

Matej Bel University, Banska Bystrica

and

the Platform of Volunteer Centers and Organizations

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# **Benefits** of Volunteering for Unemployed People – **VOLWEM** **Project**

2013

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# 1. Introduction

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Volunteering brings a lot of benefits. In the Preamble of the Universal Declaration on Volunteering that was adopted at the 11th biennial Conference of the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) in Paris in September 1990 it is stated that: “consider their commitment as a tool for social, cultural, economic and environmental development in a changing world“. At the same time, the Declaration states that volunteering „enhances human potential and the quality of daily life, building up human solidarity, provides answers for the great challenges of our time, striving for a better and more peaceful world; and contributes to the vitality of economic life, even creating jobs and new professions“.<sup>1</sup>

Report of the European Parliament on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion (2008) says that “volunteering:

- has an economic value (the economic contribution of NPIs is on average 5% of GDP and that, even conservatively estimated, volunteer time accounts for more than one quarter of this figure);
- is a major force nurturing civil society and strengthening solidarity;
- demonstrated a high level of added value: for every EUR 1 organizations spent on supporting volunteers, they received an average return worth between EUR 3 and EUR 8;
- means a very significant contribution to building up social capital ;
- lead to significant savings for public services;
- contributes to the personal and social development of the volunteer and has a positive impact within the community, for example, on interpersonal relationships;
- leads to the direct involvement of citizens in local development, and thus can play an important role in the fostering of civil society and democracy;
- can have a positive effect on people’s health; whereas this health benefit can be enjoyed by people of all ages and can help prevent physical and mental illness.“<sup>2</sup>

Benefits of volunteering can be generally divided into benefits from several points of views: of general public, of a local community, of an organization involving volunteers, of the recipients of help that is provided by volunteers, and of the volunteer himself/herself.<sup>3</sup> In this publication, we are focusing on the last group of benefits.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Universal Declaration on Volunteering* adopted by IAVE in 1990.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the European Parliament on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion* (2008).

<sup>3</sup> BROZMANOVÁ GREGOROVÁ, A., MARČEK, E., MRAČKOVÁ, A. 2009. *Analýza dobrovoľníctva na Slovensku*. Banská Bystrica : PF UMB, OZ Pedagóg, PDCS, PANET. ISBN 978-80-8083-844-7 (only in Slovak).

While volunteering, a person acquires new skills and experience, meets with new people, places and/or cultures; he/she is often confronted with social issues and challenges but also with the diversity, differences, and other life conditions or life styles. Volunteering strengthens self-confidence, brings new stimuli and motivation into life, it can engage even vulnerable or marginalized groups into activity. Volunteers gain a feeling of importance, meaningfulness, and the value of their own activity, donated time, and effort. All these aspects of volunteering are very important benefits for professional but also personal development of a volunteer. In many countries, there are systems for recognition of these benefits for the world of work. In Slovakia, the situation is different. Even though there are several initiatives in Slovakia with the aim to draw attention of various sectors of the society to the recognition of benefits of non-formal education (such as the National Programme KOMPRAX implemented by the Slovak Youth Institute – Iuventa) we lack a legal framework that would enable recognition of non-formal education and thus also the skills acquired through volunteering as well as the systems for validation of these skills and the interest of formal education institutions and employers. According the latest research on volunteering in Slovakia<sup>4</sup> among all socio-economic groups, unemployed people showed the lowest level of participation in formal volunteering (only 13.3 % while the average participation for adult population reached 27.5 %). The research also showed that the low engagement of unemployed people in volunteering is not related only with their lack of interest but also with barriers related to suitable working methods that would enable awareness about volunteering and involvement of these groups of people into volunteering.

These facts inspired partners from three countries to design and implement the VOLWEM (Volunteering as a Way to Employment) Project. During the project run, the role of the each of the four involved volunteer centers (in Banská Bystrica, Košice, Nitra, and Prešov) was to engage at least 15 unemployed people into volunteering. It was only one part of the project that we used for the validation of methodologies and tools that were developed through the project and we consider it to be the most important source of inspiration and experience.

In this publication, we present the benefits that volunteering has brought to unemployed people who were participating in the VOLWEM Project. These benefits were mapped through entrance and exit questionnaires which were filled in by volunteers themselves and their volunteer coordinators. As the second resource of data, we have used the information on competences gained through volunteering recorded through the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* which is one of the main outcomes of the VOLWEM Project.

Despite all the benefits that volunteering can bring, we need to emphasize that although one can grow, learn, and acquire new experience through volunteering, it is not a 100% recipe for a successful job search. Within the framework of the VOLWEM Project, we see it more as a tool to increase the possibility to get employed. This is confirmed also by the results of this analysis.

In case you would like to have more information about the project, please, do not hesitate to contact the Platform of Volunteer Centers or some of the involved volunteer centers (the contact information can be found at the end of this publication).

For more information visit: <http://volwem.dobrovolnickecentra.sk/>.

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<sup>4</sup> Brozmanová Gregorová, et. al.: *Dobrovoľníctvo na Slovensku – výskumné reflexie*. Bratislava : Iuventa, 2012 (only in Slovak).

## 2. Methodology Used

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During the project run, the involved volunteer centers (with the help of organizations working with volunteers) were working with more than 150 unemployed people, 96 of which were actually involved into volunteering activities. Thirty-three of these volunteers (34.38 %) were able to get a job during or after their participation in the project.

At the beginning of their volunteer experience, the unemployed volunteers filled in *the entrance competence questionnaire* and at the end also *the exit questionnaire*. The exit questionnaire was – in addition to volunteers themselves – filled in also by their volunteer coordinators in the organizations they were active in. Both – entrance and exit questionnaires served not only for mapping the benefits of volunteering for unemployed people but were used also as a part of the methodology of the work with unemployed people within volunteering as in this questionnaires the unemployed people were selecting from the list of competences those they would like to develop or improve through volunteering. Thus their volunteer coordinators could adjust the activities for the volunteers according their needs and expectations and lead them toward their personal development.

In questionnaires, we were gathering information about the subjectively perceived level of development of 46 competences divided into these areas:

- Communication Competences
- Digital Competences
- Problem Solving
- Learning Competences
- Social and Personal Competences
- Competences Related to Employment and Entrepreneurship
- Civic and Cultural Competences.

