



# VOLU-MENT

Mental Health Through Volunteering

## Research Progress Report

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## INDEX

<b>1</b>	<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1	THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH	6
2.2	METHODOLOGY	7
2.2.1	Project Target Group	7
2.2.2	Methodology of the Data Collection	7
2.2.3	Questionnaire Design	7
2.2.4	Sample Size and Sampling Method	8
2.2.5	Methodology of the Data Analysis	9
2.3	DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE	11
2.3.1	Gender Distribution	11
2.3.2	Life Situation and Employment Status	11
2.3.3	Age Distribution	12
2.3.4	Duration of the Volunteer Experience	13
2.3.5	International Volunteering and Nationality	13
2.3.6	Types of Volunteer Activities	14
2.3.7	Recentness of the Volunteer Experience	15
<b>3</b>	<b>FINDINGS</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1	SATISFACTION OF THE YOUNG VOLUNTEERS	16
3.2	MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES DURING VOLUNTEERING	18
3.2.1	What negative feelings did the volunteers mention on their own?	18
3.2.2	What feelings do the volunteers experience most strongly?	19
3.2.3	Who experiences positive feelings more intensely?	20
3.2.4	Which positive feelings are experienced more intensely?	21
3.2.5	Who is more vulnerable to mental health risks during volunteering?	23
3.2.6	Which mental health risks are the most significant?	25
3.2.7	Country-Specific Differences in Feelings	27
3.3	RELEVANT SUPPORTS	31
3.3.1	Which tool is more useful for whom?	32
3.3.2	Which tool is more useful for which mental health challenge?	35
3.3.3	Country-Specific Differences in Support Tools	36
3.3.4	What useful tools did the volunteers mention on their own?	38
3.4	MOTIVATION OF THE VOLUNTEERS	39
3.5	IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING ON MENTAL HEALTH	40
3.5.1	What are the most important benefits that volunteers have highlighted as the rewards they've gained from volunteering?	41
3.5.2	Do the volunteers ultimately gain what they sought when joining the program?	42
3.5.3	In which area do volunteers feel the greatest sense of fulfilment?	42
3.5.4	Which group's mental health had the highest impact?	43
3.5.5	Country-Specific Differences in the Impact of Volunteering	47

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<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>51</b>
A) Questionnaire	51
B) Country-Specific Differences in Feelings	57
C) Country-Specific Differences in Supports	58
D) Country-Specific Differences in Impact	59
E) Spearman Correlation Matrix and Heat Map	60
F) List of the Tables and Figures	62

## 1 Summary

The Volu-Ment research project explored the connection of youth volunteering (ages 14–30) and mental well-being across Georgia, Hungary, Portugal and Turkey based on questionnaire research. The analysis found that organised volunteering acts as both a catalyst for personal growth and a source of specific mental health challenges.

The research project found some key findings regarding mental health-related impacts:

- ▶ Despite the complex nature of volunteering, volunteers experience positive emotions (feeling energised, competent and a sense of belonging) far more intensely than negative ones. These findings support our initial hypothesis that volunteering has a positive impact on volunteers' mental health, even though it naturally presents challenges.
- ▶ Overall satisfaction is remarkably high. Students in higher education report the highest fulfilment, we refer to them as being in their "Golden age". On the other hand, one-day volunteers and high schoolers report the lowest.
- ▶ The most significant mental health red flags identified were exhaustion (burnout), self-doubt and interpersonal conflicts. Interestingly, logistical failures are also cited as major contributors to emotional distress.
- ▶ Volunteering for several years shows the highest negative emotional scores, making them the most vulnerable group. In addition, high school students (14–18) are the most prone to self-doubt and frustration (high percentage in Hungary) and volunteers in disaster relief experience the highest pressure and negative emotional averages (significant in Portugal and Turkey).

The data suggests that volunteers value structured mentorship, including one-on-one conversations and regular feedback, as well as joint leisure activities and dedicated common spaces. Moreover, assigning tasks that match a volunteer's skills is the most effective way to combat feelings of meaninglessness. Partying has turned out to be the least effective support tool in managing the emotional impact of volunteering.

Volunteering is much more than just a way to help others. It is a powerful tool for long-term mental health. While it introduces risks like exhaustion

and social isolation, the long-term gains in self-awareness, independence and social empathy provide volunteers with a more robust mental framework for their future lives and careers.

Country	Mental Health Profile of the Sample	Key Takeaway
<b>Georgia</b>	High international representation; struggles with isolation and aimlessness.	Educational volunteering provides the strongest sense of "home" and energy.
<b>Hungary</b>	Dominated by domestic, short-term (1-day) actions and younger participants.	While they report lower overall impact, they experience intense "Aha!" moments of realisation.
<b>Portugal</b>	Decision-making uncertainty due to frequent volunteering in environmental and disaster relief; most often discover their own hidden potential.	Volunteers here value thorough preparation more than any other group to make tough decisions.
<b>Turkey</b>	The most positive emotional profile, with high scores in resilience and independence.	Volunteering in Turkey is deeply empowering, with volunteers reporting the highest levels of self-confidence.

## 2 Background

Within the Volu-Ment project, a European Union tender (ERASMUS+ KA220-YOU, Cooperation partnerships in youth VOLU-MENT - Mental health through volunteering, 2024-2-HU01-KA220-YOU-000286625) is executed by a consortium that is composed of **civil society organisations from four countries: Georgia, Hungary, Portugal and Turkey**. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of these organisations active in local volunteering and ESC hosting/sending.

The VOLU-MENT **project addresses the need for mental well-being in youth work and aims to strengthen the impact of volunteering across Europe and beyond**. It aims to raise awareness of volunteering reinforced by mental support, to empower staff coordinating and mentoring young volunteers and to provide practical methods of mental support.

**This research** supports the effective design of Volu-Ment project outcomes by **identifying the challenges young people face during volunteering and mapping the tools and needs that help strengthen preventive mental health** related to volunteering and address mental health challenges that arise during volunteering.

The research was conducted by SIMPACT Public Benefit Nonprofit Ltd. For further questions regarding the research, please contact Krisztina Tolvaj ([krisztina.tolvaj@simpact.hu](mailto:krisztina.tolvaj@simpact.hu)).

### 2.1 THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The objectives of the Volu-Ment research were:

- ▶ To understand the target group's experiences, both positive and negative, regarding volunteering.
- ▶ To understand what the specific mental health challenges are and the benefits young people experience while volunteering.
- ▶ To understand the current toolbox of the target group in managing mental health challenges.
- ▶ To understand the target group's forms of volunteering and the connected mental health-related issues.

## 2.2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.2.1 Project Target Group

The target group for the Volu-Ment project is **young people between the ages of 14 and 30 with a geographical focus on 4 countries: Georgia, Hungary, Portugal and Turkey**. Respondents can be foreigners or locals in the target countries. The project focuses on those who have volunteered within an organised framework (formal volunteering), as we aim to support the work of volunteer organisations. Therefore, while we consider private volunteering (informal volunteering) to be very important, it is not our focus at this time.

### 2.2.2 Methodology of the Data Collection

The **target group survey was our primary research method**, as organisations have sporadic experiences and feedback on the mental state of their volunteers, but do not yet have concrete, quantitative data on the topic. Individual online questionnaires were planned, with an approximate length of 10-15 minutes, and sent out by the local partner organisations in either the local language or in English. The questionnaires were anonymous.

To prepare for the survey research, we conducted **qualitative research**:

- ▶ Desk research: Desk research was done to learn about the existing mental health scales in the literature and to get a picture of the countries' mental health.
- ▶ Expert interviews: Individual online in-depth interviews were conducted with experts and volunteer coordinators working with the participating four partner organisations in Georgia, Hungary, Portugal and Turkey to provide a methodological foundation for the questionnaire and survey design, with an approximate length of 1-2 hours.

### 2.2.3 Questionnaire Design

Guiding principles were:

- ▶ Simplicity, brevity.
- ▶ Should be easily understandable for the target audience.

- ▶ Both quantitative and qualitative data (both open-ended and Likert-scale questions).
- ▶ The goal is not to measure mental health, but to map its positive and negative effects during and after volunteering.

**The approach to mental health** in this research is firmly rooted in the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) foundational definition of mental well-being<sup>1</sup>.

*“Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to their community. It has intrinsic and instrumental value and is a basic human right.”*

Building upon this framework, the study’s scope is intentionally refined to **focus exclusively on mental and emotional symptoms**, deliberately excluding physical manifestations of psychological distress.

To effectively measure these constructs, the survey questions were operationalised along **four distinct dimensions of mental health based on the Psychological Needs in Volunteering Scale** (Haivas et al., 2012): autonomy, competence, relatedness, and motivation/purpose.<sup>2</sup>

Notably, rather than relying on a standardised, pre-existing psychological scale, this study employs a bespoke, multi-method approach specifically designed and tailored to answer the core research questions best.

The final English-language questionnaire is in Appendix A.

#### 2.2.4 Sample Size and Sampling Method

The research aimed to include at least 100 respondents from each of the four countries who are currently active volunteers or have been volunteers in the past, for a total of **400 respondents** participating in the survey.

We **did not form preliminary subsamples** (quotas) by group (e.g., male-female) because the population distribution was unknown and the response rate was questionable. However, in the questionnaire, we requested both demographic data and data regarding the form of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>

<sup>2</sup> <https://iaap-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2012.00525.x>

volunteering. Thus, if there was a significant number of respondents in a **subsample, we also made findings specific to that group.**

The data collection took place from December 2025 to February 2026. The following table shows the number of completed questionnaires:

	Georgia	Hungary	Portugal	Turkey	Total
# of completed	117	171	130	208	626

After data cleaning, we had **499 valid responses.** We applied all valid responses for country-level analysis.

	Georgia	Hungary	Portugal	Turkey	Total
# of valid	109	135	88	167	499

We created **a merged sample** to draw general conclusions. For this, we took a **random sample of 100 items per country**, with the exception of Portugal.

	Georgia	Hungary	Portugal	Turkey	Total
# in random sample	100	100	88	100	388

## 2.2.5 Methodology of the Data Analysis

Data was analysed using both **quantitative and qualitative methods.**

Quantitative analysis of the demographic data and data regarding the form of volunteering by:

- descriptive statistics
- frequency analysis.

Analysis of the Likert-scale (Ordinal) Questions:

1. **Mean Experiencing Score** was calculated, where the responses were quantified from 0 to 2, as follows:

*Did you experience any of these during your formal (organised) volunteering? (Feelings)*

*Not at all = 0, To a small extent = 1, To a large extent = 2*

*Which of the following did/could help you in dealing with bad feelings during formal (organised) volunteering or in avoiding them? (Supports)*

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*0 = Cannot help at all, 1 = Can help to a small extent, 2 = Can help to a large extent*

*How did your volunteer experience contribute to your life in the following areas? (Impacts)*

*0 = Not at all, 1 = Contributed to a small extent, 2 = Contributed to a large extent*

2. The items of the question were sorted by the Mean Experiencing Score, showing which items were experienced most strongly by the volunteers.

**The Friedman chi<sup>2</sup> statistic<sup>3</sup>** used to detect whether there were significant differences in the responses of the different items.

3. Statistical tests (**Kruskal-Wallis H-test<sup>4</sup>**) were conducted to examine whether there are significant differences in the frequency of the items across different groups (e.g. gender, age, activity type, countries, etc.).

4. We examined the relationship between responses on feelings and supports using the **Spearman correlation matrix<sup>5</sup>**. The Spearman correlation coefficient indicates how the presence of certain emotional states influences which types of support a volunteer finds more or less effective.

- Strong positive correlation: Volunteers who feel this state intensely find the specific support factor highly helpful.
- Strong negative correlation: Volunteers who feel this state intensely tend to find the specific support factor ineffective or even frustrating.

#### Analysis of the Open-ended Questions:

1. We identified categories based on the responses to open-ended questions and **classified the responses** into those categories with the help of Gemini.

2. We have identified which categories are related to mental health.

3. We compared the **frequency of responses** in the resulting categories with the frequency of responses to the Likert scale questions.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedman\\_test#Method](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedman_test#Method)

<sup>4</sup> <https://library.virginia.edu/data/articles/getting-started-with-the-kruskal-wallis-test>

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spearman%27s\\_rank\\_correlation\\_coefficient](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spearman%27s_rank_correlation_coefficient)

## 2.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

The survey reached a **diverse group of participants engaged in short-term, medium-term, and long-term volunteer programs**. The demographic profile reveals that the majority of respondents (55%) are in the 19-24 age group, and 45% are students in higher education. Female volunteers make up 67% of the total sample. The distribution between international and domestic volunteering is relatively balanced, representing approximately a 50-50% split. Furthermore, the volunteers engaged in a wide variety of activities, reflecting a broad spectrum of volunteer activities within the studied sample.

### 2.3.1 Gender Distribution

Overall, the sample is characterised by a **female majority, with 67% of the total respondents** identifying as female. This distribution is present across the dataset, but it is particularly pronounced in the Portuguese sample, where the proportion of female volunteers reaches 80%.

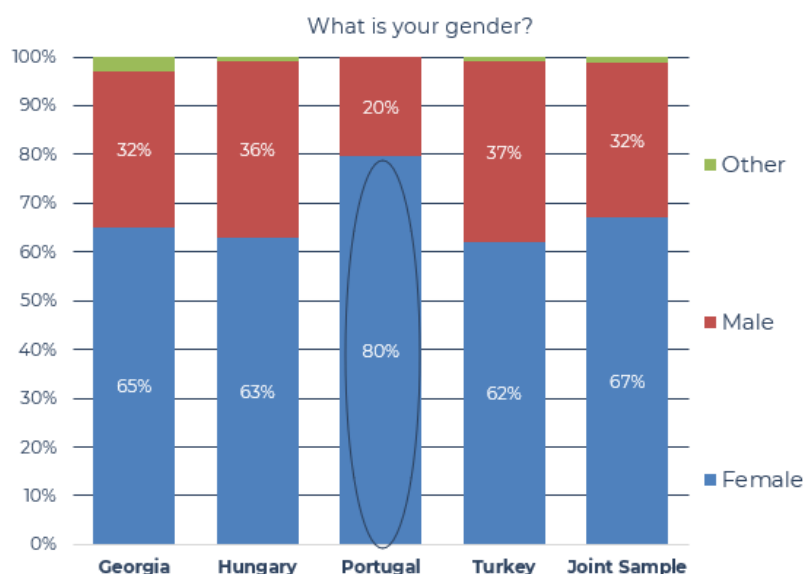


Figure 1: Distribution of the Sample by Gender

### 2.3.2 Life Situation and Employment Status

The primary life situation of the respondents shows **that students in higher education** comprise the largest (45%) segment within the sample. However, notable country-specific variations exist. In the Georgian sample, there is a considerably higher proportion of job seekers compared to the other nations. Conversely, the Hungarian sample includes a significantly higher percentage of high school students.

