



# **Volunteers In Solidarity COVID-19**

## **#VISCovid19**

**Citizens all across Europe are  
volunteering to support  
vulnerable people and each  
other during this crisis period.**

## Forward: LEJLA SEHIC RELIC CEV PRESIDENT



Since the first day of the COVID19 pandemic crisis, citizens have responded and launched numerous volunteer initiatives demonstrating the importance of a vibrant and responsive civil society in reaffirming the spirit of a resilient and caring community. The greatest contribution that civil society and volunteers are giving to all of us is a reminder of the importance of our common good and widening the space of opportunities to revive awareness and engagement to appreciate it more.

Until now, much of volunteering has relied on live contact, which is actually one of the key benefits of civil society and volunteering, the value of real social networks and eye to-eye relationships. In the times of health risks and social distancing civil society and volunteers, once again have found courage and methods to reach and help the most vulnerable among us. Despite the importance of physical distance, which can mean health these days, volunteering has shown different, beautiful, and in many aspects, new colours of social connection and solidarity.

This small virus reminded us of our fragility and interdependence, as well as how important it is, and I mean of life's importance in these situations, for everyone to have equal opportunities. The crisis has made our existing problems more visible. Poverty, limited access to health care, attitudes towards the marginalized, stigmatization of the sick, fragile democracies, populism and fake news are just some of the phenomena that can make life more difficult for some. That is why it is important for civil society organizations to act and engage volunteers to promote the values of solidarity and social equality, warn about inequality, marginalization and discrimination, seeking transparency and respect for human rights, sharing their expertise with others, helping them reach out and help people in need and share good and positive stories. This is, at the moment, the most valuable contribution to the health, vitality and resilience of society.

There seems to be an increased awareness in society that this situation affects all of us and that we should all act. Indeed, this situation has clearly shown us the importance of our common ground, personal responsibility, and the quality of interpersonal relationships. This pandemic has created a completely unknown world that has stopped to protect and save the most vulnerable among us. We live in a moment where there is so much we do not know, but one thing is for sure, solidarity and people who care can literally mean life. I hope we will take that insight into the future.

# #HASHTAG COORDINATION

DE:

**#NACHBARSCHAFTSCHALLENGE (NEIGHBORHOOD CHALLENGE)**

An initiative from social media users who are calling on people to help shop or do other tasks for elderly or people with serious health problems nearby.

NL: **VERSPREID #SOLIDARITEITJD, GEEN VIRUS!**

Organised by social media users to coordinate and inform about solidarity and volunteering initiatives to help people in need of assistance.

BG: **#ЗАДОБРОТО (FOR THE GOOD)**

This campaign is made to tackle the urgent needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The campaign is raising funds and spending them immediately in urgent manner for covering urgent needs of the hospital in Sofia and in the country.

ES:

**#JOAJUDEALZIRA (I'M HELPING ALZIRA)**

A local initiative that connects citizens, businesses and associations to voluntarily help people buying groceries, encouraging them with a message, supporting local businesses or just suggesting new ways to help.

BE: **#VLAANDERENHELPT (FLANDERS IS HELPING)**

The government launched a new hashtag. It believes that people with good ideas are numerous and that can inspire each other and that by sharing such ideas people will be keeping spirits up and ensuring Flanders shows its warmest side.

IE:

**#VOLUNTEERFROMHOME**

Volunteer Ireland has launched this campaign to help volunteers find opportunities they can do from home and to support organisations to engage their volunteers virtually.

# CITIZEN-LED INITIATIVES

## **BG: BE A GOOD NEIGHBOUR**

Initiative which encourages people who want to help their elderly neighbors by buying food and medicine, taking out the trash or speaking with them on the phone, to print out posters, fill them in with their contacts and put them inside the buildings they live in.

## **BE: SOLIDARITY MASKS**

A group of women and undocumented migrant mothers that opened a small sewing workshop 4 years ago started to sew facemasks for their communities. In only 24 hours, they managed to do more than 100 facemasks.

## **HR: PEOPLE FOR PEOPLE**

Citizens are helping their neighbours who are in vulnerable situations, shopping for them and making sure everyone receives the help they need.

## **IT: SOLIDARIETÀ ATTIVA PALERMO**

A group of youngsters in Palermo city organised themselves to deliver essential products to those in need.

## **BE: SPREAD SOLIDARITY - NOT THE VIRUS!**

A group of Brussels-based citizens have created a facebook page where they share, comment and discuss the different aspects of the pandemic. Whether it's to share volunteering initiatives with the rest of the community, offer their services, share information or even just have some fun with funny posts. It is a group made by a community for the community. In times of need, solidarity is the answer.

## **BE: SOLIDAIR BRUSSELS**

This platform was developed by citizens in order to provide information, activities, assistance and solidarity projects for every person affected by the virus.



# CITIZEN-LED INITIATIVES

## RO: WE HELP YOU FROM...

Alba, Braşov, Cluj, Sibiu, Suceava, Timișoara, and in other cities in Romania, groups of volunteers in the local community coordinate online to help with food and supplies delivery, information updates, psychological and emotional support for the ones in need.

## BE: RIDE FOR CORONA

A group of young volunteer youth leaders unable to do their regular volunteering, and passionate about cycling, before the current social distancing restrictions, started a bike relay around the Bois de la Cambre to raise money for the Institut Pasteur to help develop a vaccine for COVID19.

## DE: KRISENKULTUR.DE

Created in just a few days implemented a neighborhood help hotline, a corona job placement portal, and an information page on online education opportunities. Also supports volunteers in COVID19 initiatives with know-how and technical resources.

## HR: STOPCORINA APP

Volunteer web developers made a phone application to report daily health status and create a predictive heatmap of disease hotspots. This data, adhering to all GDPR, will provide health authorities with a real-time insight into potential outbreaks & made available only to local health authorities & the WHO, completely free of charge.

## ES: SOLIDARITY LETTERS

Volunteers are sending cards of hope and support to the people that are hospitalised and lonely due to the virus. More than 30 000 cards for patients in much need of kind words. Words make a difference.

# CITIZEN-LED INITIATIVES

## LV: #STAYHOME VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT

It is a self-organised group of volunteers who by using technologies help those most in need, risk groups as senior citizens, by buying groceries, taking a dog for a walk or giving a call for a chat.

## DK: WINDOW CONCERTS FOR NURSING HOME RESIDENTS

Aarhus musicians, bands and associations volunteer to play window concerts outside the city's nursing homes to cheer up their residents isolated from family and friends.

