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Ahead of the 2026. International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development: Dialogue on the Future of Volunteering Held

In December 2023, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2026 as the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development, or “IVY 2026.” Following this declaration, at the beginning of 2024, a Scoping Group was established under the leadership of IAVE, consisting of four leading global organizations in the field of volunteering: the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE), the International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and UNICEF Generation Unlimited. In the meantime, the Volunteer Groups Alliance (VGA) has also joined the group, and further expansion is expected in line with the development of the initiative. The group also operates in coordination with the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) regarding IVY 2026.

The Scoping Group identified IVY 2026 as an opportunity to draw attention to the power and potential of volunteering, encourage greater investment in volunteering, and secure concrete commitments from governments and other stakeholders on how they will support volunteering and create an environment in which it can thrive.

In order to ensure that all key stakeholders participate in shaping the future of volunteering, IAVE initiated the possibility of holding national dialogues on the future of volunteering.

The dialogue in Croatia was organized by the Croatian Volunteer Development Centre in cooperation with IAVE. The online dialogue, held on 10 June 2025, was attended by 49 representatives of civil society organizations, volunteer centres, public institutions, the education and government sectors, and the Croatian Red Cross.

At the beginning of the dialogue, three key areas for the development of volunteering, as defined by IAVE, were presented:

- Promoting the value of volunteering and recognizing learning through volunteering;
- Empowering volunteering to create change;
- Significant financial investment in volunteering;

The aim of the dialogue was to **identify several priorities in the development of volunteering** from the perspective of different stakeholders, keeping these areas in mind. Participants were divided into small groups in order to propose priorities for the development of volunteering from their own perspectives or positions. After the small group work, the identified priorities were presented, after which participants had the opportunity to vote and select national priorities. Since some priorities were similar



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or repeated, below is the refined list of priorities for the development of volunteering obtained during the national dialogue:

- **Local and national volunteering strategies are needed**, along with **stable and sufficient funding** for organizations that engage volunteers and for volunteer centres, as well as improved cross-sector cooperation.
- It is necessary to **invest all types of resources** that enable the development of volunteering, especially human resources, and to ensure greater job security within Croatia's civil sector.
- At the national level, **the role of Volunteer Coordinator needs to be recognized** as a paid occupation/profession.
- In order for volunteering to have a greater impact on students, schools, and the community, it should be **integrated into the school curriculum** rather than being left to enthusiasts within institutions.
- There is a continuous **need for education and support for volunteer involving organizations and for schools** in order to develop sustainable and high-quality volunteer programmes.
- **The values of volunteering and volunteers themselves need greater visibility and promotion** through various public activities, as well as recognition and validation of experience and competencies, and stronger recognition of this type of engagement within the business sector.

A few quotations from participants:

"Volunteering connects people in times when separation, loneliness, and distancing from each other are increasingly common."

"Volunteering provides space for all citizens to be involved in the development and improvement of their communities, regardless of their limitations. People, who otherwise would never have met, meet through volunteering."

"These kind of dialogues are very important because only together we can explain the diversity of volunteering and help it's recognition in the public."



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