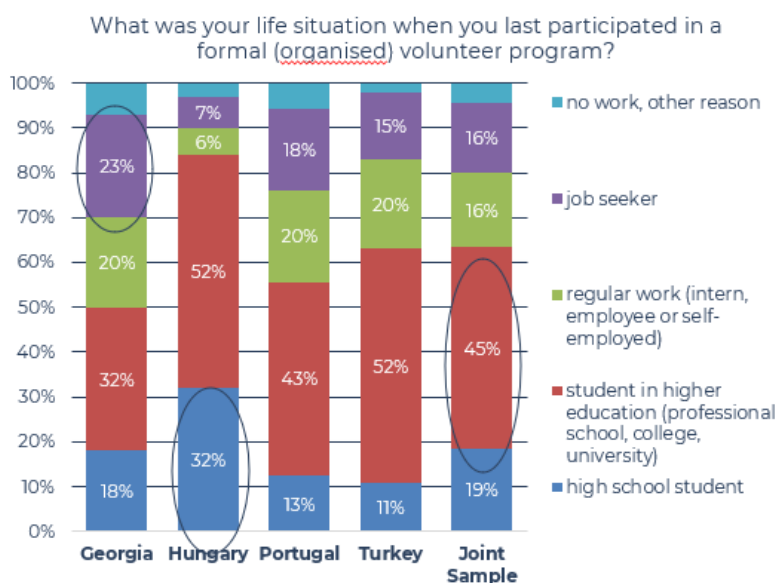


Figure 2: Distribution of the Sample by Life Situation

### 2.3.3 Age Distribution

The research specifically focuses on the youth demographic, limiting the examined age range strictly to individuals between 14 and 30 years old. Within this defined bracket, **young adults** form the largest age group in the sample, with **55% of the respondents** falling into the 19-24 age category. Country-level data indicates that this young adult group is especially dominant in the Georgian subset, accounting for 65% of their respondents. On the other hand, the Hungarian dataset shows a higher representation of the youngest eligible participants, with teenagers (aged 14-18) making up 35% of the local sample.

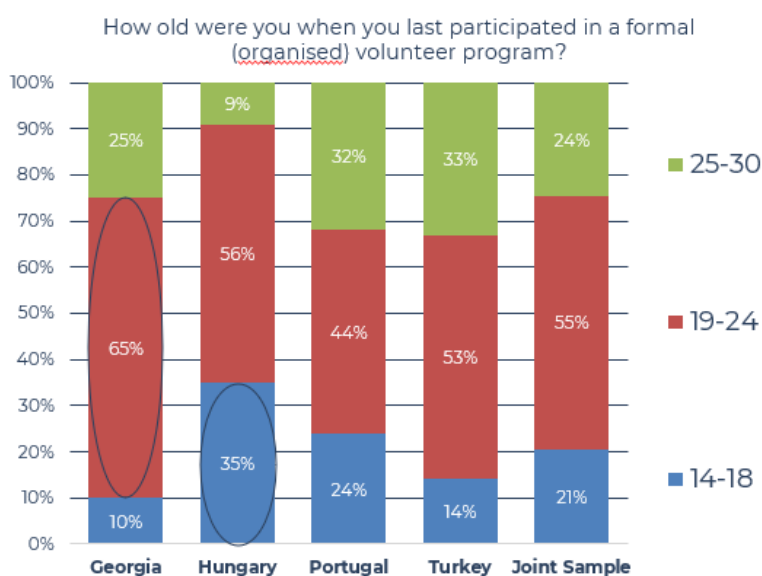


Figure 3: Distribution of the Sample by Age

### 2.3.4 Duration of the Volunteer Experience

The dataset captures a **wide spectrum of volunteering durations**, ranging from single-day events to commitments lasting several months or even multiple years. Country-level breakdowns highlight specific structural differences in how young people volunteer. In the Georgian sample, long-term volunteering is prominent, representing 60% of the activities. In contrast, short-term, 1-day volunteering actions (such as single-day charity or environmental events) are significantly more prevalent among the Hungarian respondents, accounting for 37% of that sample. Meanwhile, the Turkish sample shows a distinct proportion of medium-term commitments, with 53% of these volunteers participating in programs lasting 1 to 4 months.

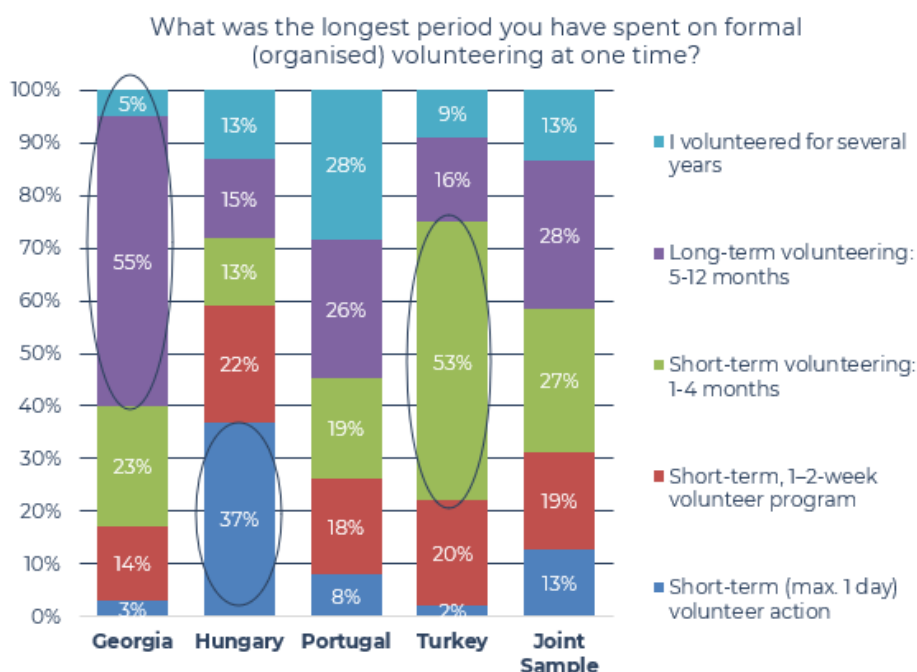


Figure 4: Distribution of the Sample by Duration of Volunteering

### 2.3.5 International Volunteering and Nationality

The survey differentiates between domestic volunteering (activities performed within the respondent's home country) and international volunteering (projects carried out abroad). At the aggregate level, the sample shows an approximately **even split between the two types of experiences**.

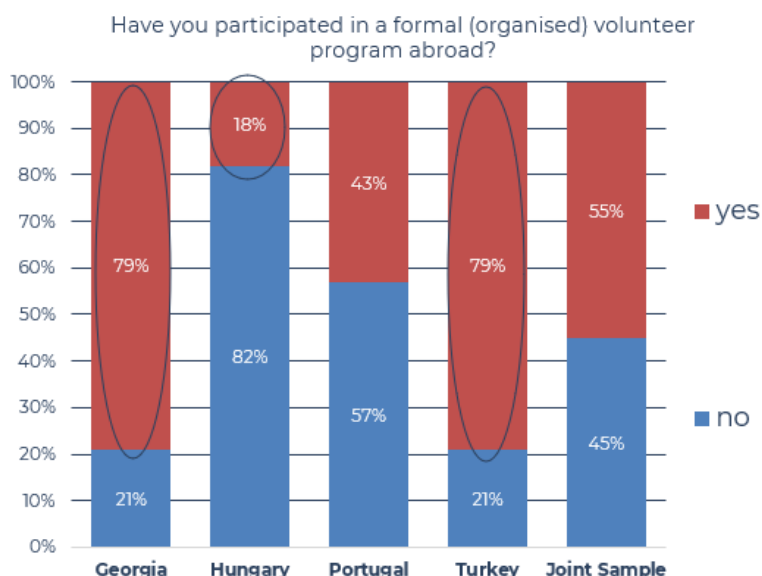


Figure 5: Distribution of the Sample by International Volunteering

However, this proportion varies significantly by country. **In both the Turkish and Georgian samples, international volunteering is heavily represented**, making up 79% of the respective national subsets. In contrast, international volunteering holds less prominence in the Hungarian sample, which is predominantly composed of domestic activities.

	GE	HU	PO	TR	Total
<b>Citizen</b>	59%	86%	81%	84%	77%
<b>Foreign</b>	41%	14%	19%	16%	23%

Table 1: Distribution of the Sample by Nationality

The distribution of the sample by nationality (citizen vs. foreign) shows a similar picture.

### 2.3.6 Types of Volunteer Activities

The respondents engaged in a **wide array of volunteer activities**, encompassing both direct, frontline field work and operational background support. The focus areas, however, shift significantly depending on the country. In the Georgian sample, there is a pronounced proportion of educational activities as well as office and administrative work. In Hungary, volunteers in the sample are highly engaged in direct social assistance and activities involving children. Notably, disaster relief activities—likely reflecting recent regional crises such as the earthquakes in Turkey or wildfires in Portugal—are exclusively represented in the samples from these two countries.

What type(s) of volunteer activities did you typically participate in?  
(Multiple answers can be selected, % of total valid responses)

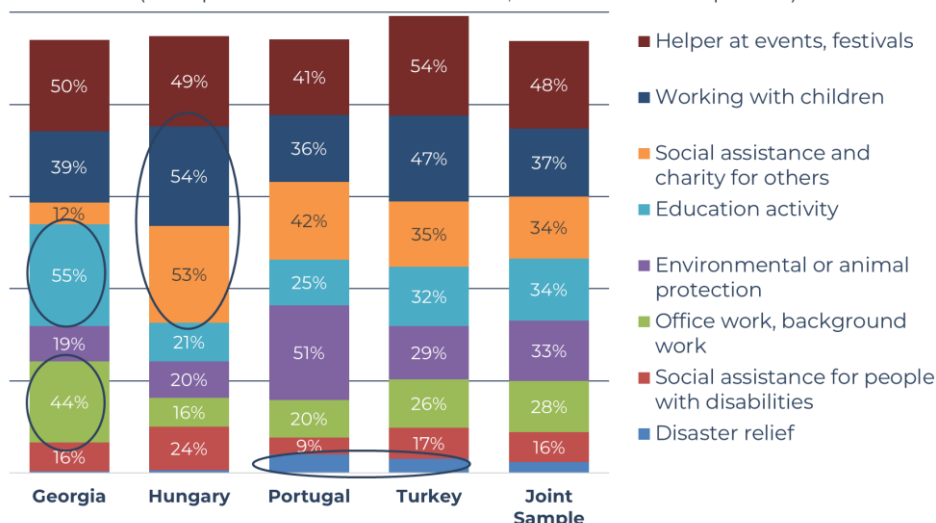


Figure 6: Distribution of the Sample by Activity Type of Volunteering

### 2.3.7 Recentness of the Volunteer Experience

To provide context on the reliability and freshness of the respondents' feedback, the survey examined when they last participated in a formal volunteer activity.

	GE	HU	PO	TR	Total
<b>I am currently volunteering</b>	52%	29%	32%	18%	33%
<b>1-2 months ago</b>	9%	19%	18%	29%	19%
<b>half a year ago</b>	9%	12%	14%	18%	13%
<b>more than half a year ago</b>	7%	12%	7%	7%	8%
<b>more than a year ago</b>	23%	28%	30%	28%	27%

Table 2: Distribution of the Sample by Last Volunteering Time

At the aggregate level, **nearly a third of the total sample (32.7%) was actively volunteering at the time of data collection**, ensuring that a significant portion of the responses is based on ongoing, real-time experiences. Furthermore, an additional 18.8% had volunteered just 1-2 months prior. Conversely, 27.1% of the respondents reported that their last volunteer engagement occurred more than a year ago. Significant country-level variations are evident in the activity timeline.

## 3 Findings

### 3.1 SATISFACTION OF THE YOUNG VOLUNTEERS

When asked to rate their overall experience on a scale of 1 to 7, respondents reported very high levels of satisfaction across all participating countries.

Organisation Country	Respondents	Avg. of Satisfaction
<b>GE</b>	100	6,06
<b>HU</b>	100	6,04
<b>PO</b>	88	6,38
<b>TR</b>	100	6,41
<b>Total Sample</b>	388	6,22

Table 3: Average Satisfaction in the 4 Countries

As the table illustrates, **the overall satisfaction rate is exceptionally high** across the board, consistently scoring above 6.0 on a 7-point scale in all participating countries. Volunteers in Turkey (6.41) and Portugal (6.38) reported the highest average satisfaction. The slightly lower averages observed in Georgia (6.06) and Hungary (6.04) are not indicative of lower program quality, but are rather directly tied to the underlying demographic composition of their respective samples. Specifically, the Georgian subset contains a lower percentage of students in higher education, the demographic that typically reports the highest satisfaction levels. Similarly, the Hungarian average is heavily influenced by a significantly larger proportion of high school students and one-day volunteers, which are the two groups that consistently reported the lowest satisfaction scores across the entire study.

The data clearly indicates that the most satisfied group consists of young adults (19-24 years old) who are currently pursuing higher education.

Age	Respondents	Avg. of Satisfaction
<b>14-18</b>	80	6,08
<b>19-24</b>	213	6,33
<b>25-30</b>	95	6,08
<b>Total Sample</b>	388	6,22

Table 4: Average Satisfaction by Age

When examining the respondents' life situations, students in higher education exhibit the highest satisfaction levels, reflecting a highly proactive and intrinsically motivated engagement in their volunteer roles. In contrast, high school students and those who are unemployed for other reasons report the lowest satisfaction, suggesting a potential lack of alignment between their personal needs and the available volunteering opportunities.