At the same time, in the entrance questionnaire, the unemployed people were supposed to select competences they would like to develop and in the exit questionnaire to assess whether it really happened.

As the second source for the analysis of benefits of volunteering for unemployed people, data recorded through the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie*<sup>5</sup> were used. *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* is an online tool that enables volunteers to recognize, name, record, and prove competences gained or improved through volunteering. Their self-assessments need to be supported by pictures, videos, documents and/or other outcomes or results of their volunteer activity. Completed questionnaire is checked by the volunteer coordinator who was working with them directly at the organization they volunteered for. Gained competences are further assessed by a special committee at the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica. Based on

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<sup>5</sup> the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* can be found at <http://dzrucnosti.dobrovolnickecentra.sk> (only in Slovak).

this assessment, the volunteer gets (or does not get) a certificate that confirms competences gained through volunteering.

In the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie*, there is the list of 34 competences divided into these areas:

- Communication Competences
- Digital Competences
- Problem Solving
- Learning Competences
- Social and Personal Competences
- Competences Related to Employment and Entrepreneurship
- Civic and Cultural Competences
- Mathematical Competence and Competences in Science.

The list of competences presented in the entrance and exit questionnaires and in the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* is to a great extent similar, however, there are also some differences. In the online tool, there are also mathematical competence and competences in science on the list, however, these competences are not part of the others competence questionnaires. The reason for this is that questionnaires were developed at the beginning of the project implementation and their assessment served as a basis for the creation of the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie*.

After completion and study of all entrance and exit questionnaires, we included **65 entrance and exit questionnaires** and **61 completed questionnaires of the online tool D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie** into this analysis of benefits of volunteering for unemployed people.

Out of 65 unemployed volunteers who filled in the competence questionnaires, there were 46 (82.88 %) women and 19 (17.12 %) men. Talking about their age, these people were from 19 to 58 years old. Percentual distribution of individual age groups is documented in the table T1.

### T1 Age of Volunteers Included into the Analysis

Age groups	%
15 – 19 years	0.76%
20 – 24 years	9.92%
25 – 29 years	20.61%
30 – 34 years	10.69%
35 – 39 years	13.36%
40 – 44 years	16.03%
45 – 49 years	5.34%
50 – 54 years	6.11%

55 + years	17.18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Talking about the education, 29 of these volunteers (34.94%) have reached a secondary level degree and 36 of them (65.06%) reached university degree.

Volunteers were helping in 28 non-profit nongovernmental organizations active in various fields, e.g. at mothers' center, community center, organizations providing social services, children and youth organizations, but also in cultural organizations such as a museum or a university library. Unemployed volunteers were involved into many activities – they provided help with administration, technical assistance, leisure time activities with children but also with seniors, disabled people, but also helped to drug-addicts. They have organized leisure time courses, creative workshops, participated in the creation of campaigns and projects, helped with the renovation of interior but also exterior of organizations, participated in the public money collections, were approaching sponsors and donors, helped children with homeworks, and participated in many other activities for the benefit of the organizations they were active in.

In both cases we have chosen unemployed people who volunteered at least for forty hours. For volunteers who wanted to get the certificate through the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie*, 40 hours of volunteering was the obligatory minimum to get involved and in the case of competence questionnaires we have decided to do this selection because it is easier to see the reached changes if the people volunteer for a longer time period. Unemployed people involved into the analysis worked approximately for 72.25 hours. Maximum number of volunteered hours was 240 hours, median was 60 hours. Volunteers were active in organizations involving organizations from 2 to 12 months.

Motivation of unemployed people to get involved into volunteering can be seen in following answers of volunteers to the question *What did motivate you for volunteering?*:

*"I wanted to be useful".*

*"I had nothing to do so I decided to get involved".*

*"I wanted to gain new experience".*

*"I wanted to try something new".*

*"I wanted to spend my time of unemployment actively".*

*"I wanted to try what it means to be a volunteer and see how the organizations involving volunteers really work".*

*"I wanted to test what I can do".*

*"I wanted to be in contact with people".*

*"As I was unemployed, I decided to 'work' this way".*

*"I wanted to feel that someone will appreciate what I am doing for him/her".*

*"I wanted to improve my skills important for the work with people".*

*"I wanted to get some practice".*

*"I wanted to learn something about myself and my potential".*

*"I was unemployed for a long time and wanted to do at least something".*

*"After the graduation, I wanted to spend the time actively, in a usefull way, and at the same time to learn and get to know something new".*

*"I wanted to use my free time in a useful way and I thing that volunteering is one of the options how to do that. I wanted to be helpful for the environment I live in and last but not least I consider this activity to be a great source of experience and the oppportunity to improve my skills related to the work with children and youth".*

It is obvious that unemployed people were motivated for volunteering by different factors. On one hand it is possible to identify those that are directed rather toward other people or organizations (such as to be usefull). However, so called "selfish" motivation (those that confirmed that unemployed people wanted to helpe primarily to themselves through involvement into volunteering, such as they wanted to experience something new, to improve some skills, to spend their time actively, to gain new contacts or practice, to get to know themselves, etc.) were present much more often. We do not perceive this fact negatively, but rather positively as within volunteer programs that are focusing on the development of volunteers, this type of motivation can be viewed as the key one.

## 3. Analysis of Benefits of Volunteering for Unemployed People in the Area of Competence Development

In the further analysis, we will focus on the comparison of subjectively perceived level of competences and their development in individual areas. Even though there were no statistically important differences found out in the comparison of entrance and exit evaluations, this analysis points out to interesting findings.

### 3.1. Communication Competences

The first area covered communication competences. The summary of findings that were recorded before and after the volunteering experience is provided in the table T2.

