations targeted by the survey included those who directly engage volunteers (for example, sport clubs, sport for all organisations, event organisers etc.) and stakeholders who may not directly or frequently engage volunteers but have significant interest in and knowledge of sport volunteering and its contribution to the sector as a whole (for example, federations, sport institutes, National Olympic Committees, umbrella organisations and government departments).

2.3.2 - SURVEY DESIGN AND DISSEMINATION

In order to facilitate the completion and analysis of the questionnaire across 18 different languages, in almost every case the respondents were offered 'tick box' options to select. The only qualitative responses required were when they were asked about references to relevant good practices. The options presented in these questions, for example, reasons for people becoming sport volunteers, reasons why sport volunteers are valuable to organisations, were all derived from the desk research/literature review and volunteer interviews.

The questionnaire design was based on the findings of the desk research and volunteer interviews. It was subject to detailed discussion and testing by the partners and went through several iterations before it was launched. It consisted of seven sections:

- **Section 1:** About your organisation and engagement of volunteers: *Type, size, status, coverage etc.*
- **Section 2:** About your opinions on sport volunteering: *A series of statements (level of agreement).*
- **Section 3:** About the skills of volunteers: *Skills required and in need of improvement per role.*
- **Section 4:** About the recruitment of volunteers: *Difficulties, methods, barriers and potential solutions.*
- **Section 5:** About the training of volunteers: *Existing training, which providers, and barriers.*
- **Section 6:** About the management of volunteers: *Type, challenges, communication, retribution etc.*
- **Section 7:** About the retention of volunteers: *Difficulties, which role, reasons, and effective ways.*

In order to collect data on the different roles played by sport volunteers, the survey adopted the same volunteer roles used by Eurobarometer in its regular surveys of participation in sport and physical activity and sport volunteering⁶. These were:

- > Board or committee member/governance
- > Administration/management
- > Coaching/training/instructing/leading activities
- > Officiating (e.g., referee, umpire, judge)
- > Organising or helping to run events
- > Maintaining sport equipment and/or sport facilities
- > Supporting day-to-day sport organisation activities (e.g., catering, transport, bar work).

The survey questionnaire was tested, revised and finalised in English by the partners. It was then translated into 17 other EU languages with the support of native speakers. This step was extremely important to reduce the language barrier and improve the chances of collating a higher number of contributions from the sector as a whole.



The online survey was then widely dispatched and promoted all over Europe using all possible channels (*e.g., multi-lingual flyers, emails, newsletters, social media, websites, conferences, meetings, articles*) with the goal to reach a maximum of stakeholders at the European, national, regional and local levels, as well as worldwide.

The online survey was launched in May 2022 and remained open for a period of two months. The original ambition of the partners was to attract 1 000 responses.

⁶ - See, for example, Special Eurobarometer 525 (2022).



2.3.3 - NUMBER OF RESPONSES

When the survey closed in July 2022, 2 723 responses had been received (nearly three times the original target). Given the length and detail of the questionnaire and the fact that some questions were not appropriate to all types of organisations, it was perhaps inevitable that not all respondents would fully complete the survey. However, most questions received over 1 000 valid responses.

2.3.4 - RESPONDENTS INDIVIDUAL PROFILES

For General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) purposes, the questionnaire gave the respondents the option not to identify themselves or provide their contact details. However, for monitoring purposes, all respondents were asked to record their gender, age, whether they had any disabilities and whether they had experience of sport volunteering themselves.

64.2% of respondents were male, 34.2% were female, 1.6% were divided between those who were 'other' and those who preferred not to say.

93.6% had no disabilities. This does not necessarily reflect the representation of disabled people in sport volunteering. Later questions addressed this issue.

The largest proportion of respondents were aged 46-60 years (41.3%), followed by those in the 31-45 age bracket (27.1%) and those aged over 61 years (23.5%). Only 6.1% were aged under 30 years. Perhaps most significantly 92.8% of respondents recorded that they had experience of being sport volunteers themselves. Indeed, given (as we shall see later in Section 2.3.6) that nearly 40% of the respondent organisations had no paid employees, there is a strong likelihood that a large proportion of the respondents were practising sport volunteers themselves when the survey took place.

2.3.5 - COUNTRIES WHERE RESPONDENTS WERE BASED

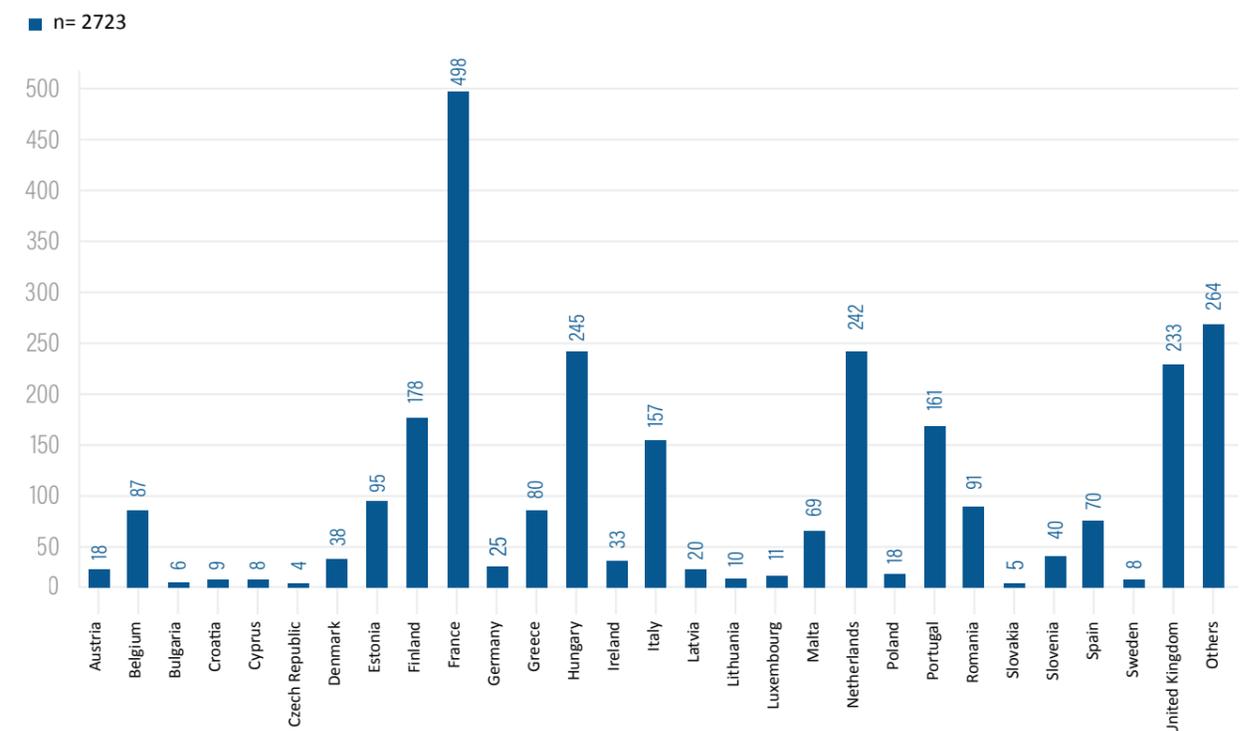
Although the online survey was primarily aimed at European sport organisations, respondents from 115 different countries contributed.

The majority of these (2 226 or 81% of the total sample) were from sport organisations in the 27 EU member states.

497 (19%) came from countries outside the EU-27. Of these:

- > 233 (9% of total sample) were based in the UK (which had recently exited the EU)
- > 60 (2.2%) were based in other European countries not part of the EU
- > 86 (3.2%) represented African sport organisations
- > 56 (2.1%) were based in Asia
- > 36 (1.3%) were based in South America
- > 26 (1%) were based in North America.

Figure 1: Total number of responses collated through the European Skills Survey on Sport Volunteering

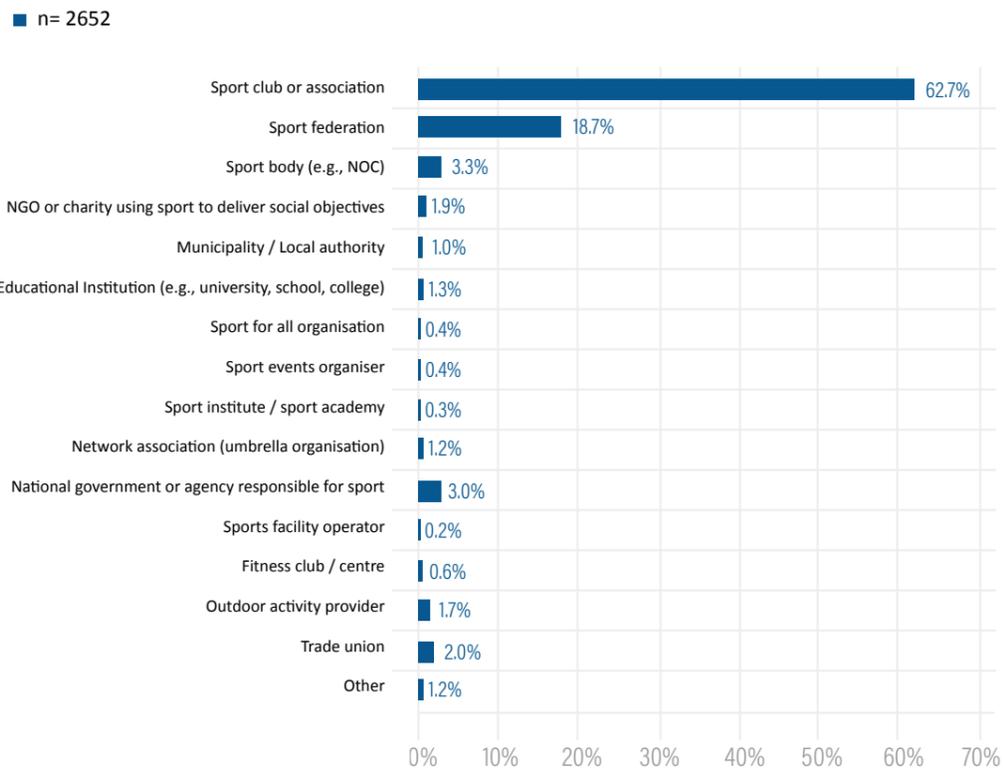


The variation in the number of responses from different countries may reflect a combination of factors which include overall population size, whether or not the country had a national researcher, perhaps the level of interest in the topic and overall willingness to participate in surveys of this kind.

2.3.6 - RESPONDENTS' ORGANISATIONAL TYPES

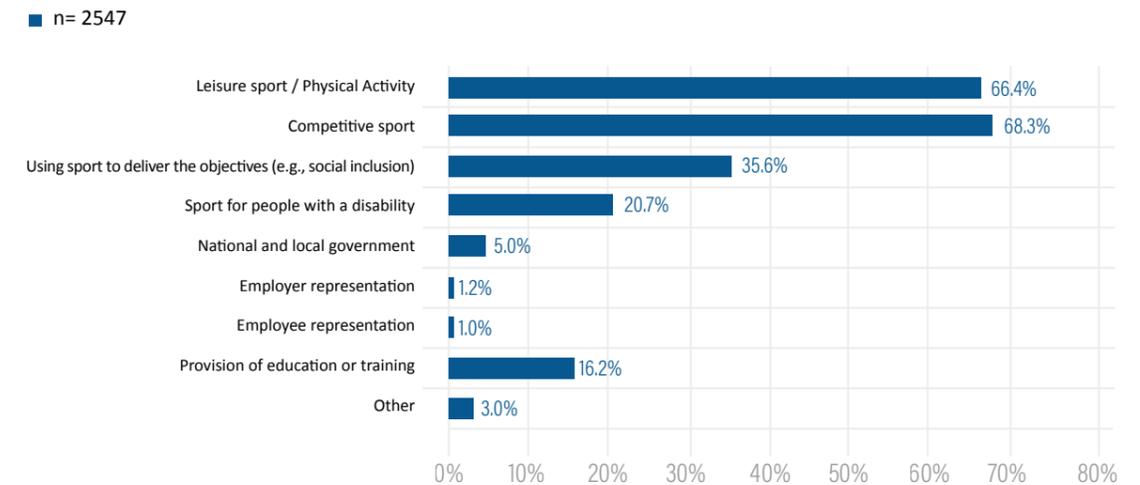
Nearly two thirds of responses came from sport clubs and associations (62.7%) and almost a fifth (18.7%) from sport federations. These were planned to be the primary target groups for the survey since they have the most direct engagement with sport volunteers.

Figure 2: Types of respondent organisations



In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to identify the main focus of their work. Since sport organisations tend to combine a variety of objectives (for example, combining competitive and leisure sport or leisure sport and social inclusion) they were given the opportunity to select more than one.

Figure 3: Objectives of the respondent organisations



Overall, the respondent sample provided a reasonably representative mix of the main objectives which sport organisations pursue (for example, the fairly even balance of leisure and competitive sport). The fact that over one third of respondent organisations mentioned 'using sport to deliver other objectives (for example, social inclusion)' seems particularly significant since this is still and relatively new and emerging part of the sport sector and demonstrates an awareness of the broader outcomes sport can achieve.

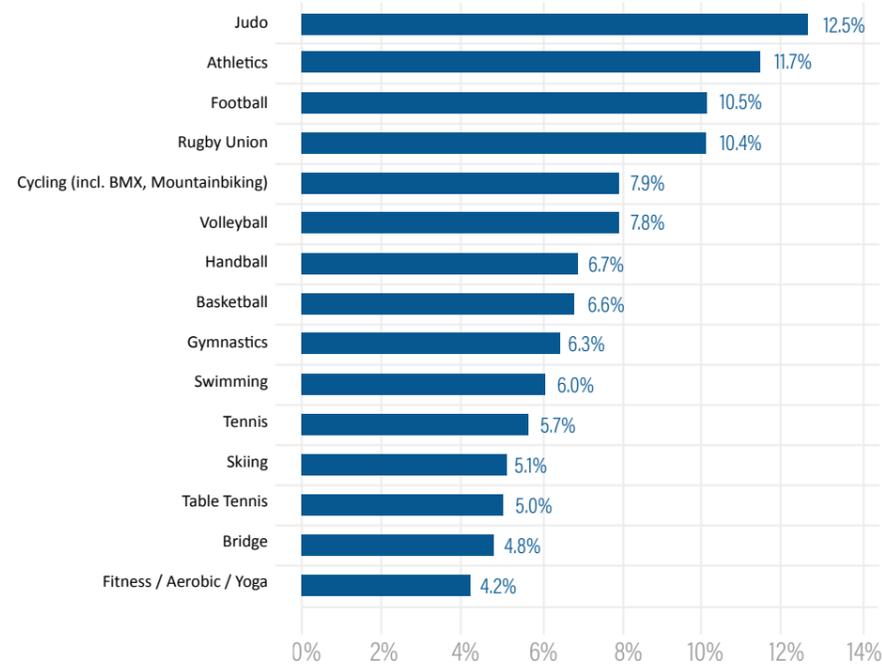


2.3.7 - SPORTS REPRESENTED IN THE SAMPLE

74 different sports were represented in the sample. The figure below shows the 16 most frequently selected sports (in this case, those above 4% of total sample).

Figure 4: Top 15 sports covered by the respondents' organisations

n= 2165



The relatively high percentage of responses from judo, athletics, football and rugby union almost certainly reflects the fact that these sports were represented by sport federation researchers who were able to mobilise their networks.

Although some sports were more represented than others, separate analyses on a sport-by-sport basis showed no significant variations in the later sections of the questionnaire. Therefore, it is likely that answers to the later questions are reasonably representative of all sports.

2.3.8 - REPRESENTATION OF NOT FOR PROFIT, PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL ORGANISATIONS

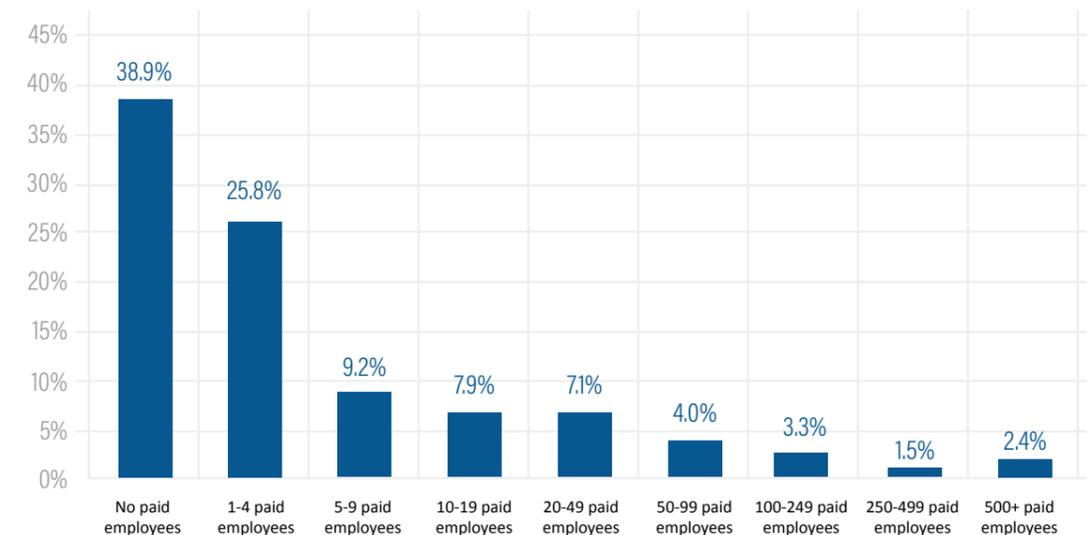
The majority of respondents identified their organisations as 'not for profit voluntary or charitable organisations' (82%). 12.6% were public organisations and 3.7% commercial (private profit).

2.3.9 - SIZE OF RESPONDENT ORGANISATIONS BY NUMBER OF PAID EMPLOYEES

The largest proportion of respondent organisations (38.9%) had no paid employees at all, and a further 25.8% said they employed only 1-4 paid employees. This achieved one of the goals of the survey to reach out to grassroots sport organisations.

Figure 5: Size of respondent organisations by number of paid employees

n= 2507



2.3.10 - RESPONDENT ORGANISATIONS' ENGAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

In analysing the results, it was important to identify if the respondent organisations engaged volunteers. Over two thirds (68.9%) said they did so 'often' with a further quarter (24.2%) saying they did so 'occasionally'. Only 6.9% said 'never'. This would suggest the respondents had sufficient experience of deploying sport volunteers to provide informed answers to the rest of the questionnaire.

It was also important to find out more about the size of organisation according to their engagement of volunteers. This was covered by two questions, one focusing on numbers of permanent and regular volunteers and the other on temporary/occasional volunteers.

Over two thirds of the sample (67.4%) engaged less than 20 permanent/regular sport volunteers.