Life Situation	Respondents	Avg. of Satisfaction
high school student	72	6,07
student in higher education (professional school, college, university)	174	6,39
regular work (intern, employee or self-employed)	64	6,11
job seeker	61	6,08
no work, other reason	17	6,00
<b>Total Sample</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>6,22</b>

Table 5: Average Satisfaction by Life Situation

Conversely, the lowest levels of satisfaction can be observed within the group of high school students (aged 14-18) and in the case of individuals participating in short-term, 1-day volunteer actions.

Duration of Volunteering	Respondents	Average of 3.1 Satisfaction
I volunteered for several years	52	6,21
Long-term volunteering: 5-12 months	109	6,24
Short-term volunteering: 1-4 months	106	6,15
Short-term, 1-2-week volunteer program	72	6,46
Short-term (max. 1 day) volunteer action	49	5,96
<b>Total Sample</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>6,22</b>

Table 6: Average Satisfaction by Duration of Volunteering

## 3.2 MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES DURING VOLUNTEERING

As mentioned in the methodology section, the study's scope is intentionally refined to focus exclusively on mental and emotional symptoms, deliberately excluding physical manifestations of psychological distress. We examined the volunteers' mental health in two ways:

- 1) We asked them an open-ended question: *"Did you have any negative feelings during your formal (organised) volunteer work? What were they?"*
- 2) Based on preliminary expert interviews and studies, we compiled a list of 27 "feelings". We asked the volunteers to rate them on a 3-point (0=not at all, 1=to a small extent, 2=to a large extent) Likert-scale to indicate: *"Did you experience any of these during your formal (organised) volunteering?"*

We asked about both positive and negative feelings, based on the positive approach outlined in the WHO definition and our initial hypothesis that volunteering has a positive impact on volunteers' mental health, even though it naturally presents challenges.

### 3.2.1 What negative feelings did the volunteers mention on their own?

**75% provided valid answers** to the non-compulsory open-ended question regarding their negative feelings during volunteering. This indicates a **high level of openness and engagement** among the volunteer base.

**The most frequent** response category was **"No negative feelings"** (40%), suggesting a **positive overall experience** of the volunteers.

**Mental health issues** (highlighted in bold in Table 7) were very relevant and highlighted **the mental and emotional pain in volunteering**. Of these, the most frequently mentioned were **stress, exhaustion and feeling overwhelmed** (emotional burden, 20%). Interpersonal problems (13%), loneliness, homesickness (8%) and inadequacy, feeling of incompetence, and self-doubt (6%) were mentioned significantly.

**Logistical challenges** are surprisingly of high importance (15%) in the responses, suggesting that logistics plays a major role in **fostering a sense of safety, being supported and well-being**.

Did you have any negative feelings during your formal (organised) volunteer work? What were they?

Category	Definition	Count (Mentions)	% of Valid Responses
No negative feelings	Explicitly stated they had no issues (e.g., "None", "Nope", "Everything was fine").	116	40%
<b>Emotional Burden</b>	<b>Stress, emotional exhaustion, sadness, or feeling overwhelmed by the situation.</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>20%</b>
Logistics	Problems with accommodation, budget, coordination, transport, or organizational planning.	43	15%
<b>Interpersonal Problems</b>	<b>Conflicts with others, team dynamics, rude behavior, racism or living with different people.</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Isolation</b>	<b>Loneliness, homesickness, or the language barrier.</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>8%</b>
Expectation Mismatch	When the reality of the project differed significantly from what was promised or expected.	18	6%
<b>Inadequacy</b>	<b>Feelings of incompetence, self-doubt, or being unprepared for the tasks.</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Lack of Impact</b>	<b>Boredom, lack of meaningful activities, or feeling that their work wasn't useful.</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3%</b>
General Negative	Mentioned having a bad experience but did not specify the cause or provided a vague answer.	9	3%

Table 7: Negative Feelings Mentioned by the Respondents on their Own

The responses to this question were very similar across countries. **In Turkey and Georgia, „isolation” has higher importance**, probably due to high international volunteering.

### 3.2.2 What feelings do the volunteers experience most strongly?

When we analysed the responses to the “feelings” we listed based on the percentage of respondents who experienced that “feeling” while volunteering, we found that volunteers reported **positive feelings at a much higher rate than negative ones**. If we rank the “feelings” based on their Mean Experiencing Scores<sup>6</sup>, all positive feelings—with one exception—achieved higher scores than the negative ones.

<sup>6</sup> See details in the methodology section.

Did you experience any of these feelings during your formal volunteering?  
(Percentage of the responses)

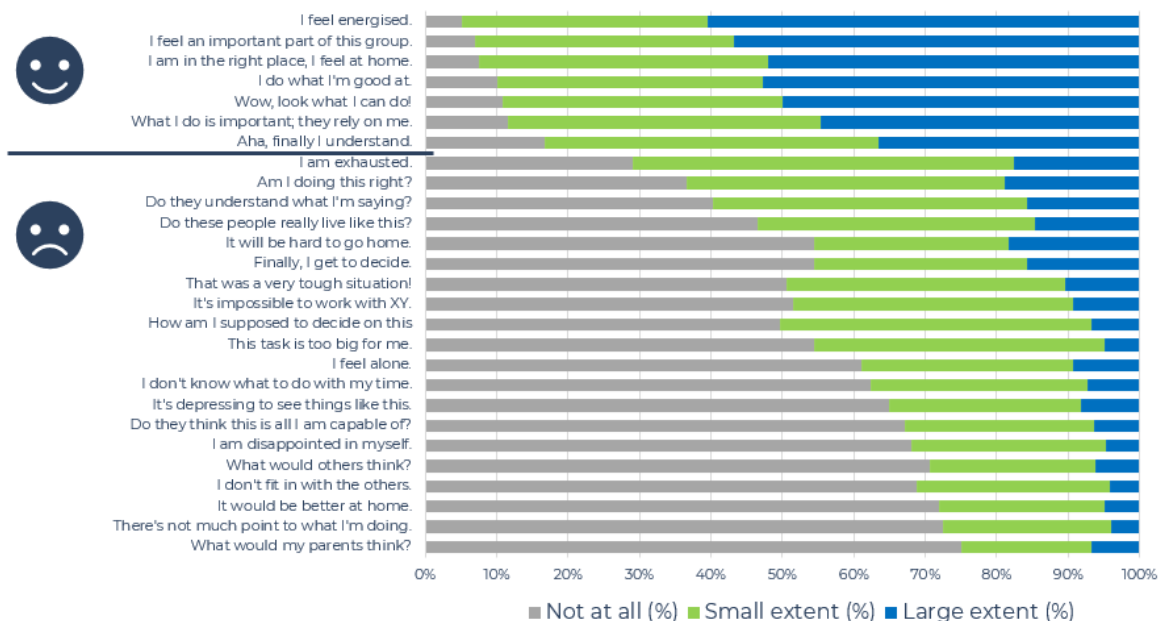


Figure 7: Rank of the Feelings based on their Mean Experiencing Score

This supports our hypothesis that **volunteering has a positive impact on mental health**, even while one is engaged in volunteering: the volunteers feel energised, feel competent, feel an important part of the group, and feel improvement.

### 3.2.3 Who experiences positive feelings more intensely?

In general, two groups showed a clear statistical difference<sup>7</sup> in how positively volunteers felt:

- ▶ **International volunteering:** Volunteers who had participated in international (abroad) volunteering achieved a significantly higher positive average (1.28) than those who only volunteered domestically (1.17). They felt more confident, energised, and useful.
- ▶ **Young adults:** Age significantly influences positive experiences. Generally, young adults (19-24 years) showed the highest levels (1.29 vs. 1.13) of commitment and enthusiasm. experience the "golden age" of volunteering.

<sup>7</sup> We tested the difference between the group's Mean Experiencing Scores by the Kruskal-Wallis H-test.

### 3.2.4 Which positive feelings are experienced more intensely?

All positive feelings are experienced by min. 80% of the respondents except “*Finally, I get to decide*”, which tendency confirms the positive impact of volunteering on mental health. Independent decision (“*Finally, I get to decide.*”) was experienced to a small extent.

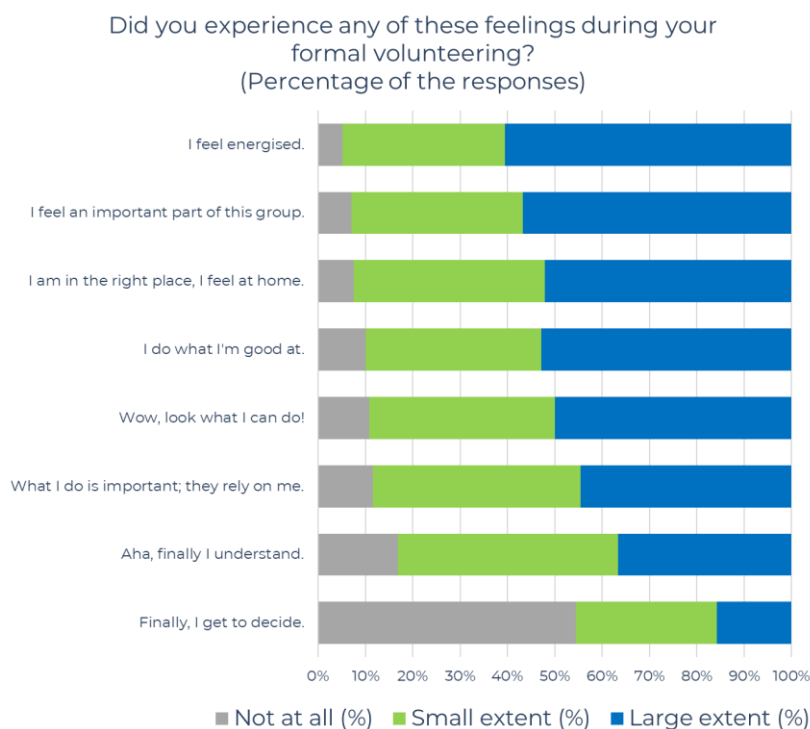


Figure 8: Rank of the Positive Feelings based on their Mean Experiencing Score

We examined using the Kruskal-Wallis H-test<sup>8</sup> which positive feelings are experienced statistically more intensely by which volunteer group:

- **Competence:** More **female volunteers** reported improvements in their competence (“*Wow, look what I can do!*”, “*I do what I'm good at.*”). And female volunteers feel significantly more that they are in the right place.

<sup>8</sup> <https://library.virginia.edu/data/articles/getting-started-with-the-kruskal-wallis-test>

Gender	Responses	I do what I'm good at.	Wow, look what I can do!	I am in the right place, I feel at home.
Female	260	1,47	1,46	1,53
Male	123	1,33	1,24	1,28
Other	5	1,4	1,8	1,2

Table 8: Mean Experiencing Score of Positive Feelings by Gender

- ▶ **Sense of belonging: Young adults** (19-24 years old) found that they are mostly in the right place.
- ▶ **Learning breakthroughs:** The **youngest cohort** (14-18 years old) experienced the highest rate of "Aha moments" and the lowest rate of "I do what I'm good at", suggesting a much steeper learning curve for younger participants.

Age Group	Respondents	I do what I'm good at.	Aha, finally I understand.	I am in the right place, I feel at home.
14-18 years	80	1,24	1,31	1,26
19-24 years	213	1,47	1,23	1,55
25-30 years	95	1,49	1,04	1,37

Table 9: Mean Experiencing Score of Positive Feelings by Age Group

- ▶ **Feel energised:** Most felt the most fulfilled through **international volunteering** (1.65 vs. 1.43). **Working in education** is also very **energising** in Georgia (1.59 vs. 1.24).
- ▶ **Importance:** Volunteers working in **social assistance for people with disabilities** felt most strongly "What I do is important", "I am an important part of the group", and in disaster relief (typical in Turkey and Portugal), the least.

Activity Type	Respondents	What I do is important; they rely on me.	I feel an important part of this group.
Disaster relief	24	<b>0,92</b>	<b>1,17</b>
Education	231	1,37	1,52
Environment & Animals	127	1,35	1,57
Events & Culture	191	1,37	1,61
Office & Admin	137	1,36	1,56
Social assistance - Charity & Others	137	1,36	1,49
Social assistance - Disabilities	63	<b>1,49</b>	<b>1,67</b>
Working with children & youth	147	1,36	1,51

Table 10: Mean Experiencing Score of Positive Feelings by Volunteering Activity Type

### 3.2.5 Who is more vulnerable to mental health risks during volunteering?

Feelings of frustration, uncertainty, and exhaustion were much more influenced by structural factors and social background. Our analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis H-test<sup>9</sup> found that negative feelings are experienced statistically more intensely in certain groups. Specifically, the risk is higher in the following groups:

- **High school students** (14-18 years) have a higher experience of uncertainty and frustration during volunteering compared to volunteers in other life situations (0.61 vs. 0.46 for students in higher education).

Life Situation	Responses	Mean Experiencing Score
high school student	72	<b>0,61</b>
job seeker	61	0,53
no work, other reason	17	0,49
regular work (intern, employee or self-employed)	64	0,55
student in higher education (professional school, college, university)	174	0,46

Table 11: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by Life Situation

<sup>9</sup> <https://library.virginia.edu/data/articles/getting-started-with-the-kruskal-wallis-test>

- ▶ **Long duration of volunteering:** There is a clear sign of volunteer burnout. Those who volunteered for several years had the highest negative emotional average (0.6 vs. 0.46 for short-term volunteering).

Longest duration of volunteering	Responses	Mean Experiencing Score
I volunteered for several years	52	<b>0,6</b>
Long-term volunteering: 5-12 months	109	0,55
Short-term volunteering: 1-4 months	106	0,46
Short-term, 1–2-week volunteer program	72	0,44
Short-term (max. 1 day) volunteer action	49	0,48

Table 12: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by the Duration of Volunteering

- ▶ **International volunteering** affected special negative feelings: working in a foreign culture/environment triggered greater feelings of isolation and being misunderstood (likely due to language barriers). However, overall domestic volunteering has a higher negative emotional average than international volunteering (0.54 vs. 0.49).
- ▶ Those **working in disaster relief** achieved the highest negative average, which can be explained by the extreme pressure of the situation.

