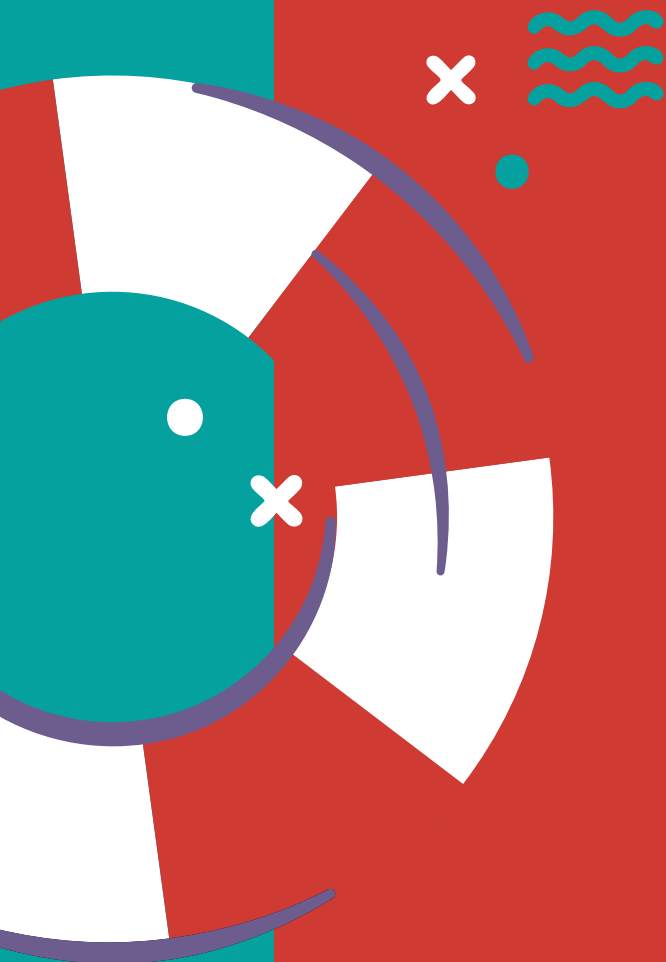


# REGIONAL VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Of the Volunteer Office Koper  
for the Coastal–Karst Region,  
Slovenia



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SLOVENTROPIJA  
FILANTROPIJA



Volunteering Equality  
Rights Action  
VERA 2025



Sofinancira  
Evropska unija

Project Number: 101194233  
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# Contextualization

Volunteering in Slovenia remains a key contributor to social cohesion, solidarity, and intergenerational cooperation. The 2024 National Report on Volunteering confirms that voluntary work continues to complement public services while acting as an essential mechanism that connects communities, strengthens interpersonal ties, and promotes active citizenship. Despite ongoing societal challenges – ranging from social vulnerability to demographic shifts – volunteering retains its vital and irreplaceable role within Slovenian society.

In 2024, a total number of 203,786 volunteers engaged in organised voluntary activities, collectively contributing 8,560,250 hours. This represents a significant increase compared with 2023. While the overall number of volunteers declined slightly, their individual engagement intensified: the average volunteer contributed 42 hours, three more than in the previous year. A total of 2,675 organisations submitted reports, indicating a stable and continually evolving institutional environment for volunteering in Slovenia.

The highest share of volunteer hours was dedicated to social services (3,936,033 hours or 46%), followed by education and training (1,303,517 hours), culture and the arts (714,809 hours), and recreation (625,850 hours). Structurally, volunteers devote most of their time to substantive programme work, representing 59.3% of all hours, while organisational tasks account for 22.2% and other supporting roles for 18.5%. These contributions play an important role in enhancing programmes that complement essential public services – particularly those supporting vulnerable groups, education, environmental initiatives, and civil protection.

Although nearly half of all volunteer work takes place in the Central Slovenia Statistical Region (Osrednjeslovenska regija), with 4,219,475 hours, followed by the Drava Statistical Region (Podravska regija) with just over one million hours, it is important to recognise the significance of volunteer activity across all regions. These contributions provide valuable insights into local needs, societal trends, and community responsiveness. Notably, the Gorizia Statistical Region (Goriška regija) recorded the most substantial annual increase in average volunteer hours – from 13.8 hours in 2023 to 72.6 hours in 2024 – illustrating the capacity of volunteers to mobilise rapidly when emerging needs arise.

