

Enhancing Civic Engagement: The Volunteering Impact Measurement Training.

One of the main objectives of the Volunteering Impact Measurement Training in Europe (V-CALC) project is to strengthen the capacity of CSOs, volunteer managers and coordinators. All ages and a diversity of backgrounds should be involved to measure and understand the impact of volunteering initiatives, in this way promoting inclusivity as an essential aspect of volunteering.

To achieve this goal, our project consortium is delivering the ***Volunteering Impact Measurement Training sessions***, tailor-made around non-formal education (NFE) values and best practices. This programme combines accessibility, active participation, and innovative ICT tools to enhance impact measurement practices across Europe, pledging to the UN 2030's Agenda by leaving no one behind. The online training sessions provide both a theoretical basis and practical experience, deepening the features of our **methodology** for volunteering impact measurement, while sharing experiences in the field. The training programme strongly relies on the combination of learning by doing and a learner-centred approach, thanks to the online interactive tools allowing participants from all walks of life to actively engage and interact.

The training is designed to be pragmatic, with group work and engaging discussions to dive into our developed methodology and provide hands-on experience with the [Volunteering Impact Platform](#). Ultimately, it aims to offer valuable insights into capturing the essence of volunteering efforts and equip volunteer managers and coordinators with the knowledge and practical skills necessary to utilise the methodology and the platform for effective volunteer impact measurement.

Thereby, the Erasmus+ priorities, set under the EU Erasmus+ Programme to support citizens in their personal and professional development in the fields of education, training, youth and sport, are addressed to empower a new push to European democracy. These priorities include the promotion of inclusive environments, green and digital innovation and alignment with EU values. Our innovative approach in this regard, consists of spreading these priorities in civic spaces through measurable and robust volunteering contributions. Therefore, *Volunteering Impact Measurement Training* fosters genuine integration of people from all backgrounds in volunteering initiatives, leveraging their capacity to measure and understand the impact of their volunteering contributions thanks to the implementation of accessible, concise and interactive online training. Let's explore now how we contribute to consolidate the Erasmus+ priorities in civic spaces:

A new push to European democracies: it is estimated that 100 million people volunteer in Europe (GHK, 2010); however, information about the impact of these initiatives is poor and scattered, and volunteering is not regularly and/or comparatively tracked in official statistics. In this context, our efforts are directed at promoting a channel of communication on the EU level to report on the state of volunteering impact in civic spaces. Our aim is to allow the data gathered from our [Volunteering Impact Platform](#) to be used to inform policy nationally and cross-nationally. Hence, these endeavours will result in a comprehensive monitoring system of the environment in which civil society organisations interact within national and cross-national contexts. Thus, the project is set on contributing to volunteer involvement being more visible and reliable across Europe which will result in a new push to European democracies.

Acting on inclusion and diversity: physical barriers might challenge participation in civic life. Our online training format fosters participants' fundamental rights to inclusion and civic engagement despite their background, nationality or special needs. Our training design allows people from all around Europe to join our training sessions, regardless of which barriers they might be facing (financial, cultural, physical or other). In this way, our goal is to ensure an inclusive space and resources for very diverse participants including participants from various different countries, hence fostering intercultural learning and skills development as well as the inclusion of both seasoned volunteer managers but also new ones - all of whom can be of different ages. The training directly addresses the principles of non-discrimination outlined in articles 19, 29, and 30 of the UNCRPD, which enforce equal participation in civic life. Addressing such issues is a fundamental aspect in the project implementation. Therefore, to make this opportunity accessible and to work towards a more inclusive volunteering landscape in Europe, each week one online training is available in English. In case needed, we also offer translations and/or interpretation to other languages (incl. the possibility of sign language) as well as further support if needed for accessibility purposes.