Activity Type	Responses (multiple answers possible)	Mean Experiencing Score
Disaster relief	24	<b>0,62</b>
Working with children & youth	147	0,57
Education	231	0,53
Office & Admin	137	0,51
Social assistance - Disabilities	63	0,51
Social assistance - Charity & Others	137	0,51
Environment & Animals	127	0,50
Events & Culture	191	0,49

Table 13: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by Type of Volunteering Activity

### 3.2.6 Which mental health risks are the most significant?

**All negative feelings** listed in the questionnaire **were experienced by min. 20%** of the respondents. This suggests that each of these risks deserves attention. The following chart shows the “feelings” ranked according to their Mean Experiencing Scores:

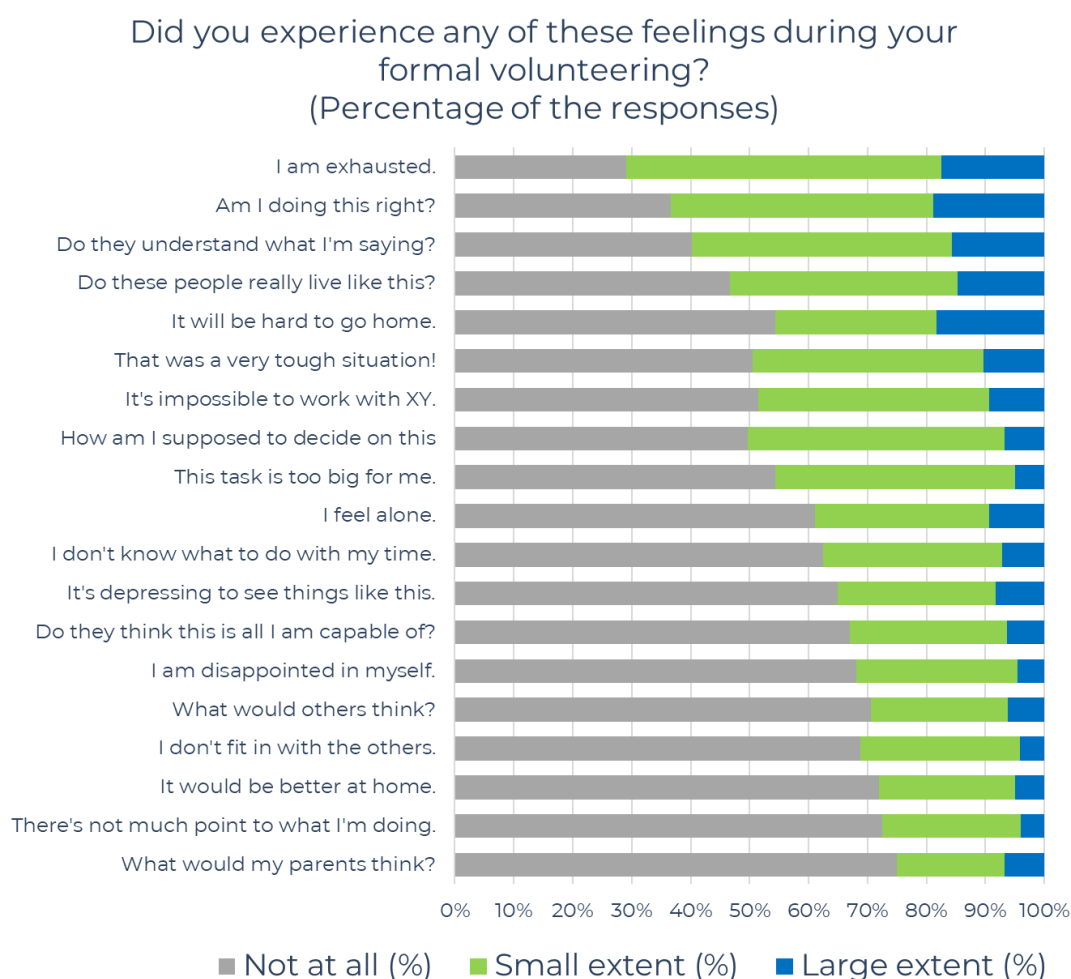


Figure 9: Rank of the Negative Feelings based on their Mean Experiencing Score

The most experienced negative feelings are exhaustion, followed by self-doubt, language barriers, cultural shock, hardness of going home, tough situations, and interpersonal conflicts. The risk factors of experiencing negative feelings differ by groups<sup>10</sup>:

- **Homesickness:** Going **abroad for volunteering** drastically changes the emotional landscape, generally fostering confidence (“*It will be hard to go home.*”) but introducing homesickness (“*I feel alone.*”).

<sup>10</sup> <https://library.virginia.edu/data/articles/getting-started-with-the-kruskal-wallis-test>

International Volunteering	Respondents	I feel alone.	It will be hard to go home.
no	174	0,37	0,35
yes	214	<b>0,57</b>	<b>0,87</b>

Table 14: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by International Volunteering

- **Physical and emotional toll** and **overwhelming tasks**: Volunteers who have been **involved for several years** experienced these at the highest rate.

Longest duration of volunteering	Respondents	This task is too big for me.	I am exhausted.
I volunteered for several years	52	<b>0,81</b>	<b>1,25</b>
Long-term volunteering: 5-12 months	109	<b>0,54</b>	<b>0,94</b>
Short-term volunteering: 1-4 months	106	0,36	0,79
Short-term, 1-2-week volunteer program	72	0,4	0,76
Short-term (max. 1 day) volunteer action	49	0,57	0,73

Table 15: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by Longest Duration of Volunteering

- **Loneliness**: Isolation (“I feel alone.”) was felt most strongly by **job seekers and high school students**. Meanwhile, students in higher education felt the least isolated.
- **Lack of purpose**: **regular workers/employees** felt mostly that their tasks were **pointless**, and **job seekers felt most strongly bored**. Students in higher education are less affected by this problem.

Life Situation	Respondents	Am I doing this right?	I feel alone.	I don't know what to do with my time.	There's not much point to what I'm doing.
high school student	72	<b>1,06</b>	<b>0,62</b>	0,54	0,38
job seeker	61	0,69	<b>0,69</b>	<b>0,61</b>	0,28
no work, other reason	17	0,76	0,47	0,41	0,43
regular work (intern, employee or self-employed)	64	0,88	0,41	0,52	<b>0,47</b>
student in higher education (professional school, college, university)	174	0,76	0,38	0,33	0,23

Table 16: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by Life Situation

- ▶ **Self-doubt: High school students** were the most unsure of their performance (“Am I doing this right?”). Volunteers here experience similar uncertainty and frustration **in disaster relief** (see Table 10: “How am I supposed to decide on this?, ”This task is too big for me.”).
- ▶ **Tough situation and interpersonal conflicts:** Those involved **in disaster relief** felt most strongly that the situation was very difficult, and they also reported the highest rate of conflicts with others.
- ▶ **Cultural shock:** Besides **disaster relief, social assistance & charity** can be a trigger for emotional heavy-lifting as volunteers directly face poverty or marginalised living.

Activity Type	Respondents	That was a very tough situation!	It's impossible to work with XY.	Do these people really live like this?	It's depressing to see things like this.	How am I supposed to decide on this	This task is too big for me.
Disaster relief	24	<b>0,92</b>	<b>0,79</b>	<b>0,88</b>	<b>0,58</b>	<b>0,71</b>	<b>0,75</b>
Education	231	0,59	0,59	0,7	0,42	0,57	0,49
Environment & Animals	127	0,59	0,58	0,72	0,35	0,64	0,52
Events & Culture	191	0,57	0,64	0,65	0,34	0,57	0,47
Office & Admin	137	0,61	0,69	0,66	0,34	0,55	0,53
Social assistance - Charity & Others	137	0,58	0,45	<b>0,83</b>	<b>0,49</b>	0,57	0,54
Social assistance - Disabilities	63	0,67	0,52	0,73	0,44	0,59	0,52
Working with children & youth	147	0,72	0,67	0,77	0,4	0,61	0,56

Table 17: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by Type of Volunteering Activity

### 3.2.7 Country-Specific Differences in Feelings

We used the Kruskal-Wallis H-test<sup>11</sup> to examine differences in the experience of various “feelings” across countries (see Appendix B for a detailed table). Only **a few significant differences emerged between countries**, which were primarily attributable to variations in sample composition within each country.

<sup>11</sup> <https://library.virginia.edu/data/articles/getting-started-with-the-kruskal-wallis-test>

## GEORGIA

- ▶ Age significantly dictates the level of self-doubt and confidence in Georgia. Younger volunteers (14-18) experience much higher levels of insecurity (*"How am I supposed to decide on this?"*, *"Am I doing this right?"*). However, this is where volunteers felt the **most improvement in making decisions** (*"Finally, I get to decide."*).
- ▶ While the percentage of **international volunteering** is very high in Georgia (79%), the **feeling of isolation** (*"I feel alone."*) and **the thought of returning home** are the hardest here (*"It will be hard to go home."*). However, domestic volunteers report more struggles with decision-making (*"How am I supposed to decide on this?"*) and tough situations (*"That was a very tough situation!"*).
- ▶ Boredom or **lack of structured tasks** was a significant issue in Georgia, affecting more than half of the volunteers in a small extent (*"I don't know what to do with my time,"*). The **sense of aimlessness** (*"There's not much point to what I'm doing."*) is the highest here, as well. These can be explained by the higher percentage of **job seekers** (23%) and **regular workers/employees** (20%).
- ▶ **Cultural backgrounds** slightly influence **feelings of belonging, responsibility, and anxiety**. Volunteers from non-EU European countries felt a stronger sense of being relied upon (*"What I do is important; they rely on me."*), while EU volunteers experienced slightly more anxiety about others' opinions (*"What would others think?"*).
- ▶ In Georgia, **education brings a strong sense of purpose** (*"I am in the right place, I feel at home."*), **energy** (*"I feel energised."*), and **"Aha" moment** (*"Aha, finally I understand."*) but also exposes volunteers to **social realities** (*"Do these people really live like this?"*) and **language barriers** (*"Do they understand what I'm saying?"*).
- ▶ **Working with children & youth:** High responsibility leads to **feelings of empowerment** (*"Wow, look what I can do!"*, *"Finally, I get to decide."*), but also increases **interpersonal friction** (*"It's impossible to work with XY."*) and exposure to **social struggles** (*"Do these people really live like this?"*).
- ▶ **Environment & Animals actions** provide a **safe, energising, and emotionally uplifting** environment (*"I feel energised."*, *"I am in the right place, I feel at home."*).
- ▶ **Social assistance with disabilities** maximises the feeling of **being useful** (*"What I do is important; they rely on me."*) and the discovery of unexpected **personal strengths** (*"Wow, look what I can do!"*).

## HUNGARY

- ▶ In Hungary, **emotional swings are more moderate**, with responses often falling in the middle range. This can be explained by the higher proportion of **one-day volunteering** (37%) and **14-18-year-olds** (35%).
- ▶ Here, **uncertainty** about whether they are doing their job well is highest (*"Am I doing this right?"*), and volunteers in Hungary felt **the least competent** (*"I do what I'm good at,"*), mainly in the **14-18-year-old group**. However, the **"Aha moment"** (*"Aha, finally I understand."*) is one of the strongest here, indicating an **intense learning process**.
- ▶ However, **young adults** (19-24) **experience the "golden age"** of volunteering (*"I am in the right place, I feel at home."*, *"What I do is important; they rely on me."*, *"It will be hard to go home."*).
- ▶ **Female** volunteers report a much **higher sense of belonging** (*"I am in the right place, I feel at home."*) and **purpose** (*"What I do is important; they rely on me."*), whereas **male** volunteers experience significantly **more performance anxiety** (*"Do they think this is all I am capable of?"*), **boredom** (*"I don't know what to do with my time."*), and **concern about external opinions** (*"What would others think?"*).
- ▶ The length of volunteering dictates the level of "reality shock" versus long-term exhaustion. **Short-term (1-day)** volunteers experience the **highest levels of shock** (*"Do these people really live like this?"*) and **depression** regarding social conditions (*"It's depressing to see things like this."*), while **multi-year** volunteers feel **the most exhausted** (*"I am exhausted."*), but also **the most competent** (*"Wow, look what I can do!"*).
- ▶ Volunteering in the **Office & Admin field** supports surprising levels of **autonomy** (*"Wow, look what I can do!,"* *"Finally, I get to decide."*), and **team integration** (*"I feel an important part of this group."*).
- ▶ **Working with children & youth** means high **flow** (*"I do what I'm good at"*), high **energy** (*"I feel energised"*), but **physically tiring** (*"I am exhausted"*) – mainly in the case of long-term duration.
- ▶ **Social assistance** (with disabilities or others) produces severe **reality shocks** (*"Do these people really live like this?"*) and is **highly challenging** (*"That was a very tough situation!"*) and **emotionally heavy** (*"It's depressing to see things like this."*).

## PORTUGAL

- ▶ **Uncertainty regarding decisions** is highest here (*"How am I supposed to decide on this?"*). This can be explained by the high percentage of volunteering in **environmental actions** (51%) and **disaster relief** (10%).
- ▶ At the same time, this is where people most often experience **amazement at their own abilities** (*"Wow, look what I can do!"*).
- ▶ **Culture shock** was felt by the majority of volunteers in Portugal (*"Do these people really live like this?"*) due to the higher importance of **social assistance & charity** (53%).
- ▶ There are significant differences between genders in several emotional aspects. **Male** volunteers reported higher levels of feeling that the **tasks are below their capabilities** (*"Do they think this is all I am capable of?"*) and experienced **more uncertainty about their time and the purpose** of their work (*"I don't know what to do with my time"; "There's not much point to what I'm doing"*). **Female** volunteers felt **more empowered** (*"Wow, look what I can do!"*).
- ▶ Volunteers in the field of **working with children & youths** were significantly more likely to **wonder about people's living conditions** (*"Do these people really live like this?"*) and find it **harder to go home** (*"It will be hard to go home"*).
- ▶ Volunteers in **environment & animals actions** reported higher **frustration with interpersonal dynamics** (*"It's impossible to work with XY"*).

