
Half a year of Gdansk as European Volunteering Capital 2022

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"It is impossible without us!" - under this slogan for half a year, activities related to the awarded title of the European Volunteering Capital have been carried out in Gdansk. During this time, a number of meetings were held, a special fund was launched, Local Volunteer Centers were opened, and 3600 volunteers supported the "Gdańsk Helps Ukraine" campaign.



The involvement of Gdansk residents and citizens in volunteering in all areas of social life has always been one of the highest in the country. It has been recognized internationally, resulting in the city being awarded the title of the European Volunteering Capital. It is, on the one hand, an honor for past activities, and on the other hand, a motivation for further development. It is also an impetus for further activities in the field of volunteering in the city.

"Our experience so far in the European Volunteering Capital shows that the citizens and residents of Gdansk are willing to engage in various activities, such as assistance activities, ecological and cultural activities. We are committed to ensuring that volunteering in Gdansk develops in a sustainable and accessible way for everyone, and that the very idea of the European Volunteering Capital stays with us for a long time. We still have six months of intensive work ahead of us to achieve this," says Monika Chabior, the Mayor of Gdansk plenipotentiary, the European Volunteering Capital.

The first major event included in the program was participation in this year's 30th finale of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity. On January 30, on the main stage of the event, Aleksandra Dulciewicz, Mayor of Gdansk, handed over the keys to the city to the volunteers. The event was preceded by the release of the "Light to Heaven from the European Volunteering Capital."



The first months were filled with meetings of working groups with city institutions, NGOs, houses and neighborhood clubs, councils operating under the mayor and schools, during which the idea of the European Volunteering Capital was introduced. The topics of certification of volunteers and organizations, the volunteer card or environmental volunteering were also discussed.

Volunteering in the neighborhoods

One of the assumptions of the European Volunteering Capital was the establishment of 10 Local Volunteer Centers, which introduce residents to the idea of volunteering, activate them and involve them in various activities. They also aim to increase the potential of residents to animate social events and take care of the common space, the environment and other residents of the district, and to increase the number of volunteers working for the benefit of their local community. In the 1st round of the competition, funding was awarded for LVC activities in 8 districts. During the second round of the competition, the remaining two neighborhoods will be selected. So far, they have been established in the districts and are run by:



- DownTown - Storytellers of the History of the DownTown in Gdansk,
- Centre - Pomagamy Nie Ziewamy Foundation,
- Piecki-Migowo - Association of Friends of Piecki-Migowo in Gdańsk Neighborhood House,
- Sobieszewo Island - Association of Friends of the Sobieszewo Island,
- Siedlce - Association For Siedlce,
- Wrzeszcz Górny - RC Foundation,
- Przymorze Wielkie - PSONI,
- Osowa - Anita Kammer, an informal group.

European Volunteering Capital Fund

It is addressed to all residents of Gdansk, who support initiatives that help develop and spread the idea of volunteering. The competition allocated a grant for initiatives in the amount of PLN 700 for 15 informal groups. Example implementations:

- "Our Actions Give Birth to Relationships/Reactions" - from April to November, residents from Piecki-Migowo conduct neighborhood beautification actions, integration meetings and local flea markets,
- Active seniors courted clean forests by organizing a cleanup of the area around the Forest Theater in Wrzeszcz,
- Gdansk Promyki, an initiative from the city center, helping children from Ukraine to adapt in Gdansk by organizing Polish language lessons and activities in cultural institutions.



Gdansk Helps Ukraine

Throughout the action, more than 3,600 volunteers were involved, working at information points, temporary accommodation sites and at the Gdansk stadium, where aid for refugees is still regularly disbursed. Initially, the most committed volunteers came from Gdansk NGOs. Over time, people previously unconnected with the third sector began to join the campaign. Many of the



people who got involved in volunteering at aid sites came from abroad, showing how important helping together is for integration. Mostly they were from Ukraine, but also from Lithuania, Russia, Belarus, the US, UK or Spain.



Willingness to get involved in helping Ukrainian citizens could be signaled in various ways. A hotline for refugees was set up, which was also mainly manned by volunteers.

Conferences, meetings, integration

Monika Chabior, deputy mayor of Gdansk for social development and equal treatment in March took part in two conferences held in Brussels. The first was organized by the Center for European Volunteering, the second by the European Economic and Social Committee. During both events, Monika Chabior conveyed to the European forum the assumptions and objectives of the planned activities in Gdansk in connection with the awarded title of European Capital of Volunteering.



In April, another of the Gdansk Civic Lessons took place. During the meeting with young people from Gdansk, they talked about the importance of volunteering and social involvement in everyday life. Young activists also passed on their personal experiences and encouraged their colleagues to join the actions taking place in Gdansk.



As part of the celebration of the 33rd anniversary of the June elections, a Social Zone was set up at the European Solidarity Center. This space to talk about all sorts of topics was commandeered by nearly 100 NGOs from all over Poland. A tent of the European Capital of Volunteering also stood at the event site. In the "It is impossible without us!" hall, one could, among other things, take part in a marathon of writing applications to the Gdansk the European Volunteering Capital Fund, there was

an informational meeting on the possibilities of joining the volunteer service, and to take part in a number of debates and discussions.



Also in June, an integration of volunteers and Gdansk NGOs took place. A tent hall, refreshments, animations including a photo booth and music played by a DJ were prepared in St. Barbara Park. Another opportunity for integration was the "Hour for Gdansk on Midsummer Night" concert, which took place at People's Meeting Square as a way of thanking residents for their community involvement. It was also an opportunity to promote volunteer activities and the title of European Capital of Volunteering 2022. Admission was free, and the event was attended by about 8500 people. The concert featured performances by the Kalush Orchestra, Igo, Edzio and DJ Fala.



In July, a conference "Volunteers - Citizens Building the Future of Europe" was held on the occasion of the European Economic and Social Committee's 3-day mission to Gdansk, which focused on the role of volunteers in social life. During it there was a discussion about trends in the development of volunteering in the European Union, new forms of volunteering, but also about the support of public bodies for organizations and volunteers and its economic role.

Upcoming events

In the coming months, there will be other events closely related to the European Volunteering Capital. The closest one is scheduled for Saturday, August 6, when the Festival of Volunteering will be held during St. Dominic's Fair. The program will include a joint brunch, concerts or information on how to join the ranks of volunteers.

On September 12 and 13 there will be a congress "Solidarity in Development - Active for Development" organized as part of the Open Eyes Economy Summit series, which will be part of the Gdansk Democracy Week program. The topic of volunteering and social activism will be addressed,

including its new dimensions represented, among others, by informal groups, activists and grassroots activities of residents.

Also in September, a three-day European Volunteer Capital Forum is to be held, aimed at spreading the idea of volunteering as a conscious social attitude, showing the diversity of volunteering and its intergenerational character. A separate event will be the creation, together with residents, of a large-format ecological mural in cooperation with Iwona Zajęc, which will be placed on the Conradinum school building, with the unveiling scheduled for the end of the Gdansk Democracy Week.

Meanwhile, a study visit will take place on October 3 and 4, with representatives of the [Centre for European Volunteering](#), among others.

On the [website dedicated to Gdansk European Volunteering Capital 2022](#) you can find the necessary information on the title and news related to it. In addition, a calendar of events has been launched, into which NGOs and institutions can enter their events that they implement. Instructions on how to get involved in volunteering in Gdansk are also provided.