Figure 6: Size of organisation by number of permanent/regular volunteers

n= 2233

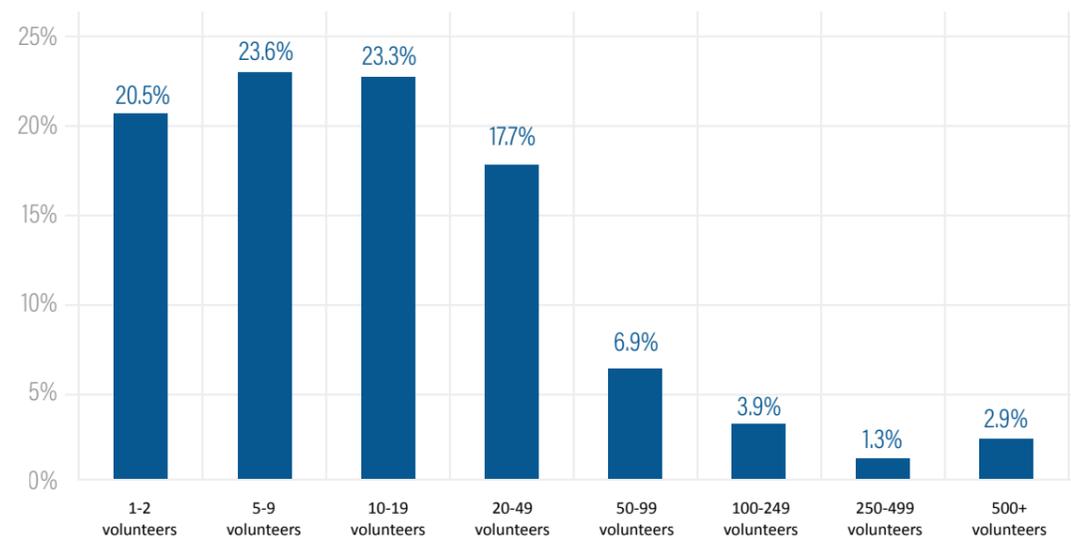
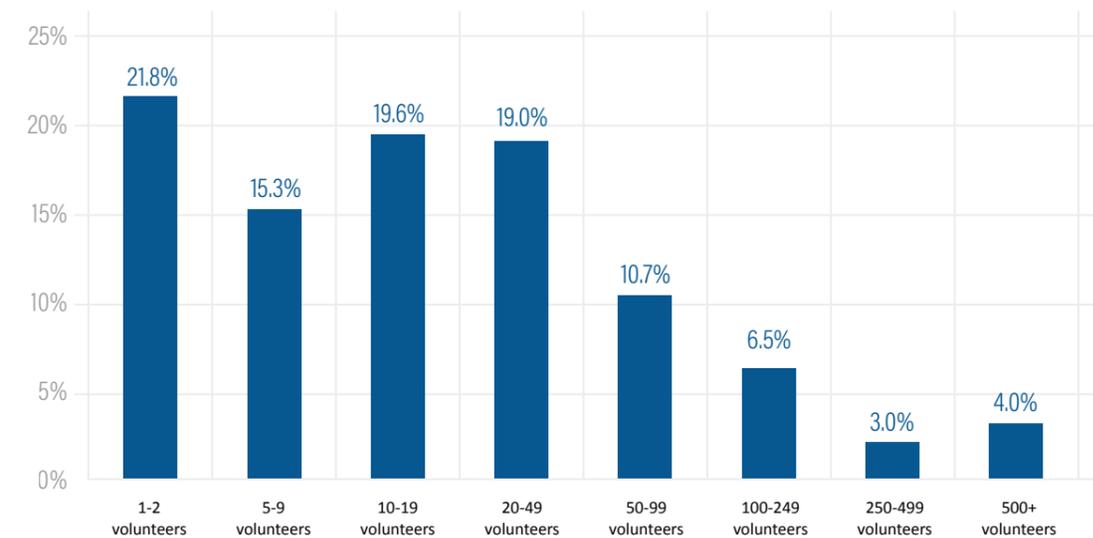


Figure 7: Size of respondent organisation by number of temporary/occasional volunteers

n= 2233



The largest proportion (21.8%) engaged only 1-4 temporary/occasional volunteers and over three quarters (75.7%) engaged less than 50.

The larger number of temporary volunteers engaged in groupings from 20-49 through to 500+ possibly reflects the organisations' involvement in setting up and running events, some of them quite major.

2.3.11 - ESTIMATED NUMBERS OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS COVERED BY THE SURVEY

Although it is difficult to estimate accurately the total number of volunteers engaged by the respondents, a rough estimate would suggest they deploy between 72 000 (using the smallest number in each band) and 119 000 permanent/regular sport volunteers (using the largest number in each band).

For temporary/occasional volunteers this would equate to between 103 000 and 172 000 sport volunteers. Combining permanent with temporary, it would seem our sample represents organisations working with between 175 000 and 291 000 sport volunteers across the countries sampled which is a considerable pool of relevant experience.





SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE THREE STRANDS OF RESEARCH



In this section we examine the main findings from the three strands of research and bring them together to form some overall conclusions. The partners also hope that these conclusions will be of interest to all stakeholders in a sector for which volunteering is so vital.

+ 3.1 - STATUS OF VOLUNTEERING IN THE COUNTRIES AND SPORTS COVERED BY THE DESK RESEARCH

In order to 'set the scene' for what follows, national researchers were asked to provide some brief observations on the history and culture of volunteering in their countries. This provided some quite diverse contexts.

 **Denmark:** There are very high rates of volunteering (40%) among citizens, and very high levels of children's engagement in sport (85% of children are part of a sport association). Anyone can establish an association in a few minutes and get a right to support. Anyone can organise sport activities.

 **Finland:** Volunteering has a long tradition and many agricultural jobs in particular have been taken care of with the help of volunteers. Volunteering has been traditionally tax-free for both the employee and to the organiser of the work.

 **Portugal:** Volunteering in Portugal has been relatively low compared to some other countries. However, the International Year of Volunteering 2001 contributed to the social recognition of volunteering and to a greater understanding of its reality. Voluntary work is now considered a more serious activity. There is, however, often a perception that volunteers may occupy professional areas of competence or tasks of paid workers. In the context of sport, volunteering remains a cornerstone of Portuguese sport as a majority of organisations rely on it to ensure the delivery of their activities. Compared to other sectors, where volunteering is more structured and formalised, in sport it is rare to find fully structured volunteering programmes in place that address aspects such as recruitment, retention, training and follow-up.

 **Hungary:** Volunteering has a long tradition which is rooted in civil initiatives connected to religious organisations, national disasters and wars. In sport, volunteering followed the establishment of civil sports clubs from the second half of the 1900s. A new wave of volunteering came after Hungary's entry into the EU. Citizens increasingly recognise their own activities for others and the community as volunteering, and their efforts are increasingly recognised; formal volunteering receives more space in the activities of sports clubs, specifically in connection to sporting events. Recently, the status of volunteering in large sporting events can be considered high.

 **Estonia:** The previous communist regime had a strong control over civil society, which resulted in compulsory volunteering called 'subbotniks'. Nowadays 'subbotniks' still take place, but they have lost their ideological aspect and have again become purely voluntary days of labour. After the collapse of communism in the 1980s, volunteering declined in these societies because of experiences of the deformed volunteering culture under the previous regime. Estonia regaining independence in 1991 marked a significant milestone for volunteering. Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia (the Baltic States), which joined the European Union in 2004, experienced an increase in both the level of civil liberties and the extent of voluntary work. Among students in universities, programmes like Erasmus or Erasmus+ are more and more popular, which increases international volunteering. However, there is no volunteer centre or local co-coordinating agencies in Estonia, which inform citizens about volunteering opportunities or match volunteers with organisations that might need them. Also, there are no central databases, and volunteer networks are not yet highly developed. Volunteers work in various fields, starting from internal security all the way to culture and sports. The most popular areas of volunteering are the promotion of local life and the protection of the environment and nature conservation. Half of the Estonian population has participated in one or more voluntary activities during the last year, but only 30% of the population explicitly define themselves as volunteers.

 **Romania:** Like Estonia, sport volunteering in Romania dramatically reduced after the collapse of the communist regime. Today there is a general low level of sport volunteering in Romanian society. Volunteers generally come from: senior citizens, former amateur and/or professional athletes or former employees of various organisations and bodies in the field of sport, students from PE and sport faculties. The latter seek to gain organisational and managerial experience by participating in various sports events, especially those of European level organised in Romania. On the other hand, today volunteering is regulated by Law no. 78/2014. In this context, the Romanian Ministry for Youth and Sport (MYS) is directly interested in the development and support of volunteering in sport. The best recent example of a volunteering management initiative was the organisation of EURO 2020 UEFA Championship by the Romanian Football Federation.





The UK: Volunteering has a rich history, traceable in Britain at least back to medieval times, when there was a strong association between religion and ministrations to the poor and sick. With the development of organised sports in the nineteenth century and the establishment of local clubs, sport volunteering flourished.

In the 1960s volunteering was seen as a way of diverting youthful energy away from anti-social behaviour, whilst in the 1970s the emphasis shifted to professionalising volunteer effort as a reliable addition to social services. In the 1980s volunteering (including in sport) was seen as a practical response to mass unemployment and inner-city unrest, while administrations in the 1990s focused on volunteering as a key aspect of 'active citizenship'.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) claims that the UK has one of the highest rates of volunteering in the world. A recent survey shows that in 2018/19, nearly 19 million people (36%) volunteered with a group, club or organisation at least once in the year and over 11.9 million (22%) volunteered regularly (at least once a month). Volunteers are well regarded and respected in the UK. Volunteering is recognised as having multiple benefits to individuals; the opportunity to contribute to the social fabric of communities, the opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge, and a valuable way for young people to gain relevant work experiences.

The hosting of the London 2012 Olympic Games not only intended to deliver a great level of sport to London, but also promised to provide a legacy for the years to come; it was seen as an opportunity to create a new volunteering spirit, an improved volunteer network with more opportunities and better training for those who want to volunteer in sport. Over 250 000 individuals registered to volunteer for the 2012 Olympics and, in total, with 70 000 volunteers acting as 'Games Makers' (during games time) plus an additional 30 000 volunteers for the Paralympics carrying out various roles in the fields of sport, medical, spectator services, technology, press operations, transport and accreditation.

Post-London 2012, this attention shone a light on the fact that sports volunteering had not received enough support and funding across the country. National organisations developing and leading in volunteer management and good practice such as Volunteering England, NCVO, Volunteer Centres and the Association of Volunteer Managers had engaged very little in sport prior to London 2012, associating the role of supporting sports volunteers with sports bodies. National Governing Bodies and other sports organisations over time have continued to engage vast numbers of volunteers with little investment in research or infrastructure to support the armies of coaches, officials and committees running sport in the UK. The sports sector had assumed the development needed was coming from the volunteering sector. As a result, sports volunteering nationally had not been subject to the rigorous research, training, investment infrastructure and good practice standards as volunteering based in charities, hospitals, the faith sector or social care.

In recent years some important steps have been made on both sides to bridge the gap. Sport England has created a central Volunteering Unit, whose role is to study and promote good practice in sports volunteering. The unit is staffed by experts from the volunteering sector who are producing more advanced guidance and tools for sports organisations. Many National Governing Bodies (NGBs) are starting to appoint staff with previous experience of leading large volunteering structures within national charities. The Association of Volunteer Managers held its first sports volunteering conference in 2017 in conjunction with Sport England and both organisations continue to support NGB volunteering leads, ensuring good governance on the volunteer boards and committees in sport.



+ 3.2 - LAWS AND REGULATIONS RELEVANT TO SPORT VOLUNTEERING

In regard to national laws or regulations in general in European countries, the desk research found a diverse picture from rich and complex regulations in some to quite limited control in others. In Hungary, for example, a specific law on volunteering was introduced in 2005. This law acknowledges the contribution of volunteers and also outlines their possible tasks and responsibilities, the circumstances under which they can participate in connection with the practices of a receiving organisation. This law outlines the benefits that an organisation may give to volunteers with no additional income tax burdens. It also outlines the legal environment in which the receiving organisations must operate, and handle volunteers in general, but also what kind of legal and tax regulations they must fulfil. Services or in-kind rewards sent on or given to volunteers are freed from tax in Hungary, which may include but is not limited to meals, uniforms, training and management.

Many of the laws or regulations in the partner countries show that in general they provide the right to volunteering. Most of the laws add a framework to volunteer administration and their activities. Some regulations specify the content, location and duration of the activity.

On the other hand, **Finland and Denmark** (where volunteering rates are traditionally high) appear not to have any laws or regulations specifically governing volunteering.

All countries, however, tend to outline which general areas of legislation apply to volunteers and which do not.

Examples of general laws that tend to apply are those covering:

- > Fundraising
- > Child protection and the protection of vulnerable adults
- > Data protection
- > Equality
- > Health and safety at work (although sometimes exemptions apply, since the volunteer is not formally speaking an employee).

Examples of general laws that do not cover volunteers:

- > Employment
- > Minimum wage
- > Taxation laws (where remuneration of expenses for volunteers takes place).



In **Estonia**, for example, if the volunteer does not receive remuneration for their work, then it is not an employment contract, and the volunteer is not an employee within the meaning of the Employment Contracts Act and has no rights under this law or indeed the Occupational Health and Safety Act.



Some countries, for example, **Hungary** legally require elements of volunteering as part of their secondary education programme.



+ 3.3 - STRATEGIES AND POLICIES RELEVANT TO SPORT VOLUNTEERING

National strategies and policies play a crucial role in shaping a nation's practices in connection to volunteering, but also contribute to how volunteer engagement and volunteer contributions are valued in a society, how it is developed, assisted and acknowledged. Strategies and policies facilitate volunteering or address barriers to volunteering as well. The overall approach defined in policies and strategies influencing volunteering vary across different sectors in a society may also be important and influential to the sport sector. These policies and strategies may even contain specific references to the sports sector.

 **Romania**, for example, introduced 'Volunteering Promoters Romania' in 2021. The main objectives of the strategy are: 1) the need for education for volunteering; 2) the need to include volunteer activities in the development strategy of the 41 counties; 3) the role of the volunteer coordinator; 4) improving the legislative framework for volunteering; 5) the need to establish volunteer centres at county level; and finally, 6) the role of partnerships between NGOs and local authorities to support volunteer activities in key areas such as social protection.

 **Denmark** has something similar dating from 2017, the 'Strategy for a Stronger Civil Society'. This focuses on 1) strategic partnerships between voluntary organisations and municipalities; 2) more resources for common solutions; 3) strengthening civil society in rural areas; and finally, 4) strengthened integration through civil society. The strategy led to attempts to remove barriers and increase incentives, which succeeded to some extent (e.g., the tax incentive for volunteers was raised).

 **Portugal** has a 'National Youth Plan' (2018) which aims to increase the civic participation of young people and incentivise volunteering for young people.

 **Scotland** has 'Volunteering for All: the National Framework' (2019) which has the following objectives: 1) Set out clearly and in one place a coherent and compelling narrative for volunteering; 2) Define the key outcomes desired for volunteering in Scotland over the next ten years; 3) Identify the key data and evidence that will inform, indicate and drive performance at a national and local level; and 4) Enable informed debate and decision about the optimal combination of programmes, investments and interventions.



Hungary also had a Volunteer Strategy valid for a period of eight years between 2012-2020. This strategy defined 12 areas for development and sets benchmarks to reach, such as the proportion of adult population to recognise volunteering in the life of society as a whole. Performance indicators were also set, such as «The participation of young people aged 18 to 26 in voluntary activities to raise 25% by 2020. In the last years of the first National Volunteering Strategy (2012-2020), 58% of organisational volunteers were representing the 18-39 age group, while the proportion of people over 40 (including the priority target group of over 60 years) was 42%.



Additionally, some countries have strategies specific to sport volunteering. In 2015, the **UK** government launched 'Volunteering in an Active Nation, 2017-2021' which sought to provide legacy to the volunteering successes of the London Olympics in 2012. This aimed to facilitate sport volunteering through 1) Financial investments and funding opportunities targeted at young people and projects in disadvantaged areas; 2) Methods of advertising for and engaging volunteers; 3) 'Golden ticket' incentives for volunteers; 4) Promotional campaigns aimed at getting young people involved in volunteering; and 5) Researching and testing ways to use digital technology to support volunteer recruitment.

In terms of the specific sports represented in the desk research, strategies for volunteers in rugby were found in England, Scotland and Australia. Judo also acknowledges the value of volunteers in the organisation of up to 22 major events as part of its World Judo Tour.



+ 3.4 - DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING

The desk research helped the partners to evaluate the definition of volunteering adopted by the project.

3.4.1 - DEFINITION ADOPTED BY V4V

It is important to begin by examining the definition of volunteering which the project adopted at the beginning. Volunteering was defined as actions which are:

- > Performed with the free will of the individual
- > Developed in the framework of non-profit, non-governmental organisations
- > Non-paid and carried out for the benefit of the community or a third party.

3.4.2 - FINDINGS FROM THE DESK RESEARCH

This definition was well supported by the desk research, but there are various conditions/caveats which should be kept in mind.

The first characteristic is extremely important. There should be no requirement or element of coercion involved in volunteering. Not only is this incompatible with the essential nature of volunteering, but it can also – as we saw from the examples of Estonia and Romania, while under communist regimes – actually foster a very negative perception of volunteering in the wider population which has constrained the development of ‘pure’ volunteering in subsequent years.

Considering the second characteristic, it is true that most volunteering does take place in non-profit, non-governmental organisations, in our case sport federations and clubs, but in terms of a wider framework, the private sector and national governments do have a role to play. For example, private sector employers can encourage employees to engage in volunteering (although without coercion or material incentives) and can be involved in supporting initiatives to recognise and celebrate volunteer achievement, as we saw in the case of English Rugby’s Mitsubishi Motors Recognition Programme. National governments can also promote and support volunteering as we saw in the case of Romania, Denmark, Portugal, Hungary and the UK. However, in order to uphold the first characteristic, it is important that national governments avoid placing requirements on volunteering, for example as part of an educational curriculum.

In terms of the third characteristic, while ‘unpaid’ is vital (i.e., no payment for the labour involved) it is also important to note that volunteers very often receive compensation for legitimate expenses incurred during their voluntary activities (for example, for travel and subsistence) and small material benefits (for example, uniforms or sports kit) and in the countries we examined in the desk research, these compensations and benefits did not attract taxation on the volunteer and that this had a positive effect of encouraging volunteering.

Given the findings above, the definition could be improved in the following ways:

Volunteering is defined as actions which are:

- > Performed with the free will of the individual
- > Developed in the framework of non-profit, non-governmental organisations, *although governmental and private sector organisations can facilitate and support volunteering*
- > Non-paid and carried out for the benefit of the community or a third party, *although compensations for expenses and small non-financial rewards are often provided.*



+ 3.5 - OVERALL IMPORTANCE OF THE SPORT VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE

A second important assumption at the start of the research was the overall importance of volunteering to the sport sector and to those who take part in sport volunteering.

3.5.1 - SPORT VOLUNTEERING IS VITAL TO THE SECTOR

This came across as a very strong message in the desk research and in the survey of sport organisations. In the case of the desk research, for example, Finland highlighted that replacing volunteers with paid labour would make the provision of many services financially impossible. The two international sport partners found the same message being reiterated by a wide range of federations.

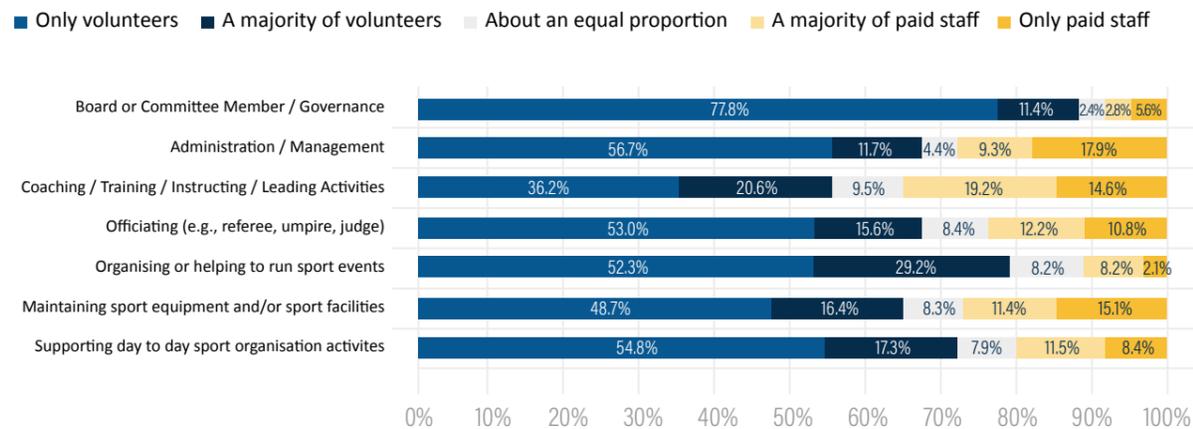
From the survey we can see that all seven key roles in sport organisations were filled either exclusively by volunteers or by a majority of volunteers.

Simply on the basis of this data, it seems impossible for these organisations to operate without a volunteer workforce.

- > 92.2% of the survey respondents agreed that sport organisations could not provide the services they do without volunteers
- > 60% agreed that volunteers provide energy and enthusiasm to sport organisations
- > 58.7% agreed that volunteers are vital in providing logistical support
- > 50% agreed that volunteers bring in new participants for sport activities
- > 40% agreed that volunteers help to build relationships with the local community which are vital to growing sport participation by ordinary citizens.

Figure 8: Proportion volunteers to paid staff in respondent organisations

n= 1888



3.5.2 - POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is clearly beneficial to society in general and to individuals. The desk research identified a number of positive impacts of volunteering in general and sport volunteering in particular. These included:

- > Social cohesion
- > Social participation
- > Solidarity
- > Social trust
- > Generation of social value
- > Personal development
- > Physical and mental health benefits for those who take part.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In the case of the sport volunteer interviews, the interviewees also mentioned positive benefits including:

- > Making a difference to the lives of others
- > Social interaction
- > Fun and enjoyment
- > Feeling valued
- > Spending time away from a busy lifestyle
- > Gaining new knowledge and skills
- > Improving their own social mobility and increasing their access to the labour market.

