



Volunteering for a Sustainable World

**VOW**

## Result 3 - TOOLKIT

**European perspective: Comparison with the main EU and national volunteering networks to define forms of collaboration and facilitate the inclusion of these topics**

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## EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE:

### Comparison with the main EU and national volunteering networks to define forms of collaboration and facilitate the inclusion of these topics

In order to deepen the European perspective and ascertain what forms of collaboration have been established to facilitate the inclusion of sustainability and Fair Trade issues, a questionnaire was circulated to the main European and national volunteering networks in May 2024. The response was very positive and the survey produced the following results.

Regarding the degree of awareness about tools that promote volunteering on fair trade and environmental sustainability issues, the 66% of respondents declared not awareness at all, while a percentage of 34% answered they are aware of some tools and mechanisms: youth participation tools, community-based volunteering, sensitisation initiatives in schools, projects promoting a behavioural change around environmental protection, energy communities, waste collection voluntary groups, themed volunteer camps, exhibitions and workshops.

During the past year, training sessions on volunteering in the field of fair trade and environmental sustainability have been held in the following quantities in the different organisations: none (according to 47.36% of respondents); between 1 and 5 (42.10%); between 5 and 10 (5.27%) and more than 10 (5.27%).

About the participation in training sessions on volunteering in the field of fair trade and environmental sustainability, the 52.63% of respondents say they have not taken part in any of them, the 42.10% answered they have participated in between 1 and 5 sessions, the 5.26% in between 5 and 10, while nobody replied “in more than 10”.

78.94% of repliers consider that there are good possibilities to develop volunteering on fair trade and environmental sustainability issues, while the remaining 21.06% don't know or prefer not to answer. Nobody said that there are no possibilities at all. Those who are more sceptical point out that it's difficult to find new volunteers, as well as in other areas (38.45%); that not all the non-profit world is sensitive to sustainability and Fair Trade issues (30.77%); that sustainability and fair trade are not perceived as suitable for volunteer initiatives (23.08%). The remaining 7.7% state that a difficulty may be the activation of synergies between the public bodies and the community education services, which are supposed to spread a culture of sustainability by starting from everyone's daily habits.

Fortunately, there is no lack of ideas about how to promote responsible and sustainable volunteering, that is likely to attract and inspire people - according to the majority of the respondents - more than activities that do not consider these perspectives or do not communicate them properly to volunteers. The non-profit world is considered as quite motivated to take care of sustainability and Fair Trade issues, but with a need for additional learning paths and a robust re-thinking process. Moreover, the necessity to hear young people's voices is seen as imperative, as sustainability issues in the supply chain and care for the environment are considered truly important for this target group, which is very eager to volunteer within these domains.

Others suggest the set-up of educational and communication campaigns (e.g. through the organisation of workshops and seminars, the production of dedicated informative material, a lot of dissemination and awareness-raising actions, the spread of already existing good practices etc...) in order to educate the public on the benefits of volunteering in environmental sustainability and Fair Trade sectors. Somebody suggests to 'get volunteers out of the shops', to spread the Fair Trade philosophy through testimonial actions. As a general rule, these campaigns are considered very useful to encourage companies in integrating fair trade and sustainability volunteering into their corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies or as a team building tool.

While recognising the added value that could be offered by companies in this field, many nevertheless consider the intervention of big-size non-profit organisations working on these issues as essential to promote and enhance volunteering on sustainability topics: the reported problem is that very often these non-profit organisations are not able to network together and this leads to dispersion and a lack of awareness of existing virtuous initiatives. Finally, a widespread opinion is that it's not only useful to network between non-profit organisations, but also between these organisations and local authorities or bodies including LAGs (Local Action Groups).

About the type of support that networking organisations helping smaller associations can give to stimulate volunteering on fair trade and environmental sustainability issues, the 21.06% of the repliers answered an increase in training, the 42.11% an increase in networking actions, the 26.31% a stronger promotion of fair trade and sustainability issues inside and outside the organisation. The remaining 10.52% indicated all the previous options.

By widening the sight to volunteering in general, the 84.22% of respondents declare they are aware of training tools/workshops that promote volunteering as a source of more general skills and competences, not only on fair trade and

environmental sustainability issues. 10.52% don't know or prefer not to answer, while only 5.26% state that they are not aware.

Among the most important skills acquired through volunteering, repliers report: team leading and organising work (33.33%); problem solving and conflict management (16.66%); communication and public speaking (11.12%); openness of mind (11.12%); reliability and ability to meet deadlines/timetables (5.55%); communication, problem solving, team leading and organising work altogether (5.55%); others (5.55%); all the previous ones (11.12%).