**T2 Communication competences before and after volunteering experience**

Communication Competences	average before*	modus before	average after	modus after	average difference
<b>Ability to participate in discussions, to actively present something</b>	3.09	3	3.67	4	0.58
<b>Ability to actively listen to others</b>	3.67	3	4.22	4	0.55
<b>Presentation skills</b>	2.87	3	3.42	4	0.55
<b>Ability to express one's own opinion</b>	3.42	3	3.92	4	0.50
<b>Ability to feel empathy with other people</b>	3.66	3	4.09	4	0.43
<b>Ability to express own opinion in a written form</b>	3.29	4	3.60	4	0.31
<b>Ability to use audio-visual tools effectively</b>	2.92	3	3.22	3	0.30
<b>Ability to communicate in a foreign language</b>	2.40	2	2.61	3	0.21

*\*on the scale from 0 to 5, where 0 = not developed at all, 1 = very little developed, 2 = little developed, 3 = developed on an average level, 4 = developed and 5 = very well developed competence*

Out of these communication competences, the most developed within the volunteering activities were: the ability to participate in a discussion, to express own opinion, to listen actively to others, and presentation skills. Within the average evaluation, in these competences the volunteers experienced the biggest difference before and after volunteering experience. Before the volunteering experience, the unemployed volunteers assessed these competences as developed on an average level (modus 3) while after volunteering experience they have seen them as developed (modus 4).

These competences belong also among those that volunteers wanted to develop and reviewed their development in a positive direction (see table T3).

### T3 Preferred and developed communication competences within volunteering

Communication Competences	Number of people who wanted to develop this competence	Number of people who have developed this competence	%
<b>Ability to express own opinion</b>	8	8	100.00
<b>Ability to use audio-visual tools effectively</b>	2	2	100.00
<b>Ability to participate in discussions, to actively present something</b>	13	12	92.31
<b>Presentation skills</b>	6	5	83.33
<b>Ability to express once's own opinion in a written form</b>	4	3	75.00
<b>Ability to feel empathy with other people</b>	6	4	66.67
<b>Ability to actively listen to others</b>	6	4	66.67
<b>Ability to communicate in a foreign language</b>	17	8	47.06

*\*on the scale from 0 to 5, where 0 = not developed at all, 1 = very little developed, 2 = little developed, 3 = developed on an average level, 4 = developed and 5 = very well developed competence*

Similarly, also within the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie*, the communication competences belonged to those competences that unemployed volunteers presented as those most often developed within volunteering. 91.80 % of people who used the online tool stated that they have developed the ability to adequately communicate in mother tongue and 86.89 % the ability to participate in a discussion.

### T4 Communication competences within the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie*

	Number of people who stated that this competence was developed	% of the total number of completed questionnaires
<b>Ability to adequately communicate in mother tongue</b>	56	91.80
<b>Ability to work with information</b>	53	86.89
<b>Ability to actively listen to others</b>	40	65.57
<b>Ability to participate in a discussion</b>	35	57.38
<b>Ability to communicate in a foreign language</b>	13	21.31

Answers of volunteers to open questions related to what they have learnt or how they have changed their attitudes, beliefs or values through volunteering also proved the development of their communication competences. Here are some of them:

*"Thanks to volunteering, I have learnt to communicate better and to behave assertively".*

*"I have learnt to be much more active in presentation and communication".*

*"I can work better with information".*

*"I have learnt to better communicate with people".*

*"I have improved my skills as a moderator of discussions, and I am better in leading individual interviews".*

*"I have learnt how to better listen and understand others".*

*"I have learnt how to say my opinion".*

*"I have learnt to feel empathy for others".*

*"I have learnt how to be patient, how to listen, and how to find time for a client".*

*"My communication skills, the ability to work under stress respectively to look for solutions for crisis situations, but also my ability to cooperate, discuss, assess, and to provide feed-back have improved".*

*"I have improved my communication skills; it have helped me to feel empathy for other people and to understand their needs".*

We consider the fact that volunteering creates a space for the development of various communication competences to be an important finding in case when the volunteering is perceived as a tool for the support of employability. Unemployed people often – especially when they are unemployed for a long time – lose this type of skills and abilities because of social isolation and the fact that their activities are performed only within a small circle of people, such as family or friends. Volunteering **'forces' them to leave this circle and creates opportunities** for communication with various types of people – with the employees of the organization they work for, with its clients or target groups and/or with other volunteers.

Readiness for the communication in mother tongue involves not only the ability to communicate but also to work with information, actively listen to others and participate in discussions, and can be considered to be one of the basic conditions for employability. These types of competences were assessed as the most important factor for the selection of future employees also by representatives of HR professionals and employees in the survey carried out within the VOLWEM Project<sup>6</sup>. The ability to actively listen to others was by 60% of respondents of this survey assessed as the one that job applicants often lack.

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<sup>6</sup> BROZMANOVÁ, GREGOROVÁ, A., VLAŠIČOVÁ, J. 2013. Správa z prieskumu medzi zamestnávateľmi v rámci projektu Dobrovoľníctvo – cesta k zamestnaniu. Banská Bystrica : Univerzita Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici a Platforma dobrovoľníckych centier a organizácií (only in Slovak).

## 3.2. Digital Competences

The second area of competences we were focusing on and trying to find out the progress reached through volunteering were the digital competences. Readiness to use information technologies and the work with information belongs today – in the time of information society – among one of the key competences for personal and professional life. The table T5 documents that there was no distinctive difference reached if we compare the level of these competences before and after volunteering experience (the biggest difference was 0.33), however, each of these competencies was developed by volunteers.

### T5 Digital competences before and after volunteering experience

Digital Competences	average before*	modus before	average after	modus after	average difference
<b>Internet Skills</b>	3.65	4	4.02	5	0.37
<b>PC Skills</b>	3.43	3	3.70	4	0.27
<b>E-mail Skills</b>	3.73	4	4.03	5	0.30

*\*on the scale from 0 to 5, where 0 = not developed at all, 1 = very little developed, 2 = little developed, 3 = developed on an average level, 4 = developed and 5 = very well developed competence*

While at the beginning of their volunteer experience the unemployed volunteers assessed their digital competences as developed on an average level or developed, after volunteering experience they have seen them as developed or very well developed. Data presented in the table T6 also confirm these findings.

### T6 Information competences preferred and developed within volunteering

Digital Competences	Number of people who wanted to develop this competence	Number of people who have developed this competence	%
<b>PC Skills</b>	10	10	100.00
<b>Internet Skills</b>	4	4	100.00
<b>E-mail Skills</b>	4	4	100.00

Four unemployed volunteers included into the analysis wanted to develop their internet and e-mail skills. After their volunteering experience they have stated that these skills were really developed by them. In the case of the PC skills development, these skills were improved by 10 unemployed volunteers out of ten which means – similarly to the previous example – 100%.