In the Coastal-Karst Region (Obalno-kraška regija), previous reports recorded approximately 6,000 volunteers contributing around 136,000 volunteer hours. This places the region in the mid-range nationally in terms of volunteer engagement. While the region benefits from a relatively stable network of volunteer organisations, it falls behind larger regions in the overall volume of hours contributed. A challenge consistently highlighted in past assessments is the low participation rate among young people, which remains one of the primary opportunities for strengthening future volunteering capacities. The absence of more recent region-specific data also points to the need for improved monitoring and strategic support for volunteering initiatives in this coastal region.

Gender distribution remains broadly consistent with previous years – 57.6% women and 42.4% men. Age-wise, the majority of volunteers are between 30 and 60 years or belong to the 60+ age group, while the fewest volunteers are found among those under 18. Nonetheless, this youngest generation represents the greatest long-term potential for the sector. Young people bring energy, creativity, and new perspectives to the emerging social challenges. Their engagement should be regarded not only as an opportunity but as an investment in a more cohesive, empathetic, and socially responsible Slovenia.

The aggregate economic value of voluntary work in 2024 is estimated at €84,972,928, underscoring the substantial impact of volunteering on social welfare, community resilience, and the broader objectives of a solidarity-based society. While these figures illustrate the measurable value of volunteering, they capture only one dimension: the objective contribution. The subjective, human value – often less visible in statistical reporting – remains equally significant. If volunteering serves as the connective tissue between systemic solutions and the everyday needs of people, it functions not as a corrective measure but as an essential societal link that enhances stability, resilience, and social connectedness. Much like a bridge joining two riverbanks, volunteering carries both tangible and intangible value – each indispensable in its own way.

This report aims to assess the state of volunteering at the local level and to support the development of measures that strengthen awareness, understanding, and the value of volunteerism. It highlights the importance of cultivating the principles of (in)formal mutual assistance and solidarity, and of reinforcing the spirit of volunteering – one that is grounded in selfless support for others and in building bridges that connect the diverse banks of our shared social landscape.

Volunteer Office Koper, Slovene Philanthropy –  
Prostovoljska pisarna Koper, Slovenska filantropija



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# Introduction

This Regional Volunteer Development Plan builds upon the findings of the Regional Fact Sheet on the Prevalence of Service Learning and Civic Education in formal education and the Validation of Learning gained through Volunteering, which examined how Service Learning (SL), Civic Education (CE), and validation of learning gained through volunteering are implemented across different sectors — both in formal education and volunteering organisations in the Coastal-Karst Region. The report investigated (a.) how volunteering and civic engagement are recognised as learning experiences (“validation” through certificates); (b.) how Service Learning (SL) and Civic Education (CE) are embedded in formal education (from kindergartens to universities) and last but not least (c.), it highlighted the best practices and barriers related to inclusivity, equality, and validation. It also aimed to understand both how developed and how consistent these practices were in the Coastal-Karst region, within the framework of the VERA (Volunteering, Equality, Recognition, and Accessibility) project. Consequently, the purpose of the Regional Development Plan is to define concrete development priorities and actions that will in respect to those findings:

- **Strengthen the recognition and validation of competences acquired through volunteering,**
- **Enhance the integration of Service Learning (SL) and Civic Education (CE) in formal education,**
- **Increase diversity, equality and inclusion in volunteering, and**
- **Contribute to the overarching objectives of the Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030 (BEV2030) and the CEV VERA Volunteering & Equality framework.**

The plan addresses both formal education institutions and volunteer organisations, providing a roadmap for improved collaboration, inclusion, and recognition of non-formal learning.

As a reminder, volunteerism is one of the richest environments for non-formal learning. When people volunteer, they: (a.) develop skills like leadership, team spirit and, problem-solving capabilities as they enter different synergies with highly marginalized, vulnerable groups of people; (b.) they build important values like solidarity, empathy and responsibility; and (c.), finally gain a valuable insight and deeper understanding of social issues and the complexity of communities. Even though they may not receive formal qualifications, volunteers often experience deep personal and civic learning — which is non-formal learning in action. Hence, we can assume that non-formal learning is the heart of education that happens through volunteering, civic participation, and service — and it is simply put — how people grow by doing good, together.