Several quotes help to illustrate these motivations:



“Experiences, positive emotions”
43-year-old female volunteer in Estonia

“Contribute back to the local community”
32-year-old female volunteer in UK



“The joy of participating and contributing to a team is invaluable! This is the spirit of sports and volunteering is a great way to experience it!”
28-year-old female volunteer in Greece

From the survey:

- > 98.4% of respondent sport organisations agreed that sport volunteering contributes positively to volunteers’ personal development
- > 96.7% agreed that volunteering helps volunteers to develop new skills and competencies.

The interviewees, however, also noted some potential negative impacts of volunteering. These included:

- > Bad or careless treatment
- > Lack of training
- > Exploitation and being treated as unpaid labour.

It is therefore an important conclusion for those seeking to attract and engage sport volunteers to emphasise the positive benefits of volunteering and do what they can through the management of volunteers to reinforce these benefits and minimise the possible negative impacts.

In conclusion, all of these findings are significant and should be emphasised when promoting the value and benefits of sport volunteering to stakeholders in the sector and beyond.



+ 3.6 - PROFILE OF THE SPORT VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE

3.6.1 - ROLES PLAYED BY SPORT VOLUNTEERS

Desk research identified the following main roles played by sport volunteers:

- > Board members and governance
- > Administration and management
- > Coaching, training, instructing and leading activities
- > Officiating (e.g., referees, umpires, judges etc.)
- > Organising and helping to run sport events
- > Maintaining sport equipment and facilities
- > Supporting day-to-day activities (for example, catering, bar and transport).

These roles were well supported by the survey respondents. However, it is also important to note that from the desk research and sport volunteer interviews that many volunteers play more than one role in a sport organisation. Of the 57 sport volunteers interviewed, 120 different roles were mentioned. More detailed analysis suggests that one volunteer may have anywhere between two and five roles.

This is an important conclusion when we later consider the implications for volunteer recruitment, management and training. In particular, sport organisations may benefit from avoiding ‘overloading’ volunteers with too many responsibilities (a negative tendency identified in the Portugal desk research) and possibly to consider training volunteers in transversal skills which bridge a number of roles.

It was also interesting to note that some of the interviewees were clearly ‘serial volunteers’ often active in other sectors as well as sport. This is illustrated by the following quotes:



“Parent governor in a child’s primary school. Parent-teacher association member”

47 years old male volunteer in UK

“I also volunteer for the national museum, which I enjoy very much as well”

Retired male volunteer in Hungary



3.6.2 - SIZE OF THE SPORT VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE AND TENDENCIES

Estimating the overall size of the sport volunteer workforce in Europe is difficult given that most statistical research has focused on the paid workforce. For the purposes of this research, we used and further analysed two surveys carried out by Eurobarometer in 2017 and 2022. According to the 2022 survey, it would appear that around 6% of EU-27 citizens aged 15 and above take part in sport volunteering. Despite the intervention of COVID-19 during the intervening five years, this percentage does not appear to have changed from the similar 2017 survey. However, it should be noted that the 2017 survey included the UK and 2022 did not. 6% of the EU population aged 15 and above equates to around 12m citizens.

When considering the number of hours per month contributed by sport volunteers, as identified in the Eurobarometer survey of 2017, it is reasonable to assume that the total sport volunteer hours could be around 97m per month which would be equivalent to over 608 000 fulltime posts in sport organisations.

Table 3: Possible hours contributed per month by sport volunteers and estimated fulltime equivalents

	%	Number of sport volunteers	Time spent per month	Median hours per month	Total hours per month	Fulltime equivalent (160-hour month)
	30	3 600 000	Only occasionally	Assume 0.5	1 800 000	11 250
	31	3 720 000	1-5 hours	3	11 160 000	69 750
	30	3 600 000	6-20 hours	13	46 800 000	292 500
	7	840 000	21-40 hours	30.5	25 620 000	160 125
	2	240 000	40+ hours	Assume 50	12 000 000	75 000
Total	100	12 000 000			97 380 000	608 625

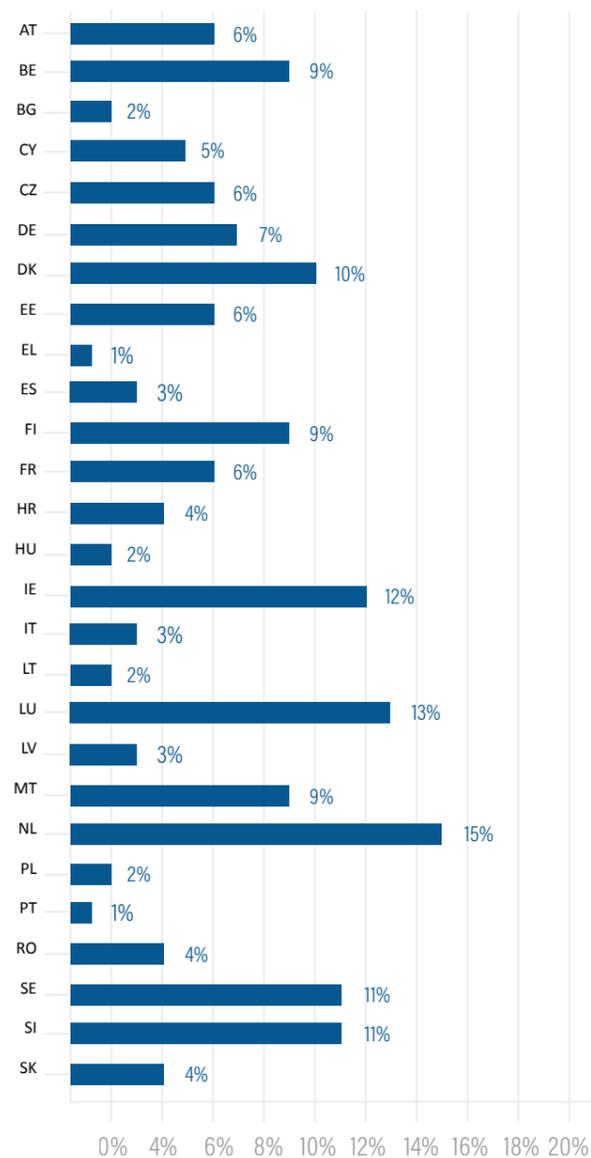
Whilst this is only a rough estimate based on available statistics, it is still a point worth emphasising when discussing the overall importance of sport volunteering to the sector and to wider society, and of adequately training and managing this workforce.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

3.6.3 - NATIONAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

However, the distribution of sport volunteers across the EU is not uniform. It is clear from the desk research that percentages of sport volunteering are much higher in some countries, notably Netherlands and Scandinavia and can be up to 10-15 times higher than others, for example southern European countries such as Portugal, Greece and Italy. Countries like Austria, Germany and France are much closer to the EU average. The lowest levels of sport volunteering seem to be found in the former Warsaw Pact nations.

Figure 9: Eurobarometer 525 (2022) % of population participating in sport volunteering in EU-27 nations



To a certain extent these differences reflect cultural and historical differences in relation to volunteering in general. Thus, we know from research carried out by the Portugal partner that volunteering historically has not had a high level of engagement. Here, there is a perception that volunteers occupy professional areas of paid workers and therefore may be negatively perceived as unpaid labour which could compete unfairly with salaried employment.

We also discovered from the Estonia research that the use of 'subbotniks' ('compulsory volunteers') during the soviet era created a deformed volunteer culture and a negative perception of volunteering from which it is difficult to build. Thus, the country still lacks anything like a coordinated approach to volunteering. However, we can also see from the examples of Hungary and Romania that new measures are being put in place at the national and regional levels to stimulate volunteering in general and in sport in particular.

It is also notable from the Eurobarometer findings that high levels of sport volunteering tend to be found in countries where there is a high level of sport participation. There may be a close relationship between sport participation and sport volunteering. Increasing one may have an impact on increasing the other.

One important conclusion for this area of research is that the frequency of sport volunteering tends to follow the frequency of volunteering in general. Where nations either have or promote a positive volunteering culture across all relevant sectors, sport volunteering will tend to follow. In addition, there is much that the countries with low levels of sport volunteering can learn from those who are currently more successful, and good practice examples will be useful. However, it is usually the case that one national approach cannot simply be transplanted to another country. Good practice examples need to be relevant (for example, progressive measures already taken in Hungary and Romania may be more applicable in Estonia) and also need to be sensitive to cultural differences (for example, between northern and southern Europe).

3.6.4 - OVERVIEW OF DEMOGRAPHICS

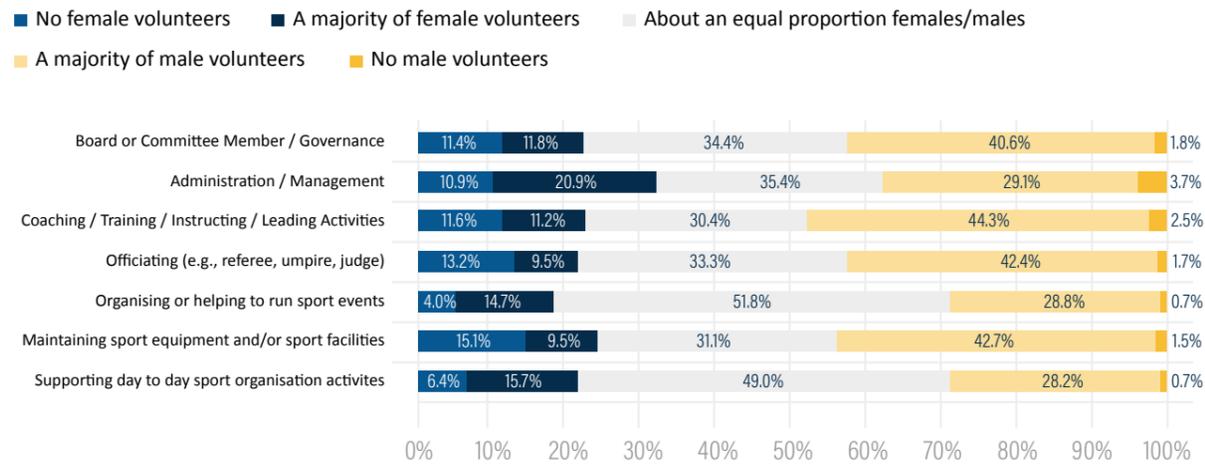
When considering the types of people who engage in sport volunteering, there is much to be gained from both the desk research and survey of sport organisations.

Firstly, there tends to be a predominance of male volunteers. Eurobarometer, for example, identified a 5:7 ratio of females versus males. This equates to 42% females and 58% males which is close to some of the findings from the national partner research (for example, an identified Sport England study suggested a 36% to 64% ratio). The predominance of male sport volunteers is also reinforced by findings from the survey of sport organisations. In the case of all seven roles performed by sport volunteers, more men are likely to be role holders than women.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Figure 10: Proportions of sport volunteers in relation to gender in respondent organisations

n= 1853

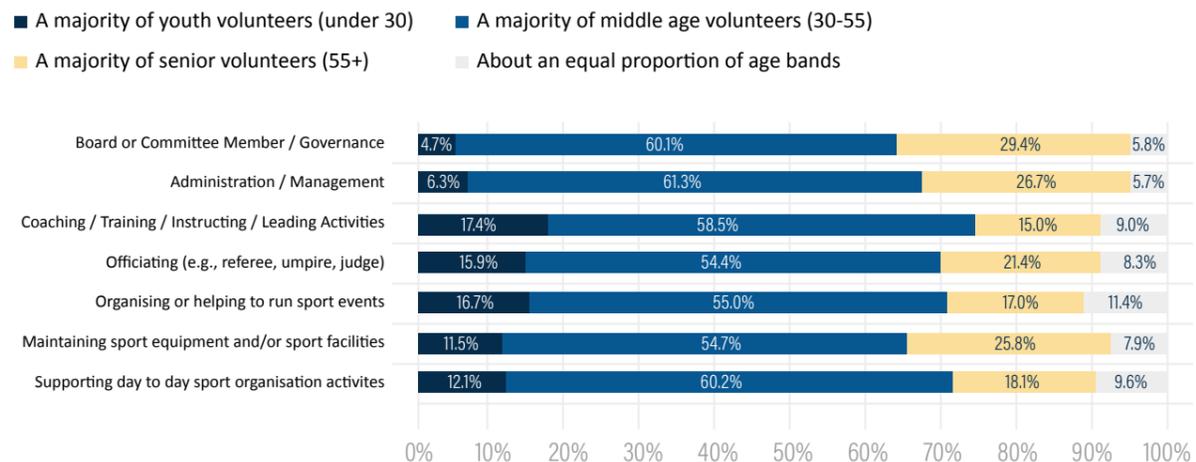


Analysis of other sections of the survey suggest a possible paradox. 68.6% of the respondents disagreed with the statement 'It is more difficult to recruit and retain female volunteers than male'. This may perhaps suggest that the respondent organisations are satisfied with the level of female representation which they have, even though the females are underrepresented by comparison with the wider population.

Secondly, in terms of age, it seems clear that sport volunteering is far more popular with the middle aged and senior population. From the desk research, it appears the largest proportion of sport volunteers are aged 40-54 years and the next significant group are in the age range 25-39 years. Those aged 15-24 are less well represented. Although the V4V survey of sport organisations used different age ranges, it tends to tell the same story. Those aged 30-55 years were in the majority across all volunteering roles, with the next highest age group being 55+.

Figure 11: Proportions of age groups in different sport volunteering roles

n= 1840



This is an interesting finding since people in the middle age range are likely to have busier work and family lives, whereas young people and those over 55 years may be considered to have more time to devote to volunteering.

Thirdly, sport volunteers tend to have spent more time in education. Eurobarometer research suggests that around 45% of sport volunteers have continued education beyond the age of 20 years. Those who had completed education by the age of 19 may only account for 30%. This connection between higher levels of educational achievement and sport volunteering is underscored by the findings of other aspects of the desk research and the volunteer interviews.

Fourthly, sport volunteers tend to be economically active. From the Eurobarometer survey we can see that housepersons, the unemployed, retirees and students are less represented than those in employment or self-employment. Once again, this is an interesting finding since those who are economically inactive may be considered to have more time to give to volunteering. Of the economically active, managers, other white-collar workers make up the majority. Manual workers are less in evidence. These tendencies are underscored by the occupations of the interviewees where those with leadership positions were more common.

There is also a link between being a sport participant and being a sport volunteer. The 2017 Eurobarometer survey found that 23% of those who participate in sport (regularly or with some regularity) give their time to sport volunteering. Only 6% of those who seldomly or never participate in sport act as sport volunteers. We also saw from the desk research that there is a strong correlation between countries where there is a high level of sport participation and a high level of sport volunteering.

These findings were supported by the sport volunteer interviews. Here, we found that almost all of the interviewees (96%) either were or had been athletes or leisure participants and three quarters took part in sport or physical activity 1-2 times per week.

When considering the demographics of sport volunteers, it is possible to conclude that there are demographic groups – women, youth, older people, manual workers, the economically inactive and the physically inactive – who are underrepresented in the sport volunteer workforce and that further efforts could be made to engage them.



HumanitAVE – Humanitarian Emergency Association

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

3.6.5 - INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

From the desk research, there is evidence that sport federations and other stakeholders are conscious of the need for greater diversity in the sport volunteering workforce and are making efforts to achieve this. We can see examples in Denmark, England, Hungary, New Zealand and Scotland where national federations are taking appropriate steps. This is exemplified by the Welsh Rugby Union who have become the first national federation to achieve Gold in Disability Sport Wales's insport programme, recognising their commitment to developing the inclusion of disabled people across their rugby communities.

From the survey findings, we can see that grassroots organisations are also concerned. 81.6% of the respondents agreed that 'Volunteering in sport needs to be more inclusive reflecting gender, disability and minorities in society'.

However, we have already seen in Section 3.6.4 above that women are underrepresented in the sport volunteer workforce. We also know from the survey that on average only around 19.3% of the respondent organisations have volunteers with the main categories of disability. Only 11.4% of those surveyed engage sport volunteers with mental health conditions, and yet we know from the desk research that sport volunteering has been identified as having a positive effect on mental health (Sport England).

Only 23.9% of the survey respondents agreed with the statement, 'It is easy for people with a disability to find opportunities to be involved in sport volunteering' which suggests that more must be done. In fact, when we consider the seven sport volunteer roles, there are some (for example, Board member, administration, Supporting day-to-day activities) which should not exclude those with physical or sensory disabilities. However, sport organisations would probably need more practical guidance on how to do this. It is notable that in the desk research, the UK NCVO study *Time Well Spent: A National Survey on the Volunteering Experience* found that disabled people were more likely to have had a bad experience of volunteering compared to others, suggesting that when disabled people are engaged, organisations lack the knowledge, skills and resources to support them.

There is some further evidence from the V4V survey of sport organisations that disabled volunteers can be successfully integrated. When we analyse the 459 organisations who identified their main purpose was 'Sport for people with a disability', we can see that the proportions of volunteers with disabilities and mental health conditions are in most cases nearly twice as high as those for the survey sample as a whole.

Figure 12: Percentages of respondent organisations engaging volunteers with disabilities

n= 2233

■ Yes ■ No ■ Do not know

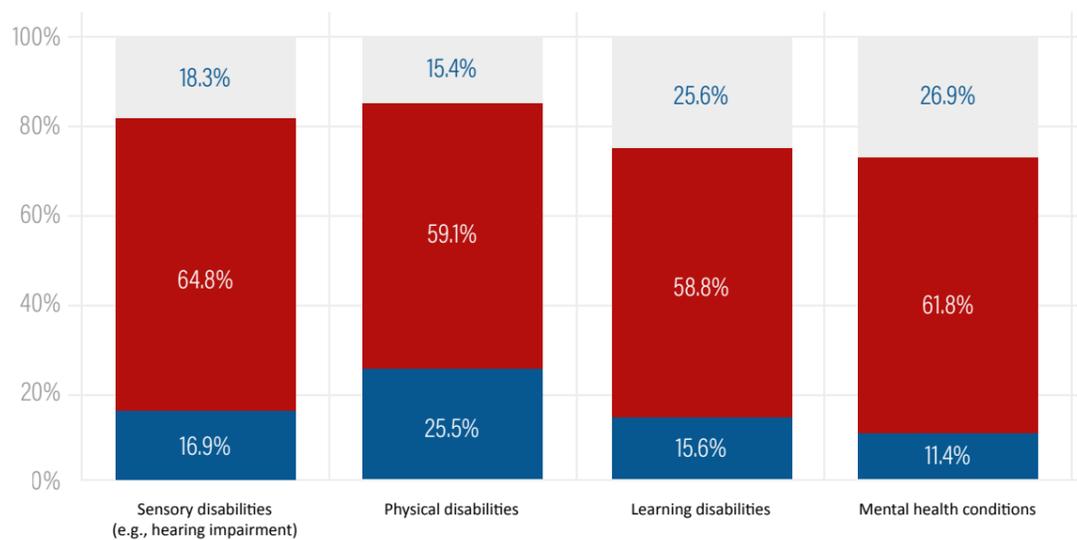
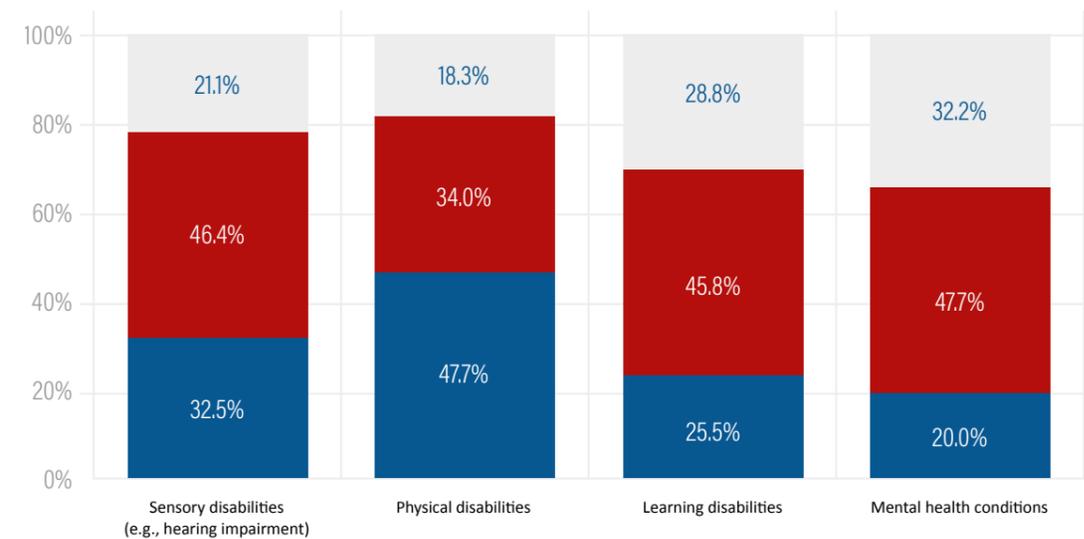


Figure 13: Percentages of sport disability organisations engaging volunteers with disabilities

n= 459

■ Yes ■ No ■ Do not know



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This suggests that sport organisations who are disability aware have the necessary support in place and can engage disabled volunteers in their activities.