The development of digital competences was documented by unemployed volunteers also by the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* (table T7).

## T7 Digital competences within the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie*

	Number of people who stated that this competence was developed by them	% of the total number of completed questionnaires
<b>PC Skills</b>	46	75.41
<b>Internet Skills</b>	44	72.13
<b>Critical attitude to available information</b>	18	29.51

More than 70 % of volunteers who filled in the online questionnaire stated that thanks to volunteering, they have improved PC skills and internet skills.

Even though unemployed volunteers were helping in various organizations, they were often involved into activities that required work on PC or with the internet. Thanks to that, the development of digital competences and thus also the level of employability was supported. According the results of the survey among HR professionals and employers carried out within the VOLWEM Project, the computer literacy was important for the selection of new employees for 76.2 % of them. It is obvious that in future, these competences will play an important role in majority of jobs.

### 3.3. Competences related to problem solving

Competences related to problem solving belong to the most important for working and family life of an individual. Every person needs to solve problems and conflicts almost on a daily basis and the ability to effectively deal with them – either individually or within the cooperation with other people – is a precondition of our successes. The development of these competences within volunteering is documented by following findings.

#### T8 Competences related to problem solving before and after volunteering experience

Competences Related to Problem Solving	average before*	modus before	average after	modus after	average difference
<b>Ability to work in demanding and difficult situations</b>	3.06	3	3.66	3	0.60
<b>Ability to make decisions</b>	3.28	3	3.86	4	0.58
<b>Ability to handle stress</b>	3.154	3	3.692	4	0.54
<b>Ability to cooperate with others on solution of problems</b>	3.44	3	3.93	4	0.49
<b>Ability to solve problems and conflicts</b>	3.31	3	3.73	4	0.42

\*on the scale from 0 to 5, where 0 = not developed at all, 1 = very little developed, 2 = little developed, 3 = developed on an average level, 4 = developed and 5 = very well developed competence

In the tables T8 and T9, we can see that volunteering of unemployed participants of the project improved their ability to work in demanding and difficult situations, their ability to make decisions, to handle stress, to cooperate with others on solution of problems, and also to solve problems and conflicts. The progress happened in the average evaluation of the level of individual competences before and after volunteering experience and also in the most often preferred value in case of three of these competences.

### **T9 Competences related to problem solving preferred and developed within volunteering**

Competences related to problem solving	Number of people who wanted to develop this competence	Number of people who have developed this competence	%
<b>Ability to cooperate with others on solution of problems</b>	4	4	100.00
<b>Ability to work in demanding and difficult situations</b>	10	8	80.00
<b>Ability to handle stress</b>	19	14	73.68
<b>Ability to solve problems and conflicts</b>	15	11	73.33
<b>Ability to make decisions</b>	9	5	55.56

Four unemployed volunteers wanted to improve their ability to cooperate with others on solution of problems and all of them also stated that this ability was improved within volunteering. The ability to solve problems and conflicts and the ability to work in demanding and difficult situations and to handle stress was developed by more than 70 % unemployed people who expected the development of these competences; the ability to make decisions was developed by more than half of them.

The results recorded through the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* in the area of competences related to problem solving were slightly different than those stated in entrance and exit competence questionnaires. More than 60 % of volunteers who filled in the online tool documented the development of ability to perceive and analyse problems and to solve them in an independent and creative way. More than 50 % of unemployed volunteers documented the development of ability to make a decision and to think critically and ability to handle stress and to work in demanding and difficult situations.

### **T10 Competences related to problem solving within the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie***

	Number of people who stated that this competence was developed by them	% of the total number of completed questionnaires
<b>Ability to perceive and analyse problems and to solve them in an independent and creative way</b>	37	60.66

<b>Ability to handle stress and to work in demanding and difficult situations</b>	35	57.38
<b>Ability to make a decision and to think critically</b>	33	54.10

The development of readiness for creative, critical, and independent problem solving is well documented also by following quotes of unemployed volunteers related to the assessment of personal benefits of volunteering activities:

*"I have improved my ability to solve unforeseen and difficult situations".*

*"Through the events for children I have learnt how to solve problems and conflicts that arose from time to time".*

Competences related to problem solving can be seen as another type of competences important for employability. The ability to solve problems was considered to be important by 95.8 % of HR professionals and employers in the survey. 62.3 % of them stated that this competence is one of those that job applicants lack most often.

Even though we try to create for volunteering an environment that would be supportive and without conflicts, our findings show that many volunteer activities need the ability to solve problems and conflicts and to handle the work in stress or in a difficult situation. This consequently leads to the development of competences needed for the problem solving.

### 3.4. Learning Competences

The improvement of learning competences shows that through volunteering activities volunteers not only learn new skills but also improve their ability to learn new things and to use the new knowledge and skills in their further lives.

#### T11 Learning competences before and after volunteering experience

Learning Competences	average before*	modus before	average after	modus after	average difference
<b>Ability to gain new skills</b>	3.69	4	4.12	4	0.43
<b>Ability to learn and to use new knowledge</b>	3.68	4	4.06	4	0.38

\*on the scale from 0 to 5, where 0 = not developed at all, 1 = very little developed, 2 = little developed, 3 = developed on an average level, 4 = developed and 5 = very well developed competence

As documented in tables T11 and T12, the development of the competences in this area was confirmed also in this area, even though not in large extent. In most cases, the unemployed people stated that these competences were developed before and after the volunteering experience. The development of the ability to learn and use new knowledge was expected and also developed by five of them. The ability to gain new skills was developed by 7 volunteers out of 9 who expected the development of this ability.

## T12 Learning competences preferred and developed within volunteering

Learning Competences	Number of people who wanted to develop this competence	Number of people who have developed this competence	%
Ability to learn and to use new knowledge	5	5	100.00
Ability to gain new skills	9	7	77.78

More than 50 % of unemployed volunteers documented through the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* not only the development of the ability to learn and use new knowledge, but also the development of self-motivation to learn.