# Context and Rationale

The Coastal–Karst Region, encompassing eight municipalities and approximately 119,000 inhabitants, represents a demographically compact, diverse and economically dynamic area. Despite a strong volunteering tradition, regional disparities remain visible, especially regarding inclusivity, gender balance, and participation of marginalized groups.

The key findings of the regional survey reveal that:

- **94% of organisations issue certificates validating volunteering experience, but the content and quality of validation vary greatly;**
- **Inclusivity barriers are mostly practical (space, mentor training, time), not attitudinal, indicating a readiness for improvement through capacity-building;**
- **SL and CE are present at all education levels, though unevenly: kindergarten and primary schools demonstrate strong integration, while high schools and universities lag behind;**
- **Diversity and inclusion are recognised as important values, yet structural mechanisms to ensure equal access remain underdeveloped.**

Findings from the Coastal–Karst Region reveal a well-established yet uneven framework for recognising and integrating learning through volunteering, Service Learning (SL), and Civic Education (CE). While Slovenia's Volunteering Act (ZProst, 2011) provides a strong legal basis, practices across organisations and education levels vary in consistency and depth.

## **Validation of Learning through Volunteering:**

Most organisations (94%) issue certificates confirming volunteer work, demonstrating wide compliance with the law. However, certificate content differs—only one-third include all required information, and one-quarter list acquired competences. Validation is therefore widespread but inconsistent. Some organisations also note low volunteer demand for certificates, pointing to a need for greater awareness of the benefits of recognised learning.

## **Equality and Inclusivity:**

No systemic exclusion was reported, showing that inclusivity is a key value among organisations. Still, practical barriers persist—such as limited accessibility, lack of mentor training, and time constraints. Some roles require specific skills (e.g. driving), which can limit participation. Strengthening infrastructure, mentor capacity, and inclusive programme design would further improve equality in volunteering.

## **Service Learning and Civic Education:**

SL and CE are broadly implemented in early education but diminish at higher levels. All kindergartens and most primary schools include SL and CE activities

that promote empathy, cooperation, and civic engagement. Primary schools show particularly strong integration, while the single responding high school and the University of Primorska demonstrate limited and mostly informal implementation.

## **Regional Outlook:**

The Coastal-Karst Region shows strong alignment with VERA's principles of recognition, equality, and accessibility. Future development should focus on (1) standardising certificate content, (2) expanding SL and CE across all education levels, and (3) addressing practical barriers to inclusivity through training and infrastructure support.

These key insights form the basis for the developmental priorities that follow.

## **Vision**

The vision of this development plan is to create an inclusive, diverse, and well-recognised volunteering ecosystem in the Coastal-Karst Region, where learning through volunteering is valued, validated, and integrated across education and society. Creating such an environment would also set an example to regions, which are yet to align their policies with the VERA framework and create a valuable set of actions, that could be implemented also far beyond our region.

## **Strategic Objectives**

### **1. Enhance the recognition and validation of learning acquired through volunteering**

- Promote standardisation and quality assurance in volunteer certificates;
- Strengthen the link between validated volunteering competences and employability.

### **2. Mainstream Service Learning and Civic Education across all levels of formal education**

- Encourage educational institutions to integrate SL and CE as core pedagogical methods;
- Promote partnerships between schools/universities and volunteer organisations.

### **3. Increase inclusivity and diversity in volunteering**

- Reduce physical, social, and informational barriers for underrepresented groups;
- Build mentor and staff capacities for inclusive volunteering management.

### **4. Foster cross-sectoral cooperation and policy alignment**

- Encourage municipalities, NGOs, and educational institutions to jointly promote inclusive volunteerism;
- Advocate for the inclusion of BEV2030 principles in local and regional strategic documents.