From the findings from both the desk research and the survey, it is possible to conclude that sport organisations know there is a need to increase diversity but need additional support to make this happen, particularly by targeting women and those with disabilities/mental health conditions, creating more appropriate opportunities for them and helping them to integrate into their roles.

3.6.6 - IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SPORT VOLUNTEERING

Findings from the three strands of research present some ambiguities.

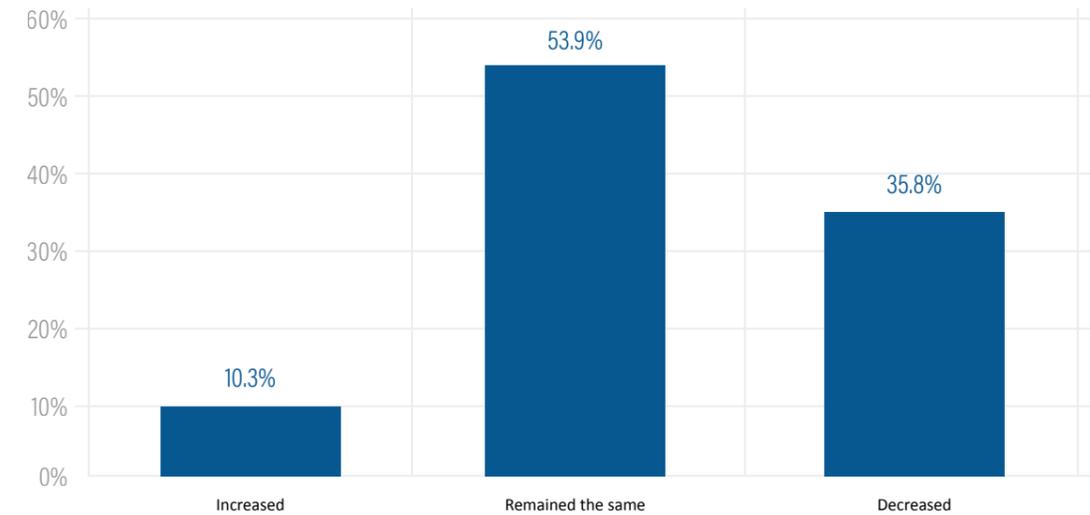
From the desk research carried out by the national partners, we find evidence that the numbers of volunteers declined during the pandemic (for example, England and Denmark). Yet, the 2022 Eurobarometer survey found no change in the percentages of European citizens taking part in sport volunteering compared to 2017.

A qualitative study in England by the Sports Volunteering Research Network in 2020 'Community Sports Clubs Responses to Covid-19' included interviews with committee members from 12 clubs. These indicated the following problems 1) more work and different work for volunteers (the different work mostly concerned adapting the sport and facility to make it COVID compliant, doing this each time guidelines changed, communicating with members, setting up new methods of communication and managing subscriptions); 2) finding it more difficult than usual to recruit volunteers; and 3) losing the positive 'feedback loop' with members and therefore experiencing less sense of satisfaction and reward. Some interviewees, however, welcomed their volunteer activities during the lockdowns because volunteering them kept active during a period when they might otherwise have felt bored and lacking purpose.

From the survey of sport organisations, 35.8% agreed that numbers of sport volunteers had decreased compared to before the pandemic's start.

Figure 14: Respondents' views on the current impact of COVID-19 on sport volunteering

n = 2197



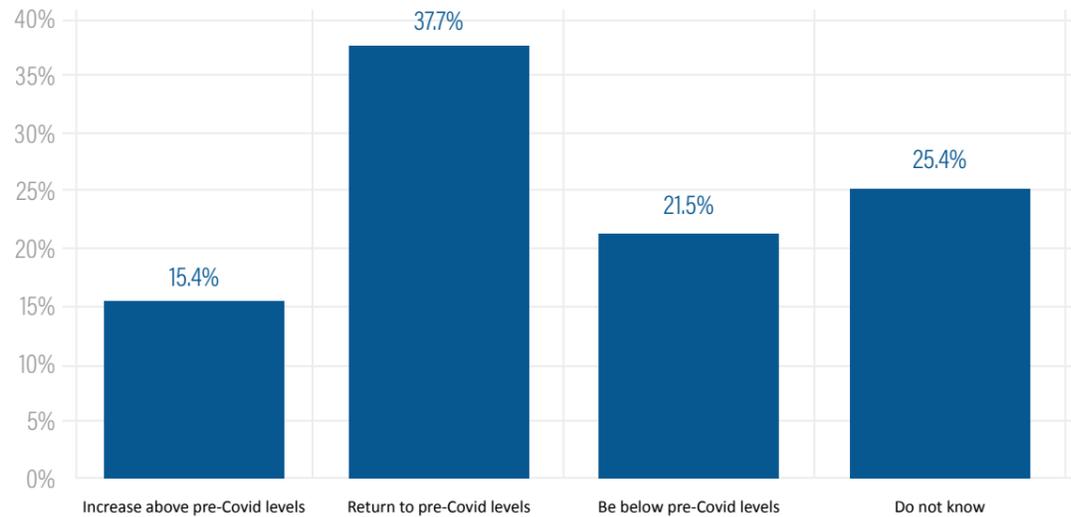
53.9% reported that sport volunteer numbers had remained the same and 10.3% thought numbers had actually increased. The desk research suggests that the increased level of sport volunteering may possibly be because actual/potential volunteers found that due to COVID-19 restrictions affecting their main employment, they had more time to give to volunteering and possibly that volunteering gave them something to do. This interpretation is supported by qualitative research conducted by Sport England.

However, when asked about the future, it is also concerning that whereas 37.7% of the survey respondents thought sport volunteering would return to pre-COVID levels and 15.4% predicted that sport volunteering would increase above pre-COVID levels, 21.5% thought it may decrease.



Figure 15: Respondent views on the longer-term impact of COVID-19 on sport volunteering

n= 2197



In a later section of the questionnaire where respondents were asked about recruitment difficulties, over one third (36.9%) selected 'Covid pandemic'.

It is notable that in the desk research, the main difficulties associated with the pandemic appeared to be extra work created by COVID-19 protocols. As these protocols become less rigorous, and fear of infection declines then possibly there will be no significant longer term negative impacts on the volunteer workforce. Certainly, from the sport volunteer interviews, the majority of interviewees expressed a high level of resilience and a commitment to continue volunteering if they felt safe. Interviewees did not brush over the impact of COVID-19, but also emphasised the need for sport organisations to have strong protocols to minimise infections.



"I wouldn't volunteer less, but it makes volunteering a bit more complicated as we have to follow certain protocols."

30-year-old female volunteer in Hungary

"I will volunteer where needed, but also where I feel safe and well."

28-year-old female volunteer in Greece



In conclusion, it does seem from the V4V survey that the COVID-19 pandemic did have a negative impact on volunteering. However, this needs to be set against the Eurobarometer survey which suggests that there was no decline in sport volunteering 2017-2022. In terms of the future, although it will take more time to be certain, it appears that COVID-19 may not have a significant negative impact on sport volunteering in the long term.

+ 3.7 - INCENTIVES AND BARRIERS TO SPORT VOLUNTEERING

3.7.1 - INCENTIVES TO SPORT VOLUNTEERING

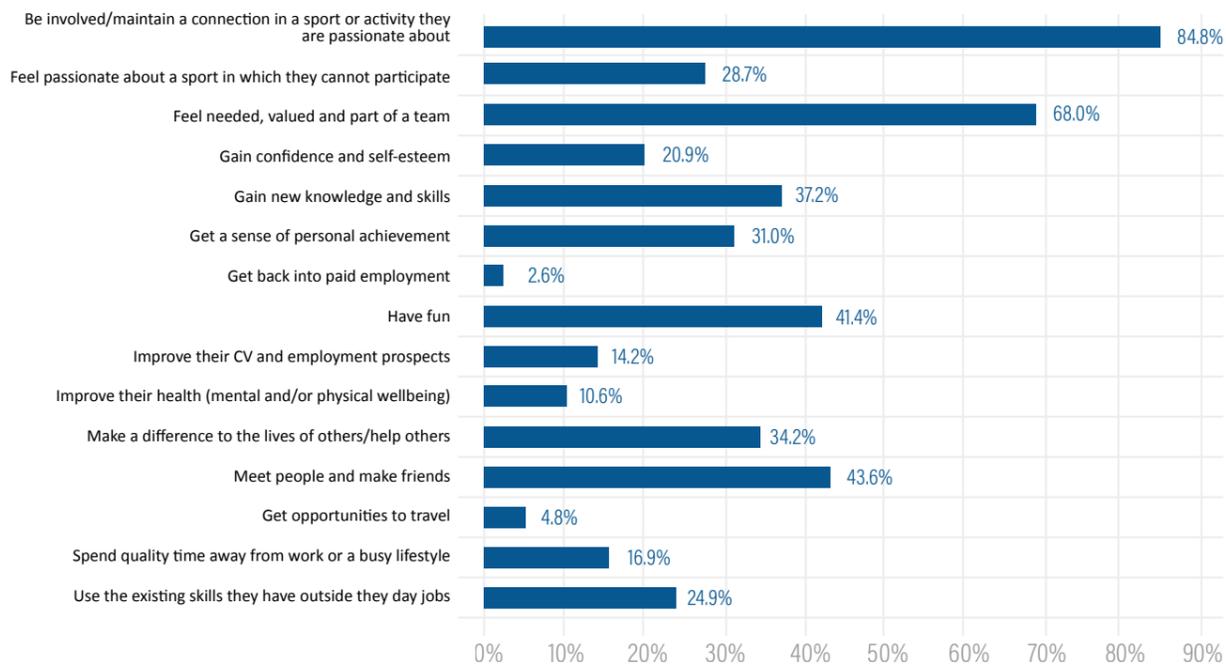
From the desk research, a survey undertaken by NCVO in the UK indicated that 'personal enjoyment' ranked as the highest benefit for the volunteers themselves. This was followed by 'making a difference (particularly to the lives of individuals)' and then helping the volunteer to overcome feelings of social isolation. For those interested in future volunteering, 52% said they wanted to make use of existing skills or experience, 50% said they wanted to take part in fun and enjoyable activities and 44% said they wanted to combine volunteering with existing hobbies. In reviewing all of the data collected, the authors concluded that eight features make up a quality experience for volunteers. These were: 1) meaningful; 2) inclusive; 3) flexible; 4) impactful; 5) connected; 6) balanced; 7) enjoyable; and 8) voluntary.

In terms of what incentivises people to engage in sport volunteering, the interviews were particularly helpful. The most frequently mentioned personal reason for volunteering (19%) was 'Be involved in a sport or activity you are passionate about'. This was closely followed by 'Make a difference to the lives of others', 'Meet new people', 'Have fun' and 'Feel valued and part of a team (all in the range 14%-16%)'. When asked directly about incentives, by far the largest percentage of interviewees (46%) selected 'Positive experience and emotions related to helping other people'.

These interview findings were mainly supported by the survey of sport organisations.

Figure 16: Respondent views on the reasons people volunteer in sport

n= 1865



By far the highest supported reason for volunteers to be involved in sport was 'Be involved in a sport or activity they are passionate about' (84.8%). This was followed by 'Feel needed, valued and part of a team' (68%). Falling slightly below 50% were 'Meet people and make friends' (43.6%), and 'Have fun' (41.4%). 'Gain new knowledge and skills' came fifth highest (37.2%).

Interestingly, by comparison with the interview findings, 'Make a difference to the lives of others/help others' only came in as the sixth most selected option whereas it was the highest incentive selected by the interviewees.

From this we may conclude that by far the most important incentive for people to join the volunteer workforce is passion about the chosen sport. In addition, sport volunteers value the personal rewards they receive, in particular feeling needed and valued, being part of a team, finding opportunities to socialise, enjoy themselves and further develop skills. However, altruistic motives should not be discounted.

3.7.2 - IMPACT OF MAJOR EVENTS ON SPORT VOLUNTEERING

It is also interesting to note from the desk research the impact of major sporting events. The Romanian partner, for example, highlighted the positive effect of the Euro 2020 UEFA Championship, the statistical impact of which may be reflected in the Eurobarometer surveys where we can see that sport volunteering in the country increased from 2% in 2017 to 4% in 2022. The UK partner mentioned the London Olympic Games of 2012 which attracted over 250 000 volunteers. Hungary showcased the 2017 FINA World Championships which recruited 3 500 volunteers for a two-week period.

It is possible to conclude that major events such as these stimulate interest in volunteering, and sport organisations, if they are sensitive to this heightened interest, should be well placed to use them as a platform to continue to engage at least some of these volunteers on a longer-term basis.

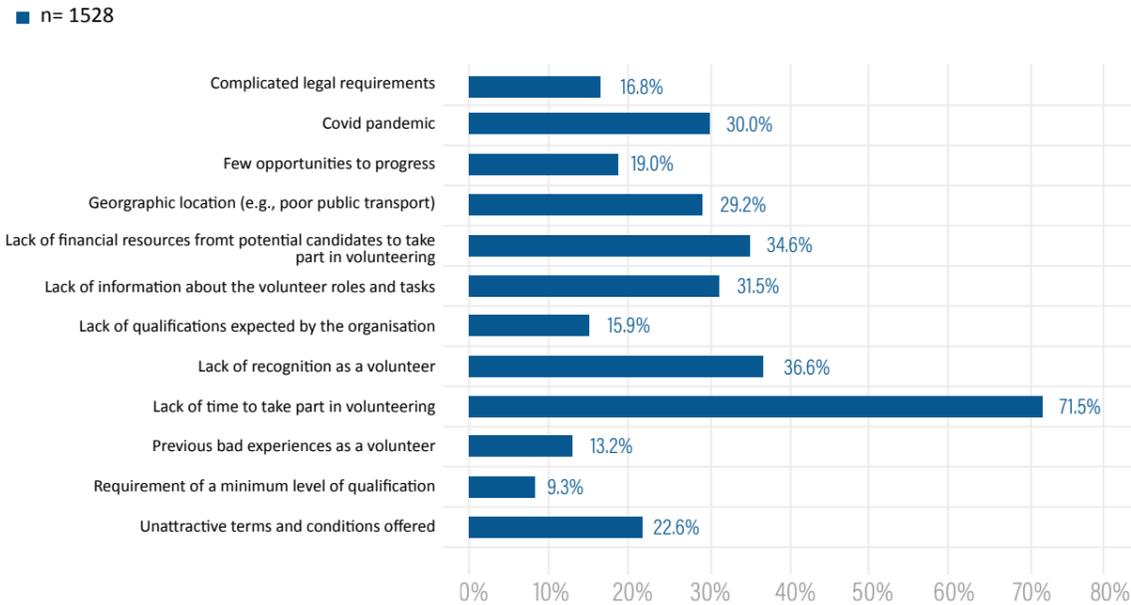
3.7.3 - BARRIERS TO SPORT VOLUNTEERING

Considering the desk research findings, by far the most frequently mentioned barrier is lack of time or other competing responsibilities. This was mentioned in a range of the studies which were cited (for example, from Denmark, Portugal, the UK and Welsh Rugby). Given what we already know about sport volunteers, this is understandable. They are predominantly economically active and fall into an age range where they are likely to have family as well as work responsibilities. However, there were also some other barriers mentioned which suggest solutions could be found. Frequently mentioned were 1) not being asked to volunteer; 2) not being aware of volunteering opportunities; and 3) lack of appropriate skills. Desk research also identified that some people may be reluctant to volunteer because they do not want to be 'tied down', i.e., committed to something on a long-term basis.

The interviewees mentioned similar barriers, but also highlighted some other concerns which relate to poor volunteering experiences. These included bad or careless treatment, poor communication, coordination and instructions, feelings of exploitation and being treated as unpaid labour. It was interesting to note that those most likely to have had negative experiences are younger volunteers, the disabled, and those volunteering through employers or public sector organisations.

Similar findings emerge from the survey of sport organisations.

Figure 17: Respondents perceptions of barriers which can deter people from becoming sport volunteers



Clearly, the biggest perceived barrier is ‘Lack of time to take part in volunteering’ (71.5%) which received almost twice the level of support than any other possible barrier. As we saw in previous questions in this section, this may raise the question as to whether sport organisations are targeting the right people, i.e., those with sufficient time, rather than those who are simply closest to hand.

The second most selected ‘Lack of recognition as a volunteer’ (36.6%) aligns well with both the desk research and interviews where the importance of the volunteer receiving acknowledgement and recognition, given the absence of material rewards, was highlighted.

The selection of ‘Lack of financial resources from potential candidates to take part in volunteering’ (34.6%) may suggest the importance of ensuring adequate compensation for expenditure on the part of the sport volunteer during their voluntary activities, particularly for those with low incomes.

It is also interesting to note that ‘Lack of information about volunteer roles and tasks’ (31.5%) was mentioned several times in the desk research and is one that some sport organisations are now seeking to address.

When it comes to lack of time, overcoming this obstacle may be difficult for many, but perhaps more forward planning, communication and flexibility on the part of sport organisations may assist. There may also be some value in sport organisations exploring opportunities for ‘micro-volunteering’ i.e., offering shorter volunteering opportunities which would help to address both lack of time and fears about long-term commitment.

In addition, it seems that many people are simply not aware of sport volunteering opportunities and have not been asked to volunteer. We may conclude that sport organisations need to publicise volunteering opportunities and the associated tasks and responsibilities more loudly and widely. It is also clear that sport organisations must address some of these barriers by ensuring that volunteers do not have negative experiences of volunteering (which requires competent volunteer management), providing volunteers (particularly those with limited financial resources) with adequate compensation for expenses incurred during volunteering and perhaps most vitally by ensuring the volunteers receive exceptional recognition for their work.

+ 3.8 - RECRUITMENT OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

3.8.1 - WHAT TYPES OF ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS DO SPORT ORGANISATIONS LOOK FOR?

When considering the recruitment of sport volunteers, it is important to know what kinds of attributes and skills are expected.

The desk research provided some insights into the skills which sport volunteers require. Welsh Rugby Union, for example, has developed Club Volunteer Role Descriptions to support clubs and volunteers so that all parties are aware of the tasks required and the skills, responsibilities, and relationships in order to be successful in leadership roles (for example, club chairperson, secretary, treasurer, health and safety officer etc.). They have, furthermore, created a skills audit so that clubs can perform the assessment of current volunteers, identify the gaps, and the necessary skills and industry knowledge required for volunteer roles.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Looking across all the attributes and skill requirements identified for rugby club leadership roles, the following are mentioned:

- > Ability to multi-task
- > Being motivated
- > Communication
- > Empathy
- > Facilitation
- > Leadership
- > Motivational skills
- > Organisational skills
- > People skills
- > Positive liaison with other organisations
- > Teamwork
- > Time management

In terms of what they expect of volunteers in general, Welsh Rugby identified the following attributes:

- **C - Commitment:** Although volunteers are under no obligation or contract, a club expects its volunteers to commit to the time originally agreed to at the beginning of their placement and if there are any problems the club is notified as soon as possible.
- **A - Attitude:** Volunteering must be completed with the right attitude otherwise both the club and the volunteer suffer needlessly. There are some undesirable but worthwhile jobs that are desperately needed doing, however with the right attitude, even the worst job can be enjoyable.
- **R - Respect:** Rugby and respect go hand in hand, both on and off the pitch. We expect Welsh Rugby's volunteers to be passionate about their club, but volunteers must treat with the respect and sportsman like conduct the WRU insists upon.
- **E - Education:** The federation and other local 3rd sector parties are continuously advertising, organising and funding certain courses to upskill and train volunteers across Wales and in the spirit of good practice, volunteers should look for and apply themselves to continuous personal development for both their own development and the club's development.