## T13 Learning competences within the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie*

	Number of people who stated that this competence was developed by them	% of the total number of completed questionnaires
Ability to learn and to use new knowledge	39	63.93
Self-motivation to learn	31	50.82

One of the unemployed persons for example volunteered as a lecturer for a regular leisure time activity for children and youth and started to educate himself in this area. As he said: "It has forced me to read more, to look for activities and information in the area of natural science". Another volunteer stated: "I have learnt to apply the knowledge I gained in school into real life situations".

## 3.5. Social and Personal Competences

Social and personal competences express the readiness for the relationships with other people, for the self-development, and self-management. Talking about this area, the most developed within volunteering was the ability to work with other people in team. Within this competence, the most distinctive progress was documented in its average assessment before and after volunteering experience. At the same time, the progress was showed in the modulus from the value 3 to the value 4 which means that unemployed people stated this competence after the volunteering experience as the developed, while before the volunteering experience as developed on an average level.

## T14 Social and Personal Competences before and after volunteering experience

Social and Personal Competences	average before*	modus before	average after	modus after	average difference
Ability to work in team	3.631	3	4.169	4	0.54
Self-respect and self-confidence	3.406	3	3.89	4	0.48
Ability to take over the responsibility for assigned tasks	3,688	4	4.123	4	0.44
Awareness of own qualities and vices (self-awareness)	3,453	3	3.83	4	0.38
Ability to handle own emotions	3.297	3	3.661	3	0.36
Ability to manage one's own personality	3.547	3	3.873	4	0.33
Ability to set up one's own personal goals	3.523	3	3.846	4	0.32
Adaptability and flexibility	3.615	3	3.938	4	0.32
Respect for opinions of others	3.969	4	4.246	4	0.28

\*on the scale from 0 to 5, where 0 = not developed at all, 1 = very little developed, 2 = little developed, 3 = developed on an average level, 4 = developed and 5 = very well developed competence

100 % of unemployed volunteers who expected the development of the ability to work in team also developed this ability. This is documented also by following quotations:

*"I have learnt to work in team, to handle my own moods, and to adapt to conditions"*

*"I have learnt to better work in team".*

*"I am more peaceful and self-confident when working in team".*

*"I know how to behave when working in team".*

## T15 Social and Personal Competences preferred and developed within volunteering

Social and Personal Competences	Number of people who wanted to develop this competence	Number of people who have developed this competence	%
Ability to work in team	5	5	100.00
Ability to take over the responsibility for assigned tasks	2	2	100.00
Respect for opinions of others	2	2	100.00
Ability to set up one's own personal goals	4	4	100.00
Ability to manage one's own personality	2	2	100.00
Adaptability and flexibility	12	11	91.67

<b>Awareness of own qualities and vices (self-awareness)</b>	7	6	85.71
<b>Self-respect and self-confidence</b>	7	4	57.14
<b>Ability to handle own emotions</b>	8	3	37.50

The ability to participate in a team work was documented through the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* as developed by more than 70 % of unemployed volunteers. The same percentage of them stated as developed also the responsibility and reliability.

The reason for development of the ability to work in team can be seen in the fact that majority of volunteers were doing group activities that were based on the cooperation with different numbers and types of clients but also of other volunteers and employees of organizations. At the same time, we can again connect the development of this ability with the development of employability. According the survey among HR professionals and employers carried out within the VOLWEM Project, the ability to work in team was considered to be important for the selection of new employees by 83.6 % of them.

#### **T16 Social and Personal Competences within the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie***

	<b>Number of people who stated that this competence was developed by them</b>	<b>% of the total number of completed questionnaires</b>
<b>Ability to work in team</b>	43	70.49
<b>Responsibility and reliability</b>	43	70.49
<b>Ability to develop and manage one's own personality</b>	32	52.46
<b>Self-respect and self-confidence</b>	32	52.46
<b>Adaptability and flexibility</b>	31	50.82
<b>Ability to tolerate others</b>	30	49.18

In the area of the development of social and personal competences we can mention as the more developed also the self-respect and self-confidence. The progress in this area was documented by more than 50 % of people who completed the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie*. If we compare the information provided before and after volunteering experience, the difference is 0.48 and the progress was from the value 3 to value 4. This benefit of volunteering is perceived as very important especially for the target group of unemployed volunteers as their self-confidence is – especially after the long time without a job – low and such a situation influences also their success rate when they are applying for a job. The benefits in this area are documented also by following statements of volunteers:

*"Everything I have learnt through volunteering strengthened my self-confidence".*

*"I am more self-confident".*

*"I have started to trust myself more".*

*"When I work in team or organize event, I am more self-confident".*

*"I was so proud of myself that after a longer time period I am doing something for others not only for myself".*

*"Thanks to volunteering my self-confidence improved. It came in time when I was truly frustrated that I am not able to find a job".*

*"I am more self-confident and open in contact with other people".*

The development of other abilities and skills covered by personal and social competences is documented by the fact that volunteering creates also a space for self-awareness and self-management of people. This is clearly illustrated by following quotes of unemployed volunteers:

*"They have showed me such opportunities and areas I can and should improve and develop in".*

*"My attitude toward myself has changed".*

*"I have realized my virtues".*

*"My self-control improved".*

*"I have learnt that every person deserves a second chance even though he/she failed in something".*

*"I have learnt how to be tolerant and how to accept other opinions and attitudes".*

*"I can accept and tolerate people".*

*"I am able to tolerate people around me".*

*"I am more tolerant".*

*"I have learnt how to help without prejudices and judgement".*

*"I have started to be more responsible".*

*"I am more flexible and I have more experience".*

*"I have learnt how to be more precise in work".*

*"I have learnt that it is important to do my best – in such a way people can trust me and can rely on me".*

*"I have learnt a lot about myself, my abilities and skills but also limits and vice I can work on".*

### 3.6. Competences related to employment and entrepreneurship

Competences related to employment and entrepreneurship express the readiness for employment, for the implementation of ideas, the sense for initiative and entrepreneurship, for creativity, for risk, and for development of professional career. In this area, we can identify several competences that were developed through volunteering.

