

- Практикум по инфектологија за вежби за студенти по стоматологија, Универзитет „Свети Кирил и Методиј“ – Скопје, Катедра по инфектологија, Скопје (2006)
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- Ставриќ, К. Контраиндикации за имунизација – Апсолутни и релативни, Клиника за детски болести, Скопје, Одделение имунологија
- Стратегија за имунизација во Република Македонија 2012-2020 година со Акциониот план 2012-2015 година, Министерство за здравство, Скопје, 2012
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## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY – EMPIRICAL EXPERIENCES FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PROJECT**

**Abstract:** This paper aims to share empirical experiences and results from an international Erasmus KA2 project. The main objective of the project is to increase the social responsiveness of young people by integrating them in pro bono activities in higher education institutions. Pro bono is a voluntary activity that aims at supporting non-profit organizations in need with our professional expertise. The Erasmus project involved Spanish, Portuguese, Bulgarian, French and Hungarian universities, which were supported by intermediaries in the implementation of pro bono activities and campaigns. Three pilot pro bono activities were carried out at our university in the framework of the project. These were projects of varying duration, supporting a programme for the elderly, an organization for disadvantaged children and a foundation working for environmental protection. An important outcome of the international programme was the creation of a guide book containing the steps for implementing pro bono as a subject, in the form of an online course to help universities join the programme. We would like to expand the programme in cooperation with other universities by involving international students and promoting the need and importance of social responsibility as widely as possible.

**Keywords:** Volunteering, Pro bono, Cooperation, CSR, Generations, Higher education

### **Introduction**

In modern societies, volunteering is a form of civic activity. It can be considered effective when volunteering is organically linked to a local community or a wider area association and is widely represented by a range of organizations (Mirsfian – Mohamadinejan, 2012). The International Labour Organization (ILO) has attempted to summarize the benefits of volunteering in a lengthy study. The ILO mentions that it can not only have economic effects, but can also bring significant benefits to society or to the volunteers themselves. It can provide access to the workforce and a framework for employment. Volunteering can contribute to development goals. It can also result in services in the form of employment that a paid worker would not be able to provide. It also enhances social solidarity, social capital, political legitimacy and quality of life in society. Volunteering can help to promote social inclusion and integration (ILO, 2011).

In addition to the above, volunteering can also bring other benefits. According to a study by Owen and Celik activities such as volunteering can contribute to our mental health, thus strengthening the development of a healthy society (Owen – Celik, 2018). Mundle and co-authors (2012)

echo the previous idea. Volunteering has been associated with positive health and well-being outcomes for those who undertake it. Several other studies have demonstrated that many of those who volunteered experienced lower depression, higher mental wellbeing and satisfaction (Same et al, 2020). According to Morrow and co-authors (Morrow-Howel et al, 2003), older people who volunteer or are still working may have better mental health characteristics, demonstrating that volunteering has a positive impact on mental health (Morrow-Howell, 2010).

The international volunteering process really started to take off in the 1970s. It has been catalyzed by the expansion of globalization, which has enabled free movement in more and more areas of our lives. This process has been facilitated by international initiatives such as the European Voluntary Service (EVS), an international volunteering programme funded by the European Commission. It enabled young people aged between 18 and 30 to carry out international voluntary service with a business or public operator in Europe, Africa, Asia or South America for between 2 and 12 months. International data shows that the participation of younger people in volunteering is indeed increasing, which is encouraging for a programme that aims to promote volunteering (ESC, 2020).

Volunteering means giving pleasure not only to others, but also to oneself, as the volunteer derives satisfaction and pleasure from their work (Williems et al, 2020). Individuals can also volunteer in public or other roles to enhance their role in society. Juknevičius-Savicka (2003) also links volunteering to our role in society. It is an activity that we do for our environment without remuneration, but in return we receive moral recognition and appreciation (Wilson, 2020). The latter can motivate us to undertake such tasks (Paine et al, 2010).

Volunteering requires a certain level of human, cultural and social capital from the individual (Wilson – Musick, 1997). According to this formulation, volunteering is indeed a measure of the state of society. Where there is no social capital, the level of volunteering cannot be high. However, it does not matter whether we look at the individual or the organizational level (Czike – Kuti, 2006; Perpák, 2017). Organizations tend to turn to volunteering more often, especially in their CSR projects. Steven Howlett (2004) mentions that businesses are also consciously turning towards volunteering. Organizations want to know which aspects of their work can be affected by volunteering. More widely, organizations and companies are expected to do something for their immediate environment. Volunteering by individuals is mostly confined to the aforementioned giving. In the so-called World's Most Generous Countries Report published by Gallup, it is reported that although many people in Hungary give to charitable causes, our country still gives below average (Gallup, 2018).

With the changes of the modern age, volunteering is becoming more and more a part of our lives. From animal and environmental protection, to fighting hunger or poverty, climate protection and other areas, philanthropy is making inroads. In the pandemic era, care for the elderly, support for families, support for children have become more important. Fényes & Kiss (2011) have already outlined the strengthening role of volunteering much earlier. They argue that the crisis in welfare societies, changing work patterns and increasing leisure time all contribute to the strengthening of volunteering. It should also be pointed out that, in many cases, the inaction and problem-solving capacity of governments also fosters a sense of social engagement, which can also be felt on the corporate side in various ways. They may engage in donations, giving and financial support, but they may also engage in many other community value creation activities. The community value creation activities of organizations are significantly influenced by the behavior and attitudes of individuals, and thus the question of how to engage different generations in such (Rodell et al, 2017). According to Weissman (2014), volunteering also increases the value of the employee. On the one hand, it brings new skills into the organization. Volunteer activity helps to build networks, which can also help an organization to gain important new contacts

and partners. Volunteering can also help to build a career, gain prestige, and enhance an employee's own skills and professional development.

