

INEAR



Inclusion, Equality and Rights in Volunteering

WORKSHOP

Report

October 4th 2022

The INEAR Workshop (Inclusion, Equality and Rights in Volunteering) took place in the afternoon of October the 4th in the auditorium of the European Solidarity Centre in Gdansk and saw the participation of more than 100 participants.

The workshop was opened by Monika Popow, plenipotentiary Mayor of Gdańsk City for the European Capital of Volunteering, and Magdalena Skiba, representative of the Social Development Department of the City of Gdansk. They introduced the first round panellists: Michalina Rutka of Families without Borders; Antoni Morawski, representing the City of Warsaw with the project "Ochotnicy Warszawscy"; Elżbieta Jachlewska, Vicepresident of WAGA Association; and Szymon Knitter, member of the Regional Volunteering Centre of Gdansk, introducing the initiative "Gdansk helps Ukraine".



Michalina Rutka presented to the audience "Families Without Borders", which is a Facebook private group, with the main aim to help Ukrainian refugees offering them accommodation, assistance, transportation and collecting donations. "Families Without Borders" is operating in the Tri-City: Gdansk, Gdynia and Sopot (Poland). Michalina Rutka underlined that Families Without Borders didn't become a formal organisation in order to preserve its original spirit linked to volunteer arrangement and solidarity.

Antoni Morawski is working for the social communication centre of the City of Warsaw and he is responsible for the project "Ochotnicy Warszawscy". The project aims to increasingly involve people in volunteering in Warsaw offering training and support to volunteers. Morawski pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced volunteering in Warsaw: from a niche topic to being part of the city's social and civic engagement.



Elżbieta Jachlewska introduced the WAGA association, an NGO founded in 2009 based in Gdansk and operating throughout Poland, that is committed to the pursuit of gender equality in the socio-political and economic fields, women's rights and sustainable development. Jachlewska is also president of Biało-Zielone, an association that promotes women to play football and to eradicate from society the stereotype that if a girl plays football, she is a "tomboy".

Szymon Knitter took the floor presenting "Gdansk helps Ukraine", a multisectoral initiative launched since the start of the war in Ukraine by the Gdansk Municipality, the Gdansk Foundation, the Regional Centre for Volunteering of Gdansk and other entities. The model #Gdansk Helps campaign was already applied during the COVID-19 pandemic and was recognized as an efficient framework for facing the emergency situation. Trying to apply this successful example to the Ukrainian crisis, a "Gdansk Helps Ukraine" centre was established to offer formal support, medical and psychological assistance, clothing and personal hygiene products. Moreover, a fundraising has been launched to donate the proceeds to NGOs involved in humanitarian activities in Ukraine and to the Ukrainian community of Gdansk.

The following panel session was dedicated to case studies "Supporting Volunteering at Municipality level in times of crisis". The representatives of Berlin, Cascais and Trondheim shared their experiences during COVID-19 pandemic emergency. All three emphasised the role of volunteering and volunteers to deal with the health emergency situation. A great solidarity network was created within the communities to help vulnerable groups.



The last panel featured four representatives of the Gdansk City Council: Mateusz Pisański, Youth City Council; Jurii Zabiiaka, Immigrant City Council; Jarosław Marciszewski, Equality City Council; and Aleksander Żubrys, Senior City Council. The peculiarity is that the respective departments in which they engage are run by volunteers and they dispose of consultative and initiative powers within the Gdansk City Council. The discussion revolved around the topic: How volunteers and activists contribute to the advisory board to the Mayor of Gdansk - "Structured Dialogue in Action!".

The first panellist was Mateusz Pisański, aged 17 representing the Youth City Council; his department speaks for students from junior to high level schools. Pisański stressed the importance of youth representation in local governments to shape and influence the decision making process for a better future for young people.

Jurii Zabiiaka, of Ukrainian nationality and arrived in Gdansk in 2018 for economic reasons, represented the Gdansk Immigrant City Council. This committee was established in 2016 and it is composed only by foreigner residents and is advising the Municipality about migrants and refugees integration and related local issues and policies.

Then, Jarosław Marciszewski took the floor. He is part of the Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and he is a representative of the Gdansk Equality City Council. The work Marciszewski is carrying out is very important because the Council fights against any kind of discrimination (such as sexual, gender, religious, ethnical, age or disability discrimination). The competences of the Equality City Council include monitoring and analysing discriminatory phenomena, the implementation of interventions, education and promotion of tolerant values and attitudes as well as providing advices and opinions regarding projects adopted by the City Council.

Aleksander Żubrys introduced the Senior City Council which seeks to overcome barriers for senior citizens incentivising their involvement and active participation in society.

Given the high number of questions at the end of each panel session, it can be said that the audience was particularly interested in the topics addressed by the INEAR workshop.





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