The most extensive development was documented in time management. The average difference between the level of this competence before and after volunteering experience was 0.58 and the progress in modus was from the value 3 to the value 4. At the same time, 50 % of people who completed the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* stated that they have developed this ability. As one of the impacts of unemployment is the disorganization of time, we perceive the improvement of this ability by unemployed volunteers as very positive. Volunteering activities 'force' unemployed people to plan their day or week and their other activities when they agree with the organization that they would come and help. The development of this competence is supported also by these statements of unemployed volunteers:

*"I have learnt to organize my time"*

*"I have learnt to better organize my time"*

*"I have learnt how to distribute my time; I am not so slow anymore"*

*"I have learnt it is important to be on time and adhere to the terms"*

*"I try to be on time so that they would be satisfied with my performance"*

#### T17 Competences related to employment and entrepreneurship before and after volunteering experience

Competences related to employment and entrepreneurship	average before*	modus before	average after	modus after	average difference
<b>Skills in the area of project management</b>	2.80	3	3.40	3	0.60
<b>Time management</b>	3.46	3	4.05	4	0.58
<b>Ability to lead other people</b>	2.97	3	3.48	4	0.52
<b>Ability to orientate in a new working environment</b>	3.40	3	3.91	4	0.51
<b>Creativity</b>	3.28	3	3.77	4	0.49
<b>Skills related to the work with documentation</b>	2.94	3	3.37	4	0.43
<b>Ability to facilitate a meeting</b>	2.94	3	3.37	3	0.43
<b>Skills related to the area of presentation and promotion of activities</b>	3.02	3	3.43	3	0.42
<b>Organizational skills</b>	3.18	3	3.57	4	0.38

<b>Leadership</b>	3.45	3	3.80	4	0.35
<b>Ability to work according a plan</b>	3.68	4	3.95	4	0.28
<b>Ability to work independently</b>	3.66	4	3.91	4	0.25
<b>Ability to cooperate with experts</b>	3.45	3	3.72	4	0.27

\*on the scale from 0 to 5, where 0 = not developed at all, 1 = very little developed, 2 = little developed, 3 = developed on an average level, 4 = developed and 5 = very well developed competence

Ability to lead other people and ability to orientate in a new working environment are other abilities from this group of competences we have seen a more distinctive development within volunteering. In both cases, the results show the clearer progress in the average assessment, and all the people who planned to develop these competences within volunteering were also able to do so. The ability to orientate in a new working environment, respectively to adapt to new working conditions was checked in the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* as developed thanks to volunteering by more than 50 % of unemployed people who completed this tool.

The development of the ability to lead other people is – according to our opinion – related to the activities the volunteers were engaged in. Often, as it is stated above, they were working in a team or lead various groups of clients. As the environment of the organizations they were volunteering for was for majority of them new, it is obvious, that they were forced to adapt to new conditions.

### **T18 Competences related to employment and entrepreneurship preferred and developed within volunteering**

<b>Competences related to employment and entrepreneurship</b>	<b>Number of people who wanted to develop this competence</b>	<b>Number of people who have developed this competence</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Ability to orientate in a new working environment</b>	4	4	100.00
<b>Ability to work independently</b>	2	2	100.00
<b>Ability to cooperate with experts</b>	5	5	100.00
<b>Time management</b>	7	7	100.00
<b>Ability to lead other people</b>	12	12	100.00
<b>Creativity</b>	12	11	91.67
<b>Leadership</b>	6	5	83.33
<b>Organizational skills</b>	14	11	78.57
<b>Skills related to the work with documentation</b>	4	3	75.00
<b>Skills in the area of project management</b>	16	10	62.50
<b>Ability to facilitate a meeting</b>	5	3	60.00
<b>Skills related to the area of presentation and promotion of activities</b>	9	5	55.56
<b>Ability to work according a plan</b>	0	0	0

Volunteering activities also provided a space for the development of skills in the area of project management and for the development of creativity. Also in these competences we have identified higher average difference if we compare the situation before and after volunteering experience. These competences were developed by more than 75 % of volunteers who expected their development. Organizations these volunteers were working for often operate on a project principle (meaning that the funding is based only on the projects they design and find a donor for) and thus the volunteering there is a good space for learning how to plan, implement, and evaluate various activities. It is illustrated also by following quotes:

*"I have widened my knowledge in the area of project development".*

*"I have learnt the principles of project development".*

*"I have learnt what to avoid in the project preparation and the grant application".*

*"I have learnt why some grant applications are approved and some are not".*

*"I have learnt how to carry out various events, what to do before the actual event organization".*

*"I have learnt to better organize, plan, and evaluate activities".*

*"I have learnt how to develop my creativity".*

### **T19 Competences related to employment and entrepreneurship within the online tool D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie**

	<b>Number of people who stated that this competence was developed by them</b>	<b>% of the total number of completed questionnaires</b>
<b>Time management</b>	31	50.82
<b>Ability to adapt for working conditions</b>	28	45.90
<b>Ability to plan and organize one's own work</b>	24	39.34
<b>Entrepreneurial attitude and thinking</b>	22	36.07
<b>Ability to lead other people</b>	21	34.43
<b>Ability to manage projects</b>	21	34.43
<b>Ability to focus on a client</b>	20	32.79
<b>Ability to present and promote something</b>	18	29.51
<b>Ability to lead a meeting</b>	15	24.59

### 3.7. Civic and cultural competences

In the area of civic and cultural competences, we haven't experienced any distinctive progress in individual competences. Even though the progress can be seen in the shift of the level of competence before and after volunteering experience from the value 3 to the value 4, the differences in the average assessment were not high. Specific abilities and skills in this area were not something that volunteers aimed to develop.

This fact can be related especially to the types of organizations the unemployed volunteers were active in. Even though there were some cultural and community organizations involved, these were usually the service providers, not advocates that would help the unemployed volunteers to develop their readiness for the involvement in civic life or for the support of cultural values.

#### T20 Civic and cultural competences before and after volunteering experience

Civic and cultural competences	average before*	modus before	modus after	average difference
<b>Understanding the issues of discrimination and prejudices</b>	3.64	3	4	0.26
<b>Understanding different values and beliefs</b>	3.53	3	4	0.31
<b>Respect for diversity of other cultures</b>	3.87	4	4	0.13
<b>Providing help to people in critical situations</b>	3.69	3	4	0.20
<b>Ecological thinking</b>	3.55	3	4	0.18
<b>Protection of cultural traditions</b>	3.40	3	4	0.27

\*on the scale from 0 to 5, where 0 = not developed at all, 1 = very little developed, 2 = little developed, 3 = developed on an average level, 4 = developed and 5 = very well developed competence

We do not consider the development of these competences to be crucial in the relationship with the development of employability. These are rather skills, abilities, and knowledge important for the civic engagement of people.