## TURKEY

- ▶ Volunteers in Turkey showed **the most positive emotional profile**. Almost everyone **feels energetic** (*"I feel energised."*) during volunteering and feels they are **doing what they're good at** (*"I do what I'm good at."*).
- ▶ Here, **they worry the least** about the weight of decisions (*"How am I supposed to decide on this?"*), and volunteers in Turkey felt **the most competent** (*"I do what I'm good at."*). Accordingly, the **"Aha!" moments of realisation** and understanding (*"Aha, finally I understand."*) were notably **lower** in Turkey.
- ▶ Also in Turkey, many **international volunteers** are facing the negative impact of living conditions (*"Do these people really live like this?"*). But volunteers here were **the least exposed to emotionally depressing**

**situations** connected to it compared to the other three countries (*"It's depressing to see things like this."*).

- ▶ However, those who **hadn't participated in an international program** yet experienced **negative and uncertain feelings significantly more** often than participants of international programs: difficult decision-making (*"How am I supposed to decide on this?"*), feeling undervalued (*"Do they think this is all I am capable of?"*), feeling of meaninglessness (*"There's not much point to what I'm doing."*), critical situations (*"That was a very tough situation!"*).
- ▶ **Women** felt significantly **more strongly their competence** (*"I do what I'm good at"*). However, women **worried more** often about whether *"Do they understand what I'm saying?"* and more frequently asked themselves: *"Am I doing this right?"*.
- ▶ **Working with children** gives the **highest sense of achievement** (*"Wow, look what I can do!"*).
- ▶ **Helping at events and festivals** is a very common activity in Turkey (54%), which offers **great improvement of the autonomy** (*"Finally, I get to decide."*) but exposes volunteers to **unpredictable situations** (*"That was a very tough situation!"*).
- ▶ Volunteers in **disaster relief** experience **high uncertainty and frustration** when there are no immediate tasks or clear directions (*"Do they think this is all I am capable of?"*, *"Am I doing this right?"*).
- ▶ In contrast to the experience in Hungary, **office work** in Turkey is prone to **"empty hours" and boredom** (*"I don't know what to do with my time."*).

### 3.3 RELEVANT SUPPORTS

We examined the volunteers' opinions on the usefulness of different mental health support tools during volunteering in two ways:

- 1) We asked them an open-ended question: *"What could have supported you in dealing with bad feelings during formal (organised) volunteering?"*
- 2) Based on preliminary expert interviews and studies, we compiled a list of 17 "support tools". We asked the volunteers to rate them on a 3-point (0=Cannot help at all, 1= Can help to a small extent, 3=Can help to a large extent) Likert-scale to indicate: *"Which of the following did/could help you in dealing with bad feelings during formal (organised) volunteering or in avoiding them?"*

### 3.3.1 Which tool is more useful for whom?

When analysing the closed questions, we found that **min. 35% of respondents found all of the listed tools to be very useful** (to a large extent).

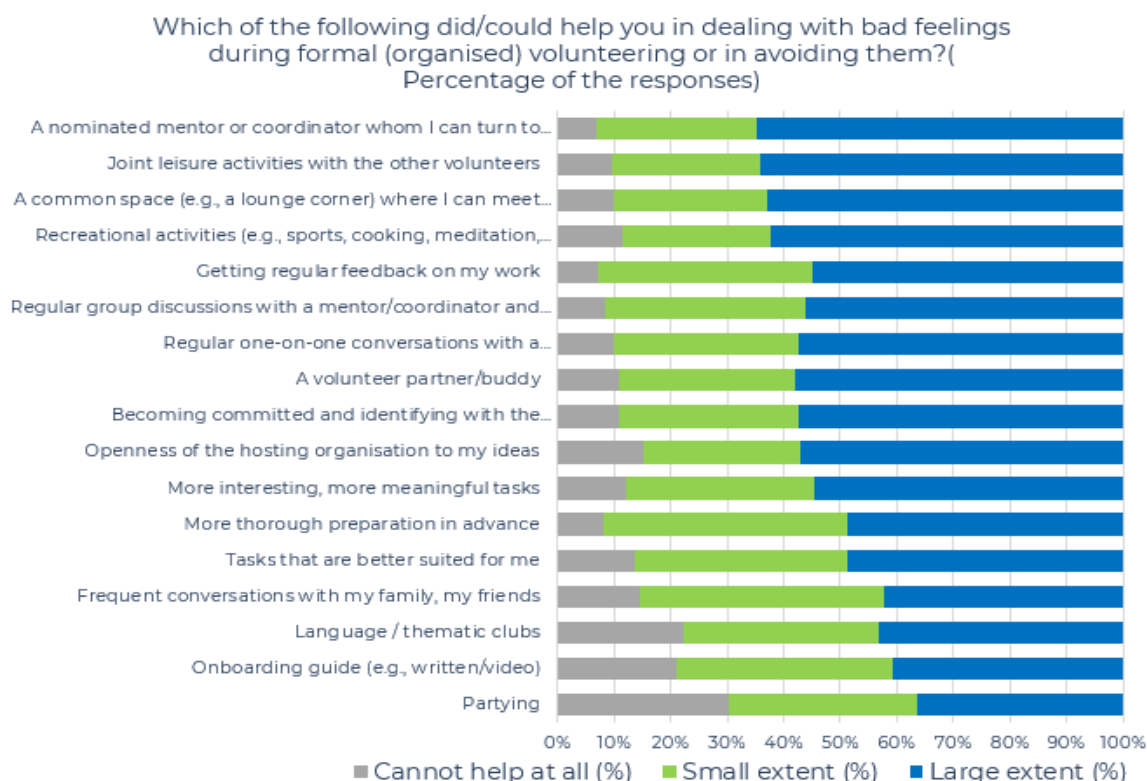


Figure 10: Rank of the Possible Supports based on their Mean Experiencing Score

The data highlights a distinct preference for **structured personal mentorship** and **informal community integration**. Conversely, social events like "partying" were ranked as the least effective support measure. Other tools, including onboarding guides, language/thematic clubs and familial discussions, showed lower utility scores. Notably, the perceived effectiveness of these tools was highly subjective, fluctuating significantly based on the **respondent's demographic group, the country of the volunteering and the specific nature of their mental health challenges**.

We examined the Kruskal-Wallis H-test<sup>12</sup>, which listed support types that are experienced statistically more intensely by which volunteer group:

<sup>12</sup> <https://library.virginia.edu/data/articles/getting-started-with-the-kruskal-wallis-test>

- **Female volunteers** generally value **structured support, feedback and mentoring more** than male volunteers.

Gender	Respondents	More thorough preparation in advance	Becoming committed and identifying with the organisation's goals	A nominated mentor or coordinator whom I can turn to when I need it	Getting regular feedback on my work
Female	257	1,46	1,51	1,65	1,54
Male	122	1,3	1,37	1,44	1,36
Other	5	1,4	1,6	1,4	1,2

Table 18: Mean Experiencing Score of Relevant Supports by Gender

- **Young adults (19-24)** require the **most active community building, space and activities**. Older volunteers (18+ years) need **more openness to their ideas**, they would aim to **become more committed**, and they **require meaningful tasks**. The youngest volunteers (14-18) need less openness to their ideas, commitment and meaningful tasks than older volunteers.

Age	Respondents	Openness of the hosting organisation to my ideas	Becoming committed and identifying with the organisation's goals	More interesting, more meaningful tasks	Recreational activities (e.g., sports, cooking, meditation, arts...)	Partying	A common space (e.g., a lounge corner) where I can meet other volunteers informally
14-18	79	1,09	1,28	1,19	1,33	0,89	1,34
19-24	209	1,51	1,54	1,49	1,61	1,15	1,61
25-30	93	1,48	1,46	1,47	1,43	1	1,51

Table 19: Mean Experiencing Score of Relevant Supports by Age Group

- Volunteers already integrated into the labour market (**job seekers and regular workers**) demand professional treatment, such as **dedicated one-on-one time and meaningful tasks**, much more than e.g., high school students or students in higher education.

Life Situation	Respondents	More interesting, more meaningful	Regular one-on-one conversations with a
high school student	71	1,25	1,34
job seeker	61	<b>1,57</b>	<b>1,68</b>
no work, other reason	17	1,18	1,41
regular work (intern, employee or self-employed)	63	<b>1,56</b>	<b>1,65</b>
student in higher education (professional school, college, university)	173	1,42	1,4

Table 20: Mean Experiencing Score of Relevant Supports by Life Situation

- ▶ Those who take part in **medium to long-term volunteering (1 to 12 months)** require **structural mentoring, openness to their ideas and recreational activities**. Intense 1-2 week programs rely heavily on "buddies" and immediate social bonding to navigate the sudden new environment. Those doing very short events (max 1 day) find extra support mechanisms significantly less necessary, only a volunteer partner/buddy who has higher usefulness.

Longest Duration	Respondents	Openness of the hosting organisation to my ideas	More interesting, more meaningful tasks	Recreational activities (e.g., sports, cooking, meditation, arts...)	A nominated mentor or coordinator whom I can turn to when I need it	Regular one-on-one conversations with a mentor/coordinator	A volunteer partner/buddy
I volunteered for several years	52	1,38	1,42	1,27	1,61	1,52	1,16
Long-term volunteering: 5-12 months	107	<b>1,64</b>	<b>1,65</b>	<b>1,7</b>	<b>1,71</b>	<b>1,64</b>	<b>1,61</b>
Short-term volunteering: 1-4 months	105	<b>1,47</b>	<b>1,44</b>	<b>1,55</b>	<b>1,56</b>	<b>1,53</b>	<b>1,5</b>
Short-term, 1-2-week volunteer program	70	1,32	1,31	<b>1,55</b>	<b>1,55</b>	1,36	<b>1,58</b>
Short-term (max. 1 day) volunteer action	48	1	1,04	1,19	1,35	1,08	<b>1,27</b>

Table 21: Mean Experiencing Score of Relevant Supports by Longest Duration of Volunteering

- ▶ **Volunteering abroad** drastically increases the reliance on **social integration tools and organizational openness**. International

volunteers score consistently higher on community-building elements than domestic volunteers.

International volunteering	Respondents	Openness of the hosting organisation to my ideas	More interesting, more meaningful tasks	Recreational activities (e.g., sports, cooking, meditation, arts...)	Partying	Joint leisure activities with the other volunteers	Frequent conversations with my family, my friends	Regular group discussions with a mentor/coordinator and other	A common space (e.g., a lounge corner) where I can meet other	Language / thematic clubs	A volunteer partner/buddy
no	169	1,2	1,23	1,33	0,81	1,39	1,19	1,39	1,38	0,9	1,36
yes	212	<b>1,59</b>	<b>1,58</b>	<b>1,66</b>	<b>1,26</b>	<b>1,67</b>	<b>1,35</b>	<b>1,55</b>	<b>1,65</b>	<b>1,45</b>	<b>1,56</b>

Table 22: Mean Experiencing Score of Relevant Supports by International Volunteering

### 3.3.2 Which tool is more useful for which mental health challenge?

The Spearman correlation coefficient<sup>13</sup> was used to indicate how the presence of certain emotional states influences which types of support a volunteer finds more or less effective. (The Correlation Matrix and the Heat Map can be found in Appendix E.)

- ▶ **Physical and emotional toll:** For volunteers suffering from high fatigue, more interesting/meaningful tasks or recreational activities, partying can be helpful.
- ▶ **Competence:** There is a strong correlation between confident volunteers ("I do what I'm good at", "Finally, I get to decide,,", "Aha, finally I understand.") and 1) suited, meaningful tasks and 2) openness of the hosting organisation to the new ideas.
- ▶ **Indecisiveness:** Volunteers who have a hard time making decisions ("How am I supposed to decide on this?") likely haven't received adequate preparation ("More preparation in advance"), and support from a mentor could be the most helpful.
- ▶ **Inappropriate task:** For those who are dissatisfied with their tasks ("This task is too big for me", "Do they think this is all I am capable of?", "I am disappointed in myself", "There is not much point to what I'm doing", "I don't know what to do with my time"), the solution is

<sup>13</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spearman%27s\\_rank\\_correlation\\_coefficient](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spearman%27s_rank_correlation_coefficient)

clearly to assign them a suitable task; community and recreational programs will not help.

- ▶ **Cultural shock:** volunteers who feel *"Do these people really live like this? "*, and *"It is depressing to see things like that"*, need more thorough preparation in advance, an onboarding guide or can help a volunteer partner/buddy.
- ▶ **Though Situation:** in case of the feeling *"That was a very tough situation!,"*, regular one-on-one conversations with a mentor/coordinator help the most.
- ▶ **Positive Emotional States:** Joint leisure activities and becoming committed to the organisation's goals show the strongest positive correlations with feelings like *"I am in the right place, I feel at home"*, *"I feel energised"* and *"I feel an important part of the group"*.
- ▶ **Mentorship and Feedback:** Tools like *"Getting regular feedback"* and *"A nominated mentor"* show relatively stable, moderate positive correlations across various positive feelings (e.g., *"Wow, look what I can do!"*, *"I feel energised."*, *"I am in the right place"*, *"I feel an important part of the group"*).
- ▶ **The "Fit" Factor:** The feeling of *"I don't fit in with others"*, *"I would be better at home"* are negatively correlated with the helpfulness of community building and joint leisure activities. This highlights a challenge for coordinators: those who feel they don't fit in may perceive group social activities as less helpful, perhaps even stressful, requiring more individualised one-on-one support instead.

### 3.3.3 Country-Specific Differences in Support Tools

We examined with the Kruskal-Wallis H-test<sup>14</sup>, which supporting tools were seen statistically more positively in which country. (The mean Experiencing Scores can be found in Appendix C.)

#### GEORGIA

- ▶ **Active, inclusive participation:** They strongly valued the hosting organisation being open to their ideas, indicating a desire for active, inclusive participation rather than just executing tasks.
- ▶ **High demand for social integration and inclusion:** Volunteers in Georgia placed the absolute highest value on community and

<sup>14</sup> <https://library.virginia.edu/data/articles/getting-started-with-the-kruskal-wallis-test>

informal social bonds. They rated "Joint leisure activities", "Recreational activities" and "Partying" higher than any other country.