The sport volunteer interviewees highlighted the skills and attributes they felt they brought to their volunteer roles. These included:

- > Technical skills appropriate to the role
- > Communication
- > Organisational, planning and social skills
- > Cheerfulness
- > Conscientiousness
- > Courage and enthusiasm
- > Trustworthiness (or reliability) was highlighted as the most important attribute

In the survey of sport organisations, respondents were asked to select what they thought the top five essential skills/attributes were for each of the seven volunteer roles presented in the questionnaire.

When sport organisations are recruiting for the seven roles, they may wish to highlight the following as important skills/attributes to look for (in order of priority).

- **Board or committee member:** motivation, reliability, ethical approach, people skills, communication skills.
- **Administration/management:** reliability, motivation, technical skills appropriate to the role, organisational skills, ethical approach.
- **Coaching/training/instructing/leading:** motivation, technical skills appropriate to the role, passion about the sport, reliability, people skills.
- **Officiating (referee, umpire, judge etc.):** technical knowledge appropriate to the role, reliability, ethical approach, passion about the sport, motivation.
- **Organising/helping to run sport events:** reliability, motivation, adaptability, people skills, organisational skills.
- **Maintaining sport equipment/facilities:** reliability, motivation, technical skills appropriate to the role, willingness to learn, organisational skills.
- **Supporting day-to-day sport organisation activities:** reliability, motivation, people skills, adaptability, organisational skills.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

It is interesting that technical knowledge and skills specific to the role only applies to four of the roles: administration/management, coaching, officiating and maintaining equipment and facilities. Only in the case of officiating, does it appear as number one requirement. The skills most frequently mentioned across the seven roles are people skills and organisational skills, both of which are transversal, rather than role specific technical skills. Responses in this survey fairly accurately replicate the findings from the desk research and interviews, i.e., there is a strong emphasis on attributes, in particular motivation and reliability, and on broad transversal skills, in particular people skills and organisational skills.

However, it is important to remember that volunteers may play anywhere between two and five roles in a sport organisation. If an organisation is seeking to recruit volunteers in general, rather than for one specific role, they might wish to consider all of the ten skills and attributes mentioned above.

3.8.2 - DIFFICULTIES IN RECRUITING SPORT VOLUNTEERS

Aside from the barriers to sport volunteering discussed above, no further information or data was collected from the desk research and interviews concerning recruitment difficulties.

However, the survey of sport organisations did ask respondents about the level of difficulty they experienced when trying to recruit volunteers for the seven roles.

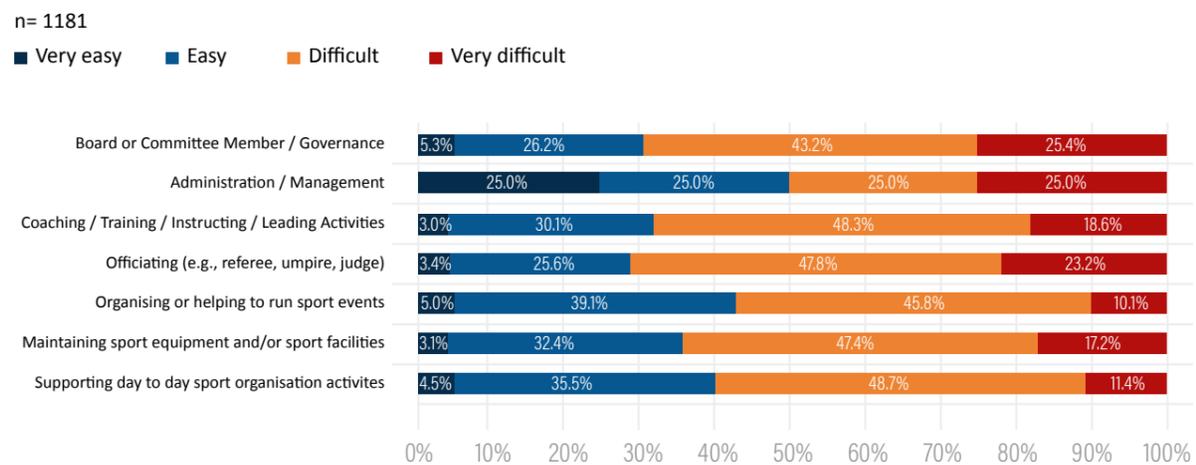
Combining the responses for 'Difficult' and 'Very difficult' we can see (in descending order):

- **Officiating (71%)**
- **Board/Committee members (68.6%)**
- **Coaching/Training/Instructing/Leading (66.9%)**
- **Maintaining sport equipment/facilities (64.6%)**
- **Supporting day-to-day sport organisation activities (60.1%)**
- **Organising/helping to run sport events (55.9%)**
- **Administration/Management (50%)**

Thus, more than 50% of the respondents experienced difficulties in recruiting for six of the seven roles with Administration/management sitting on the borderline between difficult and easy.

When asked about the types of difficulties they encounter when recruiting sport volunteers, two stand out above the others, 'Not enough people interested in doing this type of role' (62%) and 'Low number of applicants generally' (59.6%). All other difficulties offered as options received less than 40% support from the respondents. The next highest was 'Low number of applicants with the required attitude, motivation or personality' (39.4%). Aside from 'Covid pandemic' (36.9%) which has already been discussed in Section 3.6.6 above, all the other difficulties fall below 30% level of support. 'Low number of applicants with the required skills' received only 27% support.

Figure 18: Levels of difficulty recruiting sport volunteers into the seven roles

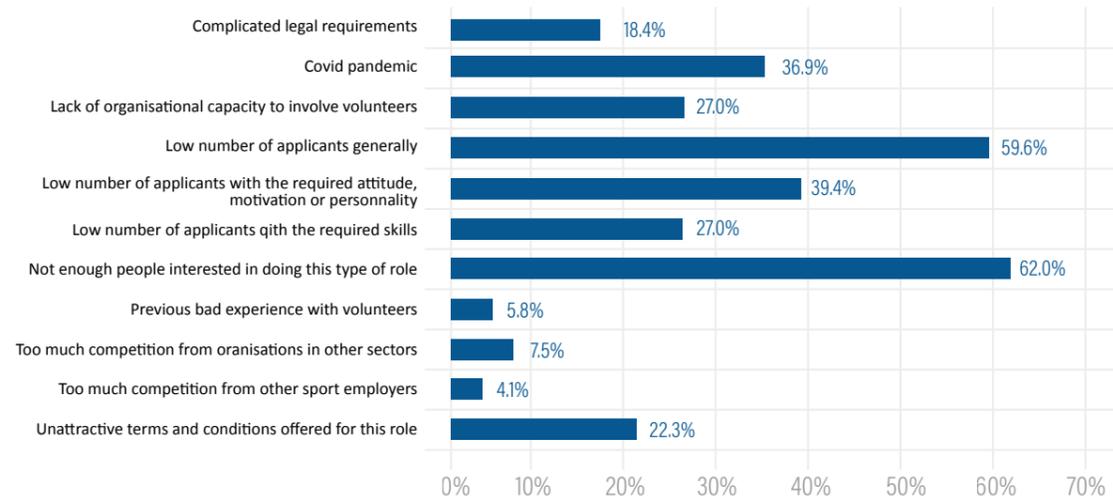


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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Figure 19: Respondent difficulties in recruiting sport volunteers

n= 1528



Therefore, we can conclude that the primary difficulties relate to lack of people being interested in sport volunteering and/or the roles on offer and then lack of the right attitudes and motivation. This tends to support the conclusions drawn in Section 3.8.1 above in which we identified attributes, particularly reliability and motivation, as being vital to sport volunteering. Lack of skills, at the point of recruitment at least, seems to be less of a difficulty. Whilst holding on to this thought, it is also important to remember that the desk research identified some key barriers to volunteering as being ‘not being asked to volunteer’ and ‘not being aware of volunteering opportunities’.

In order to explore this further, it is useful to look at the types of people who sport organisations target for recruitment and the methods which are used to reach them.

3.8.3 - TARGET GROUPS FOR RECRUITMENT OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

From the desk research, we learned that volunteers are most often recruited by sport clubs and federations. Their primary target groups are ex-players/athletes and the parents of young participants or others already connected to the club or federation. This was supported by the experiences recounted by the interviewees, most of whom started in volunteering through their children, were former athletes or were simply approached by someone they knew in the club or federation. This is illustrated by the following extracts from the interviews.

Some volunteers mentioned they were drawn into volunteering through their children’s involvement in sport:



“I started myself thanks to working in the field of sports and training activities for my children”

Volunteer in Estonia

At board and senior management level, volunteers often mentioned they were recruited based on their professional career:

“I was called by organisers”

43 years old female volunteer in Estonia



“It was a challenge raised by former managers who believed in my leadership abilities to manage the club”

44 years old male volunteer in Portugal



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

For others volunteering seems to be a natural extension of their athlete career:

“I started as an athlete and participated in activities whenever I could”
28 years old female volunteer in Greece

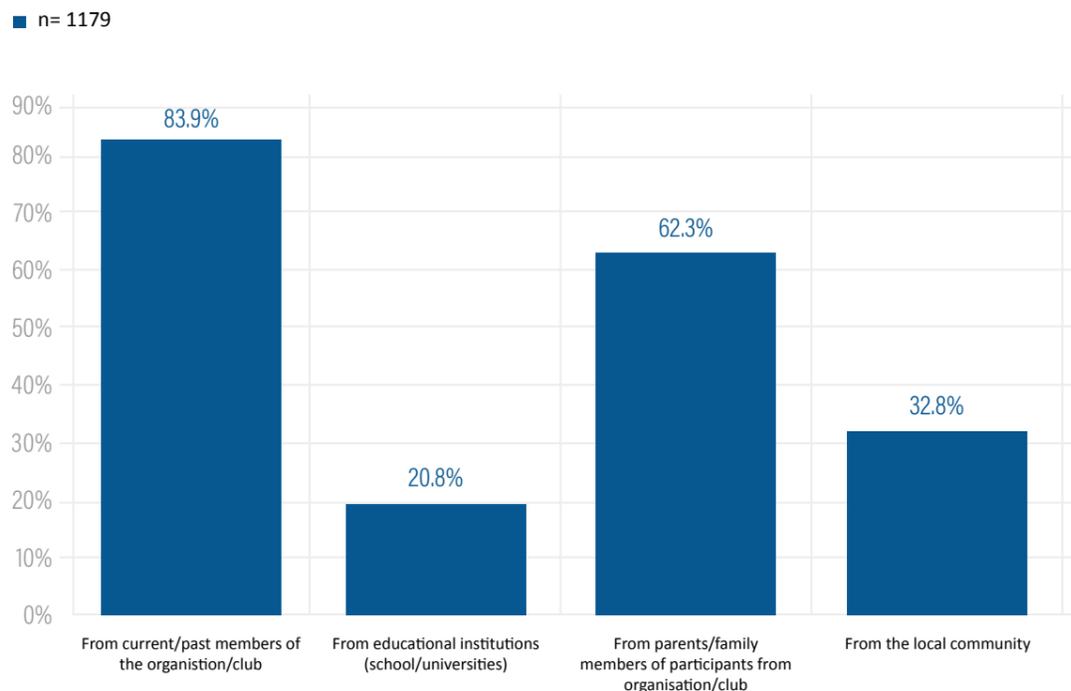




“My coach invited me”
17 years old female volunteer in Russia

This is further supported by the data collected from the survey of sport organisations. Here we can see that 83.9% of respondents target current or past members and 62.3% target parents or family members of participants. Only 32.8% target the local community. The high percentages of sport organisations targeting ex-players and parents may also partially explain the high percentages of sport volunteers in the 30-55 age range.

Figure 20: Respondent target groups when recruiting sport volunteers



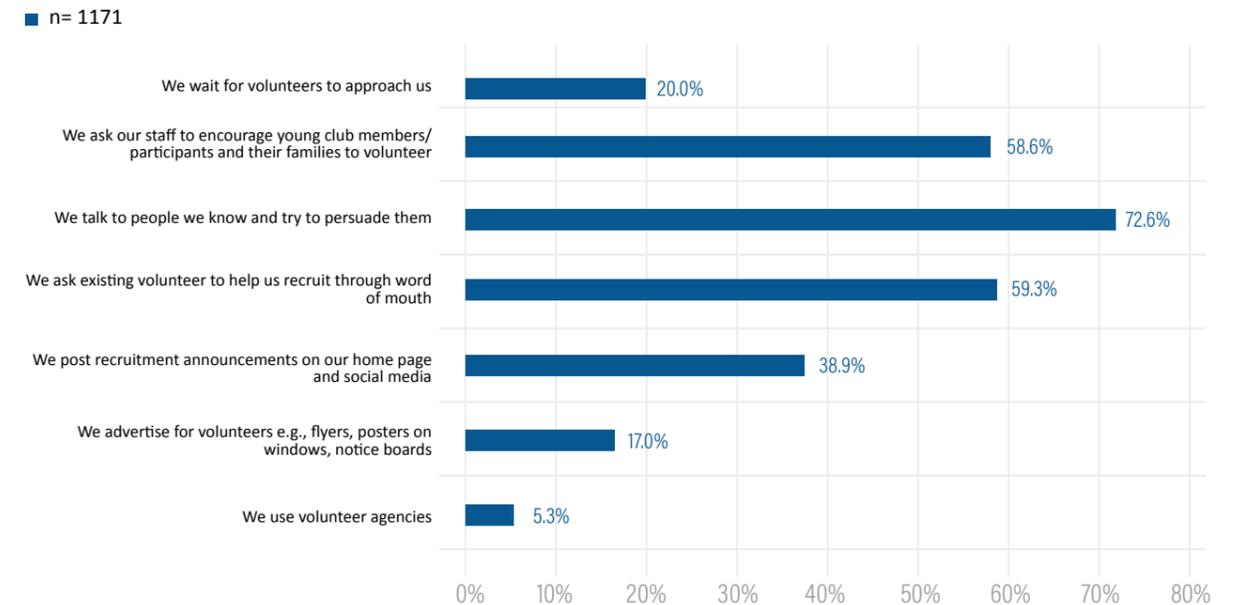
These findings tend to create an impression that sport volunteer recruitment tends to operate in a ‘closed loop’, in other words sport organisations are mainly targeting people who are already connected with the organisation. Relatively few seem to be reaching out to a wider population, some of whom may have a passion for the sport in question and might have the required attributes. The problem is that they may not know about the volunteering opportunities available or have not been asked to volunteer.

3.8.4 - RECRUITMENT METHODS

Although the desk research identified some more creative efforts to recruit, for example the Welsh Rugby Union’s 2021 Community Strategy and the Romanian ‘Volunteer in Sports’ platform, most recruitment methods seemed to rely heavily on word of mouth, i.e., directly approaching people already associated with the organisation.

Once again, the survey of sport organisations tends to support this.

Figure 21: Respondents methods of recruiting sport volunteers



72.6% selected 'We talk to people and try to persuade them', 59.3% chose 'We ask existing volunteers to help us recruit through word of mouth' and 58.6% opted for 'We ask our staff to encourage young club members/participants and their families to volunteer'. Less than 40% seem to use any methods which might reach a wider population. 38.9% chose 'We post recruitment announcements on our home page and social media' (although it may be questionable as to whether this approach would reach many people outside of the orbit of the organisation). Only 17% selected 'We advertise for volunteers e.g., flyers, posters on windows, notice boards. Only 5.3% said they used volunteer agencies. It is notable that 20% chose 'We wait for volunteers to approach us'.

It seems, therefore, that at least some of the volunteer recruitment difficulties experienced by sport organisations may be as a result of not targeting a wider population of potential volunteers and not using recruitment methods capable of reaching them. We can see from analysis of the demographics of sport volunteers that there is an underrepresentation of women and youth in general. Although in some cultures, women may have little free time while balancing the competing demands of family and work, young people should have more time to give.

It is also tempting to suggest that more of the economically inactive groups in the community (unemployed, students and retirees) may have more to contribute than they currently do. As noted earlier, there may be greater opportunities to reach out to disabled people and those with mental health difficulties, given the benefits which sport volunteering can bring to these groups. The challenge may be to find channels to reach these groups, i.e., proactively recruiting outside of the traditional base of those already associated with the organisation. In this instance, making greater use of volunteer agencies or platforms may have a positive impact.

It will also be important to use messages which build on what we know of the factors which incentivise sport volunteers, but which groups beyond the sport organisation may be unaware of. These include:

- > Feeling passionate about the sport (this is not limited to sport participants – many people who are not current or ex-participants do follow specific sports on TV which they feel passionate about)
- > Feeling needed, valued and part of a team (the economically inactive often feel goalless and socially isolated)
- > Opportunities to meet people and make new friends (again, this could be very attractive to people who have few opportunities to expand their social network)
- > Opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills (this could be extremely helpful to the unemployed or housepersons wishing to transition back into employment)
- > The altruistic motive of making a difference to the lives of others/help others (very often the wider population does not understand the social and personal growth opportunities which sport participation brings; if they had a better understanding of these, they may feel more motivated to volunteer in sport as a contribution to their community)
- > And, simply 'have fun'.

The desk research also identified the value of sport organisations being clear and specific about the volunteering roles on offer and what those roles require. Therefore, it is important for sport organisations to follow the example of the Welsh Rugby Union and other organisations who are developing role descriptions to support clubs and volunteers so that all parties are aware of the tasks required and the skills, responsibilities and relationships needed.

Welsh Rugby Union is also giving more of a focus toward micro-volunteering, as primary and secondary feedback over recent years has indicated that some people are reluctant to volunteer because they do not want to be 'tied down' to a formal role for a prolonged period of time. It may be important, therefore, to negotiate 'win-win' volunteer agreements which may be less formal, more flexible and take account of the needs of both the sport organisation and the volunteer.

+ 3.9 - TRAINING OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

3.9.1 - IDENTIFYING THE SKILLS WHICH SPORT VOLUNTEERS NEED TO DEVELOP

In Section 3.8.1 above, we looked at the types of attributes and skills needed by sport volunteers at the point of recruitment. This suggested that the emphasis is strongly on attributes such as reliability and motivation and broad transversal abilities such as communication, planning and people skills. In some cases, sport volunteers will already bring the technical skills appropriate to the role, for example coaching, officiating or administration skills. In other cases, the sport volunteers will not have the appropriate skills and need to be developed further.



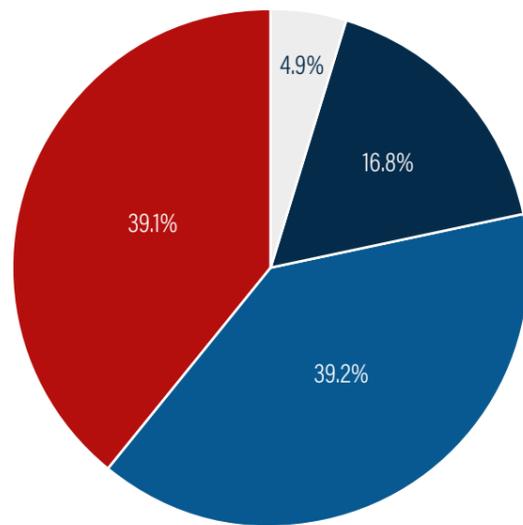
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This is why some findings in the desk research highlighted the need for sport organisations to carry out skills audits of their volunteers and offered some examples of support resources provided by federations. Skills audits on a regular basis for all volunteers can also be useful in ensuring that volunteers continue to have the required skills and attributes for their current role and are adequately prepared when they change roles and when managers are planning succession in an organisation.

However, the survey of sport organisations revealed that only 16.8% of the respondents regularly reviewed the skills and training needs of all their volunteers, although just over one third (39.2%) said they did so for some volunteers. A similar percentage (39.1%) said they did not review skills and training needs for any of their volunteers which would suggest that any systematic and planned approach to training is difficult to achieve.

Figure 22: Does the respondent organisation regularly review skills and training needs of sport volunteers?
n= 1513

■ Yes, for all sport volunteers ■ Yes, for some sport volunteers ■ No ■ Not applicable (no volunteers)



Despite the infrequency of formal skills audits, the survey respondents were very aware that their volunteers do have skills development needs. In the case of all seven sport volunteering roles, respondents identified 'Technical knowledge and skills appropriate to the role' as the number one priority for improvement. 'Motivation' and 'Communication skills' were selected for six of the roles and 'Organisational skills' for five. The fact that 'Motivation' appears in six of the seven roles as in need of development suggests that motivation needs to be maintained throughout a volunteer's career which has implications for later sections on the management of sport volunteers and their retention.