#### T21 Civic and cultural competences preferred and developed within volunteering

Civic and cultural competences	Number of people who wanted to develop this competence	Number of people who have developed this competence	%
<b>Ecological thinking</b>	3	3	100.00
<b>Understanding different values and beliefs</b>	7	6	85.71
<b>Providing help to people in critical situations</b>	5	4	80.00

<b>Protection of cultural traditions</b>	3	2	66.67
<b>Understanding the issues of discrimination and prejudices</b>	4	2	50.00
<b>Respect for diversity of other cultures</b>	1	0	0.00

These are quotes documenting the development of this type of competences:

*"I have learnt a lot about Roma culture, multi-culturalism, and tolerance".*

*"Thanks to the recycling project I look differently at the waste management, and also at toys, respectively their secondary use within a school".*

*"I respect other cultures".*

*"I have thrown my prejudices away".*

*"Through this work it only got clearer that it is not possible to judge a person based on his/her ethnicity, relationship to some group or so... we should not be influenced by prejudices, we need to get acquainted with a person first and only then to form an opinion".*

### **T19 Civic and cultural competences within the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie***

	<b>Number of people who stated that this competence was developed by them</b>	<b>% of the total number of completed questionnaires</b>
<b>Respecting laws and regulations</b>	27	44.26
<b>Ability to provide help in critical situations</b>	13	21.31
<b>Protection of cultural traditions</b>	12	19.67
<b>Environmental protection</b>	12	19.67

## **3.8. Mathematical competence and competences in science**

The area of mathematical competence and competences in science was not present in entrance and exit questionnaires as we – based on our previous experience – did not consider these competences to be very frequently present. However, they were included into the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* especially because of the compatibility with the key competences defined in current documents developed on European and national level.

Findings summarized in the table T19 show that volunteering provides a space for the development of mathematical competence and competences in science only rarely.

## T19 Mathematical competence and competences in science within the online tool D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie

	Number of people who stated that this competence was developed by them	% of the total number of completed questionnaires
Basic competences in science and technology	5	8.20
Mathematical competence	3	4.92

Only 5 out of total number of 61 unemployed volunteers who completed the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* stated that they have developed the basic competences in science and technology and only 3 of them stated that they have developed mathematical competence.

### 3.9. Other Identified Benefits of Volunteering for Unemployed People

In addition to competences the development of which we were monitored through the questionnaires and the online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* we have identified also several other benefits of volunteering for unemployed people. These were identified through a qualitative analysis.

The following statements document that volunteering is **a space for the development of social contacts** for unemployed people:

*"I have met a lot of interesting people who have inspired me in many ways".*

*"I have met new people".*

*"I am glad I could spend time with people. Many of them became my friends".*

*"I have met many new people".*

The widening of social networks during the time of unemployment can play an important role in the process of job search. Wider network of contacts can lead to the wider opportunity to get an information about job vacancies.

In the relationship with unemployed people we also think that volunteering can bring a **change of attitude toward work and also change in obtaining working habits** as illustrated in following quotes:

*"I have changed my attitude to work, now I really appreciate that I have it".*

*"After a longer time I have realized what the word 'job' really means and I have gained some working habits".*

Unemployed volunteers also identified benefits of volunteering:

- **In the area of personal development and change:**

*"I have found the new meaning of life".*

*"It has helped me to direct my life for the future".*

*"It has influenced my values".*

*"Volunteering has inspired me for activities I would like to organize".*

- **In personal satisfaction:**

*"I have felt happiness and peace".*

*"I have found the way how to spend my time meaningfully".*

*"I feel usefull".*

*"I have found the feeling of satisfaction during the time when I was unemployed".*

- **In the change of view on various things and issues:**

*"I have met many new people, experienced new situations that helped me to learn to look at things from different perspectives".*

*"I have understood that the education at schools needs a lot of enthusiasm, patience, and empathy".*

*"Volunteering has widened my point of view and confirmed my belief that the beauty of everyday life lies in diversity".*

- **In the development of specific abilities and skills and self-awareness:**

*"I have learnt to be more patient".*

*"I am more relaxed and more kind to other people in general".*

*"Thanks to volunteering, I became more patient and open".*

*"I have found out that we should not push anybody that doesn't want to be helped".*

*"I have learnt how to be more humble".*

*"I have learnt sometimes it is harter to take than to give".*

*"Now I don't take things personally".*

*"I have learnt to work with mowing-machine".*

*"I have learnt how to floor the room".*

We have found out that volunteering brings special benefits for unemployed people also in the relationship with the target group the volunteers were in contact with during the volunteering. Many unemployed have developed their **knowledge of the target group**, such as: "I have learnt more about drug addicts".

*"I have learnt more about homeless people".*

*"I have learnt what the re-integration into society really means".*

Others **changed their opinions and attitudes to groups** they were working with:

*"I have changed my opinion on some target groups".*

*"I have changed my mind; now I think that if a person starts to help somebody and finds the right way how to do it, it can bring results and it has sense".*

*"I have got to know a community of homeless people and their way of thinking. It has changed my original opinion".*

*"I have changed my opinion on drug addicts".*

*"I have learnt to appreciate older people".*

*"I have learnt to better understand the Roma topic; now I perceive it more seriously, without prejudices and barriers".*

*"I have changed my view on foster parents and adoption".*

*"I look at people differently now".*

*"My empathy and sensitivity to poor people has increased".*

*"Thanks to volunteering, I have changed my attitude to seniors".*

Last but not least, through volunteering the unemployed volunteers **obtained or developed skills in the area of work with various target groups**:

*"Within the work with youth I have learnt that if you can find the right approach and non-violent methods of leadership, you can attract their interest and support their cooperation".*

*"I have learnt to communicate with socially marginalized groups".*

*"I have learnt how to work with small children".*

*"I have learnt how to work with people with disability".*

*"I have learnt how to work with visually impaired people".*

*"I have learnt how to work with youth".*

*"I have gained experience with the work with drug addicts".*

*"Thanks to volunteering I started to perceive individual differences among children and the need to use individual approach".*