## IT: ONE METER FROM YOU

Sicilian Medicine course students voluntarily take part in basic hospital screening activities to help the medical team to better focus on the critical cases reaching the hospitals. These tasks are carried out under the maximum safety for both students and those accessing the hospitals.

## HR: SPORTS CLUB VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers from sport clubs unable to do their regular volunteering are helping hospitals to move patients and medical equipment from one facility to another.

## UK: MUTUAL AID UK

A group of volunteers supporting local community groups organising mutual aid. They focus on providing resources and connecting people to their nearest local groups, willing volunteers and those in need.

# ONLINE MATCHING

## EE: KOGUKONDAITAB

A few people from various start-ups came together for a whole weekend hackathon to think about a new way to help those in need throughout the COVID19 pandemic. The platform connects people in search of help and those that can provide it, from a friendly chat on the phone with someone that feels lonely to a young person helping the elderly with the shopping and delivering it to their doorstep.

## BE: IMPACTDAYS.BE

The Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and its partner "Give a Day" have created this web platform to facilitate the carrying out of solidarity actions by the university community. On this page, you will discover solidarity actions to support those most vulnerable to the pandemic.

## NL: CORONAHHELPERS.NL

This platform is for all those that wish to offer their help in order to fight the pandemic and for those that wish to receive medical help under all its forms.

## ES: TODOSALDRABIEN.ORG

The goal is to gather all the needs of the citizens during the pandemic and at the same time offer a space where the citizens themselves are the solutions to the problems. If for example a student needs help with maths, they can find a maths teacher that can help online.

## UK: CORONA-HELPERS.CO.UK

They're working with local groups and organisations to coordinate offers of support. This will help make sure everyone receives the help they need.

## DK: VOLUNTEERING NETWORK FOR STRANDED DANES

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark established an online network between Danish NGOs and stranded Danish travellers outside the country who risk being expelled from hotels, to provide them with practical assistance by finding them temporary accommodation, or giving them advice.

## PT: CASES - COOPERATIVA ANTÓNIO SÉRGIO PARA A ECONOMIA SOCIAL

The 'Portugal Voluntario' Platform connects those who want to volunteer and the organisations that need them. The website CASES/Voluntariado/COVID-19 collects together the voluntary and solidarity initiatives across Portugal.

# ORGANISATIONS ADAPTING

## FR: VOISINS SOLIDAIRES

The main aim is to create and reinforce bonds among the neighbours. During this COVID-19 crisis, they have created an initiative to mobilise people to help their elderly or handicapped neighbours. They made a free kit in order to help neighbours groups to better organise themselves.

## IT: PADOVA WE ARE HERE

Three different organisations have come together to coordinate all social support actions aiming to enhance, support and fortify existing associations and volunteer commitments by ensuring that everyone can continue to operate safely and in view to protect everyone's health.

## BG: BULGARIAN RED CROSS

Volunteers in Plovdiv delivered food and medicines to more than 200 elderly people daily and have opened a hotline for psychological help served by volunteer psychologists.

## IT: L'ANGELO DEGLI ULTIMI

Respecting the norms and guidelines of safety, continues its activities towards those without a home in this period of crisis.

## IT: HUMAN RIGHTS YOUTH ORGANISATION

Organises food delivery for those that cannot leave their houses.

## UK: CAN DO BRISTOL

Bristol has recruited an 'army' of volunteers through 'Can Do Bristol' to help with response to COVID-19. They collect and distribute food. The city is also raising funds to support the local grant giving funder, Quartet Community Foundation who launched a Coronavirus Appeal Fund with funds distributed to local communities to address needs.

## BG: PLOVDIV 112

This Voluntary firefighters association is recruiting and training new volunteers.

## IT: #EQUODACASA

Volunteer run fairtrade shops across the country can collect orders for grocery delivery of fairtrade products (from food to cleaning products).

# ORGANISATIONS ADAPTING

## PT: VOLUNTEER GROUPS HELP VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Different associations of Guimarães and its region are creating volunteer groups to help more vulnerable people with the important tasks like going to the supermarket or to the pharmacy to buy medicines, in order to avoid them to leave from home.

## HR: ONE FOR EACH OTHER-ZAGREB

Citizens of Zagreb together with Volunteer Centre Zagreb and other various associations teamed up to help the most vulnerable groups and the people in need due to the COVID19 outbreak.

## ES: TELECARE STUDENTS

Idea Alzira created an initiative of volunteer telephone support for elderly people, thanks to "Idea Alzira" 'telecare' course students.

## HR: RED CROSS

Volunteers are involved in the procurement of the necessary food, hygiene and medical products that they provide to many families in accordance with safety and health guidelines and instructions. Also, an SOS line for psycho-social support for citizens was established.

## RO: CODE FOR ROMANIA

Volunteers are tackling misinformation and providing real, complete and truthful information regarding COVID19 to the citizens. Information is key to tackle any crisis.

## FR: TOUS SOLIDAIRES - COVID 19

Toulouse is distributing food to isolated elderly and disabled persons. The food kits are delivered every Wednesday by teams of employees and volunteers from the municipality.

## BG: HEALTH EDUCATION

Volunteer mediators are educating people in the Roma minorities on COVID-19.

## HR: PROTECTIVE MASKS

Red Cross volunteers from Novi Vinodolski are sewing protective masks and distributing them to the local hospitals.



# ORGANISATIONS ADAPTING

## HR: CROATIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL CHAMBER

Volunteers from the Chambers of Croatian psychologists are providing help over the phone to citizens.

## HR: CROATIAN STUDENT UNION

Volunteering students from Split made 3D protective visors and medical equipment for medical workers. They are asking for more volunteers to join them.

## DK: PHONE VOLUNTEERS

"Ældre sagen" association has created an "Elder Phone" for volunteers who want to call and start a conversation with elderly people who are trapped at home alone, avoiding them feeling lonely.

## ES: VOLUNTEERS FOR MADRID

The campaign "It is time for neighbourly solidarity" encourages people from Madrid to volunteer and help the most vulnerable ones with their daily household tasks, such as throwing out the rubbish, walking the dog or buying basic necessities.

## ES: ADOPTA UN ABUELO

It is an organisation whose main aim is to connect elderly people who are living in nursing homes with young people in order to avoid elderly people to feel lonely.

## DK: ACTIVITIES IN TIME OF CONFINEMENT

"Børn Voksenvenner" volunteer mentors have made a list of activities which can be done online in order to let children and young people to socialize and communicate with others during this confinement time.