The skills most in need of development for the seven roles were (in order of priority):

- **Board or committee member:** technical knowledge and skills specific for the role, communication skills, organisational skills, digital skills, leadership skills
- **Administration/management:** technical knowledge and skills specific for the role, digital skills, communication skills, organisational skills, motivation
- **Coaching/training/instructing/leading:** technical knowledge and skills specific for the role, communication skills, people skills, organisational skills, motivation
- **Officiating (referee, umpire, judge etc.):** technical knowledge and skills appropriate to the role, communication skills, people skills, willingness to learn, motivation
- **Organising/helping to run sport events:** technical knowledge and skills appropriate to the role, communication skills, organisational skills, motivation, adaptability
- **Maintaining sport equipment/facilities:** technical knowledge and skills specific for the role, motivation, reliability, adaptability, willingness to learn
- **Supporting day-to-day sport organisation activities:** technical knowledge and skills specific for the role, organisational skills, motivation, organisational skills, adaptability.

Thus, there appears to be a strong training need in all aspects of sport volunteering and the strongest emphasis is on technical knowledge and skills specific to the role.



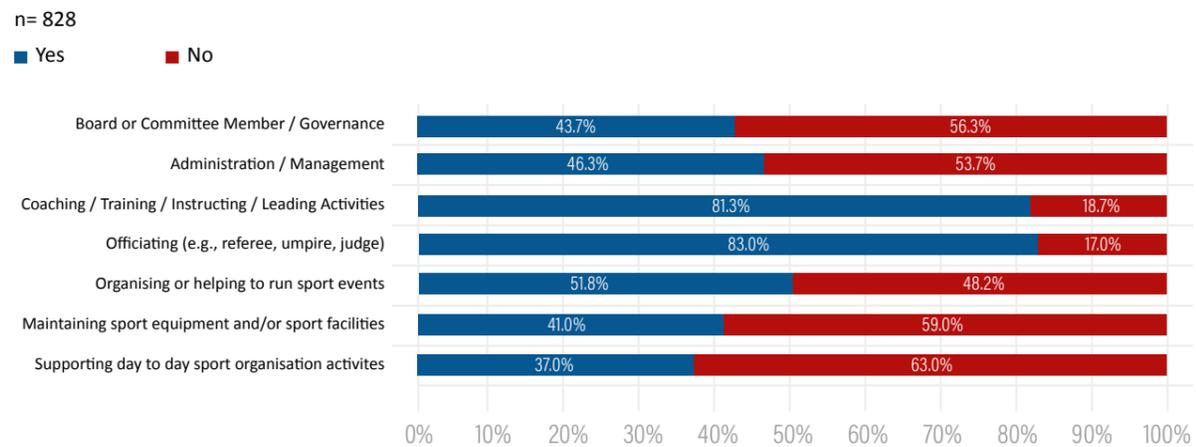
HumanitAVE – Humanitarian Emergency Association

3.9.2 - TRAINING PROVIDED TO SPORT VOLUNTEERS

The desk research found that training of volunteers (as opposed to one-off induction to a new role) is gaining increasing attention in volunteer management. Some research even states that the training of volunteers may play a key role in the good experiences of volunteers with a sports organisation or event which may contribute to volunteer retention. The Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations (Danske Gymnastik & Idrætsforeninger - DGI) and Sports Confederation of Denmark (DIF) have very comprehensive training programmes for volunteers, including trainers, referees, board members, administrators etc. This is probably the largest non-formal education sector in Denmark. Similar programmes exist in Hungary. World Rugby provides a wide and varied blended learning Training and Education portfolio across multiple strands. Many of their larger member unions also deliver their own training and education portfolio.

Despite this awareness of skills development needs shown by the survey of sport organisations in Section 3.9.1 above, responses to further questions in the survey suggest that training for sport volunteers is not uniform across all roles.

Figure 23: Respondent organisations' provision of induction training for different sport volunteer roles

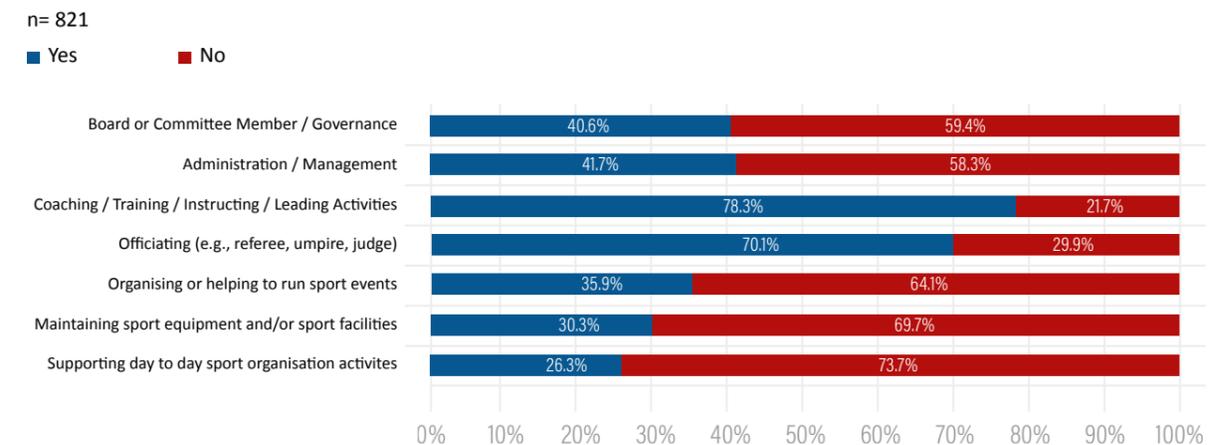


In fact, the majority of the sport organisations surveyed provided no induction training – introduction to a new role – for four of the volunteer roles (Board member, Administration/Management, Maintaining equipment/facilities and Supporting day-to-day activities). The three roles for which high percentages of induction training were reported were Coaching/Training/Instructing/Leading (81.3%), Officiating (83%) and Organising/Running Events (51.8%). The high percentages for Coaching and Officiating may be as a result of requirements by sport federations who rightly place a strong emphasis on technical skills in these roles for the success of the sport and often provide training pathways and qualifications. The results for Organising/running events are also understandable given the episodic, sometimes 'one-off' nature of sport events for which those taking part would need some form of training, but it is concerning that this applies only to just over a half.

Despite the undoubted importance of Coaching, Officiating and Events, the remaining four roles are extremely important to the efficient running of sport clubs and their growth and sustainability, yet they seem to be largely neglected in terms of induction to the role.

Equally concerning are the survey findings for ongoing training when in a volunteer role. We can see almost the same pattern repeating itself. Whereas for Coaching/Training/Instructing/Leading, ongoing training was provided by 78.3% of respondents and for Officiating by 70.1%, the majority reported no ongoing training for the other five roles (including this time Events).

Figure 24: Respondent organisations' provision of ongoing training for different sport volunteer roles



Qualitative information from the sport volunteer interviews provided some insights into the frequency and duration of training. 50% of those interviewed reported that they only received training once during their volunteering careers and 15% only once per year. However, 22% reported training more than four times per year. Given what we know from the survey about the priority given to coaching and officiating, it may be that this 22% fall into those categories.

In terms of the duration of training, the largest proportion (39%) reported that training lasted for less than two hours. The next highest proportion (30%) was at the opposite end of the scale at more than 21 hours (again, it is likely these are coaches and officials).

Thus, we can conclude that, whereas volunteer training does take place, it is not uniform across all volunteer roles.

The findings should be set against outcomes from the desk research which revealed that 60% of sport organisations expected the same as paid staff in terms of activities and skills.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

They also need to be compared with findings from other parts of the survey where:

- > 83.9% agreed that 'Volunteers need the appropriate skills to perform their role'
- > 96.6% agreed that 'Volunteering helps volunteers develop new skills and competencies'

It seems likely that the main pathway for sport volunteers to acquire these skills is non-formal 'learning on the job' which is a theme that emerged from the sport volunteer interviews.

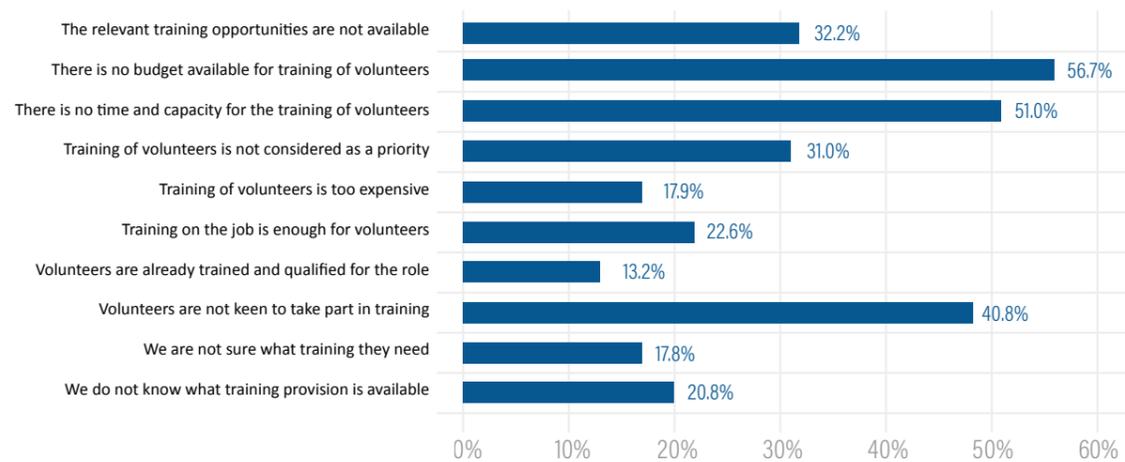
Nevertheless, the desk research did reveal some interesting examples of good practice from the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations (DGI), World Rugby and its affiliated federations which could be followed by others.

3.9.3 - BARRIERS TO TRAINING SPORT VOLUNTEERS

Findings here came mainly from the survey of sport organisations.

Figure 25: Respondents' perceived barriers to training sport volunteers

n= 1458



When asked about barriers to training, more than half of responses (56.7%) selected 'There is no budget available for training of volunteers'. This was closely followed by 'There is no time and capacity for the training of volunteers' (51%).

Both of these could be said to be as a result of decisions made by the respondents' organisations on how the allocation of resources could be prioritised, i.e., some funding could be diverted to training, someone in the organisation could take responsibility for training. Indeed, nearly a third of responses (31%) admitted that 'Training of volunteers is not considered as a priority'. Once again this is interesting considering how much sport organisations rely on volunteers to deliver services. Other areas of expenditure and effort are perhaps given more priority, for example, rent, equipment and uniforms etc. However, the third most selected option was 'Volunteers are not keen to take part in training' (40.8%). This may in turn relate to time constraints on the part of sport volunteers, but perhaps could be addressed by making training more attractive.

This problem of balancing priorities is undoubtedly a difficult one to solve. However, the long-term and sustainable success of sport organisations and the expectations which they place on their volunteers strongly suggest that training for all volunteer roles needs to be reprioritised and solutions need to be found. Possibly, this could be addressed by more training programmes being devised by federations so that clubs do not need the capacity to design such programmes themselves, the careful reallocation of some internal resources to training and making the time spent in training part of the time the volunteer gives to the organisation, not something in addition.

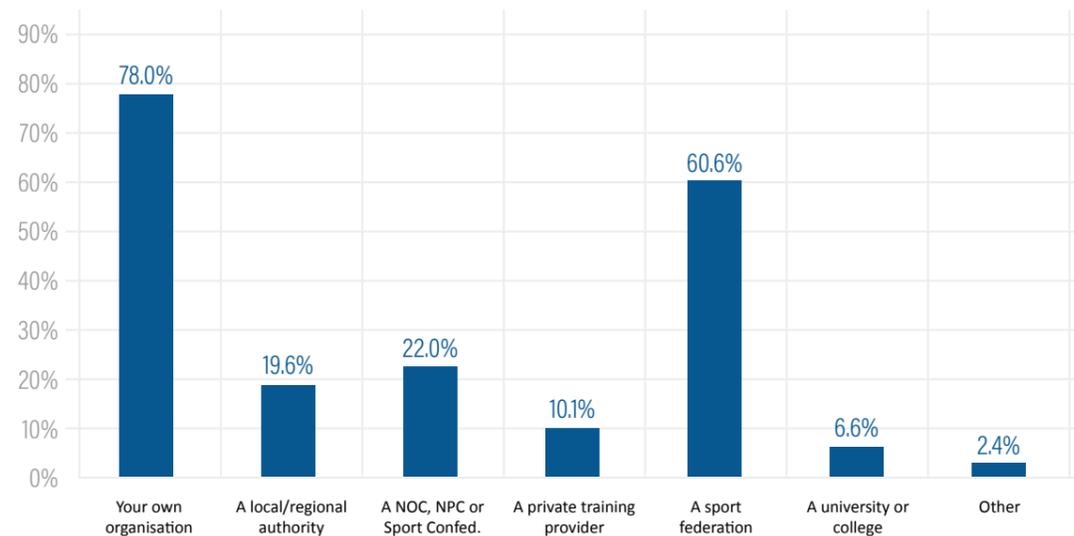
3.9.4 - TRAINING PROVIDERS

The desk research identified some examples of training provision either being designed and/or provided by sport federations (for example, the Danish DGI and World Rugby) and by generic volunteer bodies (examples from Romania and Hungary).

In the V4V survey, over three quarters of the respondents (78%) said their own organisations provided the training. This was followed by sport federations (60.6%) and other types of sport organisations in the form of national Olympic committees and Sport confederations (22%). In most countries sport federations are the primary training providers for coaches and officials, so it is likely these groups are the main recipients of these external efforts.

Figure 26: Providers responsible for the training of volunteers in the respondent organisations

n= 714



Providers outside of the sport sector seem to contribute little. Only 19.6% selected 'Local/regional authorities' and a combined 16.7% for 'Private training providers' and 'A university or college'.

This is interesting since several of the roles which sport volunteers play could be considered generic to organisations in different sports and probably to voluntary organisations in all sectors. Examples would include Board/committee members, Administration/management, Events and Supporting day-to-day activities of the organisation.

Furthermore, with the exception of the technical skills appropriate to the role, all the other skillsets, such as digital skills, communication, people skills etc. are transversal and not sport or role specific. In the case of these roles and skills, there may be considerable advantages in different sports combining their efforts and of sport organisations making greater use of generic volunteering training programmes (either from volunteer organisations or other training providers) which could be adapted and applied to the sport context if necessary. In terms of training providers, it seems many sport organisations are not thinking beyond their club or federation. Offering structured training opportunities in these transversal skills may also be attractive to volunteers and help to overcome the barrier identified by 40% of the survey respondents that 'Volunteers are not keen to take part in training'.

+ 3.10 - MANAGEMENT OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

3.10.1 - GUIDELINES AND SUPPORT FOR SPORT VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

The management of volunteers, specifically how their participation is planned and implemented, what roles and tasks they are involved in or how they are treated and handled during their contribution are critical in the formulation of their volunteer experience.

The desk research identified that many stakeholders are sensitive to the importance of volunteer management and highlighted several efforts by sport federations and national volunteering organisations to provide support. The Danish DGI provides a programme of guidance to sport organisations covering a number of key themes in volunteer management. The rugby union federation in New Zealand has a Volunteer Management Toolkit with key messages around making the club environment enjoyable for volunteers, through appreciation, connectedness and being energised. Sport England similarly has provided the sector with a wealth of support resources via its Club Matters channel. In the wider volunteering context, we can see that the Volunteer Centre Foundation in Hungary has developed guidelines and training for organisations engaging volunteers as does the UK's NCVO.

The sport volunteers who we interviewed generally expressed a high level of satisfaction with their experience of volunteer management. They highlighted a number of positive management characteristics which included:

- > Suitable methods of compensating volunteers
- > 'Win-win' (mutually satisfying) deals between volunteers and clubs
- > The importance of clubs understanding the nature of volunteers and volunteering
- > Assigning clear volunteer roles
- > Making good use of volunteer time
- > Providing motivational incentives and recognising volunteer achievement
- > Good leadership and communication
- > Clubs adapting to the needs of volunteers and providing a positive volunteer culture.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The interviewees also underscored a number of negative management characteristics which included:

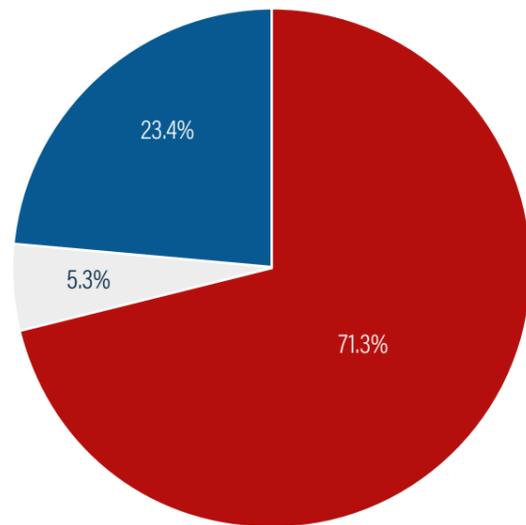
- > Profiting from volunteer engagement
- > Lack of compensation for expenses incurred during volunteering
- > Organisations not making it clear to volunteers how their work is delivering positive outcomes for others
- > Assigning inappropriate roles to volunteers
- > Lack of early information about volunteer opportunities
- > Providing volunteer opportunities which are not appropriate to the volunteers involved.

The survey of sport organisations was helpful in revealing some of the realities associated with volunteer management.

Firstly, we discovered that nearly three quarters of the respondent organisations (71.3%) had no guidelines or procedures for managing sport volunteers. Although this may be understandable given that a large proportion of the surveyed organisations were very small. However, their dependence on volunteers (38.9% had no paid employees and a further 25.8% had only 1-4), would suggest that it is extremely important for these organisations to have such guidelines and procedures.

Figure 27: Respondents on whether they have written guidelines/procedures for managing sport volunteers

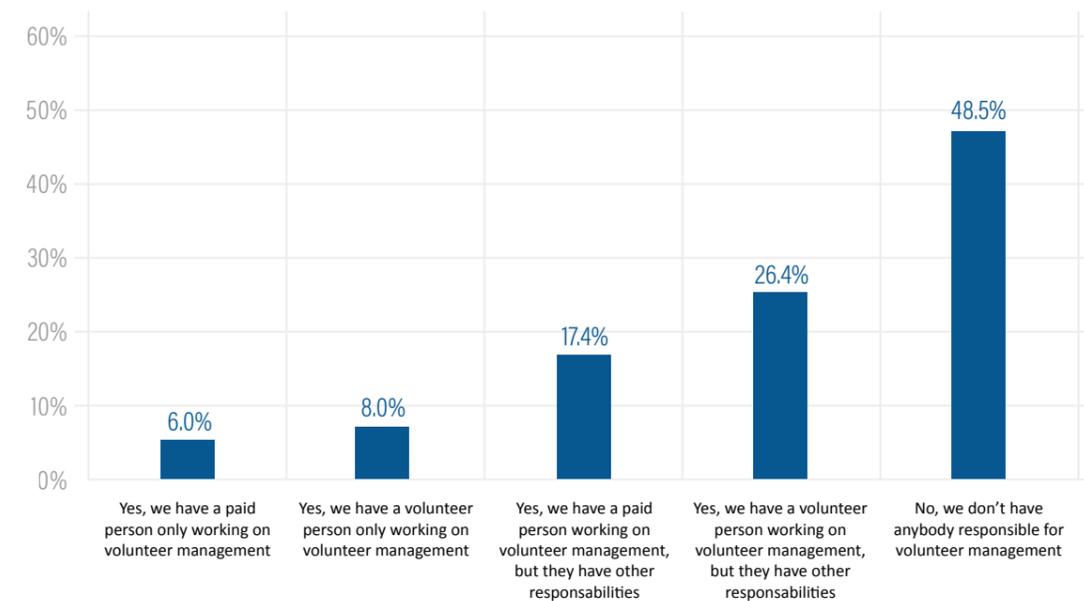
n= 1489
 ■ Yes ■ No ■ Not applicable (no volunteers)



Secondly, nearly half of the respondent organisations (48.5%) had no-one responsible for volunteer management. Just over a quarter (26.4%) had a volunteer responsible for volunteer management, but they had other duties as well. Given the size of the organisations involved, it is understandable that a named person may have other responsibilities, but it is worrying that so many organisations have no-one allocated that responsibility.