*"I have learnt how to work with seniors, how to create a program for them, how to inspire them for pleasant thoughts and memories".*

The last group of benefits can be summarized by the category **change of the opinion on volunteering and non-governmental non profit organizations:**

*"I have realized the sense of existence of NGOs".*

*"I have realized the importance of non-formal education, organizations active in the NGO sector and their influence and activity within the local community".*

*"Now I know more about the work of NGOs".*

*"I have learnt how an NGO operates".*

*"I have changed my opinion on volunteering; now I think it is very important for today's society".*

*"I have learnt more about law on volunteering".*

*"I have changed my opinion on the work in the NGO sector. Now I appreciate more the work of voluntary organizations".*

## 4. Summary

Based on the analysis of competence questionnaires and online tool *D-zručnosti pre zamestnanie* we can state that for unemployed people volunteering created a space for the development of specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes and thus contributed to the development of their employability.

Overall evaluation of the development of individual groups of competences documented through the questionnaires points out to the fact that volunteering activities created space especially for the development of competences related to problem solving and communication competences.

### T20 Overall evaluation of the development of competences documented through questionnaires

Area of Competences	average before*	average after	average difference
<b>Communication Competences</b>	3.17	3.59	0.43
<b>Digital Competences</b>	3.60	3.92	0.31
<b>Competences Related to Problem Solving</b>	3.28	3.86	0.58
<b>Learning Competences</b>	3.68	4.09	0.41
<b>Social and Personal Competences</b>	3.53	3.93	0.40
<b>Competences Related to Employment and Entrepreneurship</b>	3.25	3.67	0.42
<b>Civic and Cultural Competences</b>	3.61	3.84	0.23

Through volunteering, the unemployed volunteers improved their ability to work in demanding and difficult situations, to make decisions, to handle stress, to work in team, to cooperate with others on solution of problems and conflicts. In the area of communication competences, the largest progress was documented in the area of development of the ability to participate in discussions, to express one's own opinion, to actively listen to others and the development of presentation skills. Among the most developed competences related to employment and entrepreneurship we can mention these: time management, ability to lead other people, to orientate in a new working environment, skills related to project management, and creativity. In the area of social and personal competences, the largest progress reached thanks to volunteering was documented in ability to work in team, self-respect and self-confidence, and self-management of people. For a larger group of unemployed people, volunteering also created a space for improvements of the PC and internet skills.

Other benefits prove that for unemployed people volunteering creates a space for:

- the development of social contacts,
- the change of attitude toward work and the acquirement of working habits,
- the change in personal development and change in life and the life direction,
- the feeling of personal satisfaction,
- the change of views on various topics and issues,
- the development of specific abilities and skills,
- the development of knowledge on various target groups,
- the change of opinions and attitudes related to various target groups,
- the acquirement and development of specific skills related to work with various target groups,
- the change of views on volunteering and NGOs.

The fact that unemployed volunteers were able to develop competences they had wished to develop is also significant. It proves that volunteering experience – if there was a chance for the organization they have volunteered for to influence that – was adapted to the needs and expectations of the volunteers.

46 out of 65 (more than 70 %) unemployed volunteers the competence questionnaires of whom we have analyzed stated they will name this experience in their CVs. More than 90 % of the unemployed volunteers use or will use the experience in their personal and professional lives.

Existing empirical findings and specific practical experience in the area of work with unemployed volunteers proves that volunteering can be one of the tools for the support of employability and employment of these people. To reach such a situation we need two conditions: on one hand the development of specific programs focused on the involvement of unemployed people into volunteering that are based on their real needs and on the other hand the improvement in the area of recognition of the volunteering experience on the labour market.

## 5. VOLWEM – Project Partners

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### **Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica**

Národná 12, 974 01 Banská Bystrica,  
the Slovak Republic  
Phone: +421/48/4464 1111,  
+421/48/4153 3180  
E-mail: alzbeta.gregorova@umb.sk

### **Platform of Volunteer Centers and Organizations**

Hviezdoslavova 119, 900 31 Stupava,  
the Slovak Republic  
Phone: +421/904 368 693  
E-mail: platforma@dobrovolnickecentra.sk

### **Volunteer Development Scotland Ltd.**

Jubilee House, Forthside Way, FK8 1QZ,  
Stirling, the United Kingdom  
Phone: +44 /1786/479593, +44/1786/849767  
E-mail: vds@vds.org.uk

### **Volunteer Centre, Ústí nad Labem**

Prokopa Diviše 1605/5, 400 01  
Ústí nad Labem, the Czech Republic  
Phone: +420/475/216 684,  
+420/475/216 684  
E-mail: dcul@seznam.cz

### **Centre of Volunteering**

Ružová 13, 974 11 Banská Bystrica,  
the Slovak Republic  
Phone: +421/48/4464 783  
E-mail: cd@centrumdobrovolnictva.sk

### **Volunteer Centre of Košice Region**

Youth Council of Košice Region,  
Moyzesova 36, 040 01 Košice,  
the Slovak Republic  
Phone: +421/911 488 229  
E-mail: rabatin.dckk@gmail.com

### **Community Centre**

Nedbalova 17, 949 12 Nitra,  
the Slovak Republic  
Phone: +421/37/7728 152  
E-mail: jana@ckr.sk

### **Prešov Volunteer Centre**

Ul. 17. Novembra 11, 080 01 Prešov,  
the Slovak Republic  
Phone: +421/51/7711 676  
E-mail: pdcoz11@gmail.com

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Matej Bel University and the Platform of Volunteer Centre and Organizations

Author: doc. PhDr. Alžbeta Brozmanová Gregorová, PhD.

Reviewers: doc. PaedDr. Peter Jusko, PhD.  
doc. PhDr. Ladislav Vaska, PhD.

Graphic Design: Mgr. art. Mária Čorejová

Published in: Banská Bystrica

Published by: Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica and the Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organizations

ISBN 978-80-557-0815-7

Published: 2014



Lifelong  
Learning  
Programme

This publication was printed within the scope of the VOLWEM project funded by the European Commission. The published information represents the opinion of the authors solely, The Commission is not responsible for any use of the published information contained in this document.



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