

Mapping essential competences of culture volunteers
in sparsely populated areas
WP03

Survey Report

Prepared by: Agnieszka Dadak
Foundation of Alternative Educational Initiatives
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Curricula for culture volunteers and managers
in sparsely populated areas



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1. Introduction to the methodology applied.

The mapping in Poland was conducted in February and March 2017.

The questionnaire was translated into Polish and made available both on-line and in paper for all interested. Wide networks of the FAIE Foundation were invited to take part in the research, including specific associations, informal groups and other stakeholders representatives active in the field of culture on sparsely populated areas in the South and South-East Poland. The research was also announced, among others, on the main all-Polish NGO sector directed Internet portal. At the beginning of the questionnaire a short note describing the research goals, the project and it's expected outcome was provided. The questionnaire consisted of 6 parts: 1. Background information; 2. Clarifying key competence for currently successful culture volunteers; 3. Clarifying best ways of outreach and engaging of new culture volunteers; 4. Clarifying best training programme for culture volunteers; 5. Clarifying needed support from key stakeholders to the volunteers; 6. Comments to the questionnaire. There were both closed and open questions provided. There were also 2 additional, specific for Poland, questions added it the second part: Clarifying best ways of outreach and engaging of new culture volunteers: 2.11. *The culture organisations should offer cooperation on the basis of a written Agreement of Cooperation, ensuring rights and duties of a volunteer and the organisation* and 2.12. *The cultural organisations should give the volunteer written Recommendations/ Certificate after finishing his/her activities for the benefit of the organisation.*

The terms “*sparsely populated areas*” and “*culture sector organisation*” were explained in the footnote.

To **the interviews** specific persons were invited: As representatives of the learning providers, the managers of the Spichlerz Association from Czernica, and a manager of the Foundation of Alternative Educational Initiatives (South of Poland) were invited. As learners the volunteers of an informal group from Góra Ropczycka in South-Eastern Poland and volunteers of the Spichlerz Association. As the representatives of other stakeholders: Local authorities representatives from Oświęcim, a cultural institution representatives from Lipnica Mała and businesswomen from Radziechowy, all active in rural communes of Southern Poland. The interviewees were informed about the research goal, the project and expected outcomes. Most of the interviews were conducted by phone, 4 persons took part in a group interview, one was an e-mail interview. The group interview was recorded.

2. The results of the questionnaires

Concerning the background data, all the questionnaires gathered were filled by Polish citizens. There were, in sum 88 filled in questionnaires gathered, 26 From the learning providers, 20 from volunteers and 42 from the other stakeholders. More women (77,3%) than men (22,7%) have filled in the questionnaire. Most of the survey respondents represented the age group 18-29 (27,3%) and 30-39 (25%); the smallest age group were persons between 40 and 49 years old (2,3%). Most of the respondents completed middle higher education (40,9%), followed by technical vocational education (27,3%), longer higher education (18,2%) and gymnasium (9,1%). Concerning occupation, out of work respondents constituted 29,5%, full time students 22,7%; civil society organisations workers 18,2%; public and private sector 13,6% and other - 2,3%.

2.1. Learning providers

For most Learning providers, **culture volunteers in sparsely populated areas should have the following key competences:**

- Knowing good practice on how culture volunteering in sparsely populated areas can promote civic participation, community bonding and local identity (90%);
- Have knowledge of the cross-cultural sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture and heritage and their activities in the actual municipality (85%) and
- have knowledge of the other sectors of voluntary work in the municipality, such as the social, humanitarian, welfare, and sport associations (85%).

Lowest importance was assigned to the fact that The volunteer needs to have good skills in finding extra money by fund-raising, seeking sponsors, etc. (46% highly/very highly agreed).

The remaining competences mentioned in the survey were classified, by most of the respondents of this group, as highly important.

For most Learning providers, **the best and most important ways to engage active citizens as volunteers are:** Emphasising that the tasks as volunteer brings personal competence development and an improved CV by offering extra training courses, mentoring, etc. (the personal career appeal, 92%), followed by using the idealistic appeal (85%) and providing elaborated presentation materials where the possible tasks as culture volunteer are presented (85%).

The least importance was assigned to engaging volunteers through traditional announcement means in the local news media and at notice boards in shops, libraries and community centres (36% highly/very highly agreed).

Regarding the **training programs**, most of the Learning providers considered it extremely important that the volunteers must learn to recognise and assess their key competence profile as culture volunteer (their strength and weaknesses) and learn to articulate their possible needs and priorities for extra training events to gain the needed extra competences (over 90% of very/extremely important). Still high but least popular (61% positive answers), skills in finding extra money by fund-

raising, seeking sponsors, etc. were assessed as slightly/moderately important by 39% of the respondents.