# Priority Areas and Actions

Priority Area	Key Actions	Lead Actors / Partners	Timeline	Indicators of Success (KPIs)
<b>1. Validation of Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and distribute a <b>regional template for volunteer certificates</b>, aligned with Article 24 and BEV2030;</li> <li>- Organise <b>capacity-building workshops</b> for NGOs on documenting learning outcomes;</li> <li>- Establish <b>peer-review mechanisms</b> for quality validation among organisations.</li> </ul>	Slovene Philanthropy, Volunteer Office Koper, NGO network	2025 – 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 50% of organisations adopt the new template</li> <li>- 30 NGO representatives trained</li> <li>- 1 regional peer-learning group active</li> </ul>
<b>2. Service Learning in Schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create and share <b>guidelines on integrating SL</b> into curricula at all education levels;</li> <li>- Facilitate <b>pilot projects</b> in high schools and universities;</li> <li>- Support teachers with <b>training in experiential learning and civic engagement</b>.</li> </ul>	Ministry of Education, local schools, University of Primorska	2025 – 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5 new SL projects implemented</li> <li>- At least 2 university faculties embed SL elements in study programs</li> </ul>
<b>3. Inclusivity &amp; Diversity in Volunteering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a <b>Regional Charter for Inclusive Volunteering</b>;</li> <li>- Provide <b>training for mentors</b> on inclusive practices (gender equality, disability inclusion, multicultural engagement);</li> <li>- Support <b>accessibility improvements</b> in NGO infrastructure.</li> </ul>	NGOs, municipalities, equality offices	2025 – 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charter endorsed by 30 organisations</li> <li>- 50 mentors trained</li> <li>- 5 NGOs supported in improving accessibility</li> </ul>
<b>4. Awareness &amp; Advocacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct an <b>annual “Inclusive Volunteering Forum”</b> bringing together NGOs, schools, municipalities, and volunteers;</li> <li>- Disseminate success stories and good practices identified through the Fact Sheet;</li> <li>- Collaborate with local media to promote volunteering as a diverse learning pathway.</li> </ul>	Volunteer Office Koper, Municipality of Koper, regional NGO hub	Annual, starting 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 annual forum held</li> <li>- 10+ media mentions/year</li> <li>- 500+ individuals reached through outreach activities</li> </ul>
<b>5. Policy Integration &amp; Sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate outcomes of this plan into the <b>Regional Strategy for Youth and Volunteering</b>;</li> <li>- Promote <b>alignment with BEV2030</b> and VERA priorities;</li> <li>- Establish <b>regional monitoring mechanism</b> for inclusivity in volunteering.</li> </ul>	Regional municipalities, Slovene Philanthropy, CEV partners	2026 – 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regional Strategy updated</li> <li>- Monitoring report published annually</li> <li>- Active representation in national volunteering councils</li> </ul>

## Implementation Framework

The implementation of this Development Plan will be coordinated by the Volunteer Office Koper in cooperation with Slovene Philanthropy and the regional NGO hub.

A Regional Working Group will be established, including representatives of:

- Formal education institutions (kindergartens to university),
- Volunteer organisations and NGOs,
- Municipalities and public authorities,
- Equality and inclusion experts, and
- Representatives of volunteers (including youth).

The working group will meet bi-annually to monitor progress, evaluate activities, and propose adjustments.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring will focus on both quantitative indicators (number of organisations trained, certificates issued, SL projects implemented, etc.) and qualitative outcomes (improved inclusivity, partnerships, perception of volunteering as learning).

Evaluation methods:

- Annual self-assessment reports by participating organisations,
- Feedback surveys among volunteers and educators,
- Comparative analysis of volunteer participation trends in the region,
- Public presentation of progress at the Inclusive Volunteering Forum.

## Expected Impact

By the end of 2028, the implementation of this plan is expected to result in:

- Increased recognition and validation of non-formal learning across sectors,
- Broader integration of Service Learning and Civic Education in schools and universities,
- Enhanced inclusivity and diversity in volunteering participation,
- Stronger cross-sectoral collaboration and a sustainable volunteering ecosystem in the Coastal-Karst Region, aligned with the European vision of inclusive, empowered civic engagement.

# Conclusion

This Development Plan transforms the evidence gathered in the Regional Fact Sheet into a forward-looking strategy aimed at strengthening inclusive, validated, and equality-driven volunteering. It builds on the existing strong legal framework and community engagement culture while addressing remaining challenges — particularly the standardisation of validation practices, the expansion of SL and CE, and the removal of practical barriers to inclusion.