## **Method**

In this study, we present partial results of a primary study. The quantitative research was carried out within the framework of an international research project with the participation of Hungarian, Bulgarian, French, Portuguese, Spanish researchers, using a pre-tested, standardized questionnaire online survey. The recruitment of subjects in each of the sampling units was carried out using a snowball sampling procedure, resulting in 840 evaluable questionnaires in Hungary.

In this study we focus on the Hungarian results. The survey instrument was the same in all countries participating in the project for future comparability. The standardized questionnaire contained only closed questions at nominal and metric measurement levels. Attitudes towards volunteering were measured in all cases using Likert scales. Scale questions were asked on a scale from 1 to 7 due to the international nature of the research. The results showed that the majority of subjects do not know what the term pro bono means. However, those who had heard of it showed a clearly positive attitude.

## **Results and Discussion**

The results of the research showed that young people are absolutely open to pro bono activities, but they still need information, education and, last but not least, a mentor to encourage participation. An instructor or a company expert who can help them in their work and give them direction. The main motivation for them to take part in pro bon activities is to belong to a community, to fulfil themselves and to develop themselves. The research also looked at the most effective communication channels to get the message of a knowledge-based volunteering campaign across to young people. The results show that the main sources of information about the conditions for participating in a pro bono volunteering programme are, according to the respondents, recommendations and opinions of friends and family, shares on social media platforms they visit, and social media platforms of non-profit organizations promoting such programmes.

The highest proportion of the sample (42.2%) were those who had not yet participated in a volunteering programme but would like to try it. They were followed by young people (39.9%) who had already volunteered and would be happy to do so again. The smallest group (17%) had a negative attitude towards volunteering: they had never participated in a volunteering programme and would not like to join one.

Among those who had volunteered in their lifetime, the most popular were children's programmes (30.4%), programmes helping animals and programmes supporting people in need (homeless) (26%). This was followed in order by programmes targeting local, local problems (16.8%), programmes targeting global problems (8.4%) and others such as volunteering in student organizations and student councils (2%). Based on the results, it was thought that a strategically well-constructed education campaign and emotional messages that reinforce motivation would be the most effective way to attract young people with immature values. Rather than being socially insensitive or self-centered, their lack of motivation can be explained by a lack of a mature value orientation.

There is a large body of literature suggesting that young people's value orientation is more easily influenced, that they are easily won over by a good reference person, if only because they are characterized by a relatively strong social networking loss and seek out communities to join. And such communities can strongly influence young people's value judgements. [21], [22]. We also asked our respondents, that they would you like to be part of a volunteer program where you could help foundations OR organizations by sharing your expertise and experience.

We received the following answers:

- Yes, I would be happy to participate in such a program: 25.2%;
- Yes, I would be happy to attend, but only if I knew the organization who will be helped: 19.1%
- Yes, I would be happy to attend, but only if I am not alone participating (e.g., working in small groups or with the supervision of a more experienced professional): 49.4%
- Under no circumstances I would participate in such a program: 6.3%

Based on the results we can say, that young people are keen to join a volunteering programme based on knowledge sharing, as long as they do not have to do it alone, but in a team, possibly with the help of a supervisor. This shows that there is an openness to pro bono activities among young people and that a higher education institution can provide a really excellent opportunity for this community building by providing an institutionalized background.

## Conclusion

Three pilot pro bono activities were carried out at our university in the framework of the project. These were projects of varying duration, supporting a programme for the elderly, an organization for disadvantaged children and a foundation working for environmental protection. An important outcome of the international programme was the creation of a guide book containing the steps for implementing pro bono as a subject, in the form of an online course to help universities join the programme. We would like to expand the programme in cooperation with other universities by involving international students and promoting the need and importance of social responsibility as widely as possible. As a continuation of the programme, the Eastern Faculty will continue to offer students the opportunity to carry out pro bono activities in the form of project work. We would like to expand both the programme and the research in cooperation with other universities by involving international students. We believe that one of the limitations of the research carried out on the Hungarian sample is the sample, as it focused on Hungarian students and Generation Z. We think that it is worthwhile to extend the research to other generations, younger and older, and to include foreign students studying in our country among the sample. We believe that the perception of CR activities and pro bono activities is also culturally determined. By broadening the scope of the research and including foreign students in the pro bono programme, we have the opportunity to promote the need and importance of social responsibility as widely as possible. We believe that it is important to orient students towards ethical behavior and values and to strengthen their sense of community. In my experience, this kind of activity is a major contribution to graduates taking this ethos forward as employees and possibly as managers.

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## INTERCULTURAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

**Abstract:** Intercultural and multicultural education is the basis of the individual to fulfill one's civic duties and responsibilities in accordance with the values and main principles of our modern society: peace and brotherhood among people, respect for human rights, democracy, tolerance, solidarity and understanding, protection and preservation of the environment and the cultural heritage, integration with other cultures.

Intercultural and multicultural education is a progressive approach to transforming the education system, based on the ideas of educational equality and social justice. It is an approach that enables students to get to know, understand, respect and appreciate cultural differences and similarities and to recognize the achievements of different ethnic, racial and socio-economic groups. Intercultural and multicultural education is a combination of knowledge, competencies, skills and leads to a change in the way of thinking. This is a process of personal growth – with an effect on the whole society.