Concerning **forms of support for volunteers**, most of the members of group 1 assigned high and very high importance to: Personal sparring or mentoring from more experienced culture volunteers or managers or consultants from voluntary associations and help to find and contact the appropriate nationwide experts, speakers and advisers in the field (92%), followed by help to get contacts with similar initiatives in other municipalities to exchange experiences and learn from each other (85%). As least important support to solve some more practical tasks as rent of venues, making pre-materials, distribution materials, etc. was assessed.

Asked about 1 – 3 competences important to have to be a successful culture volunteer in sparsely populated areas, the learning providers named:

- Ability to work both in a team and individually, ability to cooperate with people;
- Knowledge about the local specifics: local history, events important for the local community and their common celebration, being present and participation;
- Solidarity, innovativeness, creativity;
- “Have the spine”, joy, courage and moral values;
- Ability to cope with difficult situations, keeping the others involved and engaged.

2.2. Learners

For most Learners, **culture volunteers in sparsely populated areas should have the following key competences:**

- Knowledge on good practise on how culture volunteering in sparsely populated areas can promote civic participation, community bonding and local identity (80%);
- Enhanced social and communication skills to engage and involve different social groups in the local municipalities and good skills in finding extra money by fundraising, seeking sponsors etc. (70%).

As least important knowledge of other local stakeholders that may support and/or be part of the cross-culture activities in the local communities was assessed (40% High/very high degree).

According to the Learners, **the best and most important ways to engage active citizens as volunteers are:** The personal career appeal and offering cooperation on the basis of a written Agreement of Cooperation, ensuring rights and duties of a volunteer and the organisation (highly/very highly important to 70%). Also idealistic and social appeals were seen relevant by most of the respondents, as well as reaching them through other NGOs and providing a personal contact, which interested volunteers can call by phone or mail. Least relevant way of recruitment for the present and potential volunteers is letting the key persons in the local voluntary culture associations use their own contact lists and personal network (20%).

Regarding the **training programs**, all the subjects proposed in the questionnaire were assessed as relevant, giving the highest importance to: recognising and assessing one’s own strengths and

weaknesses and articulating possible needs and priorities for extra training events to gain the needed extra competences (90%).

Having a clear well-argued opinion on the main challenges for our sparsely areas to counter the trend for movement to the bigger cities was assessed least important.

Concerning **forms of support for volunteers**, all the forms proposed were seen as important and relevant to a high/very high degree by the majority of respondents.

In the open question, the learners have also highlighted, as key skills to be a good culture volunteer in sparsely populated areas:

- Being accountable, open, able initiate contacts;
- Having skills of working with children;
- Being communicative, helpful and demonstrating good willingness to work.

2.3. Other stakeholders

According to the other stakeholders, **culture volunteers in sparsely populated areas should primarily have the following key competences:**

- Knowing good practise on how culture volunteering in sparsely populated areas can promote civic participation, community bonding and local identity (85,7%);
- Enhanced social and communication skills to engage and involve different social groups in the local municipalities (80,9%) and
- Knowledge of the local civil society activities as part of the overall activities in the municipality (76,2%).

Enhanced skills in planning and managing cross-culture activities and events in the local community and good skills in finding extra money are seen as less important.

The best and most important ways to engage active citizens as volunteers are: Using the social appeal, using the personal career appeal – letting the key persons in the culture associations to use their own personal network for recruitment (over 80% assigns high/very high degree of relevance). To the contrary – the traditional announcement means in the local news media and at notice boards in shops, libraries and community centres were seen as least relevant.

Almost all the elements of the **training programmes** mentioned was seen as extremely/ very important. Relatively lowest score (but still high – important for 70%) was assigned to training in the field of finding extra money by fund-raising, seeking sponsors and skills of cross-cultural project leaders.

Concerning **forms of support for volunteers**, the most important for all respondents in this group was support to complete fund-raising to get support to cost demanding activities (over 90%), whilst support at find and contact the appropriate nationwide experts, speakers and advisers in the field was seen as least important (66% agreed).

To be a good culture volunteer in sparsely populated areas, it is also necessary to have key competences such as:

- Ability to build good relations with local authorities;
- Vocational skills to be applicable in the cultural sector;
- Being observant and “psychologist”, able to make relations;
- Competences to animate activities, designing cultural programmes;
- Having support of the others, knowledge about the local environment, openness, liking this kind of job – since it is not an easy one – to be able to have satisfaction.