## IT: ITALIAN RED CROSS

Training new volunteers for tasks such as: delivery of grocery & pharmaceutical products; check of passengers at the airports; info & support at the Red Cross info desks, etc.

## HR: ONE FOR EACH OTHER- OSIJEK

Citizens of Osijek in Croatia and various associations teamed up to help the most vulnerable groups and the people in need due to the COVID19 outbreak.

# CROSS SECTOR COLLABORATION

## **BE: FREE VOLUNTEER INSURANCE**

The Flemish Government & the Flemish Volunteer Centre have collaborated to provide free volunteer insurance to anyone who is helping others during this crisis, including on a non-formal basis.

## **IT: I STAY AT HOME, CAN YOU HELP ME WITH THE GROCERY?**

Municipality of Camponogara, in the Venice province, with the voluntary support of citizens develops the project collecting list of grocery, buying and delivering it at home for those in need.

## **GR: DON'T BE AFRAID, I'M HERE**

The Greek Government launches a call for skilled volunteers aimed at anyone who can offer their services such as: doctors, nurses, paramedics, psychologists, students, & retired health scientists. Also, who can offer administrative, technical or support to the health system regardless of their specialisation.

## **FR: CITY OF PARIS**

Together with NGOs, Parishes and different companies developed several initiatives to deal with this crisis situation, such as the opening of new places of shelter and specialised accommodation centres, the reinforcement of health structures, food aid, and the launch of a call for volunteers to assist with delivery.

## **UK: FOOD DISTRIBUTION NETWORK**

The city council, third sector organisation EVOC and the volunteering community have come together to provide vulnerable groups food in these difficult circumstances. 3000 areas are targeted at first and further actions will adapt to the citizens' demand. Volunteers will receive training and schools are acting as logistic centers.

## **BG: CRISIS HEADQUARTERS PLOVDIV**

Recruits both medical and non-medical volunteers.

# CROSS SECTOR COLLABORATION

## **PL: SHOPPING FOR SENIORS**

During the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the city of Poznań launched the "Shopping for seniors" service to support elderly and disabled people living in Poznań. Assistance provides everyday basic products such as medicines, food and cleaning products.

## **ES: FORGOOD.ES**

A virtual meeting space to provide mutual support between actors from different sectors. Companies, academic institutions and public bodies can voluntarily or on pro bono basis offer their initiatives, products, services and knowledge to each other.

## **UK: TRIPLE SHELTER PARTNERSHIP**

"10,000 bed spaces to 730 unique individuals over the last 200 nights" is the outcome reached together by Edinburgh city council and Bethany Christian Trust. The project is supported by the Old Waverley Hotel, where those in need can have temporary accommodation while receiving support and advice. The hotel is also offering three meals a day for those in need thanks to many anonymous volunteers.

## **HR: ONE STOP SHOP**

The Croatian Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy are directing all willing volunteers to the regional volunteer centres, members Croatian Volunteer Development Centre in order to ensure the best possible coordination and efficient use of precious resources at this challenging time.

## **FI: CALLING EVERYONE OVER 80**

The city of Helsinki has teamed up with local parishes and volunteer organisations to reach out to the self-isolating elderly population. In the 'Helsinki Helpline' campaign, volunteers are calling the elderly by phone to ask if they need help – or just want to talk about how they are coping with the COVID-19 lockdown. The ambition is to contact all 27,000 residents who are over 80. People over 70 years of age can also call for a chat or request help, as with shopping food or medicines. A retailer cooperative and a call center company are supporting the service as partners.

# ADVICE AND SUPPORT

## IE: VOLUNTEER IRELAND

Prioritising recruitment, support and promotion of volunteer roles related to the COVID-19 response; Communicating with local volunteers and organisations; Providing advice and guidance on volunteering safely when dealing with vulnerable members of the public; Sharing stories of those volunteering and raising awareness of the positive impact of volunteers.

## EE: ESTONIAN VILLAGE MOVEMENT

New website providing summary information on volunteering, how to call for help from volunteers and how to offer help as a volunteer.

## HR: CROATIAN VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Recommendations for volunteering during the COVID19 crisis, media articles to promote and highlight the importance of solidarity in times of crisis, publishing positive stories and encouraging examples of civic engagement.

## DE: GEGEN DAS VIRUS

Digital aids that bridge the gap between the digital help offers and the mostly analogue needy. This project is part of "KrisenKultur.de".

## IT: MUNICIPALITY OF MIRA (VE)

Sharing & explaining information concerning the new emergency legislation and the municipality actions, involvement of citizens, local shops & NGOs in volunteering activities and by promoting online activities to keep the community active.

## DE: ESSEN VIRAL

Volunteers in Essen created this webpage to provide local people with up to date and reliable information and advice about different aspects of daily life including volunteering or requesting volunteer help.

## FR: FOOD FOR STUDENTS

Nice isn't forgetting its students and has put into place some measures supporting those living in a precarious situation, for example, volunteers bring them every week a basket of fresh groceries.

**Volunteers In Solidarity**

**COVID19**

**#VISCovid19**

**Personal Volunteers  
Stories**



# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

## #VISCovid19



## Volunteers Stories

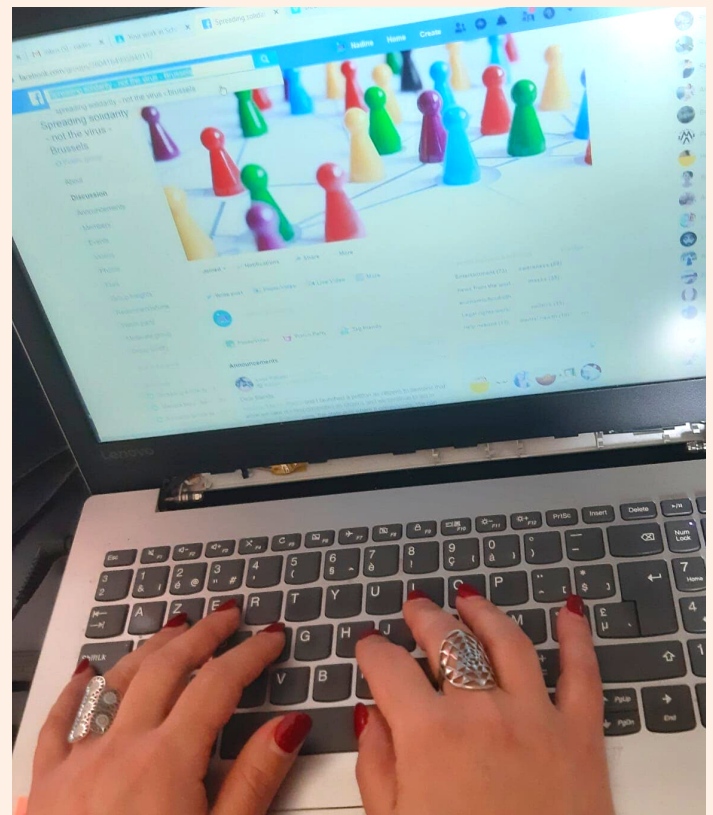
### *Nadine's Story as a Volunteer for "Spreading Solidarity - not the Virus - Brussels"*

"Having been Lebanese who grew up in the civil war and later went through several Israeli aggressions on my country, it was quite easy for me to anticipate the need for solidarity/relief work. This was a collective global crisis we were living and I knew from experience we will need each other.