## HUNGARY

- ▶ **Overall lower helpfulness:** Volunteers hosted in Hungary consistently gave lower helpfulness scores across all the support types.
- ▶ **Less demand for social integration:** They placed less value on a volunteer partner/buddy and joint leisure activities with the other volunteers than in the other countries. It is well with the high percentage of 1-day volunteering.
- ▶ **The need for commitment and preparation:** Volunteers in Hungary stood out for valuing "Becoming committed and identifying with the organisation's goals" and "More thorough preparation in advance".
- ▶ **Office & Admin work:** High need for team integration ("Joint leisure activities with the other volunteers", "Regular group discussions with a mentor/coordinator") to combat the isolation of office work.

## PORTUGAL

- ▶ **The need for preparation:** Volunteers in Portugal stood out for valuing "More thorough preparation in advance" (1.60) significantly higher than anyone else. This aligns perfectly with our previous findings, where volunteers in Portugal felt the most pressure to make decisions and encountered many "tough situations." It can be connected to the high percentage of disaster relief and environmental actions.
- ▶ Volunteers **working with children & youth** significantly value social integration ("A common space for meeting others", "Partying", "Language / thematic clubs").
- ▶ Volunteers working in **social assistance with disabilities** show the highest demand for structured support ("Onboarding guide", "Getting regular feedback on my work") and "joint leisure activities with other volunteers".

## TURKEY

- ▶ **Structured integration and resources:** Volunteers in Turkey placed the highest value on structured, formal integration tools. They found having a "Volunteer partner/buddy", "Language / thematic clubs",

and "Onboarding guides" highly effective. They also strongly valued having a "Dedicated common space" and receiving "More meaningful tasks". This suggests a volunteering environment where organised programs and tangible resources are the preferred methods of support.

- **Office work** in Turkey is prone to "empty hours" and boredom. Therefore, there is a high demand for recreational activities (e.g., sports, cooking, arts) here.

### 3.3.4 What useful tools did the volunteers mention on their own?

High participation engagement was noted with the non-compulsory open-ended question regarding useful tools: over 70% of the participants actively provided feedback.

What could have supported you in dealing with bad feelings during formal (organised) volunteering?

Category	Definition	Count (Mentions)	% of Valid Responses
Peer Support	Support from fellow volunteers, friends, family, or social group interactions.	122	45%
Psychological support	Psychological support, coping mechanisms, positive thinking, and emotional processing.	77	28%
Clear Communication	Regular feedback, transparency, clear task information, and open discussions.	52	19%
Impact/Purpose	Focusing on the value of the work, community benefits, and personal motivation.	45	16%
Mentorship/Leadership	Guidance from mentors, supervisors, coordinators, or organizational leaders.	40	15%
Institutional Support	Organizational environment, fair treatment, financial allowances, and structure.	39	14%
Well-being/Rest	Physical rest, time off, travel, reflection, and leisure activities.	24	9%
Training/Preparation	Workshops, handbooks, skill-building, and pre-activity preparation.	22	8%

Table 23: Supports Mentioned by the Respondents on their Own

**Peer support** is the primary driver, suggesting that the social bond and support from „colleagues” are the most significant factors for volunteers.

There has been significant emphasis on **mental health**, as nearly 28% of respondents highlighted mental health as a critical category.

**Communication** is key. 19% of volunteers identified "*Clear Communication*" as an essential element, ranking it third overall.

It became clear from the respondents that the foundation of success is how the volunteering activity is organised:

- ▶ *Clear Communication* (19%)
- ▶ *Mentorship/Leadership* (15%)
- ▶ *Institutional Support* (14%)
- ▶ *Training/Preparation* (8%)

**Professional psychological** support is newly mentioned by the respondents, as the questionnaire did not offer that support in the closed questions.

The need for **Institutional support** is higher in Turkey and Portugal.

**Well-being/Rest** is ranked significantly higher in Georgia compared to the other countries.

### 3.4 MOTIVATION OF THE VOLUNTEERS

Several people gave more than one answer to the question "*What was your main motivation for applying to be a volunteer?*", which indicates that the decision to volunteer involves a combination of social, personal and professional goals.

What was your main motivation for applying to be a volunteer?

Category	Definition	Count (Mentions)	% of Valid Responses
Altruism	Helping others, achieving social impact, charity.	168	48%
<b>Social Connection</b>	<b>Belonging to a community, new friends, getting to know each other.</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>35%</b>
Career Growth	Career building, improving your CV, gaining professional experience.	109	31%
<b>Personal Growth</b>	<b>Increasing self-confidence, new challenges, self-knowledge.</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>25%</b>
Skill Building	Learning new skills, language development, teamwork.	85	25%
Cultural Exchange	Getting to know other cultures and countries, traveling.	80	23%
<b>Well-being</b>	<b>Seeking happiness, mental recharge, relaxation.</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>9%</b>

Table 24: Motivation Mentioned by the Respondents on their Own

**Altruism** is the leading motivator when participating in volunteering activities. Nearly half of all volunteers (48%) cited altruism as the primary motivation.

The answers also showed a strong focus on professional development: **Career Growth** achieved 31% and **Skill Building** achieved 25%. Regional insight: Career growth is a dominant motivator in **Georgia**, reaching **53%**.

**Social connection** also plays an Important role. Over a third of respondents (35%) highlighted the program's role in building communities and interpersonal relationships. **Personal Growth** motivates 25% of participants, and well-being motivates 9%. These are the categories that contribute most **to mental health** (highlighted in bold in Table 24).

Regional insight shows a higher importance of **Cultural Exchange** in Turkey and Georgia due to the higher international volunteering.

### 3.5 IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING ON MENTAL HEALTH

An important objective of the research was to examine the hypothesis that **volunteering has a positive long-term effect on young people's mental health and well-being**, even after they have stopped participating in volunteer work.

Therefore, we examined the possible impact of volunteering on volunteers' mental health in two ways in the questionnaire:

- 1) We asked them an open-ended question: *"What are the 3 things you feel you gained from volunteering?"*
- 2) Based on preliminary expert interviews and studies, we compiled a list of 17 possible positive effects of volunteering connected to mental well-being. We asked the volunteers to rate them on a 3-point (*not at all – contributed to a small extent – contributed to a large extent*) Likert-scale to indicate: *"How did your volunteer experience contribute to your life in the following areas?"*

### 3.5.1 What are the most important benefits that volunteers have highlighted as the rewards they've gained from volunteering?

**85% provided valid answers** to the non-compulsory open-ended question regarding the benefits of volunteering. This indicates a **high level of openness and engagement** among the volunteer base.

**More than half of the respondents** (57%) indicated some type of **skill development** due to volunteering. This suggests that the volunteer program is highly effective at providing **practical learning opportunities**.

**Strong Effect on Mental Health** (highlighted in bold in Table 25): social connection (43%), personal growth (40%), perspective shift (35%), mental well-being (15%) and personal fulfilment (12%) are often mentioned, as well. **This confirms our hypothesis** that volunteering has a positive impact on mental health even in the long term.

**Professional vs. Personal Outcomes:** Interestingly, **career advancement was the least** mentioned category (3%). However, skill development and personal growth contribute significantly to career advancement in the long run.

Category	Definition	Count (Mentions)	% of Valid Responses
Skill Development	Technical/soft skills, languages	188	57%
<b>Social Connection</b>	<b>Friendships, teamwork, networking, and belonging.</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Personal Growth</b>	<b>Self-confidence, independence, courage, and self-knowledge..</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Perspective Shift</b>	<b>Empathy, cultural awareness, and a broader worldview.</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Mental Well-being</b>	<b>Happiness, hope, stress reduction, and positive energy.</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Personal Fulfillment</b>	<b>Purpose, achievement, and personal satisfaction.</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>12%</b>
Community Impact	Helping others and social responsibility.	33	10%
Career Advancement	Job opportunities and professional path.	9	3%

Table 25: Gained Benefits Mentioned by the Respondents on their Own

Notably, the top four categories are very closely clustered, suggesting that the **volunteer experience is complex**, providing skill development, social and personal benefits simultaneously.

### 3.5.2 Do the volunteers ultimately gain what they sought when joining the program?

We compared the motivations and gained benefits of the volunteers, and we observed that there is **no direct connection between entry goals** (motivation) **and the perceived benefits** (gained things).

**Motivation is mostly just an "entry ticket" to volunteering.** In reality, participants can be attracted by various promises (e.g., "build your career", "make friends"). Still, at the end of the program, **the true, universal value of volunteering** will prevail for them:

- the development of soft skills
- the broadening of their social network
- and their personal growth, which contributes significantly to mental health.

### 3.5.3 In which area do volunteers feel the greatest sense of fulfilment?

When we analysed the responses to the "gained benefits" we listed based on the percentage of respondents, we found that overall, volunteering seems to **primarily catalyse internal psychological growth and social empathy**, rather than providing immediate, practical life-path or career resolutions.

Conversely, **the lowest-ranking effects are tied to concrete career progression and daily routines** outside of volunteering.

How did your volunteer experience contribute to your life in the following areas?  
(Percentage of the responses)



Figure 11: Rank of the Gained Benefits based on their Mean Experiencing Score

### 3.5.4 Which group's mental health had the highest impact?

We examined by the Kruskal-Wallis H-test which long-term benefits are experienced statistically more intensely by which volunteer group:

- **Female volunteers** report a **slightly higher developmental impact across several interpersonal and self-awareness dimensions** compared to male volunteers.

Gender	Respondents	I am more independent	I know myself better	I am more confident dealing with challenges	I connect with people more easily	I better understand other people's situations and perspectives
Female	260	1,67	1,67	1,59	1,65	1,7
Male	123	1,46	1,47	1,46	1,5	1,58
Other	5	1,6	1,6	1,2	1,8	1,6

Table 26: Mean Experiencing Score of Gained Benefits by Gender

- The **14-18-year-old age** group reported **minor improvements** in almost every area. The **"19-24" age** group reports **the highest personal growth**, mainly in the case of independence, connection with people and community.

Age	Respondents	I have more self-confidence	I am more independent	I know myself better	I cope with difficulties and stress more easily	I connect with people more easily	I found a supportive community	I better understand other people's situations and perspectives	I know now how to proceed with my career and/or studies
14-18	80	1,41	1,42	1,39	1,15	1,52	1,36	1,48	1,02
19-24	213	1,69	<b>1,71</b>	1,65	1,45	<b>1,68</b>	<b>1,69</b>	1,73	1,28
25-30	95	1,62	1,52	1,67	1,44	1,52	1,58	1,67	1,26

Table 27: Mean Experiencing Score of Gained Benefits by Age

- Volunteers who are **"job seekers"** experience the most intense personal transformation, using volunteering as a major tool for building self-confidence and independence.

Life Situation	Respondents	I have more self-confidence	I am more independent	I know myself better
high school student	72	1,42	1,47	1,42
job seeker	61	<b>1,74</b>	<b>1,79</b>	<b>1,75</b>
no work, other reason	17	1,47	1,47	1,35
regular work (intern, employee or self-employed)	64	1,69	1,48	1,62
student in higher education (professional school, college, university)	174	1,64	1,65	1,64

Table 28: Mean Experiencing Score of Gained Benefits by Life Situation

- The duration of volunteering strongly dictates the depth of personal impact. **Volunteers staying for "several years" or "5-12 months"** show **the highest levels of confidence, independence, and resilience** ("I am more confident dealing with challenges.") **and know themselves better and their future goals**. Very short assignments ("max. 1 day") provide almost no lasting personal development.

Longest Duration	Respondents	I have more self-confidence	I am more independent	I see my future goals more clearly	I know myself better	I am more confident dealing with challenges
I volunteered for several years	52	<b>1,71</b>	<b>1,71</b>	1,5	<b>1,77</b>	<b>1,69</b>
Long-term volunteering: 5-12 months	109	<b>1,69</b>	<b>1,69</b>	1,45	<b>1,72</b>	<b>1,65</b>
Short-term volunteering: 1-4 months	106	1,61	1,64	1,42	1,59	1,53
Short-term, 1-2-week volunteer program	72	1,67	1,57	1,33	1,5	1,54
Short-term (max. 1 day) volunteer action	49	1,27	1,27	0,98	1,35	1,18

Table 29: Mean Experiencing Score of Gained Benefits by Longest Duration of Volunteering

- Travelling abroad for volunteering is a massive catalyst for personal growth. **International volunteers** score significantly higher in almost every single developmental category than those who stay in their home country.

International volunteering	Respondents	I have more self-confidence	I am more independent	I know myself better	I cope with difficulties and stress more easily	I stand up for myself better	I connect with people more easily	I found a supportive community	I better understand other people's situations and perspectives
no	174	1,44	1,4	1,45	1,23	1,18	1,48	1,41	1,55
yes	214	<b>1,75</b>	<b>1,77</b>	<b>1,72</b>	<b>1,51</b>	<b>1,56</b>	<b>1,71</b>	<b>1,75</b>	<b>1,75</b>

Table 30: Mean Experiencing Score of Gained Benefits by International or Domestic Volunteering

- ▶ Volunteering with **people with disabilities** has **the most profound developmental impact on personality**. In nearly every dimension, this group scored the highest.
- ▶ Although it may not seem like a “frontline” activity at first glance, **office & admin roles** yield exceptionally **high impacts on personal improvement** in nearly every dimension, as well.

Type of Activity	Respondents	I am more independent	I dare to make decisions	I know myself better	I cope with difficulties and stress more easily	I stand up for myself better	I found a supportive community	I better understand other people's situations...	The volunteer work gave meaning to my life
Disaster relief	24	1,54	1,42	1,58	1,46	1,42	1,5	1,62	1,21
Education	231	1,61	1,43	1,58	1,35	1,36	1,61	1,65	1,34
Environment & Animals	127	1,58	1,44	1,61	1,37	1,46	1,61	1,72	1,46
Events & Culture	191	1,7	1,53	1,68	1,44	1,47	1,65	1,71	1,34
Office & Admin	137	<b>1,72</b>	<b>1,59</b>	<b>1,74</b>	<b>1,46</b>	<b>1,57</b>	<b>1,74</b>	<b>1,77</b>	1,36
Social assistance - Charity & Others	137	1,54	1,45	1,62	1,37	1,33	1,53	1,66	1,31
Social assistance - Disabilities	63	<b>1,76</b>	<b>1,65</b>	<b>1,73</b>	<b>1,6</b>	<b>1,63</b>	<b>1,73</b>	<b>1,89</b>	<b>1,51</b>
Working with children & youth	147	1,63	1,42	1,59	1,37	1,39	1,61	1,67	1,24

Table 31: Mean Experiencing Score of Gained Benefits by Activity Type of Volunteering

### 3.5.5 Country-Specific Differences in the Impact of Volunteering

When we examined by the Kruskal-Wallis H-test the differences in experiencing the gained benefits by countries (a detailed table can be found in Appendix C), we found only **a few differences between countries**.

