



Challenges IV

VOLUNTEERISM FOR SENIORS

A MATERIAL FOR OLDERLY



EDUCATION – THE CHALLENGE OF THE LATER YEARS

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Introduction

The material is intended for older people. It is supposed to contribute to learners' well-being and the improvement of the quality of their life (QoL). The focus of this material is volunteerism, which is one of the activities that bring a wide range of possibilities and positive outcomes when related to the oldest members of the society. The aim of the course is to raise awareness of volunteerism opportunities for seniors. It constitutes an encouragement to promoting a positive image of volunteering among seniors. Moreover, the course is designed to raise the level of knowledge and skills of older people in respect of volunteering.

We would like to invite you to familiarise yourselves with the course and take advantage of the benefits it offers.



PROMOTING A POSITIVE IMAGE OF VOLUNTEERING AS AN EXPRESSION OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION AMONG SENIORS

TASK 1. *Please write what Quality of Life means to you.*

Quality of Life	
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According to a definition, Quality of life (QoL) is the general well-being of individuals and societies. QoL has a wide range of contexts, including the fields of international development, healthcare, politics, and employment.

TASK 2.

Please give an example of how senior volunteerism may impact social cohesion, solidarity, and active participation.

SENIOR VOLUNTEERISM	
SOCIAL COHESION	
SOLIDARITY	
ACTIVE PARTICIPATION	

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

TASK 3.

Please fill in the table. Choose three most important factors which, in your opinion, promote a positive image of a senior.

Promoting volunteering among seniors is a practical motivating factor. On the one hand, it activates people at the beginning of the end of their careers and further retirement. On the other hand, it is a concrete help.

The promotion of the positive image of active ageing by:

- Challenging negative stereotypes and images of seniors,
- Promoting positive images of ageing,
- Providing examples of positive ageing,
- Promoting seniors' contribution to society,
- Creating a culture that respects older people.

WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING WORK

VOLUNTEERING IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED AN ALTRUISTIC ACTIVITY WHERE AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP PROVIDES SERVICES FOR NO FINANCIAL GAIN.

VOLUNTEERING IS ALSO RENOWNED FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT, AND IS OFTEN INTENDED TO PROMOTE GOODNESS OR TO IMPROVE HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE.



SENIORS AS A SOURCE OF EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

TASK 4.

What experience and knowledge would you be able to transfer as a volunteer?

Your experience and knowledge	The transfer as a volunteer

Intergenerational work is a great way to break down barriers between groups of people.

For young people it is an opportunity to appreciate the experience and skills of older people and vice versa, so that we foster greater understanding between groups of people.

TASK 5. *Please provide an example of intergenerational work which contributes to breaking down barriers between the youth and the elderly.*

TASK 6. *Please read what mental and physical benefits result from senior volunteerism. Discuss this topic in small groups.*

VOLUNTEERING PROVIDES MANY BENEFITS TO BOTH MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Volunteering increases self-confidence. Volunteering can provide a healthy boost to your self-confidence, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. You are doing good for others and the community, which provides a natural sense of accomplishment. Your role as a volunteer can also give you a sense of pride and identity.

Volunteering provides a sense of purpose. Older adults, especially those who have retired or lost a spouse, can find new meaning and purpose in their lives by helping others. Whatever your age or life situation, volunteering can help take your mind off your own worries, keep you mentally stimulated, and add more zest to your life.

Volunteering combats depression. A key risk factor for depression is social isolation. Volunteering keeps you in regular contact with others and helps you develop a solid support system, which in turn protects you against stress and depression when you're going through challenging times.

Volunteering helps you stay physically healthy. The physical activity involved in certain forms of volunteering—such as environmental projects in parks, nature reserves, or beaches—can be good for your health at any age, but it's especially beneficial in older adults. Studies have found that those who volunteer have a lower mortality rate than those who do not, even when considering factors like the health of the participants.

THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

TASK 7. Please fill in the table with the factors which disturb and those which are conducive to undertaking volunteerism.