3. The results of the interviews.

There were 5 interviews conducted with the learning providers, and 4 interviews both with the learners and key stakeholders from local communities representatives. In sum: 13 interviews.

3.1. Learning providers

Asked about the **key competences of currently successful culture volunteers**, the learning providers especially stressed knowledge and orientation concerning the needs of the local community and knowledge about the local community in general: it’s history, economics, social composition combined with interest in the local people, ability to communicate on various levels – with various people from the community, being in touch with the local people. Also the organisational skills (leading a group and organising a group work) and competences were stressed. Furthermore, there were the following competences named:

- Skills of acquiring funds for realising goals;
- Professional skills to be offered for the community (for ex. painting, writing, other artistic skills);
- Ability to remain calm in stressful situations, to “keep the blood cool”;
- Ability to work in a team of wide range of competences and ability to cooperate with other volunteers from other local organisations.

Concerning **characteristics of good practise on how to engage culture volunteers in sparsely populated areas**: It was underlined that it is not easy to enter a new group. What can encourage is presenting successful actions of the organisation, to report the activities realised in various forms.

One association representatives, very successful in engaging volunteers, said they have never conducted any formal recruitment. People interested in volunteering came themselves – after participating in some of the association’s events.

Cooperation with local school, library, culture house or a parish at searching for new volunteers was also mentioned. If there are young people the organisation is searching for, Internet announcements are a must

Asked about **what characterises good practise on how to train culture volunteers to be successful in sparsely populated areas** – there were various opinions presented.

One non-formal group leader said they do not organise any workshops or trainings, people just bring in the skills they already have.

Formal and intensively locally working association managers underlined, that a volunteer should, for sure, receive a “local information kit”: who is who, who does what, who to address with what etc. Since the association’s regular work is based on wide partnerships, the new volunteer needs to learn the resources available. This should be supplemented by a “good practices kit”, presenting key activities of the organisation, it’s history, the space for volunteers, the benefits for the volunteers.

As a good idea was also named organising meetings for the new volunteers inviting local VIPs – like the village mayor or local celebrity – to show the volunteers they are important and appreciated. Training programme comprising current trends in culture, information and promotion tools, financing and documenting activities and project work were also mentioned.

Among the **characteristics of good support from voluntary culture associations to the culture volunteers**, were named:

- Assigning a contact - person, a tutor/mentor, who would show everything, would create good, friendly atmosphere – to create the feeling of participation and belonging;
- Assigning the tasks gradually, the way the volunteer wouldn’t feel overloaded from the one side, and would feel needed from the other. The tasks assigned should be specific and based on the skills and interests of the volunteer - so the volunteer could show his/her potential, have a success, satisfaction. Feedback for the volunteer should be assured.

Recognising the volunteers training needs and offering trainings answering them was also mentioned.

Asked about **what characterises good support from other key stakeholders in the local communities**, the learning providers underlined mutual benefits of cross-sector cooperation:

- Offering financial support – and receiving recognisability in return (especially the local businesses). While speaking with the other stakeholders, it is worth underlining that interesting cultural offer makes the place interesting for tourists. “Places networking” was mentioned – “there should be common for whole the region guidebooks for tourist published and disseminated, presenting, for example, all the castles in an area”;
- Sharing, with the organisation and it’s volunteers, knowledge from the specific field the given stakeholder specialises in; for example openness to organise study visits to share experience;
- The cooperation should be sustainable, regular. Loyalty packages and support at spreading information about the local organisations activities and events organised would be welcomed.

As the **final recommendations** the learning providers underlined:

- The local initiatives should be well thought over and well planned and should satisfy the local needs - of the people they are directed to. Both the organisers and the participants should be satisfied. To be able to achieve this, the organisations should devote a lot of time to the people for whose benefit they work. To learn the people, to be present where the people are. To adjust the workstyle to the local community habits, to constantly build relations.
- To cooperate with the formal and non-formal education sector is important. The cultural

organisations should be present at schools, invite volunteers, create development possibilities for the young people.

3.2. Learners

Asked about the **key competences of currently successful culture volunteers**, by all the interviewees the specific skills, something the volunteer is good at, to be offered to the local community, as well as openness to be involved in local activities were named. The following competences were also named:

- Leadership skills, ability to set goals and to realise them;
- organisational and coordination skills;
- skills to acquire financing;
- ability to bringing in ideas, ability to present ideas and encourage others to realise them.

The senior volunteers underlined the significance of passing the traditions, local knowledge and specific skills (cultural heritage) to the new generations.