Alignment with EU Values: the project is firmly rooted in our common EU values, meaning the principles of unity and diversity, as well as our cultural identity. Values that serve as a ground for our common social and historical heritage (human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, and human rights). We aim at promoting our European fundamental values in civic spaces, thanks to better understanding of volunteering efforts during our training sessions. Therefore, the project aligns with international and European frameworks, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Horizontal priorities of the European Commission's Erasmus+ Action, the 2021-2027 Solidarity Corps programme, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION (EU) 2021/1877, all of which emphasise the inclusion of people from all backgrounds in civic engagement. In this line, our training sessions foster democratic dialogue,

transparency, and good governance, contributing to the protection and promotion of European values and respect for the rule of law through volunteering contributions.

Innovative training design: the training consists of two-hour online training sessions that encourages better understanding of the volunteering impact, introduces our methodology for volunteer impact measurement and the volunteeringimpact.eu platform. Furthermore, it enables participants simulation and practical experience of the platform through interactive small groups work.

During the training sessions, the participants learn how to:

- Track volunteer hours and achievements.
- Generate impactful reports.
- Improve volunteer programmes.
- Showcase the true value of their contributions.

All of these are dedicated to developing a methodology for measuring the impact of volunteering efforts across Europe, thanks to the V-CALC project.

Implemented training sessions: the implementation of training sessions started in April 2024. By the end of July 2024, more than 200 volunteer managers have participated in over 15 online training sessions across Europe. An intense online campaign is underway, aiming at reaching as many participants with diverse backgrounds as possible, taking into consideration ways of including those with fewer opportunities and differently-abled participants.

Feedback of the training: volunteer managers' and coordinators' feedback is positive, including a strong appreciation for the training content, both informative and practical, and finding 80% of participants highly satisfied with the training sessions. Additionally, 70% of participants find the training useful and helpful for their jobs, having acquired a better understanding of effective management of volunteering efforts and learned how to measure the impact of volunteer activities, thanks to digital tools like the [Volunteering Impact Platform](#).

Key takeaways: participants acknowledge the potential of the *Volunteering Impact Platform*, recognising its worth for measuring the impact of volunteering, achieving visibility and awareness of volunteering benefits for individuals and communities, as well as for planning and monitoring volunteer programmes. Participants find the platform user-friendly and efficient because it allows them to input and analyse data easily, providing valuable insights into the impact of volunteering initiatives. They appreciated the platform's simplified process of tracking volunteer contributions and outcomes, making it easier for organisations to evaluate their effectiveness.

Participants' statements: Finally, here are some examples of participants' impressions of the platform.

"I like the methodology used. I liked the theory of change used for this project. The first part of training, especially discussing the impact and getting to know more about the project itself, because it brought a new perspective on volunteering service and work. I enjoyed the practice work and am looking forward to using this platform in my work."

"The key takeaways for me were how to measure volunteering and seeing the changes it brings to the community."

"The methodology of the platform is very understandable and effective."

"Measuring the impact of volunteering is no easy task. The V-calc platform brings the sector one step closer to this achievement. By allowing the project partners to evaluate how different projects across Europe contribute to the development of local communities and the personal development of volunteers and mentors."

"Working for so many years in the field of volunteering it is the first time I encountered the topic of impact which is why I believe it's important to have this tool and to understand what volunteering brings to the communities."

Following steps: we remain committed to building the capacity of CSOs and volunteer managers and coordinators alike, regardless of their age, condition or race. We want to ensure *the Volunteering Impact Platform* becomes a valuable and accessible tool to measure the impact of volunteering. Thus, building social and human capital and promoting common European values.

Now the chance has arrived for you, dear reader, to take an active part in the improvement of the volunteering sector and society as a whole. So let's get ready, enrol in any of our [undergoing training sessions](#) and start measuring reliably your volunteer impact!

Should you be interested in scheduling a session meeting your specific needs, please contact us and we will do our best to accommodate the training to the needs of your participants.

Thank you all for the cherished input. Together, we are achieving the deserved visibility of volunteering as a main agent of social transformation, and consequently, showcasing its significant impact on the future of Europe.

Stay tuned for more updates on the V-CALC Project!

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