DISTURBING FACTORS	CONDUCTIVE FACTORS

As people get older and enter their third age they find volunteering a good substitute for the social roles they lost. Elderly volunteering can have a positive social impact, on society as well as on older volunteers, providing services otherwise unavailable or expensive. Volunteering by older people can help eliminate isolation, strengthen community participation, enhance volunteers' self-esteem, change stereotypes, and promote social and political consciousness.

By helping others, older volunteers can also help themselves and enhance their physical, mental and social well-being, protecting from the pitfalls of retirement, physical decline and inactivity. The social integration related to volunteer work can enhance one's well-being, since the reduction of social isolation can lead to less depression.

Volunteer Opportunities for Seniors

- **Seniors' volunteerism - may be a passion that has an impact on personal development, makes it possible to maintain high social activity and gives you the satisfaction of helping others.**
- **Volunteering enables the acquisition of knowledge, new friends and interesting experiences.**

One of the better-known benefits of volunteering is the impact on the community. Volunteering allows you to connect yourself to your community and make it a better place. Even helping out with the smallest tasks can make a real difference to the lives of people, animals, and organizations in need. Dedicating your time as a volunteer helps you make new friends, expand your network, and boost your social skills.

Volunteering helps you make new friends and contact

One of the best ways to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships is to commit to a shared activity together. Volunteering is a great way to meet new people, especially if you are new to an area. Volunteering also strengthens your ties to the community and broadens your support network, exposing you to people with common interests, neighbourhood resources, and fun and fulfilling activities.

Volunteering increases your social and relationship skills

While some people are naturally outgoing, others are shy and have a hard time meeting new people. Volunteering gives you the opportunity to practice and develop your social skills, since you meet regularly with a group of people with common interests.

4. SENIORS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

TASK 8. Please fill in the table providing reasons for seniors' willingness to devote their time to volunteerism.

REASONS WHY SENIORS SHOULD DEVOTE THEIR TIME TO VOLUNTEERISM

It helps bridge the generation gap	
It helps change the way people think about older adults	
It is good for mental health and can help prevent Alzheimer's disease	
It helps prevent senior isolation And depression	
It promotes healthy physical activity	
Others	

How to find the right volunteering opportunity

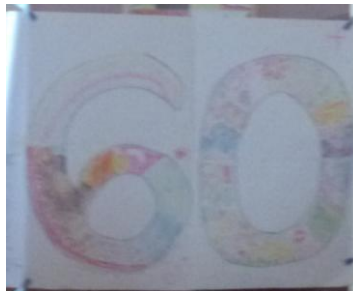
There are numerous volunteering opportunities available. The key is to find a volunteer position that you would enjoy and are capable of doing. It's also important to make sure that your commitment matches the organization's needs. The following questions can help you narrow your options:

- Would you like to work with adults, children, or animals, or remotely from home?
- Do you prefer to work alone or as part of a team?
- Are you better behind the scenes or do you prefer to take a more visible role?
- How much time are you willing to commit?
- How much responsibility are you ready to take on?
- What skills can bring you a volunteering job?
- What causes are important to you?

INCREASING THE MOTIVATION TO TAKE ACTION FOR THE BENEFIT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES AMONG PEOPLE AGED 60+

TASK 9. *Please explain your motivation to undertake volunteerism.*

The value of senior volunteers to the community is substantial. Most active and engaged senior volunteers play a critical role in making their communities stronger and more resilient places to live.



- Volunteering can play a significant role in people's lives as they move from work to retirement. Yet various barriers, both institutional and attitudinal, appear to be deterring people from taking up volunteering later in life.
- Older people's motivations for volunteering are mixed. For some older people volunteering is an opportunity to put something back into society; for others it provides a chance to continue learning new skills and tasting new experiences.
- For many older people volunteering plays an important role in the transition process, helping to fill the void sometimes felt upon retirement.

Why should senior volunteering be promoted?

The gap between potential and participating senior volunteers needs to be remedied.