After hearing the decision of the Belgian state to go on a light version of lockdown I quickly voiced my concerns on my FB profile for the need of a network through which people can stay connected, ask for help, offer help or just do entertainment. Lucia, an Italian friend of mine quickly responded with her agreement. Half an hour later we had a FB group created, **Spreading solidarity-not the virus-Brussels**".

"Both Lucia and I are firm believers in the idea that the only way out of this is via global solidarity so we insisted the group be multilingual and with very few rules. Since then we have done logistics/damage control such as posters offering neighbourhood elderly to go shopping or flyers on how to sterilise shopping items or campaigns to help women stuck in abusive domestic scenarios.

We also do politics, we do arts, we do general information and news from the world, and we sometimes simply do entertainment. We had loads of volunteers helping out with all kind of work such as translations or photoshopping or moderating. As always, when I do relief work, I come to the conclusion that the people care about each other more than the state cares for them".



*Picture of Nadine while coordinating the volunteers group*

**" We just have to remember this solidarity feeling when there is no more crisis"**

**Join us to highlight 19 examples of how Citizens all across Europe are voluntarily acting to support vulnerable people during this crisis period!**

# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

## #VISCovid19



## Volunteers Stories

### *Marielle's Story as a Volunteer for "ULBEngagée" (Belgium)*

"As soon as the confinement was announced on March 17th by Sophie Wilmes, I understood that my professional activities would be very much reduced in the coming weeks. Having time on my hands while others were overloaded with work ? No thanks. **The solution : VOLUNTEERING!**"



"I joined the **ULBEngagée** platform and was swiftly contacted with a mission: gather face masks from citizens in Brussels willing to hand over their spare masks and deliver them to 2 hospitals.

So I contacted these people (all very friendly) to organise the logistics and delivered a fair amount of masks, gloves and sanitising gel (a bonus offered by our generous citizens on top of the masks) to *Brugmann and Erasme University Hospitals* in Brussels.

*Picture of the boxes offered by a ULBEngagée donator, delivered at Erasme Hospital*

The hospital staff was pleased with the gifts : "all bits help" they said".

**"Having time on my hands while others were overloaded with work ? No thanks. The solution : VOLUNTEERING!"**

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## Volunteers Stories

### *Ingrid's Story as a Volunteer in Estonia*

Ingrid Purge is living in a small island in Estonia called Hiiumaa. During the COVID-crisis, Hiiumaa – as well as other islands in Estonia – has been locked up in order to avoid spreading the virus.

In this situation, she is coordinating volunteers who help in a social sphere (also during the crisis). She is buying and delivering food for elderly people, calling to some elderly people on a weekly bases to comfort them and dividing food at food bank – of course in a way to avoid spreading the virus.

Ingrid is rather shy and stubborn when it comes to publicity. She says for her volunteering is not anything special, volunteering is just her lifestyle. She has been an active volunteer at her home village and village society for many years. As a volunteer, she has organized events and tried to keep her neighbors active as well. For the last two years, she has been active in Kodukant testing and developing a volunteering model in social sector.

"I feel that our volunteer buddies at Hiiumaa are a huge help and their support for elderly people is enormous! Especially in the times of crisis, local municipalities could not survive without us!".

Also, did you know that at the end of last year her and her daughter initiated a Food Bank at Hiiumaa as volunteers? She is never in the spotlight, but local people know that she is always there offering her comfort, kindness and support if needed.



*Picture of Ingrid*

**"I feel that our volunteer buddies at Hiiumaa are a huge help and their support for elderly people is enormous!".**

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## Volunteers Stories

### *Lana's Story as a Volunteer in Zadar, Croatia*

"VIC Actions 2020", a volunteering project to assist elementary and secondary school students was created by Lana Matičević, a first-year student in German Studies and Pedagogy at the University of Zadar.

The initiative gathers over 50 volunteers who are students and teachers. organised through the Slack online platform that is divided into so-called channels, and each channel represents one subject. This makes it easy for parents and school pupils to find volunteers for exactly the items they need support with. The project works in a way that parents and school pupils report to the channel, or to the subject that they need assistance with, and then the first volunteer comes in and helps them with the task, explaining the process. If further explanation is needed, volunteers and parents agree on further instructions. In this way, it is very easy to coordinate a large number of volunteers and help many pupils every day in Croatia where online schooling during the lockdown is compulsory.



*Picture of Lana*

Lana: "Sometimes it is even more unreal what is happening. I am grateful to my parents for raising me to know I can and should help people who need help. I was not even aware that an individual initiative would turn into such an important online teaching support project engaging so many volunteers in the time of the pandemic. In addition to being supported by the University of Zadar, I received support from various media outlets in my city of Novska. In times like these, we should help each other".

**"I was not even aware that an individual initiative would turn into an online volunteering teaching support project in the time the pandemic".**

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## Volunteers Stories

### *Rosie's Story as a Volunteer for "Per Padova noi ci siamo" project ("We're Here for Padova")*

Let me introduce myself – my name is Rosie, I'm a primary school English teacher from the UK living in Padova, Italy, since 2014. I've been volunteering with the CSV (Centro Servizi Volontariato – Volunteering Services Centre) since the start of the national lockdown of Italy within the 'Per Padova noi ci siamo' project ('We're Here for Padova').

CSV, alongside Padova City Council and the Caritas charity group, provides essential services to those who are particularly vulnerable in our community. With one simple phone call, volunteers spring into action: going food shopping or to the pharmacy for the elderly, delivering food vouchers to families, making a care call just to check up on neighbours...or even distributing flowers and vegetable plants to make our city bloom when all this is over!