Concerning **characteristics of good practise on how to engage culture volunteers in sparsely populated areas**, learners named:

- Make the volunteer interested in a specific project; there is no use to offer “general” cooperation;
- underlining the project is prestigious, important;
- use various channels for recruitment: schools, parishes, local media, Internet – to reach various people. “There are many channels available in small towns”;
- to underline that it is up to the volunteer how much he or she would like to be involved, to respect this;
- inviting potential volunteers to the events organised by the organisation – “the person would then see engaged people, will see they have fun – and will be interested to join”. So the solution is to “give a good example”, to “infect” with activity;

Asked about **what characterises good practise on how to train culture volunteers to be successful in sparsely populated areas** – the training programmes should include:

- Project work methodology: from an idea to action plan; including budgeting;
- developing coordination skills ;
- fundraising;
- communication and negotiations, PR;
- Information on the cooperating organisation main activities, its offer for the volunteers, the rules for cooperation, the benefits for the volunteers.

Among the **characteristics of good support from voluntary culture associations to the culture volunteers**, named were:

- Professional and personal development opportunities offered to the volunteers (through trainings among others);
- support at cooperation with other organisations;

- support of the most experienced volunteers, cooperating with the organisation longer
- by guiding, sharing experience with the new ones;
- give the tools needed for work - “If I’m asked to paint, I should receive paint and brushes”;
- underlining the care about the local citizens, reminding about the local history.

What characterises good support from other key stakeholders in the local communities? According to the learners group these are:

- Getting involved in common activities. School or local authorities should cooperate with the local organisations at delivering cultural offer. This should be combined with promoting each other and informing about each other activities (the organisation promotes the school, the school – the organisation). The schools shall be involved for the benefit of their students – who would develop their competences cooperating at the projects of the local cultural organisations. Local authorities should cooperate with the local citizens.
- The local media should get interested – they would receive interesting stories to present; should be willing to offer media patronages;
- Offering sponsoring (not only finances, but also in-kind);

As the **final recommendations** the learners offered:

- What is most important, the initiatives offered should always answer real, local needs. The culture sector organisations should be open for the local people ideas, should listen to the local people – if this condition is fulfilled – the local people will get involved;
- Cooperation with the local community should be conducted on equal conditions (for example a café in redecorated culture house was opened – and the local people were asked how to name the café);
- Everyone involved in cultural activities should have his/her specific role;
- Taking care of practical details is also important – for example ensuring transport for the seniors would like to participate in an event.

3.3. Other stakeholders

Asked about the **key competences of currently successful culture volunteers**, the following were named:

- Very good time management;
- Ability to set and realise goals; consequence at realising goals;
- Creativity, inventiveness;
- Involvement, passion;
- Interpersonal, social skills, good communication skills to communicate what one wants to achieve;
- Organisational skills, including risk assessment;
- Openness for new knowledge, participating in various trainings and schoolings;
- Involvement in local social life, knowing the local people; understanding local relations
- Knowledge how to acquire funds and cooperating with formal organisations – able to receive grants;
- Vocational competences in the field of culture;
- Public spirit, openness for voluntary work.

Concerning **characteristics of good practise on how to engage culture volunteers in sparsely populated areas**

- As most effective was named showing what the organisation do and inviting to cooperation – when something is happening – to be able to give the volunteers specific tasks; recruiting persons to specific tasks;
- Asking other actively working organisations for help at finding volunteers;
- As good places to search: the village council, the local school, Internet invitations, social media invitations were named;
- “Word of mouth” marketing – instead of formal recruitment – reaching the potential volunteers through personal contacts, personal networks was underlined;
- “Infecting”. One of the stakeholders was invited to one of the local events organised by the local organisation – she has experienced something - and she just “stayed” - is still cooperating with this organisation, having specific tasks assigned.
- Making it clear for the volunteer what benefits may he/she have from cooperation;
- For a culture institution – it is good to have some constant group of cooperating persons. Then – if any event planned – it is easier to choose/invite volunteers from among the people you already know.

Asked about **what characterises good practise on how to train culture volunteers to be successful in sparsely populated areas**, were named:

- Motivating to activity by explaining, “why are we doing what we are doing”, showing the importance of the activities;
- Legal and organisational aspects: acquiring finances, who and when/under what conditions you may make a photo of – so the volunteer wouldn’t make mistake at the very beginning;
- Specific competences trainings: fundraising, finding partners, preparing cooperation offers etc.;
- Administrative training (“how to do the papers”);
- Introductory training concerning the project being realised, the volunteer would participate in – it’s goals, results, potential risks, set of tasks to be realised...;
- “Sociology of the local environment” – all this that, locally, may influence the success/failure of the actions undertaken;

It was also underlined, that the training needed depends on the tasks the volunteer would be responsible for. When it comes to general skills: workshop of assessing one’s own strengths and weaknesses; when it comes to the youth – addressing their vocational plans, dreams and goals.