Figure 28: People responsible for managing sport volunteers in the respondent organisations

n= 1393



An important conclusion here is that sport organisations (ideally with the support of federations or volunteer organisations) develop guidelines and procedures for volunteer management and have at least one member for staff (paid or voluntary) who takes responsibility. Several important duties could be attached to such a position. These would include maintaining regular communication with volunteers (Section 3.10.2 below), ensuring the provision of benefits and compensations (Section 3.10.3 below) and forward planning for occasions when there will be a demand for regular or temporary volunteers and ensuring that sufficient volunteers are available when needed (Section 3.10.4 below).



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

3.10.2 - METHODS OF COMMUNICATING WITH SPORT VOLUNTEERS

Communication with sport volunteers and the quality of communication was highlighted in all three strands of research. Lack of communication or poor communication with sport volunteers was highlighted as difficulties in managing volunteers by the desk research in Hungary and Portugal and emphasised as a challenge during the COVID-19 period in England.

From the interviews it seems that keeping volunteers engaged with regular communication is highly valued by volunteers, as one of the interviewees put it, *“some organisations greet you on your birthday”* or *“send you reminders to participate in different events”* or *“they send you their organisation’s news”*.

Failure to communicate, however, is seen as having a negative impact:

“Some organisations do not connect with volunteers after the competitions at all”

43-year-old female volunteer in Estonia



“Getting enough information and getting information on time was always a problem when I volunteered, I guess organisers didn’t have information earlier – this is this kind of business volunteers need to cope with I guess.”

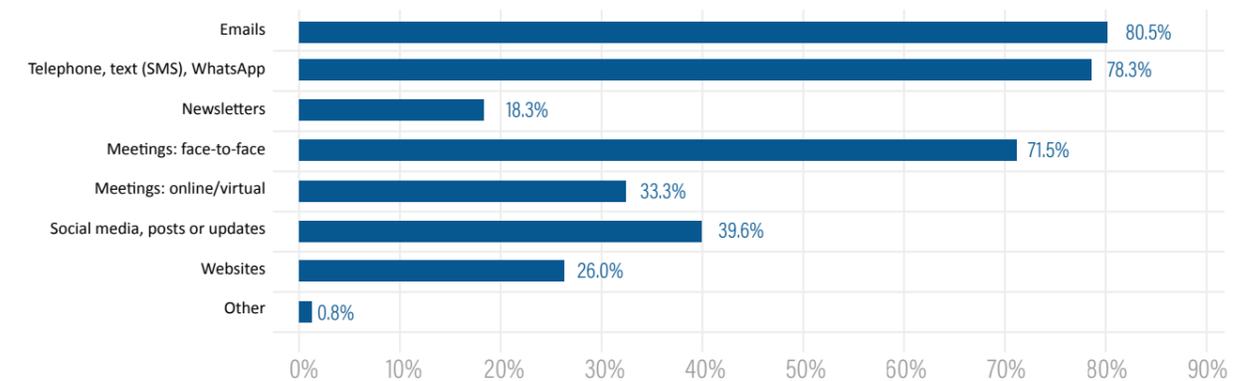
25-year-old male volunteer in Hungary

In terms of communication methods, around 75% of interviewees mentioned the use of digital media in the way their organisations communicated with them (although they did not mention the quality or timeliness of communication).

This modern approach to communication was reinforced by the survey of sport organisations.

Figure 29: Respondents methods of communication with sport volunteers

n= 1381



80.5% of respondents used emails to communicate with sport volunteers, 78.3% used telephones, text and WhatsApp, 39.6% were using social media posts and 33.3% online/virtual meetings. However, in-person meetings remain important with 71.5% reporting they still used this method. This blended approach to communication seems important. The use of technology should improve efficiency, but the use of in-person meetings may be more crucial in relationship building, teamwork and fostering a generally positive human environment in the organisation.

3.10.3 - BENEFITS AND COMPENSATIONS FOR SPORT VOLUNTEERS

In most of the countries examined in the desk research, benefits and compensations are provided to sport volunteers, although it is unclear how far this practice extends to other European countries or indeed how aware potential volunteers are that they exist.

Compensating sport volunteers through the reimbursement of expenses or provision of small, non-monetary rewards, emerged from the desk research as an important theme. Danish law, for example, allows for tax-free expenses and benefits up to DKK 1 500 per year for volunteers and the reimbursement of expenses such as phone/internet costs, subsistence, sport clothing and transport. Hungary has similar legal provisions. In Finland, transport costs are not usually reimbursed but volunteers are provided with food, drink and uniforms (which can be kept after an event). In the UK, universities offer rewards and incentives to attract higher education students into voluntary activities. These include sports kits, discounted fees for coaching qualifications, and opportunities to gain experience to enhance employability.

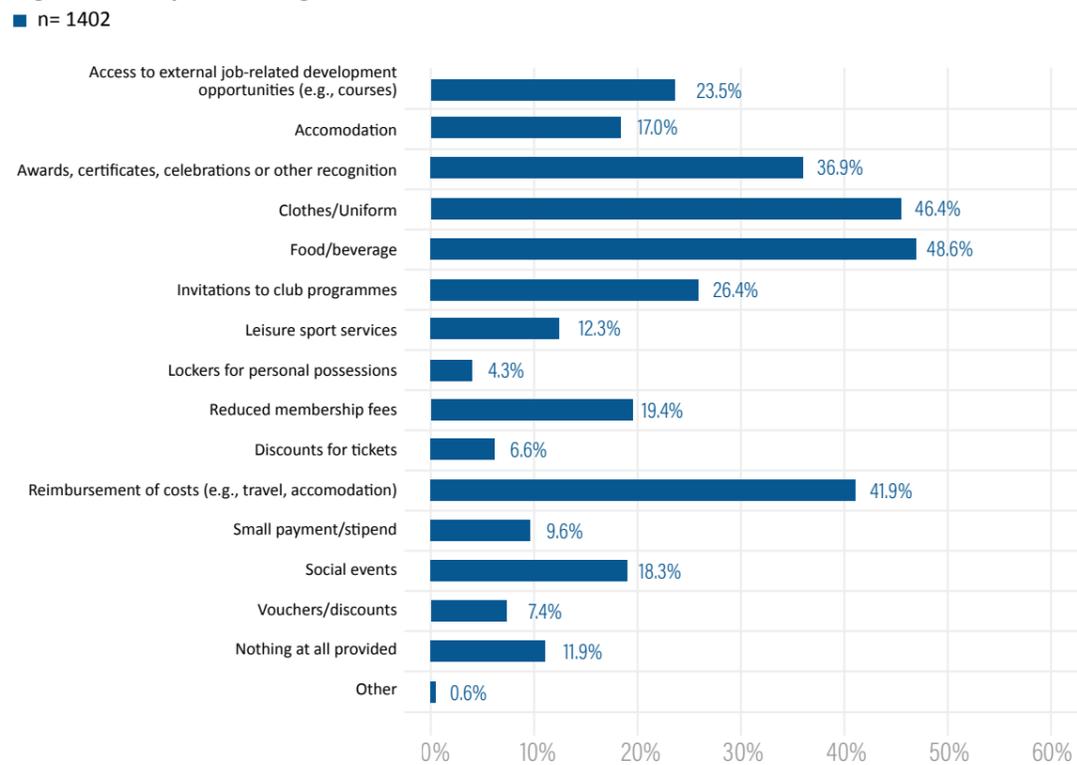


SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The most frequently mentioned benefits and compensations by the interviewees were food and beverage (29%), clothes and uniform (28%), reimbursement of costs (23%). These relatively low percentages would suggest that the provision of benefits and compensation is not universal. This pattern is fairly accurately reflected in the survey of sport organisations.

Here we find that benefits and compensation are provided, but they are provided by less than half of the respondent organisations. The most frequently selected were food and beverage (48.6%), clothes and uniform (46.4%), reimbursement of costs (41.9%) and awards, certificates, celebrations or other recognition (36.9%). This presents a worrying picture in the sense that the majority of sport organisations (at least in this survey) do not seem to be addressing the main obstacles to sport volunteering identified in Section 3.7.3 above. Certainly, if they intend to reach out to the economically inactive (unemployed, students, home persons and retirees), it might be more fruitful to provide compensation for incurred expenses. It is also concerning that less than half provide awards, certificates, celebrations or other forms of recognition.

Figure 30: Respondent organisations' incentives to volunteers

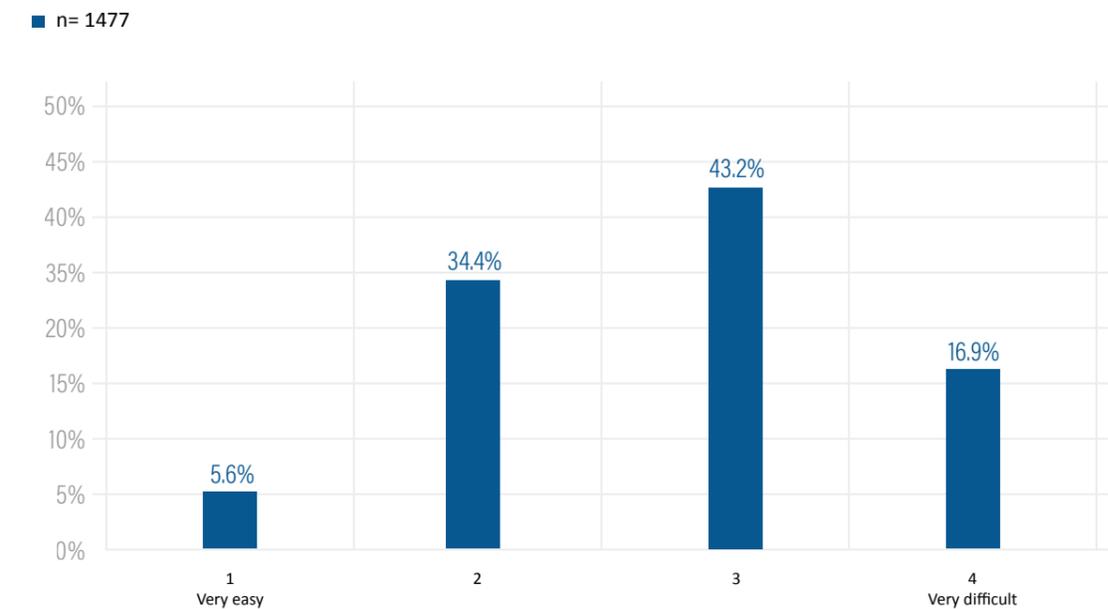


The conclusion here is that sport organisations could do more to provide benefits and compensations to sport volunteers, in particular reimbursement of expenses. Other forms of non-material rewards such as certificates, celebrations and volunteer recognition programmes would also address an identified need.

3.10.4 - DIFFICULTIES IN MANAGING SPORT VOLUNTEERS

Most of the relevant data and information regarding difficulties in managing volunteers came from the survey of sport organisations. Respondents were asked to identify the level of difficulty they encountered when managing sport volunteers.

Figure 31: Respondents' level of difficulty in managing volunteers



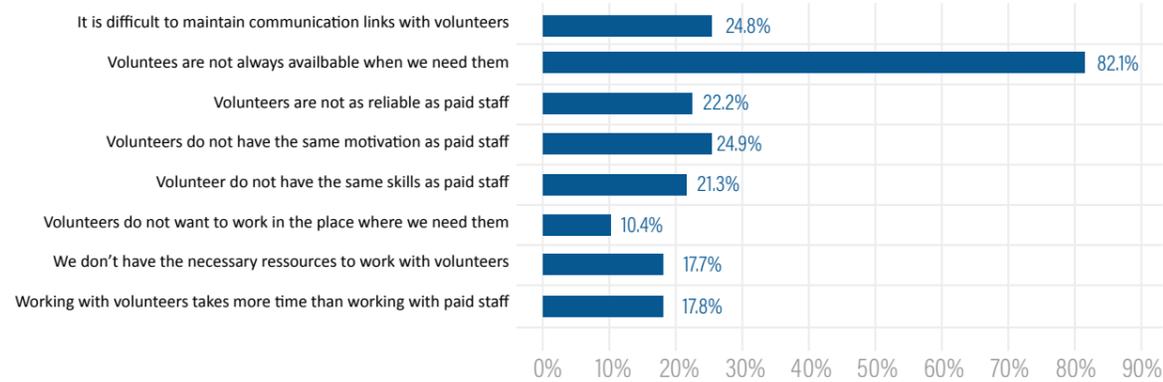
Almost two thirds (60.1%) identified some level of difficulty in managing volunteers.

They were then asked to select from a range of options what they identified as the main problems which arose in the management of volunteers. By far the most frequently selected option (82.1%) was 'Volunteers are not always available when we need them'. This highlights the fact that sport volunteers do not have a contract of employment and are making their contributions to the sport organisation from their own spare time and of their own free will. They cannot be required to be available when the organisation needs them. This was reinforced by the two next most frequently selected options. 24.9% selected 'Volunteers do not have the same motivation as paid staff' and 24.8% selected 'It is difficult to maintain communication links with volunteers'. The latter problem emphasises once again the importance of communication between the organisation and the volunteer.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Figure 32: Respondents' problems managing sport volunteers

n= 1477



The very high level of support for the lack of volunteer availability, however, raises other questions which emphasise the difference between managing volunteers and managing paid staff. For example, how much forward planning do sport organisations carry out when they are identifying the need for volunteer involvement? Do sport organisations have a regular pool of potential volunteers from whom they can attract people for planned activities? Do sport organisations maintain regular communications with their volunteer base? Do they check volunteer availability in advance of an event or other need? Do they have contingency plans for when volunteers are unavailable?

Although there is little additional evidence available from the research, it seems logical to conclude that if sport organisations carried out more forward planning, managed a pool of potential volunteers, informed potential volunteers well in advance of planned events, checked availability and utilised contingency planning, then many of the problems relating to volunteer availability would be better managed.

+ 3.11 - RETENTION OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

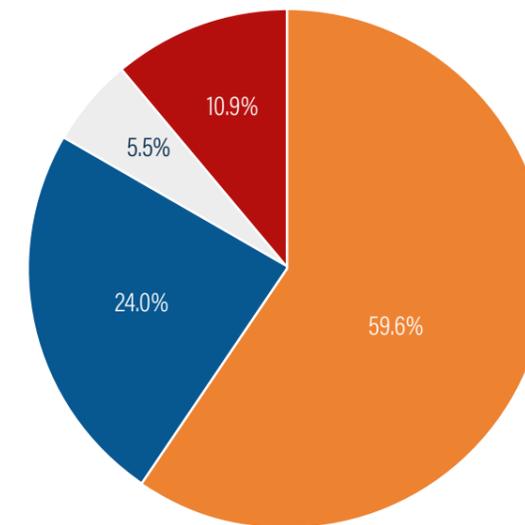
3.11.1 - DIFFICULTIES IN RETAINING SPORT VOLUNTEERS

Detail regarding sport volunteer retention emerged from the survey of sport organisations. When asked about retention difficulties, 59.6% indicated they experienced 'some difficulties' with a further 10.9% selecting 'a lot of difficulties.' Only 24% chose 'no difficulties'.

Figure 33: Percentage of respondents experiencing difficulties in retaining sport volunteers

n= 1469

■ Yes, a lot of difficulties ■ Yes, some difficulties ■ No difficulties ■ Not applicable (no volunteers)



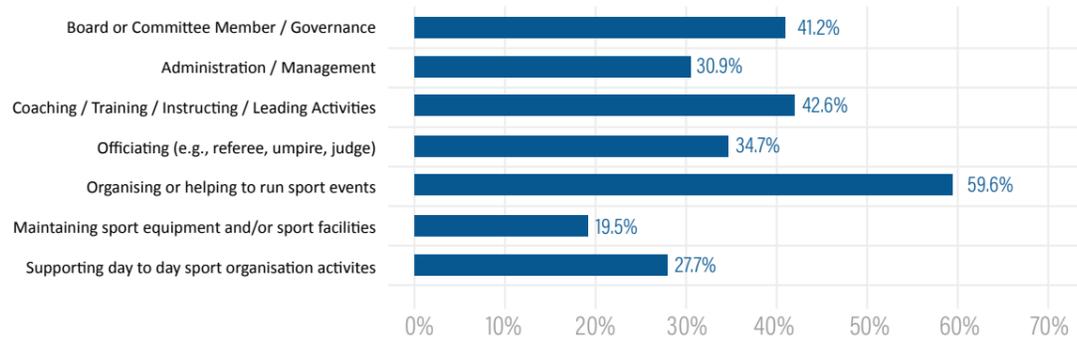
When asked which volunteer roles presented retention difficulties, by far the most selected role was 'Organising or helping to run sport events' (59.6%). This is probably understandable, given the episodic nature of events when lots of volunteers are needed for a short and intensive period of engagement. Unless event volunteers have other roles to play in the organisation, or they have other connections (for example, as being members or family/friends of members), it seems reasonable to assume that it is more difficult to retain their services/availability. However, as we saw in the case of managing volunteers in Section 3.10 above, methods of retaining volunteer engagement, for example, maintaining a database of potential event supporters, keeping up regular communication about future events schedules, forward planning volunteer requirements for events and checking availability in good time could be effective. Sport organisations could also promote opportunities to involve Event volunteers in other more continuous volunteer roles, for example, Administration/management or Supporting day-to-day activities.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Figure 34: Sport volunteer roles for which respondents experience retention difficulties

n= 1033



In the case of roles which required ongoing engagement, it seems easier to retain volunteer services. Less than half of the responses (43.6%) indicated that it was difficult to retain Coaches and a slightly lower percentage (41.2%) selected Board/committee member. Only around a third indicated Officials (34.7%) and Administration/management (30.9%). The roles in which it is easiest to retain sport volunteers are Maintenance (19.5% difficulties) and Supporting day-to-day sport organisation activities (27.7% difficulties). It would seem, therefore, that retaining sport volunteers becomes easier when there is an ongoing relationship with the organisation.

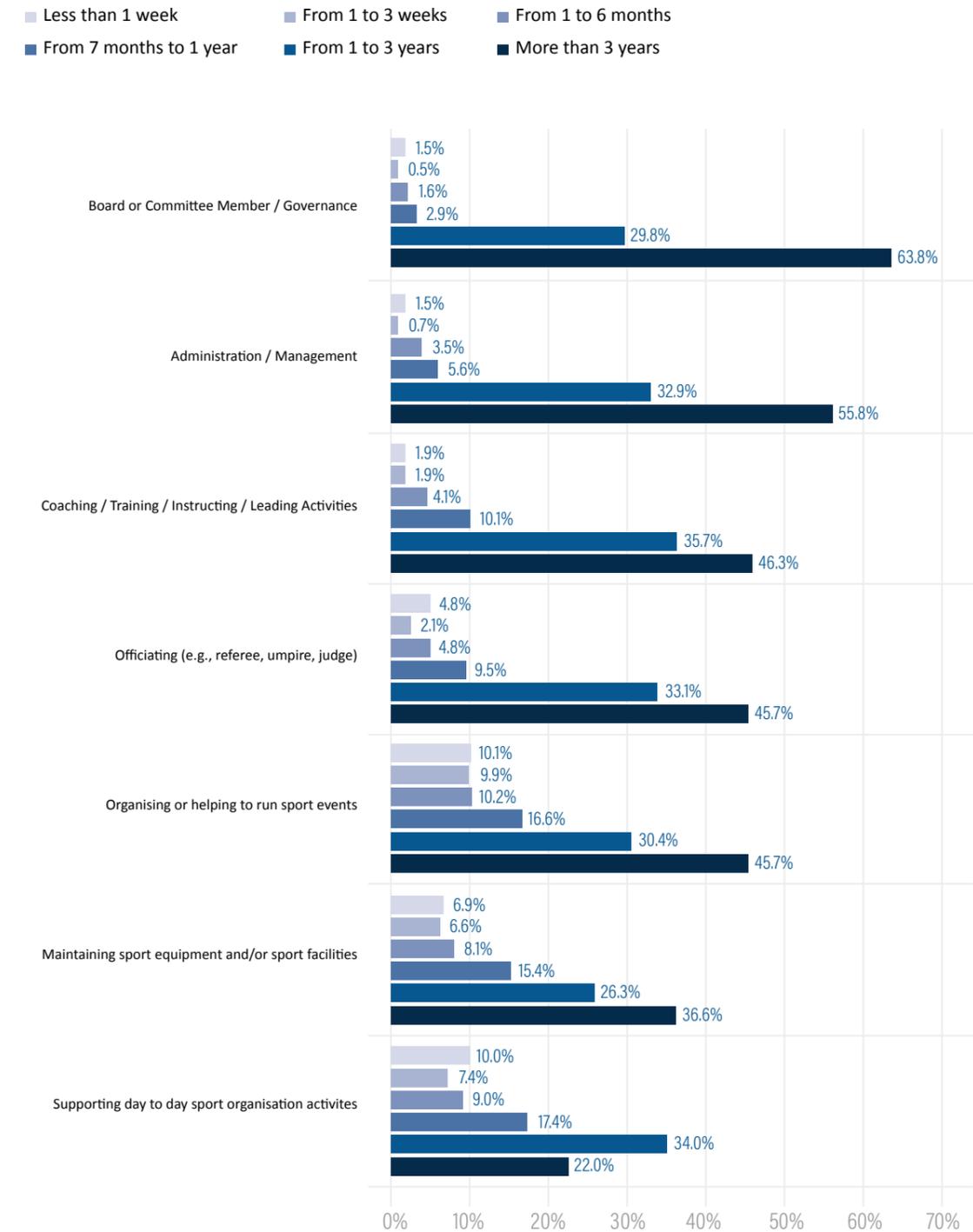
3.11.2 - LENGTH OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS' RETENTION

In the case of the sport volunteer interviews, the highest proportion had been involved in sport volunteering for more than five years (56%) with a further 13% being engaged for 2-5 years.