One thing that I have noticed with great appreciation is the grassroots and community-based nature of this whole operation. To get those essential food vouchers out to people, I've been put in contact with a group of determined, compassionate volunteers from my area, each of whom is enthusiastic to help. Since we can't move much around the city, we are all working within our own communities, getting to know the people around us through snippets of conversation and exchanging two words of thanks and encouragement.

The other thing that makes my heart swell in pride for my adopted city is the fact that there are more volunteers ready in waiting than there are requests for help every week. It is a credit to our city and the attitude of the Padovani to have so many people turn out to help.

Needless to say, it has been, and continues to be a wonderful experience for everyone involved!



Picture of Rosie

**"Needless to say, it has been, and continues to be a wonderful experience for everyone involved!"**

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## Volunteers Stories

### *Tiina's Story as a Volunteer in Estonia*

Tiina is a scientist. She is especially interested in peoples' aging and she does a lot to influence society to perceive aging as a normality. For example, she has an interesting hobby: she runs a vlog channel "Aging for beginners" to share the stories of elderly people and give tips how to enjoy life even if you are not so young anymore.

Now, in the times of crisis, Tiina has volunteered to call regularly to a women called Aino. Aino is more than 80 years old and she stays home to stay safe and healthy! Tiina calls Aino twice a week.

Tiina says: "I think through the phone call in advance every time so that our talk can become an exciting conversation that is both emotionally supportive and developmental. I deal with topics that direct our thoughts to bright moments in life, I do memory, spatial thinking and other games that support Aino's brain health. We even experiment with gymnastic exercises that can be instructed and followed - one hand with the phone at the ear. At the end of each call, Aino gets a small task for the next time, such as looking for "traces of fame" in life, remembering people who have influenced her life, asking her friends and telling these stories to me, or teaching me her childhood games. Our calls were half an hour in the beginning, but now we can't say everything even in an hour. We have become mental and emotional millionaires".



*Pictures of Tiina*

"We have become mental and emotional millionaires".

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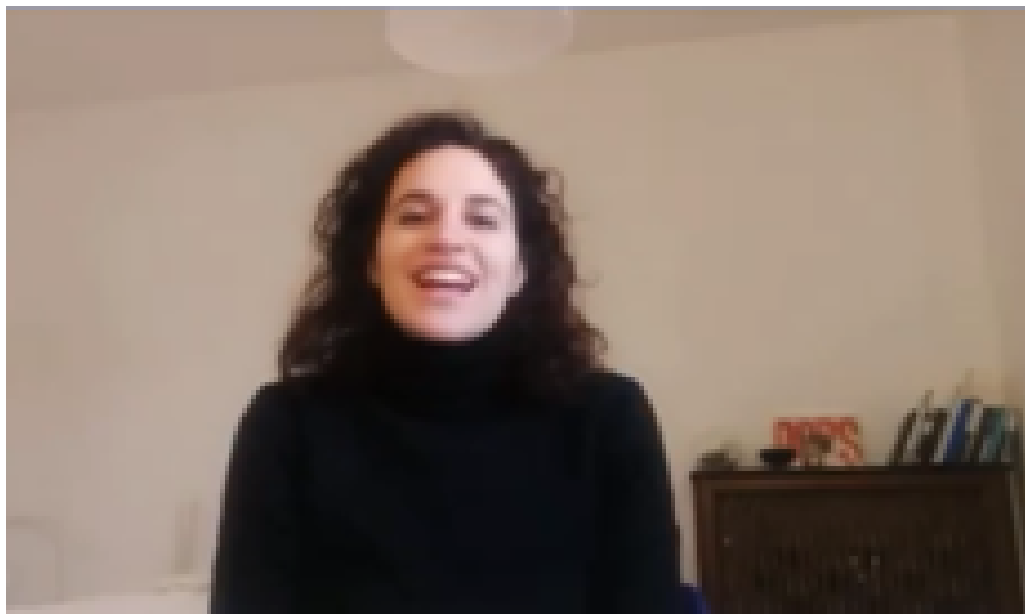
## Volunteers Stories

### *Eleonora's Story as a Volunteer for "Per Padova noi ci siamo" project ("We're Here for Padova")*

Eleonora is one of the volunteers of the "Per Padova noi ci siamo" project.

Her activity, mainly, has been to answer the phone and collect the availability of new volunteers and then enlarge the team. As well as matching the resources of the local realities, that are available to support the current volunteering actions, with the aims of the project.

Eleonora says: "For me, participating in this project means remembering that what happens in our city is the product of what we do for it, and therefore we can all, according to our possibilities, determine the strength with which our community reacts and overcomes this difficult moment".



*Picture of Eleonora*

**"What happens in our city is the product of what we do for it"**

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## Volunteers Stories

### *Erminia's Story as a Volunteer for "Per Padova noi ci siamo" project ("We're Here for Padova")*

Erminia in "normal" times volunteers at the Solidarity Centre of Padova, a free aggregation of friends that aims to accompany unemployed people in their search for work. She tells how the COVID19 situation suddenly blocked the intense meeting activity they were carrying out. But this made her understand that it was not the time to stop, on the contrary, so she continued her volunteering through the project "Per Padova noi ci siamo".

Erminia Aziani: Good morning, I'm gladly sharing the story of this experience, in addition to other days in which I was able to devote time to this project. The activities which I was able to undertake were the telephone calls to the recipients of the shopping vouchers, and then the delivery of the shopping vouchers to those who had requested them. In addition, I collaborated twice in the delivery of the boxes of flowers as part of the "CultivActions" initiative. The cross-setting collaborations have been the most varied, all extremely dignified despite the need of many. I was struck by a non-Italian lady, perhaps from Eastern Europe, who, in communicating the impossibility of being reachable on the day I proposed for the delivery of the shopping vouchers, said to me: "I started working, so give my vouchers to another family with children, who needs more ". I was amazed!

"The COVID19 situation suddenly stopped the intense meeting activity we were having. It seemed to me, however, that we couldn't remain inactive in a period of crisis when we have no idea how long it will last".



*Picture of Erminia*

**"We couldn't take an unforeseen vacation for an unspecified amount of time until the crisis was over so we needed to adapt".**

**Join us to highlight 19 examples of how Citizens all across Europe are voluntarily acting to support vulnerable people during this crisis period!**



# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

## #VISCovid19



## Volunteers Stories

### *Roberto's Story as a Volunteer for "Per Padova noi ci siamo" project ("We're Here for Padova")*

Roberto Pattaro, within the project "Per Padova noi ci siamo", tells that he "adopted" 4 elderly people, to whom he also left his own telephone number.