Volunteering adds to the individual's life satisfaction: it increases social contacts, promotes social awareness, encourages well-being, facilitates community involvement, and develops key competences and skills that further activate societal participation.

Senior volunteering forms a counterweight to the increasing isolation and egoism in modern societies. It also promotes greater understanding between generations when they support each other in a shared activity.

THE DISSEMINATION OF GOOD PRACTICES IN TERMS OF SENIOR VOLUNTEERISM

TASK 10. Please circle the senior volunteering opportunities which are available in your local environment.

VARIOUS VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES
Local theatres, museums, and opera houses
Libraries, senior centres, care facilities, or hospices
Service organizations
Local animal shelters, rescue organizations, or wildlife centres
Youth organizations, sports teams, and after-school programs
Historical restorations, national parks, and conservation organizations
Choirs, places of worship such as churches
Online databases

Older people who participate in volunteer activities bring with themselves considerable skills, knowledge and commitment. They have distinct qualities to offer due to their social maturity, accumulated life experience, and a sense of societal obligation. They are often good at problem solving, possess a high degree of cultural understanding, and can engage effectively with others. They can also offer their availability, confidence, patience, and loyalty in any voluntary commitment.

TASK 11. Please read about three groups of volunteers. Which of these groups could you classify yourself to? Discuss this topic in a small group.

Classification of volunteer groups

- I those who volunteer because they have always done so ('lifelong' volunteers);
- II those who have come back to volunteering later in life following a break for work and family responsibilities (serial' volunteers); And
- III those who are inspired by retirement to volunteer for the first time ('trigger' volunteers).

5. IMPROVING THE IMAGE OF THE ELDERLY AND BREAKING MANY STEREOTYPES.

TASK 12. *What examples could you provide which contradict stereotypes?*

Some of the common stereotypes associated with the elderly are:

- The elderly cannot learn new things
- The elderly do not face up to the changes of ageing
- The elderly are intolerant and strict
- The elderly are lonely and isolated
- The elderly have memory problems

A STEREOTYPE IS USED TO CATERGORIZE A GROUP OF PEOPLE. PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT TYPE OF PERSON, SO THEY PUT THEM INTO CLASSIFICATIONS. THEY THINK THAT EVERYONE WHO BELONGS TO A GIVEN CLASSIFICATION NEEDS TO BE LIKE THAT, OR ANYONE WHO ACTS ACCORDING TO THEIR CLASSIFICATION IS ACTUALLY THAT TYPE OF PERSON.

Older people often face disincentives to volunteer such as negative attitudes and stereotypes, cultural and practical barriers, and discriminatory policies and practices. An increasing demand for specific qualifications, the administrative burdens involved in the organisation of simple voluntary tasks and unjustified age limits imposed by insurance companies on volunteer activities all constitute obstacles that we should help overcome.

TASK 13.

Please read about the stages of volunteering and discuss them with your neighbour.

Volunteering Among Seniors

- Recruitment of volunteers
- Support for seniors who volunteer
- Support for organizations using volunteers
- Building partnerships among key social players
- Research on volunteering
- Coordination of volunteers in the not-for-profit sector

CREATING A CULTURE OF VOLUNTEERING AMONG SENIORS



TASK 14. *Have you observed any changes in the attitude to the activity of senior volunteers.*

In order to entrench volunteering as a key element of civic participation, volunteerism needs to be promoted and encouraged both at a young age and throughout people's lifespan.

I want to awaken the passion and creativity of youth, combine it with the wisdom, experience and insight of elders, and transform our world." » Ocean Robbins

Volunteering as a tool to promote social inclusion in old age. EU policies give special attention to encouraging volunteering. The main objectives are the creation of suitable general conditions for voluntary work as an important part of civic participation as well as the empowerment of volunteer organisations. This is of particular importance for volunteering in old age.



Due to cultural and historical differences, volunteering (of all age groups) is deeply rooted in the countries of the EU. While some countries have a long tradition of volunteering and a strong voluntary sector, the sector is little developed or is still being set up in other countries.