In the survey of sport organisations, respondents were asked to estimate the average length of service of volunteers in each of the seven roles. The findings for this question tend to provide more detail regarding the high number of respondents who reported retention difficulties discussed in Section 3.11.1 above. Thus, we can see that Board/committee members and Administration/management tend to remain for over three years (63.8%) and a further 29.8% remain for 1-3 years. 55.8% working in Administration/management remain for more than three years and a further 32.9% for 1-3 years. This may suggest that the volunteer workforce in the roles which are vital to running an organisation is relatively stable.

Figure 35: Length of stay of sport volunteers in seven roles

n= 1020



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

However, in terms of Coaching/training/instructing/leading and Officiating – i.e., roles which are core to delivering the main services of a sport club on an ongoing basis – we see more troubling retention rates. Less than a half (46.3%) of Coaches remain for over three years and 35.7% between 1-3 years. 45.7% of Officials remain for over three years with 33.1% remaining 1-3 years. In the case of both roles, we can see that those remaining less than one year (combining the percentages for less than 1 week, 1-3 weeks, 1-6 months and 7 months to 1 year) are higher for Coaches and Officials than Board/committee members and Administration/management. Thus, we can see that the churn of Coaches and Officials tends to be higher in this one-year period. 18% of Coaches and 21.2% of Officials leave before one year's service compared to 6.5% of Board/committee members and 11.3% of Administration/management.

Retention rates for those involved in events are lowest. Only 22% of this group tend to last more than three years and 30.4% are engaged for 1-3 years. 46.8% of Events staff are retained for less than one year (20% less than three weeks). Given the occasional and episodic nature of sport events, this is not surprising. What may be of note is that sport organisations reported they were able to keep nearly one third involved for more than one year.

When we consider the other two roles, Maintenance and Supporting day-to-day sport organisation activities, the findings also indicate a significant difference compared to Board/committee members and Administration/management. The percentages for those remaining more than three years are only around a half of those in Board/committee members and Administration/management positions for the same period. Over a third (37%) of Maintenance staff and nearly a half Supporting day-to-day sport organisation activities (43.8%) have left within one year.

In conclusion, the above analysis would suggest that, whereas retention is important for all roles, retention efforts need to be focused on volunteers who are core to the delivery of services (Coaches and Officials), those who provide more peripheral support (Maintenance and Supporting day-to-day sport organisation activities) and Events staff.

3.11.3 - REASONS FOR RETENTION DIFFICULTIES

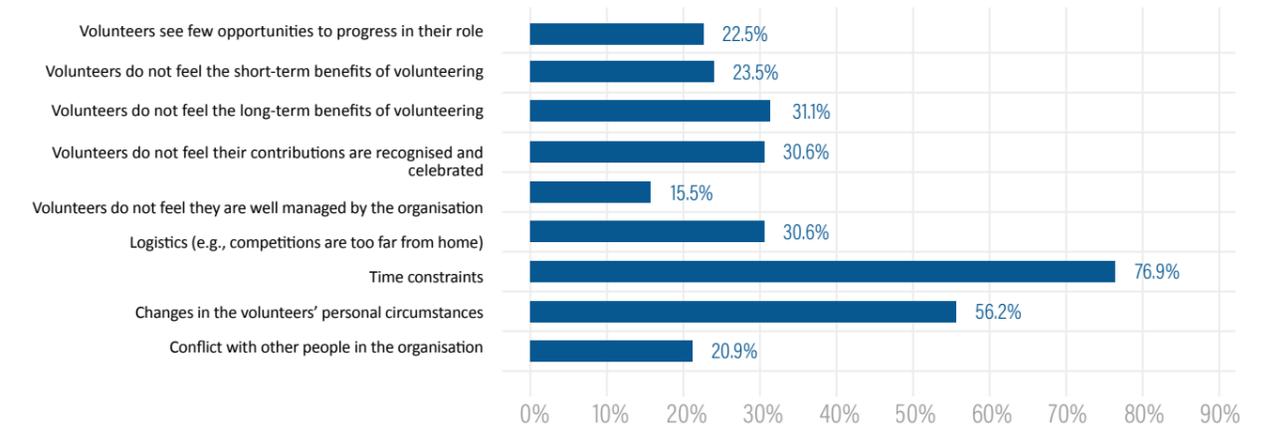
Apart from some of the difficulties in managing sport volunteers discussed in 3.10 above, little further information emerged from the desk research and interviews.

Respondents to the survey of sport organisations provided more insights when they were asked about reasons for retention difficulties.

The two most frequently selected reasons were 'time constraints' (76.9%) and 'changes in volunteer personal circumstances' (56.2%). Given that sport volunteering is a freely chosen activity with few if any material rewards, this is perhaps understandable. Potential solutions here could be limited but may include what sport organisations can do in response such as offering less time demanding and more flexible engagements.

Figure 36: Possible reasons why it is difficult to retain sport volunteers

n = 1462



Some of the remaining reasons, however, are issues that potentially could be addressed. 31.1% selected 'volunteers do not feel the long-term benefits of volunteering' and 22.5% selected 'volunteers see few opportunities to progress in their role'. This may suggest that sport organisations could do more to:

- > Review volunteering experiences with volunteers and highlight/record their achievements on an ongoing basis
- > Actively seek opportunities to progress people in the volunteering careers, perhaps through better succession planning.



Some of the interviewed volunteers emphasised the importance of progression in their own volunteering careers, and there were some examples of the importance of succession planning from the desk research.

30.6% selected 'volunteers do not feel their contributions are recognised and celebrated'. Thus, there is probably much more that sport organisations could do through, for example, regular volunteer award ceremonies and volunteer recognition programmes of the type discussed in some of the desk research. Similar approaches may be effective in addressing the 23.5% who selected 'volunteers do not feel the short-term benefits of volunteering'.

3.11.4 - WAYS OF RETAINING SPORT VOLUNTEERS

The desk research strongly emphasised the importance of retaining sport volunteers and the challenges which organisations face. However, apart from the three areas explored above (equality diversity and inclusion, training and management), they were unable to identify many policies or programmes which explicitly addressed this issue. One particular example was England Netball's Volunteer Strategy 2019-2025 which highlights:

- > Support to deliver an effective infrastructure
- > Deliver on a volunteer development model that includes succession planning of volunteers, training and upskilling of current volunteer base and empowering a younger, skilled, and more diverse volunteer base that is not performing multiple roles in the club that can lead to negatively impacting retention rates.

The desk research also identified that maintaining the motivation of sport volunteers was a key aspect of retention.

In the case of Sport Wales (identified by World Rugby), there is a Toolkit for Volunteer Coordinators which encourages sport clubs to take a strategic approach to succession planning. It also provides valuable guidance on what to do when a volunteer decides to leave a club. Advice includes holding an exit interview which explores whether the volunteer could remain with fewer responsibilities, whether a new volunteer could work shadow them for a period of time and, if no other solution can be found, ensuring that the departure is on good terms and their contributions are acknowledged.

From the interviews, it emerged that, once again, regular communication from the sport organisation to the volunteer is vital. Even actions like greeting a volunteer on their birthday, keeping volunteers up to date with the organisation's activities and latest news are appreciated. Failure to sustain communication, especially after an intense period of volunteering, for example, following a large event can have negative impacts. The volunteers also appreciated ongoing rewards and recognition for their efforts. These could include celebrations and awards ceremonies, but also opportunities for progression, for example, being invited to take on more important volunteer roles in major championships.

The interviewees mentioned the importance of being trusted and empowered by the organisation. This was outlined by a young female volunteer who said, "I have freedom in what I am doing, it's important to feel I deserve responsibility and feel I can be trusted".

Volunteers also appreciate it if the "organisation values the volunteers and takes their opinions into account in regard to the club dynamics and activities" (51-year-old male volunteer in Portugal).

Fostering a spirit of cooperation, mutual support and teamwork featured strongly as a retention incentive as well.



"At the beginning of each season, we try to make a program with the most events that we plan to take place. So, we know in advance what the needs are and where everyone can help. The excellent atmosphere of cooperation and the purpose for which the events take place are two of the main reasons why I continue to actively support the judo club. In addition, taking positions of responsibility is always a challenge, through which one evolves"

28-year-old female volunteer in Greece

Lack of effort to retain volunteers was criticised by some interviewees:

"This is a big question because my organisation has no plan to retain its volunteers. This is a great weakness"

52-year-old male volunteer in Argentina



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The sport volunteer interviews also revealed the value of social events to their ongoing participation. Opportunities to socialise were highlighted as vital to maintaining their engagement.

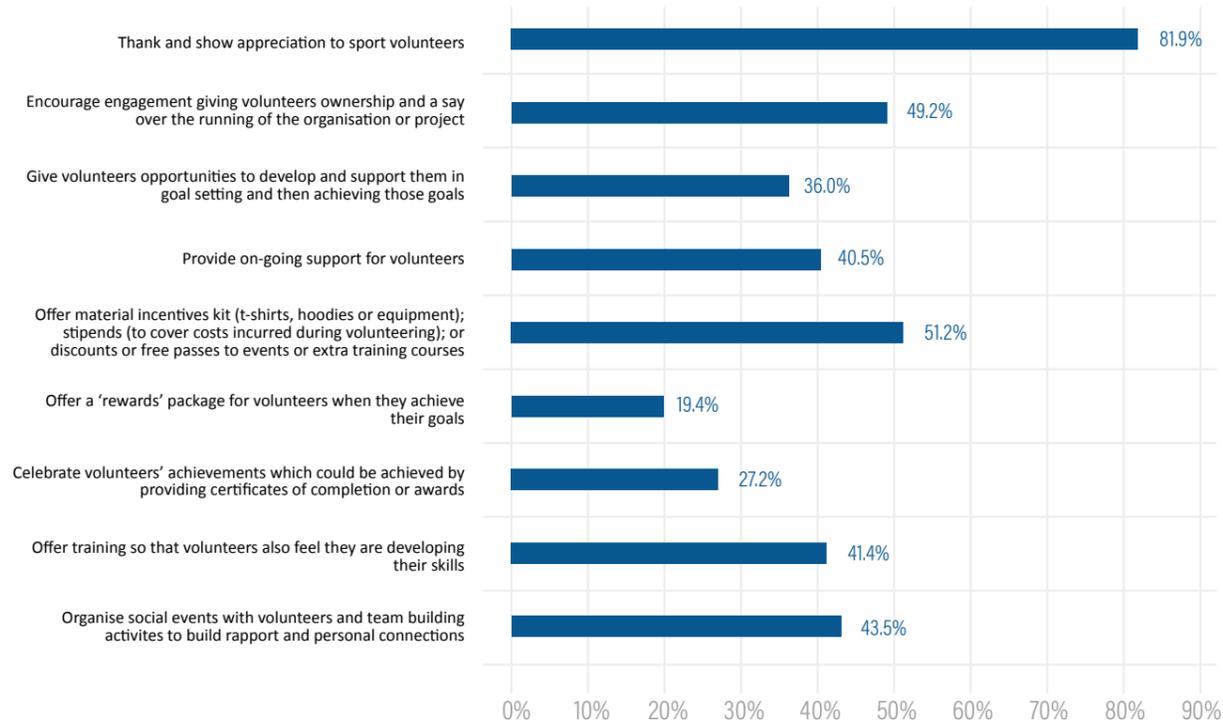
“Nearly all my friends are club members.”
19-year-old female volunteer in Finland



More relevant data emerged from the survey of sport organisations.

Figure 37: Respondent selections of possible ways to retain sport volunteers

n= 1462



When asked to select from a range of possible ways of retaining sport volunteers, by far the most frequently selected option was 'thank and show appreciation to sport volunteers' (81.9%). This would seem to be a practical and relatively easy way of acknowledging volunteer efforts but earlier in the questionnaire responses we discovered that only 36.9% provide 'Awards, certificates, celebrations or other recognition'. This suggests that nearly two thirds of sport organisations are not doing this, even though they are aware that it is important.

The next most popular option was 'offer material incentives' (51.1%). Whereas sport volunteering, by its very nature, cannot be paid employment it is still important that volunteers receive some tangible rewards. However, we also saw in earlier sections of the survey, that less than half of the respondents provided food and beverage (48.6%) and a similar 46.4% provide clothes/uniform. Only 41.9% provide reimbursement of costs.

49.2% chose the option 'encourage engagement giving volunteers ownership and a say over the running of the organisation or project', suggesting that more democratic approaches may be effective in retaining volunteer engagement, something which was suggested in both the desk research and interviews.

43.5% chose 'organise social events with volunteers and team building activities to build rapport and personal connections', which may suggest that strengthening the social integration of volunteers into the organisation is a positive incentive for many, a point which received some emphasis in the volunteer interviews.

41.4% selected 'offer training so that volunteers also feel they are developing their skills'. This may help to address two of the reasons for retention difficulties mentioned in the previous section, 'volunteers do not feel the long-term benefits of volunteering' and 'volunteers see few opportunities to progress in their role'.

40.5% selected 'provide ongoing support for volunteers'.

Taken together, these findings suggest strongly that sport organisations need to compensate volunteers for their efforts both in material and non-material forms of reward.



HumanitAVE - Humanitarian Emergency Association



CONCLUSIONS

VOLUNTEER

4

+ CONCLUSIONS

+ 4.1 - DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING

When providing a definition of sport volunteering, for example for future research and development, the following is acceptable.

Sport volunteering is:

- > Performed with the free will of the individual
- > Developed in the framework of non-profit, non-governmental organisations, *although governmental and private sector organisations can facilitate and support volunteering*
- > Non-paid and carried out for the benefit of the community or a third party, *although compensations for expenses and small non-financial rewards are often provided.*



+ 4.2 - OVERALL IMPORTANCE OF THE SPORT VOLUNTEERING WORKFORCE

- Sport organisations simply could not provide opportunities for the general population to engage in sport and health enhancing physical activity without the support of volunteers.
- Sport organisations need to fully understand and appreciate the potential benefits which volunteers bring or could bring to all areas of their work and to society as a whole.
- In order to maximise volunteer engagement sport organisations must highlight the positive benefits of volunteering for the volunteers themselves and the wider community when promoting volunteering and seeking to recruit and retain volunteers.

+ 4.3 - PROFILE OF THE SPORT VOLUNTEERING WORKFORCE

- Volunteers are absolutely vital to European sport, especially at the grassroots level. They are in the majority of all positions in most sport organisations.
- However, sport volunteering is relatively underdeveloped in many countries. Sport organisations in countries with less well-developed sport volunteering can learn a lot from the more developed nations, but this must be done in a way which is culturally and historically sensitive.
- The sport volunteer workforce is not demographically representative of the European population as a whole. There are many sections of the community whose full volunteering potential has not yet been realised. These include, for example, women and girls, manual workers, young people, retired people, people who are not economically active and people with disabilities and mental health conditions whose situations could be improved by meaningful activity and social interaction.
- Sport organisations know they need to diversify the volunteer workforce further, but they need more support to do this.

+ CONCLUSIONS

+ 4.4 - INCENTIVES AND BARRIERS TO SPORT VOLUNTEERING

- Sport organisations would benefit from being more aware of the incentives which encourage people to become volunteers and ensure that when they engage volunteers, that these incentives are addressed during volunteer experiences.
- Equally, sport organisations would benefit from being more aware of the barriers which discourage people from becoming sport volunteers and ensure, wherever possible, that volunteer experiences are flexible enough to meet individual circumstances.
- Sport organisations would benefit from finding ways to sustain volunteer engagement after their involvement in sporting events.

+ 4.5 - RECRUITMENT OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

- If sport organisations want to strengthen and diversify their volunteer workforce, they may consider:
 - focusing their attention on recruiting volunteers with the appropriate personal attributes and broad transferable skills, except in the case of coaching, officiating and administration/management
 - reaching out to the wider community beyond their existing members, family and friends
 - adopting broader and more proactive recruitment methods, including the use of volunteer agencies
 - delivering positive messages about the benefits of sport volunteering for participants and for volunteers themselves
 - negotiating 'win-win' volunteer agreements which take account of the needs of both the organisation and the volunteer.

+ 4.6 - TRAINING OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

- If sport organisations wish to grow and sustain their volunteer workforce, they should consider:
 - providing adequate induction programmes for sport volunteers new to their roles
 - making sure that all sport volunteers develop the technical skills they need for their volunteering role(s)
 - giving greater priority to training
 - balancing their internal resources accordingly, for example, by focusing more staff effort on volunteer training
 - treating training time as part of the volunteer's contribution, not something additional
 - carrying out skills audits/training needs analysis to identify the skills and knowledge which volunteers need to develop
 - ensuring all sport volunteers have a personal development plan.



- The organisation of sport volunteer training could potentially be improved by:
 - sport organisations working more closely together (even across different sports)
 - pooling their resources and providing training in generic job roles such as board/committee member and administration and in the transversal skills
 - making greater use of external training providers, universities and colleges.
- National and international federations could broaden their training efforts to ensure training pathways are available for all sport volunteer roles, not only those which require technical sport skills.

+ 4.7 - MANAGEMENT OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

- When managing sport volunteers, organisations need to be sensitive to the differences between volunteers and paid staff and pay particular attention to the positive practices listed in Section 3.10, in particular, the provision of compensations and material and non-material benefits to enhance motivation and ongoing engagement.
- Similarly, sport organisations should ensure the negative management characteristics listed in Section 3.10 are minimised.
- Sport organisations would benefit from ensuring that at least one member of staff (volunteer or paid) is responsible for their volunteers.
- Sport organisations would also benefit from having clear policies and procedures for volunteer management. National and international federations could be of assistance.
- The primary difficulty of sport organisations not having sufficient volunteers available when needed could be addressed by sport organisations:
 - doing more forward planning and timely communication,
 - building a pool of potential volunteers through sustained communication with interested people
 - contingency planning.

+ 4.8 - RETENTION OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

- Volunteer retention is a challenge for most sport organisations.
- Volunteers are more likely to remain in roles where there is regular and frequent engagement; therefore it may be helpful for sport organisations to have pathways to enable volunteers to transition from temporary/occasional engagement (mainly supporting events) into more permanent roles.
- Sport organisations may benefit from monitoring their own retention rates in different roles and identifying the reasons why volunteers leave – for example, through conducting exit interviews.
- When volunteers signal that they are leaving due to time constraints or changes in personal circumstances, sport organisations may benefit from trying to retain their engagement by offering shorter/more flexible volunteering opportunities.
- Providing material and non-material compensations are a significant factor in volunteer retention, but it is also important for sport organisations to:
 - give volunteers more say over the running of the organisation
 - organise social events and team building activities
 - offer training so that volunteers can develop their skills.



Rijeka Run, Marín Cuk Vurnek, EVEN Topography



Skills acquired through
Volunteering in Sport

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