He helps by bringing them groceries, medicine, basic needs and intervenes if there are specific needs.

Roberto: "It didn't have to be an emergency like the Coronavirus to see the needs of many lonely elderly people, I hope that volunteering will continue to make a difference once we get out of this situation".



**"I hope that volunteering will continue to make a difference once we get out of this situation".**

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# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

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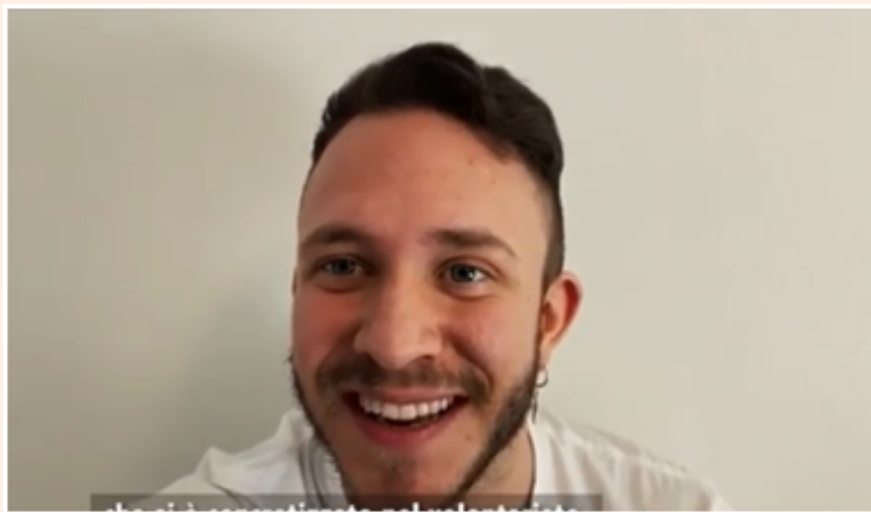


## Volunteers Stories

### *Francesco's Story as a Volunteer for "Per Padova noi ci siamo" project ("We're Here for Padova")*

Francesco, 24-year-old volunteer, is in his last year of a psychology master's degree and he is an educator in the hospital. He tells how, after a first moment of confusion created by the emergency situation, he began to think about how to make himself useful for others: "small and simple actions can do a lot".

Francesco: "Since the first moments of confinement one of my thoughts has been about people who might have more difficulties than us to live this difficult time, such as the elderly, immunodepressed people, people with other problems. This was a bit what drove me to look for a way to help them that has materialized in volunteering to help with the home delivery of food and medicines, thanks to the project for "Padova noi ci siamo".



*Picture of Francesco*

**"Small and simple actions can do a lot".**

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# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

## #VISCovid19



## Volunteers Stories

### *Juanjo's Story as a Volunteer in Spain*

Juanjo Romero belongs to the association 'Plataforma del Voluntariado de Antequera' and 'Antequera Solidaria'. He has been a volunteer for 10 years and he is also employed by both platforms. During this pandemic, he spends many hours ensuring that families from the Antequera region do not lack the most basic thing: food. He emphasizes that the number of attended families has increased from about 600 families, before the crisis, to around 700 at this moment. "If this number continues to increase, we will exceed the number of families we needed to attend in the economic crisis of 2008", he says.

Because of the contact with the people who come to the soup kitchen or the establishment to collect the food, he is very exposed, but unlike what is happening in other places in Spain, "here we do have protective equipment". The organization provides food to the most vulnerable families, but also articles for personal hygiene and cleaning of the house. He is one of the people responsible for ensuring that no one is left behind during this crisis, and that their most basic needs are covered.

Juanjo's mother, who collaborates with Cáritas and 'Proyecto Hombre', is his reference in volunteering. This is why he left his previous job to work for volunteer organisations and apply himself to something where he could directly help those who need it the most.

Before the crisis he used to volunteer with the ProLibertas Foundation in the prison of Archidona. He holds workshops with young people, "at first it was very hard, entering the prison and seeing how the 14 doors behind which I had to pass were closing. Now that the volunteer programs have been cancelled due to COVID-19, I miss it very much. I feel I am missing something".

*Picture of Juanjo*



**"It is not easy, but it helps you grow as a person".**

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# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

## #VISCovid19



## Volunteers Stories

### *Sharon's Story as a Volunteer for Feed Cork in Ireland*

Sharon Mullins has been volunteering with Feed Cork for almost three years. She normally volunteers around 25 hours per week and her role involves coordinating the other volunteers and helping with administration at Feed Cork.

Like many others in the Community and Voluntary sector across Cork who were providing vital services to those in need, Sharon and Feed Cork have been impacted by Covid-19. Sharon's vital work coordinating volunteers continues from her home on the laptop and over the phone. Sharon hasn't been into Feed Cork's premises since the outbreak occurred.

Since their doors opened at Feed Cork in May 2017, they have distributed 250 well balanced, nutritious, food baskets to individuals and families in need on a weekly basis. With the outbreak of Covid-19, the café at Feed Cork closed straight away to ensure people's safety. However, they continue to provide their services in a different way. "Instead of operating a food bank where people in need could come and collect their food baskets and socialise in our cafe, Feed Cork is now operating a food delivery service". From the confines of her home, Sharon now spends her time coordinating all the deliveries; staying in touch with her volunteers to make sure they're ok and speaking to people in need over the phone.

Feed Cork are also supporting people who are cocooning at this time due to age or underlying conditions. Sharon says that many of the people she deals with over the phone are lonely or isolated and she has referred them to the City Council helpline number for support.

Sharon also spends her time making phone calls and utilising existing contacts she has with other organisations and groups to see if there are people in the community in need of food deliveries/support. She says that it is great to be part of the Community Response and build on existing relationships that Feed Cork has with other groups.



*Picture of Sharon*

**"It's great to see the City working together".**

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# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

## #VISCovid19



## Volunteers Stories

### *Andrew's Story as a Volunteer in Dublin*

Andrew King is a teacher and now a testing volunteer: "I greet patients for swabbing at a drive-through coronavirus test centre"

Like teachers the world over, since the closure of schools I have been trying to adjust to a new pace of life. I have felt both guilty and relieved to have a stable, secure teaching job, knowing others face much more terrifying uncertainties. As an English and history teacher, I have also sensed the magnitude of this historical moment.

