



## **The Volunteering impact Platform is a Reality Now!!**

Dear audience, [the BETA version of the Volunteering impact Platform](#) is now live.

We are thrilled to go through its most innovative features, aim, and expected impact together with you, presenting here the freshly baked outcomes of the Platform.

First of all, we would like to refresh your minds about the framework, the whys and wherefores in which the platform has been developed: [The V-CALC project](#) was conceived to tackle the prevailing issue of a lack of standardised methodology for measuring the impact of volunteer involvement across nations on a European scale. Our mission regarding the development of this user-friendly online platform is no other than efficiently gathering data about volunteer engagement, volunteer impact and volunteers themselves. Throughout the project, volunteer managers and coordinators will undergo comprehensive training on how to use this innovative platform.

### **Relevance**

Reflecting the fact that volunteering is defined in many different ways but that there are underlying universal principles, volunteering in this project is taken to encompass those activities which reflect the principles referred to in the EYV 2011 Council Decision (2009) and the EC Communication on EU Policies and Volunteering (2011):

- All forms of voluntary activity, whether formal, non-formal or informal.
- Undertaken of a person's own free-will, choice and motivation.
- Without seeking financial gain i.e. financial gain being neither the objective, nor the way to recognise the contribution or the achievement.
- Is a journey of solidarity and provides a way to address human, social or environmental needs and concerns.
- Is often carried out in support of a non-profit organisation or community-based initiative.

In 2011, the European Year of Volunteers these essential characteristics of volunteering were included in [the EYV 2011 Alliance Policy Agenda \(PAVE\)](#) that emphasises that the recognition of volunteers' individual and collective achievements is essential in enabling them to better apply the demonstrable skills and knowledge achieved through volunteering activities in other areas of their lives and therefore further increase the impact of volunteering.



Building on PAVE, the Centre for European Volunteering (CEV)'s [Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030 \(BEV2030\)](#) identifies continued differences in the cultural and legal contexts for volunteering across Europe as well as a persistent lack of coordination at the EU level regarding volunteering programmes, policies and data gathering. In result, there is an ongoing need for improved access to statistical data and other information concerning volunteering opportunities, in addition to agreed common principles for the provision of quality volunteering in order to increase the rate, impact and value of volunteering across Europe. Though a decade apart, both documents deem that until such issues have been sufficiently addressed, it is impossible to have a realistic assessment and measure of the true transformative effect of volunteering in Europe, its economic and social value as well as for efficient and sustainable, evidence-based policies to be developed.

The Volunteering impact Platform aims to revolutionise the recording, and collection of data from all parties involved in volunteering: measuring the impact of volunteer activities in all the diverse beneficiaries: volunteers, volunteer providers and communities across nations. In doing so, it will enhance the empowerment of volunteering organisations across Europe to collaborate with stakeholders in the research field, promote the measurement of the Economic Value of Volunteering while supporting policymakers to work directly with partners to ensure that more reliable and comparable data on volunteering is gathered on a European scale – all with the aim to inform and implement changes to volunteering policies and programmes through which consolidated European standards for volunteer recognition and impact measurement are in place.

## Methodology

The Platform is designed to collect harmonised data on volunteering activities inputted on the one hand, by NGOs, and on the other hand, by volunteers per se. In this line, a consistent, standardised and trustful methodology will be developed across Europe with the aim to address demographics, motivations, types of volunteering, as well as their impact in promoting European fundamental values such as cohesion, solidarity, inclusivity, and sustainability, strengthening therefore, social and human capital.

## Platform Testing

Out of The Box International, as project partner, conducted the piloting of the Platform. Fifteen enthusiastic people from diverse organisations across Europe participated in the session, registering, and navigating through the platform for the first time. The primary objective was to refine the user experience and ensure the seamless functioning of the Volunteering impact Platform.



## Main Features

The Volunteering impact Platform is able to generate and provide valuable reports, enhancing visibility of volunteer involvement, and impact of civic society across Europe. The data gathered from the V-CALC online platform will be used to inform policy nationally, cross-nationally, and relevant stakeholders.

The reports are generated each quarter of a year, elaborated by the user input provided in that period of time. Furthermore, reports can be divided in 4 main areas:

1. Individual improvement impact report.
2. Community empowerment impact report.
3. Societal strengthening impact report.
4. Environmental protection impact report.

Additionally, they will be available in PDF or Excel, in case there is a need to work with them. These functionalities are key innovative elements of the Volunteering impact Platform, and showcase the potential to consolidate robust and reliable availability of data about volunteering impact across Europe. Therefore, the platform developed brings to the sector a tool to precisely measure volunteering impact, helping the most to those who have no capacity for such measurement, and in the last instance, contributing to develop a dialogue process within the sector and with policymakers through partnership and international collaboration.

## Next Steps

We are committed to ensuring that the Volunteering impact Platform becomes a valuable tool for organisations, volunteers, and policy makers alike.

Nonetheless, now has arrived the chance for you, dear reader, to take an active part in the improvement of the volunteering sector and society as a whole. So please let's contribute by enrolling your volunteer experience on our [platform](#) and be ready to start measuring reliably your volunteer impact!

Thank you all for the cherished input. Together, we are creating a significant impact on the world of volunteering, and the tools to achieve it are closer to us than ever before!

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