#### GEORGIA

- ▶ Self-reliance: The greatest growth was observed in the area of “I am more independent” (1.70).
- ▶ Broadened perspectives: **Gaining insight into local realities had a very strong impact** on them: the statement “*I better understand other people’s situations and perspectives*” received one of the highest scores in the entire research. It can be explained by the high importance (79%) of international volunteering in Georgia.
- ▶ **Office & admin**: Volunteers in administrative roles report **significantly lower emotional and resilience-building impacts** compared to field volunteers (“*I cope with difficulties and stress more easily*”, “*I stand up for myself better*”, “*I am more confident dealing with challenges*”, “*The volunteer work gave meaning to my life*”).

#### HUNGARY

- ▶ Due to the **high proportion of one-day volunteer activities** in the sample, volunteers in Hungary reported a **smaller impact on average across nearly all areas**. But the benefits gained can be ranked like those of other countries.
- ▶ **Office & admin** roles in Hungary yield exceptionally **high impacts on personal empowerment** (“*I am more independent*”, “*I cope with difficulties and stress more easily*”).
- ▶ **Working with children & youth** acts as an intense catalyst for **self-confidence** (“*I have more self-confidence*”), **copng skills** (“*I cope with difficulties and stress more easily*”), and **career orientation** (“*I know now how to proceed with my career*”).

#### PORTUGAL

- ▶ Volunteers in Poland showed **the least improvement in assertiveness** (“*I stand up for myself better*”) and **in connection with people** (“*I connect with people more easily*”) received nearly the lowest score among them.

- ▶ **Female** volunteers reported significantly higher levels of personal growth in terms of **self-awareness** (*"I know myself better"*) and **independence** (*"I am more independent"*) compared to male volunteers. Mainly, volunteers **working with children & youth** significantly developed their independence.
- ▶ **Office & admin work** contributes **more to finding daily professional purpose** (*"I find more meaning in my daily work and activities"*), likely due to the structural and goal-oriented nature of the work.

## TURKEY

- ▶ Across almost every single metric, volunteers stationed in Turkey reported **the highest levels of personal development**. Volunteering in Turkey appears to be a deeply transformative experience that builds extreme resilience and independence.
- ▶ They gave exceptionally high scores to the statements *"I stand up for myself better"* and *"I have more self-confidence"*. This suggests that the environment in Turkey (perhaps due to cultural differences or the responsibilities entrusted to them) forced them **to learn to represent themselves assertively**.
- ▶ **Mental well-being and meaning:** They also achieved the highest score for the statement *"I am generally in a better mood"*. For them, work was clearly a source of purpose in life: *"The volunteer work gave meaning to my life"*.
- ▶ **Social connections:** They integrated exceptionally well, as evidenced by the extremely high scores for *"I connect with people more easily"* and *"I found a supportive community"*
- ▶ Volunteers in **disaster relief have the absolute highest developmental impacts**, reaching near-maximum scores in confidence (*"I have more self-confidence"*), in independence (*"I am more independent"*), and community integration (*"I found a supportive community"*).

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## Appendix

### A) Questionnaire

## WHAT VOLUNTEERING GAVE YOU?

### SECTION 1

*The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand better your experiences related to volunteering. This helps us see how we can truly support you during future volunteering activities.*

*Volunteering = it is an unpaid activity performed of one's own free will for public issues. Volunteering could be self-organised or prepared by an organisation (associations, foundations, volunteer centres, federations, networks, Erasmus, educational institutions, etc.). **In this questionnaire, we are interested only in your volunteer activities carried out within a formal (organised) framework.***

*Completing the questionnaire takes **approximately 8-10 minutes**.*

*We do not ask for your name or contact details, so **your answers will not be identifiable in any way**.*

***There are no right or wrong answers**; we are interested in your honest opinion.*

*Thank you very much for your help!*

### SECTION 2

#### 1 BASIC INFORMATION

1.1 What is your gender?

(Not compulsory)

- Male
- Female
- Other

1.2 What is your nationality?

*(Short open-ended question)*

### SECTION 3

#### 2 WHAT IS YOUR VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE?

We are currently interested only in your volunteer activities carried out within a formal (organised) framework, prepared by an organisation (associations, foundations, volunteer centres, federations, networks, Erasmus, educational institutions, etc.).

2.1 When did you participate in a formal (organised) volunteer activity?

- I am currently volunteering
- 1-2 months ago

- half a year ago
- more than half a year ago
- more than a year ago
- I have not participated

#### SECTION 4

If You have not participated in formal (organised) volunteering

2.8 Please indicate why?

*(Long open-ended question)*

#### SECTION 5

2. What is your volunteering experience?

2.2 What was the longest period you have spent on formal (organised) volunteering at one time?

- Short-term (max. 1 day) volunteer action
- Short-term, 1–2-week volunteer program
- Short-term volunteering: 1-4 months
- Long-term volunteering: 5-12 months
- I volunteered for several years

2.3 How old were you when you last participated in a formal (organised) volunteer program? (Write only a number!)

*(Short open-ended question, number only)*

2.4 What was your life situation when you last participated in a formal (organised) volunteer program?

- high school student
- student in a trade school, learning a profession
- student in higher education (college, university)
- regular work (intern, employee or self-employed)
- job seeker
- I was helping the family at home (caring for children, an elderly or sick family member)
- I did not have a job due to a long-term illness or disability
- Other, namely:

2.5 Have you participated in a formal (organised) volunteer program abroad?

- yes
- no

#### SECTION 6

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## If You have participated in formal (organised) volunteer program abroad

2.6 In which countries?  
*(Short open-ended question)*

### SECTION 7

2. What is your volunteering experience?

2.7 What type(s) of volunteer activities did you typically participate in?  
(Multiple answers can be selected!)

- Social assistance for people with disabilities
- Social assistance and charity for others (e.g., for refugees, in an elderly home, in a hospital, for the homeless, for the poor)
- Helper at events, festivals, cultural institutions (organising, facilitating)
- Education activity (e.g. language teaching, after-school program, IT skill teaching)
- Working with children (e.g., helper/mentor in an orphanage/children's home, children's camp)
- Participation in environmental or animal protection actions (e.g., trash collection, helping at an animal shelter, tree planting, raising awareness)
- Assisting in disaster relief (e.g., detecting forest fires, helping earthquake victims)
- Office work, background work at a non-profit organisation, school (e.g., in administrative work, preparing communication materials, organising, loading, IT)
- Other, namely:

2.8 What was your main motivation for applying to be a volunteer?  
*(Short open-ended question)*

### SECTION 8

## 3 WHAT ARE YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH FORMAL (ORGANISED) VOLUNTEERING?

3.1 How would you describe your overall experience as a volunteer?  
1=completely negative, 7=completely positive

*(1-7*

*scale)*

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

3.2 Did you have any negative feelings during your formal (organised) volunteer work? What were they?  
*(Short open-ended question, not compulsory)*

3.3 Did you experience any of these during your formal (organised) volunteering?

	Not at all	To a small extent	To a large extent
This task is too big for me. I don't know enough about it.			
How am I supposed to decide on this?			
Do they think this is all I am capable of?			
Finally, I get to decide.			
What would my parents think if they saw this?			
I do what I'm good at.			
That was a very tough situation!			
Am I doing this right? What if I mess it up?			
Aha, finally I understand how it works.			
Wow, look what I can do!			
I am disappointed in myself. I thought I could do this.			
I feel energised.			
I am exhausted.			
I am in the right place, I feel at home.			
I feel alone.			
It would be better at home.			
I don't fit in with the others.			
I feel an important part of this group.			
It's impossible to work with XY.			
What would others think if they saw this?			
Do these people really live like this?			
Do they understand what I'm saying? How will I make myself understood?			
What I do is important; they rely on me.			
I don't know what to do with my time.			
There's not much point to what I'm doing.			
It's depressing to see things like this; it brings me down.			
It will be hard to go home and get back to my life there.			

SECTION 9

## 4 WHAT COULD HAVE SUPPORTED YOU DURING FORMAL (ORGANISED) VOLUNTEERING?

4.1 What could have supported you in dealing with bad feelings during formal (organised) volunteering?

*(Short open-ended question, not compulsory)*

4.2 Which of the following did/could help you in dealing with bad feelings during formal (organised) volunteering or in avoiding them?

	Cannot help at all	Can help to a small extent	Can help to a large extent
More thorough preparation in advance			
Tasks that are better suited for me			
Openness of the hosting organisation to my ideas			
Becoming committed and identifying with the organisation's goals			
More interesting, more meaningful tasks			
Recreational activities (e.g., sports, cooking, meditation, arts...)			
Partying			
Joint leisure activities with the other volunteers			
Frequent conversations with my family, my friends			
A mentor or coordinator whom I can turn to when I need it			
Regular one-on-one conversations with a mentor/coordinator from the hosting organisation			
Regular group discussions with a mentor/coordinator and other volunteers			
A common space (e.g., a lounge corner) where I can meet other volunteers informally			
Getting regular feedback on my work			
Regular language / thematic clubs			
A volunteer partner/buddy			
Onboarding guide (e.g., written/video)			

### SECTION 10

## 5 WHAT DID YOU GAIN FROM FORMAL (ORGANISED) VOLUNTEERING?

5.1 What are the 3 things you feel you gained from volunteering?

*(Short open-ended question, not compulsory)*

5.2 How did your volunteer experience contribute to your life in the following areas?

	Not at all	Contributed to a small extent	Contributed to a large extent
I have more self-confidence			
I am more independent			
I see my future goals more clearly			
I dare to make decisions			
I know myself better, I have a better idea of what I'm capable of			
I cope with difficulties and stress more easily			
I am more confident dealing with challenges			
I am generally in a better mood			
I stand up for myself better			
I connect with people more easily			
I found a supportive community and valuable human relationships			
I better understand other people's situations and perspectives			
The volunteer work gave meaning to my life			
I find more meaning in my daily work and activities			
I feel pride and satisfaction in connection with my daily work and activities			
I see that there are important and valuable things in life			
I know now how to proceed with my career and/or studies			

5.3 Please finish the sentence with your thoughts! *(Short open-ended question, not compulsory)*  
Volunteering for me .....

**SECTION 11**

Thank you very much for helping us with our work!

## B) Country-Specific Differences in Feelings

Average Experiencing Score																	
Organisation Country	Respondents	How am I supposed to decide on this	Finally, I get to decide.	What would my parents think?	I do what I'm good at.	That was a very tough situation!	Am I doing this right?	Aha, finally I understand.	Wow, look what I can do!	I feel energised.	I feel alone.	Do these people really live like this?	What I do is important; they rely on me.	I don't know what to do with my time.	There's not much point to what I'm doing.	It's depressing to see things like this.	It will be hard to go home.
GE	100	0,48	0,98	0,17	1,43	0,65	0,81	1,24	1,42	1,47	0,77	0,47	1,38	0,64	0,51	0,50	0,92
HU	100	0,64	0,62	0,30	1,33	0,60	1,03	1,29	1,30	1,36	0,48	0,66	1,44	0,37	0,30	0,50	0,43
PO	88	0,76	0,39	0,45	1,34	0,69	0,85	1,28	1,59	1,65	0,31	0,84	1,02	0,43	0,19	0,47	0,51
TR	100	0,42	0,44	0,36	1,60	0,46	0,60	0,99	1,28	1,75	0,35	0,77	1,44	0,35	0,23	0,27	0,68

### C) Country-Specific Differences in Supports

Organisation Country	Respondents	Openness of the hosting organisation to my ideas	Recreational activities (e.g., sports, cooking, meditation, arts...)	Partying	Joint leisure activities with the other volunteers	More thorough preparation in advance	More interesting, more meaningful tasks	Tasks that are better suited for me	A common space (e.g., a lounge corner) where I can meet other volunteers informally	Language / thematic clubs	A volunteer partner/buddy	Becoming committed and identifying with the organisation's goals*	Onboarding guide (e.g., written/video)
GE	97	1,57	1,68	1,42	1,69	1,24	1,5	1,43	1,51	1,32	1,53	1,48	1,1
HU	99	1,16	1,26	0,71	1,28	1,4	1,16	1,21	1,38	0,81	1,18	1,43	1,07
PO	88	1,41	1,47	0,92	1,6	1,6	1,47	1,3	1,58	1,07	1,49	1,49	1,13
TR	100	1,52	1,63	1,17	1,62	1,4	1,57	1,45	1,66	1,61	1,69	1,46	1,46

## D) Country-Specific Differences in Impact

Organisation Country	Respondents	I have more self-confidence	I am more independent	I see my future goals more clearly	I dare to make decisions	I know myself better	I cope with difficulties and stress more easily	I am more confident dealing with challenges	I am generally in a better mood	I stand up for myself better	I connect with people more easily	I found a supportive community	I better understand other people's situations	The volunteer work gave meaning to my life	I find more meaning in my daily work/activities	I feel pride/satisfaction in connection with my work	I see that there are important/valuable things in life	I know now how to proceed with my career/studies
GE	100	1,64	1,7	1,36	1,45	1,57	1,36	1,48	1,26	1,43	1,55	1,65	1,68	1,25	1,18	1,26	1,46	1,18
HU	100	1,46	1,44	1,07	1,29	1,49	1,17	1,41	1,03	1,13	1,05	1,42	1,53	1,16	1,06	1,02	1,63	1,07
PO	88	1,55	1,51	1,38	1,36	1,56	1,36	1,58	1,38	1,16	1,06	1,52	1,64	1,32	1,32	1,51	1,62	1,17
TR	100	1,08	1,75	1,67	1,71	1,79	1,65	1,71	1,77	1,82	1,78	1,79	1,08	1,67	N/A	1,64	1,78	1,47