By implementing this plan, the Coastal–Karst Region can become a national and European model for inclusive volunteering, where diversity, equality and recognition of learning are not only values but lived realities.

## Volunteer Office Koper – Slovene Philanthropy

The Volunteer Office in Koper is available to both individual volunteers and to educational institutions or other organisations that implement volunteer programmes. The office organises events, supports the selection of the Volunteer of the Year in the municipality, provides training, and fosters connections within the volunteering community. It was established at the end of 2021 at the initiative of the Municipality of Koper, under the auspices of Slovene Philanthropy, with the aim of further developing volunteering in the region.

The office provides support for current and prospective volunteers by facilitating the identification and selection of volunteer opportunities that correspond to individual interests. It organises free training sessions, including introductory volunteer courses and communication workshops, and supplies information on the ethical and legal frameworks relevant to volunteering.

### Volunteer Office Koper

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✉ [prostovoljstvo.koper@filantropija.org](mailto:prostovoljstvo.koper@filantropija.org)

### Find us on:

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 [@slovenskafilantropija](https://www.instagram.com/@slovenskafilantropija)

Information about the office's opening hours, new volunteer opportunities, current training sessions, and other relevant posts on volunteering, solidarity, and community engagement can be found on the office's Facebook and Instagram profiles.

## Why become a volunteer?

- As a volunteer, one contributes to the improvement of society.
- Volunteering provides opportunities to give significantly and to learn extensively.
- It contributes to a higher quality of life within the community.
- Volunteering fosters personal growth.
- It enables interaction with people who share similar interests.
- Volunteers gain valuable experience.
- It helps to alleviate specific hardships and meet concrete needs.

## What do volunteers do?

Volunteers operate in various fields:

- In social and cultural fields,
- In humanitarian activities and sports,
- In tourism, healthcare, and preventive programs,
- In leisure and intergenerational activities,
- In nature protection, rescue, and conservation, and
- In education and many other areas

## Who can become a volunteer?

Anyone who cares about the world we live in and is willing to take action to make a positive contribution.

A volunteer is someone who:

- wishes to contribute where voluntary assistance is needed,
- is willing to act for the common good,
- seeks to actively contribute to positive changes in society,
- respects the principles outlined in the Ethical Code of Organized Volunteering,
- receives training for the volunteer work they perform, and
- accepts responsibility for their volunteer activities.

## What is volunteer work?

Volunteer work is performed voluntarily for the benefit of others, without expecting material compensation in return. At the start of volunteer activities, the volunteer and the organisation conclude a volunteer agreement that defines the scope of the work. The volunteer is informed of their rights, responsibilities, and the principles of the Ethical Code of Organized Volunteering.

## What is not considered volunteer work?

Activities that are not considered volunteer work include: volunteer internships, study placements, unpaid work for profit-driven organisations, unpaid trial periods, overtime, leisure activities undertaken solely to satisfy personal needs, and unpaid work within the family.

The scope of volunteering is more precisely defined by the Slovene **Volunteerism Act (ZProst)**

**The Ethical Code of Organized Volunteering** applies to all volunteers and volunteer organisations. The code sets out fundamental guidelines and minimum standards that volunteers and organisations are expected to follow in their work. Compliance with the code is overseen by the Ethical Committee.

If a violation of the Ethical Code is suspected within organised volunteering, observations should first be addressed, where possible, within the organisation concerned. If no resolution is achieved, the case can be submitted to the Ethical Committee, which will review it and issue an opinion.

## Ethical Principles in Volunteer Work

The fundamental ethical principles are:

1. Confidentiality and data protection,
2. Dignity, integrity, and respect for all participants in volunteer activities,
3. Active participation of beneficiaries,
4. Acting in the best interest of the beneficiary,
5. Safeguarding the reputation of volunteer work, and
6. Non-exploitation of relationships.

Initiatives and suggestions can be submitted to the **Ethical Committee** via email: [eticna.komisija@filantropija.org](mailto:eticna.komisija@filantropija.org).



Regional Volunteer Development Plan Of the Volunteer Office  
Koper for the Coastal–Karst Region, Slovenia

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