Working remotely gave me more flexibility, so I decided I'd like to get involved in the community fight-back against the virus. I searched online, found an appeal on Twitter, and the following Wednesday, a member of the team from the Dublin City Volunteer Centre called. She thanked me for putting my name down on their online signup system, and asked if I would be comfortable working in a Covid-19 testing centre, greeting patients, checking details and managing the queue for swabbing. My profile suggested I might be a good candidate for this type of work.

I was hesitant, but she assured me I would not be forced to do anything I was not comfortable with. The coordinator was warm, professional and patient, guiding me through what would be involved.

The centre is located on the grounds of a GAA club just off the M50, and when we arrived, we were waved through at the gate by two security guards. I weaved the car through a sea of bright orange traffic cones, and parked up in one of the staff spaces on the other side of two large drive-through marquees.



*Picture of Andrew (right) at a drive-through Covid-19 testing centre*

**"Working remotely gave me more flexibility, so I decided I'd like to get involved as a volunteer in the community fight-back against the virus".**

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# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

## #VISCovid19

## Volunteers Stories



### *Kirke, Katrin & Sille's Story as Volunteers for Estonian Fund for Nature in Estonia*

Since 2012, the Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF) has been organizing an action called "Toads from the road". It is because in springs toads go to the waters to have a wedding, and in the autumn, they move back to the wintering place. In spring volunteers help toads crossing problematic road sections to avoid their deaths. This year, due to COVID19, the national action was cancelled but there were still some people and some communities who decided to help toads. Of course, all activities were carried out, having in mind the requirements for sanitary distancing.

Kirke Raidmets has been helping toads close to Tallinn for already 3 years. Kirke says: "During the crisis, we can freeze peoples' normal life, but we cannot stop the way and space nature has. Since cars were still on the road, we did choose to help toads in smaller groups and keeping the distance between volunteers. I even would say that helping toads and saving their lives has been almost the only reasonable reason to go outside this spring."

Katrin Luhaäär is an active volunteer and toads-saver at Harju county in Estonia. "Toads-world has remained as normal as it ever has been! It seems that our group of friends has saved more toads than previous years! We also detected another place where toads are crossing the road! And it has been lovely that there are bunch of people who do not need official action, they are just one phone-call away!" says Katrin.

Sille Sündema (also from Harju county) is willing to list the reasons why she is volunteering and helping the toads: "There are many reasons, but inspiring group of people is one of them! I value every minute I spend at nights with them next to the roads. Also, helping toads makes me feel important: I can help the nature function in a more normal way. And! The best reward is to hear the toads singing in ponds!" Let we all pay our attention also to the nature because also humans cannot survive without it!

*Picture of Kirke*



**"Helping toads and saving their lives has been almost the only reason to go out this spring".**

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# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

## #VISCovid19



## Volunteers Stories

### *Kevin's Story as a Volunteer for Volunteer Now in Northern Ireland*

Kevin Doonan is currently volunteering as a Volunteer Shopper - Here he tells how he got involved:

"Before volunteering I was working as a barista in Belfast City Airport. My plan was to save enough money to pay to do a masters in psychology which I'm happy to say I've been accepted to study with Queens University. My long term goal is to work toward becoming a clinical psychologist.

I always believe it is important to give back when I can. I lost my mum to cancer two years ago and was inspired by Marie Curie nurses. Since then I have worked and volunteered with Marie Curie UK on a few different campaigns such as Scrap the Six Months and the 2019 Great Daffodil Appeal. When the lockdown was declared and eventually the trust was looking for volunteers I thought that I should find away to give back during this time. This is when I came across Volunteer Now and applied.

Basically my role consists of food shopping for the most vulnerable individuals who can't leave their homes. I have picked up groceries and topped up electric and gas cards for older people in my local area".



*Picture of Kevin*

**"I always believe it is important to give back when I can".**

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# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

## #VISCovid19

## Volunteers Stories



### *Pablo's Story as a Volunteer in Spain*

Pablo Striano is a 24 years old young guy who lives in Madrid, in the neighborhood of Lavapiés. He's a sound technician but during the pandemic crisis he began to dedicate his time to helping others. He currently collaborates in the communication department and in the preparation of food baskets with the association "Dragones de Lavapiés". On his motivation to volunteer he says: "In a time of great despair, because every day there is bad news and injustices, projects like 'La Cuba' show that things, no matter how small, can always be done to improve the situation". "When I found out that there was an initiative in the neighborhood to distribute food to those most in need, I decided to contact the organisers immediately. There were too many reasons for being proactive rather than to stay on the sidelines and not to collaborate."

The headquarters for the food distribution and storage are located in a local theater where they also make meals for the homeless and deliver food at home. Currently "we distribute approximately 120 meals per day, giving food to around 700 families (weekly pickup) and we serve around 400 homeless people (daily pickup). In urgent situations, they know they can call and ask for what they need. A normal food basket is composed of vegetables, rice, meat or fish and, if requested, hygiene products. It has even been the case that, if not needed, some products are returned in order to be given to somebody else who maybe is waiting for them".

Pablo's volunteering day starts with checking the emails, reviewing the most urgent tasks and two days per week he goes to the local theater to help out with the food delivery and food distribution for the homelesses.

"Collaborating in 'La Cuba' has given me a lot: from knowing more about my neighborhood to developing important personal skills. It has also helped me learn how these types of solidarity initiatives are developed and how they are organized. As a volunteer you grow a lot as a person and as a professional and, above all, you discover the importance of contributing in a small 'way'. In general, we tend to have a distorted idea of people living in difficult conditions, considering them very far from our lives. But this experience has taught me that anyone can end up poor and this is why we need to keep helping each other. In a time when there is a lot of hopelessness, because there is bad news and injustices every day, projects like 'La Cuba' show that you can always do something, however small or big it is, to improve the situation."



**Collaborating in 'La Cuba' has given me a lot: from knowing more about my neighborhood to developing important personal skills**

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# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

## #VISCovid19



## Volunteers Stories

### *Volunteers' Story from Association of Women 'Aula Cultural Nuevas Amistades' in Spain*

The Association of Women 'Aula Cultural Nuevas Amistades', from Villa de Vallecas (Madrid), is made up of more than one hundred elderly women focused on leisure, sport and interactive free time activities. The association also collaborates with the local Caritas representation. However, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the association ceased its activity, and many of these women found themselves alone again. Many of them are widows or have no family, and found in these meetings the family they lack.

