

# How Artificial Intelligence and Digital Volunteering Can Enhance the Inclusiveness and Accessibility of Volunteering: Guidelines and Recommendations

This document is intended primarily for **national and local decision-makers**, as well as **volunteer-involving organisations, volunteer centres, public institutions and their partners from the private sector**. Its purpose is to provide a clear, practical, and applicable framework for developing inclusive and accessible volunteering in a digital environment. The development of digital technologies, the growing need for flexible forms of volunteering, and the shift in communication and work patterns are creating new opportunities, but also new challenges. Artificial intelligence (AI) and digital volunteering, including online volunteering (remote volunteering) and the use of digital tools during volunteer engagement, can significantly contribute to the democratisation of volunteering, reduce barriers for citizens with fewer opportunities, and modernise volunteer programmes, but only if introduced **thoughtfully, ethically, and systematically**.

## SUMMARY

Digital volunteering and artificial intelligence can significantly improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of volunteering programmes in Croatia, particularly for citizens facing physical, social, or geographic barriers. Technology can increase the accessibility of content, simplify volunteer management, and reduce administrative burden — but it requires clear standards, responsible use, and support for civil society organisations.

This document highlights three key development goals for advancing digital volunteering:

### 1. Ensure broad accessibility and inclusiveness of digital volunteering

Reducing the digital divide requires investments in equipment, internet access, accessible content, and strengthening the digital skills of volunteers and volunteer managers.

### 2. Improve the quality, safety, and wellbeing of volunteers in digital environments

Key elements include standardised processes, ongoing support, mentorship, evaluation, measures to prevent volunteer overload, and nurturing a sense of belonging in online settings.

### 3. Establish ethical, safe, and coordinated development of digital and AI solutions

This requires clear guidelines for the responsible use of AI, human oversight of AI-generated content, data protection, cross-sector cooperation, and sustainable financing for digital transition.

With well-directed investment and a coordinated approach, digital volunteering can become a powerful tool for strengthening inclusion, social cohesion, and civic engagement in Croatia

## CONTEXT

In today's dynamic world, shaped by rapid technological progress and social transformations, volunteering is not immune to change. Insights from research and practice already indicate significant trends that define contemporary volunteering.

The recommendations presented in this document are based on consultations with representatives of volunteer centres and volunteer-involving organisations held during the national volunteering conference *Volunteering in the Digital Age* in Zagreb on 5 November 2025, complemented by documents of the Centre for European Volunteering addressing AI applications in the field of volunteering.

Recognising emerging trends and changes in volunteer engagement, along with the needs of volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers themselves, is essential for adapting volunteer programmes to new circumstances, supporting further development of volunteering, and strengthening its visibility and impact in communities.

"Interest in online volunteering is becoming increasingly visible, demonstrating the growing role of technology in enabling flexible and remote volunteer engagement."

**State of Volunteering in Croatia Report,  
Croatian Volunteer Development Centre, 2024**

Online volunteering has demonstrated the importance of digitalisation as a key way of meeting many societal needs today. While access to information, social media, and networking has made volunteering available to more people and expanded the space for new opportunities, it can also create barriers for those without access to digital tools or competencies. Supporting responsible digital empowerment within volunteer-involving organisations is one of the key pathways to reaching the full potential of volunteering — but must be approached with caution to ensure that differences in access to digital tools and data do not create further inequalities in access to volunteering or volunteer support.

**Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030,  
Centre for European Volunteering, 2021**

## Recommendations for the development of digital volunteering

### **Development goal 1: Ensure Broad Accessibility and Inclusiveness of Digital Volunteering**

#### **Recommended Measures:**

- Systematically reduce the digital divide by ensuring that people with fewer opportunities can access basic equipment, internet connectivity, and digital tools through partnerships with local communities, schools, libraries, and the private sector, including options for donations and subsidised solutions.
- Organisations should prepare accessible and easy-to-understand materials on volunteering opportunities using simple formats, visual adjustments, video content, subtitles, audio versions, and digital accessibility tools to ensure that information is understandable and available to a wide range of citizens.
- Strengthening digital skills requires continuous training for volunteers and volunteer coordinators on basic digital literacy, safe use of digital platforms, and tools needed for online volunteering, supported by volunteer centres and in cooperation with the IT and education sectors.

### **RDevelopment goal 2.: Improve the Quality, Safety, and Wellbeing of Volunteers in Digital Environments**

#### **Recommended Measures:**

- Quality online volunteering requires clearly structured volunteer-involving processes, standardised role descriptions, transparent communication, formalised relationships, ongoing mentorship, and regular feedback, ensuring clarity, safety, and a sense of belonging for volunteers.
- Organisations should regularly evaluate the volunteer experience through surveys, online meetings, supervision sessions, and conversations to identify volunteer needs and maintain programme quality.
- To prevent overload and digital burnout, tasks must be clearly allocated, volunteer capacities considered, rotations and breaks ensured, and a sense of community built through informal gatherings and regular public recognition of volunteer contributions.

### **Development goal 3: Establish Ethical, Safe, and Coordinated Development of Digital and AI Solutions in Volunteering**

#### **Recommended Measures:**

- Organisations should establish clear guidelines for the responsible use of artificial intelligence, especially concerning the entry of personal data into AI tools, ensuring mandatory human verification of generated content and transparent labelling where AI has been used.
- Volunteers and volunteer coordinators should receive training on the safe and ethical use of AI tools, risks of bias and privacy issues, and ways in which AI can support accessibility — such as automatic translation, transcription, and text simplification.
- Sustainable development of digital volunteering requires strong cross-sector cooperation between civil society, the IT sector, educational institutions, and local authorities through the development of digital platforms, joint training efforts, updates to volunteer databases, and long-term financing through budgets, funds, and donations — alongside monitoring systems for accessibility, inclusion, and volunteer satisfaction.

### **CONCLUSION**

Digital volunteering and artificial intelligence offer strong potential to increase the accessibility and inclusiveness of volunteering, particularly for individuals facing physical, social, or geographic barriers. To unlock this potential, clear quality standards, ethical and safe use of technology, and continuous support for organisations and volunteers are essential. The success of digital volunteering will depend on cooperation between the public, civil, and technological sectors, and on investments in digital competencies and accessibility. With such an approach, technology can become a tool that empowers communities and expands opportunities for all citizens.

#### **Reference:**

- *Volonterstvo u Hrvatskoj: stanje, trendovi i utjecaj na društvo. Izvještaj o stanju volonterstva u Hrvatskoj, Hrvatski centar za razvoj volonterstva, 2024*
- *Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030, Centre for European Volunteering, 2021*
- *Scientific research findings and public opinion insights on societal needs (available at: <https://www.hrcv.hr/resursi/publikacije>)*