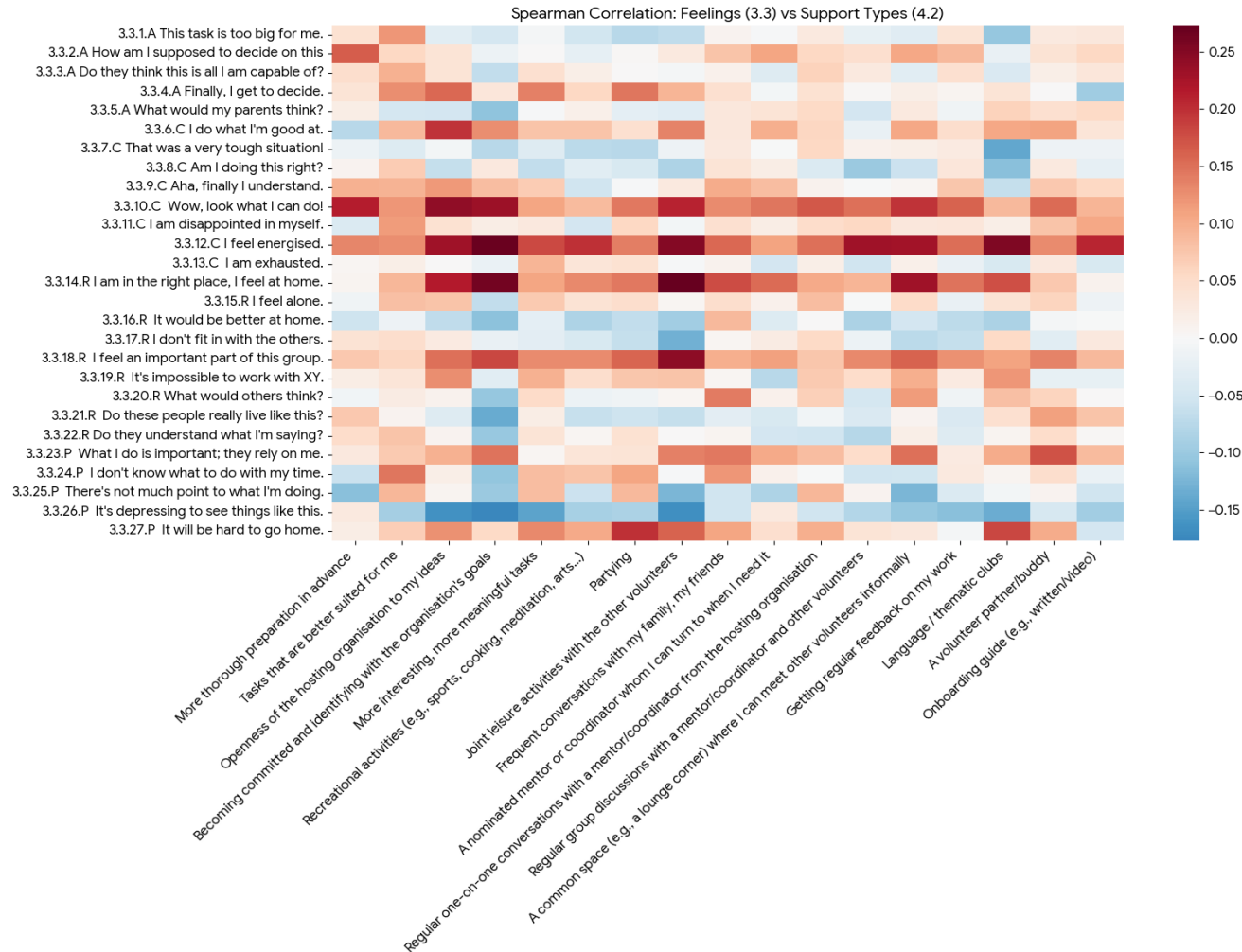
## E) Spearman Correlation Matrix and Heat Map

Feelings (3.3) / Support (4.2)	More thorough preparation in advance	Tasks that are better suited for me	Openness of the hosting organisation to my ideas	Becoming committed and identifying with the organisation's goals	More interesting, more meaningful tasks	Recreational activities (e.g., sports, cooking, meditation, arts...)	Partying	Joint leisure activities with the other volunteers	Frequent conversations with my family, my friends	A nominated mentor or coordinator whom I can turn to when I need it	Regular one-on-one conversations with a mentor/coordinator from the hosting organisation	Regular group discussions with a mentor/coordinator and other volunteers	A common space (e.g., a lounge corner) where I can meet other volunteers informally	Getting regular feedback on my work	Language / thematic clubs	A volunteer partner/buddy	Onboarding guide (e.g., written/video)
3.3.1.A This task is too big for me.	0,042	0,120	-0,031	-0,048	-0,006	-0,051	-0,075	-0,069	0,010	-0,004	0,026	-0,021	-0,034	0,038	-0,104	0,028	0,031
3.3.2.A How am I supposed to decide on this	0,165	0,056	0,038	-0,017	0,001	-0,026	0,004	0,028	0,078	0,106	0,055	0,046	0,106	0,089	-0,019	0,040	0,055
3.3.3.A Do they think this is all I am capable of?	0,049	0,096	0,038	-0,067	0,044	0,017	0,002	-0,007	0,014	-0,035	0,063	0,025	-0,030	0,044	-0,040	0,017	0,033
3.3.4.A Finally, I get to decide.	0,037	0,127	0,156	0,033	0,137	0,056	0,145	0,092	0,043	-0,007	0,042	0,003	0,019	0,009	0,038	0,001	-0,096
3.3.5.A What would my parents think?	0,021	-0,047	-0,050	-0,109	-0,003	0,015	-0,027	-0,034	0,032	0,039	0,054	-0,049	0,025	-0,012	0,064	0,044	0,054
3.3.6.C I do what I'm good at.	-0,076	0,087	0,197	0,126	0,077	0,076	0,043	0,134	0,031	0,098	0,057	-0,019	0,105	0,046	0,105	0,110	0,034
3.3.7.C That was a very tough situation!	-0,017	-0,037	-0,008	-0,075	-0,035	-0,073	-0,076	-0,012	0,030	0,000	0,056	0,014	0,017	0,025	-0,142	-0,014	-0,015
3.3.8.C Am I doing this right?	0,011	0,070	-0,064	0,029	-0,067	-0,030	-0,044	-0,083	0,037	0,021	-0,039	-0,101	-0,059	0,033	-0,113	0,028	-0,025
3.3.9.C Aha, finally I understand.	0,097	0,094	0,118	0,085	0,069	-0,054	-0,003	0,026	0,101	0,083	0,013	-0,001	0,005	0,076	-0,063	0,074	0,055
3.3.10.C Wow, look what I can do!	0,215	0,119	0,242	0,233	0,107	0,086	0,144	0,209	0,128	0,145	0,168	0,152	0,196	0,161	0,089	0,154	0,092
3.3.11.C I am disappointed in myself.	-0,039	0,115	0,043	0,020	0,029	-0,049	0,055	-0,008	0,043	0,021	0,050	0,056	0,031	0,033	0,018	0,079	0,105
3.3.12.C I feel energised.	0,133	0,126	0,230	0,268	0,179	0,199	0,141	0,249	0,156	0,110	0,151	0,231	0,228	0,153	0,254	0,128	0,207
3.3.13.C I am exhausted.	0,005	0,018	0,002	-0,018	0,092	0,035	0,042	-0,003	0,012	-0,050	0,016	-0,055	0,016	-0,021	-0,044	0,030	-0,044
3.3.14.R I am in the right place, I feel at home.	0,007	0,091	0,216	0,264	0,108	0,131	0,144	0,273	0,176	0,155	0,103	0,092	0,230	0,147	0,176	0,074	0,012
3.3.15.R I feel alone.	-0,010	0,082	0,077	-0,068	0,072	0,039	0,047	0,004	0,046	0,014	0,085	0,000	0,052	-0,019	0,040	0,062	-0,013
3.3.16.R It would be better at home.	-0,057	-0,013	-0,069	-0,112	-0,027	-0,085	-0,067	-0,094	0,090	-0,038	0,001	-0,087	-0,050	-0,070	-0,087	-0,005	-0,001
3.3.17.R I don't fit in with the others.	0,041	0,050	0,024	-0,020	-0,028	-0,043	-0,064	-0,131	0,005	0,023	0,054	-0,017	-0,073	-0,065	0,054	-0,030	0,030
3.3.18.R I feel an important part of this group.	0,074	0,060	0,150	0,182	0,130	0,129	0,157	0,243	0,100	0,113	0,075	0,132	0,159	0,124	0,108	0,135	0,089
3.3.19.R It's impossible to work with XY.	0,021	0,035	0,126	-0,030	0,097	0,047	0,075	0,077	0,004	-0,074	0,071	0,050	0,100	0,023	0,119	-0,021	-0,022
3.3.20.R What would others think?	-0,009	0,022	0,012	-0,105	0,052	-0,015	-0,011	0,005	0,143	0,014	0,065	-0,048	0,115	-0,011	0,083	0,061	0,001
3.3.21.R Do these people really live like this?	0,074	0,010	-0,036	-0,137	0,020	-0,061	-0,057	-0,063	-0,029	-0,042	-0,009	-0,041	0,011	-0,041	0,043	0,111	0,078
3.3.22.R Do they understand what I'm saying?	0,050	0,078	0,010	-0,102	0,036	0,004	0,041	0,002	0,009	-0,049	-0,053	-0,077	0,019	-0,036	0,009	0,050	0,002
3.3.23.P What I do is important; they rely on	0,029	0,072	0,097	0,147	0,005	0,034	0,038	0,137	0,144	0,103	0,083	0,050	0,151	0,024	0,102	0,174	0,087
3.3.24.P I don't know what to do with my time.	-0,060	0,146	0,017	-0,108	0,084	0,079	0,107	-0,004	0,119	0,014	-0,001	-0,054	-0,052	0,026	0,009	0,048	-0,019
3.3.25.P There's not much point to what I'm	-0,114	0,090	0,008	-0,101	0,084	-0,058	0,089	-0,124	-0,052	-0,085	0,090	0,010	-0,124	-0,038	-0,008	0,009	-0,055
3.3.26.P It's depressing to see things like this.	0,027	-0,092	-0,164	-0,177	-0,146	-0,091	-0,087	-0,166	-0,055	0,027	-0,053	-0,079	-0,104	-0,112	-0,136	-0,047	-0,094
3.3.27.P It will be hard to go home.	0,021	0,066	0,125	0,055	0,131	0,104	0,197	0,161	0,107	0,045	0,097	0,036	0,032	-0,005	0,183	0,102	-0,050

Legend:

Significant Positive Correlation (p < 0.05)

Significant Negative Correlation (p < 0.05)



Legend: On the heat map, darker red colours indicate a strong positive correlation, while darker blue colours indicate a strong negative correlation. (significance:  $p < 0.05$ )

## F) List of the Tables and Figures

Table 1: Distribution of the Sample by Nationality _____	14
Table 2: Distribution of the Sample by Last Volunteering Time _____	15
Table 3: Average Satisfaction in the 4 Countries _____	16
Table 4: Average Satisfaction by Age _____	16
Table 5: Average Satisfaction by Life Situation _____	17
Table 6: Average Satisfaction by Duration of Volunteering _____	17
Table 7: Negative Feelings Mentioned by the Respondents on their Own _____	19
Table 8: Mean Experiencing Score of Positive Feelings by Gender _____	22
Table 9: Mean Experiencing Score of Positive Feelings by Age Group _____	22
Table 10: Mean Experiencing Score of Positive Feelings by Volunteering Activity Type _____	23
Table 11: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by Life Situation _____	23
Table 12: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by the Duration of Volunteering _____	24
Table 13: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by Type of Volunteering Activity _____	24
Table 14: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by International Volunteering _____	26
Table 15: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by Longest Duration of Volunteering _____	26
Table 16: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by Life Situation _____	26
Table 17: Mean Experiencing Score of Negative Feelings by Type of Volunteering Activity _____	27
Table 18: Mean Experiencing Score of Relevant Supports by Gender _____	33
Table 19: Mean Experiencing Score of Relevant Supports by Age Group _____	33
Table 20: Mean Experiencing Score of Relevant Supports by Life Situation _____	34
Table 21: Mean Experiencing Score of Relevant Supports by Longest Duration of Volunteering _____	34
Table 22: Mean Experiencing Score of Relevant Supports by International Volunteering _____	35
Table 23: Supports Mentioned by the Respondents on their Own _____	38

Table 24: Motivation Mentioned by the Respondents on their Own_____	39
Table 25: Gained Benefits Mentioned by the Respondents on their Own _____	41
Table 26: Mean Experiencing Score of Gained Benefits by Gender_____	44
Table 27: Mean Experiencing Score of Gained Benefits by Age _____	44
Table 28: Mean Experiencing Score of Gained Benefits by Life Situation _____	45
Table 29: Mean Experiencing Score of Gained Benefits by Longest Duration of Volunteering _____	45
Table 30: Mean Experiencing Score of Gained Benefits by International or Domestic Volunteering_____	46
Table 31: Mean Experiencing Score of Gained Benefits by Activity Type of Volunteering _____	46
Figure 1: Distribution of the Sample by Gender _____	11
Figure 2: Distribution of the Sample by Life Situation _____	12
Figure 3: Distribution of the Sample by Age _____	12
Figure 4: Distribution of the Sample by Duration of Volunteering _____	13
Figure 5: Distribution of the Sample by International Volunteering_____	14
Figure 6: Distribution of the Sample by Activity Type of Volunteering _____	15
Figure 7: Rank of the Feelings based on their Mean Experiencing Score_____	20
Figure 8: Rank of the Positive Feelings based on their Mean Experiencing Score _____	21
Figure 9: Rank of the Negative Feelings based on their Mean Experiencing Score _____	25
Figure 10: Rank of the Possible Supports based on their Mean Experiencing Score _____	32
Figure 11: Rank of the Gained Benefits based on their Mean Experiencing Score _____	43