Maika Barbero, instructor of the association, explains that at the moment the crisis started "We had been wondering for a while what we could do, we were used to having a lot of activities and suddenly they were stopped". So they decided to mobilize in support of the health personnel: "Many nurses, carers and administrative personnel live in the neighborhood. And we found out they needed hospital hats to cover their heads. Apparently they get drenched in sweat every day of work by the protective equipment and each person needs several. They were also in need of masks. And so we decided to start our 'new activity'" says Maika

Some women could sew, others had curtains and fabrics they didn't use, others gave threads. Maika went with the car from one place to another to pick up the material and, after being created, to deliver the useful tools. What many of these women who have done their bit were not aware of was how much they helped themselves by helping others. "It has been a very rewarding experience, very beautiful, because we feel useful." All this in a hard moment, when also "some of us have left, we have lost several of our companions. It is hard, because if there is something to highlight about this association, it is companionship".

With their work, these women have filled hospitals and retirement homes with color, creating more than 600 hats and 150 masks.

This volunteering activity has also served to keep people in contact, "because many of these women haven't left their houses for more than two months, some of them are widows, others without family. They have been very sad... so at least the volunteers went out the window to say 'Hi' while picking up the materials they made, keeping in touch, so like this they weren't alone".



**At least the volunteers went out the window to say 'Hi' while picking up the materials they made, keeping in touch, so like this they weren't alone".**

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# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

## #VISCovid19



## Volunteers Stories

### *Rafael's Story as a Volunteer for Volunteer for Madrid in Spain*

In the particular situation of Spanish society, where life expectancy is very high, and there is a large percentage of people over 65 years of age, it was necessary to increase efforts to help older people to leave their homes as little as possible. In this way, "Volunteers for Madrid" developed a network of volunteers to cover the basic needs of the most vulnerable groups. Rafael, from the first moment, was involved in helping the older neighbors of his building with the grocery and medicine purchases, and later, he extended his collaboration to other cases in the area where he lives. Once, thanks to his intervention, the health services were able to reach and help a lady who had fallen in her home.

Rafael: "Volunteering, during these difficult times, has helped me to realize that a minimum of help from each one of us protects the people around us who are most vulnerable. The experience of "Volunteers for Madrid" team in recent years have been key to reacting quickly and the help to reach as many people as possible".



*Picture of Rafael*

**Volunteering, during these difficult times, has helped me to realize that a minimum of help from each one of us protects the people around us who are most vulnerable.**

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# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

## #VISCovid19



## Volunteers Stories

### *Javier's Story as a Volunteer for Volunteer for Madrid in Spain*

Javier is a very active volunteer who has participated in all kinds of projects during the previous year. When the Covid-19 health crisis began, he was one of the first to respond and offer his help to all those who could not leave home. In addition, he was involved from the beginning in "Minutos en Compañía", a project that seeks to combat loneliness and isolation of older people through a free telephone number attended by volunteers through which they share pleasant moments of chat.

Javier: "From the first moment, seeing everything that was happening around me, I was asked the question of what could I do, what could I contribute to others, how could I get a smile with a small gesture, how could I generate confidence to the fear that many people were spending in solitude, how to encourage others to make all those hours of confinement more enjoyable. Having been able to get some smile, remove that fear or make this situation more bearable to others, has made me feel useful and a participant in collective well-being. I am satisfied that I was able to mitigate, however little, the suffering of others.



Picture of Javier

**From the first moment, seeing everything that was happening around me, I was asked the question of what could I do to help others.**

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# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

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## Volunteers Stories

### *Atanas Yonev's Story as a Volunteer for The Municipality of Sofia Volunteer Association*

Despite the bad weather, volunteers don't stop shopping for food and medicine for the elderly who can not leave their homes. All lonely or isolated elderly people in Sofia can request the delivery of food and assistance thanks to volunteers providing this shopping service following strict safety protocols and procedures.

Volunteer Atanas Yonev, who runs a construction business: "I think every single person needs to do something good for people they don't know. The volunteering brings me such a satisfaction that can not be felt though something else. I am so happy to be involved, it is one of the best decisions I've made in my life".



*Picture of Atanas*

**"The volunteering brings me such a satisfaction that can not be felt though something else".**

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# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

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## Volunteers Stories



### *Daniel and Radoslav's Story as Volunteers for Military Medical Academy (Bulgaria)*

Trained volunteers are supporting the medical staff at the Military Medical Academy in Bulgaria, including testing people for COVID-19.

Volunteers Daniel and Radoslav (medical students): "We help the people who work there with everything which is part of our competency, including testing for COVID-19. The act of testing is not difficult for us, it is not painful for the patients. We have contact to almost everyone who comes to be tested and some people we'd tested turned out to be positive. We are happy that through this testing they can get the medical treatment they need".



*Picture of Daniel*



*Picture of Radoslav*

**We help the people who work there with everything which is  
part of our competency**

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voluntarily acting to support vulnerable people during this crisis period!**

# Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19

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## Volunteers Stories

### *Ivan's Story as a Volunteer for Voluntary Association "Plovdiv 112" (Bulgaria)*

Volunteer Ivan Klinchev: "What motivates me the most is that we are here not to pretend to be heroes, not to demand people's attention, but just to do good for someone"

The Plovdiv 112 voluntary formation, which has been in existence for six years, is a successful example of good organization during the state of emergency. The Municipality of Plovdiv has opened two hotlines, as focal points for willing volunteers. Many willing volunteers have signed up and all are provided with appropriate protective clothing.

People who want to volunteer must be between the ages of 18 and 50. The only requirements is that they should not have any symptoms and should have the willingness and time to help.

Volunteers deliver food, medicine and oxygen machines to people infected with COVID-19 but who have mild symptoms and are being cured at home. A strict decontamination protocol is followed after each order and task completion.



*Picture of Ivan*

**"What motivates me the most is that we are here not to pretend to be heroes, not to demand people's attention, but just to do good for someone"**

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*"The European Parliament Volunteering Interest Group Co-Chairs would like to express their heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to the countless volunteers across Europe putting European values into practice and showing the importance of solidarity, especially in times of crisis. This unprecedented situation has shown us more than ever just how critical volunteers are to our society and the importance of co-ordinated volunteering policies supporting a functioning volunteering infrastructure based on cross-sector collaboration. We send a special thank you to all the ESC volunteers and trainees putting others before themselves at this difficult time and playing their part in supporting vulnerable people."*

Message from the EP Volunteering Interest Group Co-Chairs April 2020  
Michaela Sojdrova (EPP), Domenec Ruiz Devesa (S&D), Irena Joveva (Renew Europe)

**Volunteers In Solidarity Covid-19**  
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