Among the **characteristics of good support from voluntary culture associations to the culture volunteers** are:

- To give the new person a “pilot” – who would open doors, advise, deliver data needed for delivering the task; to offer friendship and support – so the volunteers – even if little experienced – could feel equal, valuable partners at realising the tasks.
- Offering trust, assigning tasks that the person may succeed at realising;
- Common work, some team building activities to integrate new persons – to show that the new

person is a part of a team, may count on the others;

- Assigning specific task – so it would be clear for the volunteer what is his/her responsibility.

Assigning tasks suited for a specific volunteer, his/her skills, abilities, predispositions.

- Enabling the new ones to learning by doing – so they could learn as much as possible, get as much experience as possible;

Asked about **what characterises good support from other key stakeholders in the local communities**, the following characteristics were made:

- Inviting to events, including trainings, organised by the other stakeholders;

- Financial support from the successful local businesses; financing “own contributions” to the projects for the local organisations;

- Sponsors support – also in kind. For example the local bottle-water producer delivers drinks for the event organised by the local organisation; the businesswoman interviewed for example offers her artistic works for charity auctions; supporting with knowledge/good practices/advisory, organisational support, institutional support;

- Support at advertisement, “word of mouth” marketing - makes the most sense in small towns;

- Getting the local VIPs, local celebrities involved in volunteering – to serve as an example for the others;

- Encouraging to activity, showing what is possible, offering help.

- Building partnership relations: the volunteer – the external stakeholder was strongly underlined.

As the **final recommendations** the stakeholders offered:

- Recognition of the fact, that there are people working just for an idea, of public spirit, as volunteers – and to appreciate their activities;

- Awareness, that in some local communities people need to get accustomed with cultural activities, that it takes time to get the local people to attend an exhibition. It is important to be regular, consequent, repeating activities and invitations. The event may not have a full public for the first time which shouldn't be discouraging. Both the organisers and the local people need to get accustomed to each other - and to the new offer;

- The volunteer should know what she/he should do, should not be engaged for “general” activities, but given specific tasks. The tasks entrusted to the volunteer should fit his/her competences and interests. The volunteer should also be offered some independence, “free hand”; the organisation should listen to the volunteers.

- The most important: passion and good atmosphere at the cultural activities. “You may infect with motivation under the condition you know what you want. It helps to overcome all sorts of problems”.

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4. The common key results and recommendations.

Concluding the quantitative results, most of the statements provided were assessed as relevant or highly relevant by all 3 respondents groups. Knowing good practise on how culture volunteering in sparsely populated areas can promote civic participation, community bonding and local identity are seen most important by all the 3 respondents groups. Good **skills** in finding extra money by fundrising, seeking sponsors etc. are very important for the learners, and least important of all 10 provided for the learning providers and the other stakeholders. **To engage** the volunteers, the career appeal was seen as very important both for the learning providers and the other stakeholders, to the contrary with the learners, who have seen it as least important. The traditional announcement in the local news media and at notice boards in shops, libraries and community centres were seen as least relevant both by other stakeholders and learning providers.

Regarding the **training programs**, by both learners and learning providers, highest importance is given to: recognising and assessing one's own strengths and weaknesses and articulating possible needs and priorities for extra training to gain the needed extra competences. Training in the field of finding extra money by fund-raising, seeking sponsors was among the least important for learning providers and the other stakeholders.

Support at finding and contacting the appropriate nationwide experts, speakers and advisers in the field was seen as least important by the other stakeholders in the contrary to learning provides, who seen this aspect among the most relevant.

As for the qualitative results, there are some common points visible in the essential conditions for successful culture volunteering in sparsely populated areas, named by all the three main research groups: learning providers, learners and the key stakeholders: The key seems to be the knowledge about the local community; being in touch with the local people; listening to them, answering their needs. To achieve this involvement in the community's social life is needed to be able to understanding local relations. This is why it is worth to strengthen interpersonal, social skills: leadership, organizational etc. – also through training programs. The volunteer should be assigned specific tasks, fitted to her/his competences and interests. Essential for engaging new volunteers is making the organisations' activities visible, giving a good example, "infecting" by activity. Last but not least, cooperation with wide networks of stakeholders is desirable. Partnership relations with the key stakeholders should be constantly developed being aware that the cooperation brings mutual benefits.

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