

**DEVELOPMENT OF VOLUNTEER RESOURCE
CENTERS IN THE PERCEPTION OF STAKEHOLDERS:
EXPERIENCE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN THE
INTENSIVE FORMATION OF VOLUNTEERING
INFRASTRUCTURE**

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Abstract

The article aimed at assessing the activities of the established regional volunteer resource centers from the perspective of the principal stakeholders of this process. Analysis of documents and a questionnaire survey of Russian volunteers and expert were used. As a result, the authors have defined the problems that resource centers face, as well as the prospective directions of activities in accordance with the needs of the nonprofit sector and the population. The public strategy for the development of volunteering infrastructure “from the top-down leads to similar problems manifested in the development of hybrid network nonprofit organizations, aimed at professional organization of volunteers in different areas.

Keywords: *volunteering, volunteer resource centers, volunteer-involving organizations, volunteering infrastructure, Russia*

INTRODUCTION

Almost all countries of the world face the changes in the social policy agenda due to the volatile economy and social transformations. The concept of general welfare in the Western Europe is under serious challenge, which it sometimes cannot withstand. As governments across Europe counter economic crises by restricting welfare services and resources, the emphasis on non-state provision and community-based solutions to growing socio-economic problems increases [Milbourne & Cushman, 2015; Baszyński & Kańduła 2010; Kalinowska-Sufinowicz 2013; Yakubovskiy et al. 2017]. In the developing countries, as well as in the former socialist countries, significant changes take place in terms of the redistribution of the interaction between the public and the nonprofit sectors and the relations between public officers and citizens [Iarskaia-Smirnova & Romanov 2013]. Collaboration between governments, business and the voluntary and community sectors is now central to the way public policy is made, managed and delivered [Sullivan & Skelcher 2017]. In the countries of the Western Europe researchers register the development of public initiatives aimed at involving wider social groups, including elderly people, immigrants and people with disabilities, in volunteering activities [Jaźwiński 2017; Jones & Heley 2014; Lub & Uyterlinde 2012; Paszkowicz & Garbat 2015]. Such volunteering programs are aimed at overcoming exclusion, improving the quality of life and welfare of different groups of citizens. However, such projects need professional organizations to be made more manageable. In the former communist countries the projects aimed at involving the youth in volunteering are being developed [Pantea 2015; Schmidt 2016; Szeman 2014].

In the context of the ongoing social and economic processes, the number of volunteers is growing all over the world [State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2018]. However, volunteering rates (shares of adult population that volunteer) are considerably higher in high-income countries. For example, the geography of the volunteer economy mirrors closely, but by no means exactly, the geographic distribution of global GDP. By comparison, in Western Europe, volunteering represents the equivalent of 17.6% of government consumption expenditures, and in the Far East, it is around 8% [Salamon et al. 2011: 217-252].

Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) reports, based on the data of annual Gallup poll, fix the differences between the popularity of volunteering in the majority of Western

European countries and the former communist countries. Thus, according to the report of 2018 among 145 countries Belarus occupies the 74th position, Georgia – the 83rd, Poland – the 99th, Ukraine – the 103rd, Hungary – the 115th, Armenia – the 130th, Romania – the 139th [World charity rating 2018]. The results of the Europe-wide research held in 2010 fixed the lowest level of participation in voluntary activities in Bulgaria (10% of the population), followed by Romania and Poland, each with 18% of the population and the Baltic countries with percentages ranging between 24-27% of the population. In Western European countries, as a result of the demographic phenomenon of the aging population, there are older volunteers, while in Eastern Europe, most of the volunteers are young people aged between 15-25 years old [Dobrescu 2012: 189-190].

Researchers prove that the differences between the popularity of volunteering are related to the democratic processes, the development of the third sector and the activities of democratic institutions [Lowndes & Wilson 2001]. The promotion of volunteering activities requires institutional conditions, providing citizens with the opportunities of participation in different associations and organizations [Dekker & Halman 2003]. A well-developed infrastructure, creating conditions for community participation and education for the labor market perspective, is of utmost importance in this regard [Bos 2014].

In 2018, United Nations (UN) Volunteers Program presented their regular report on the state of the world's volunteerism. Every three years UN Volunteers Program publishes the results of the global research aimed at gaining a better understanding of the essence of volunteering. This report shows that volunteering as a universal social behavior is one of the most important resources for sustainable development of local communities in very different countries, and it provides conditions for involving individuals in the system of support on the part of citizens, business, and municipal administration institutions [The website of the UNV programme]. Such collaboration helps to confront risks, economic, social and ecological shocks, and requires an all-round support of public officers on different levels.

UN Volunteers Program formulated the priorities for the development of “volunteering ecosystem”, taking into account the interests of the local communities, the possibilities, decisions and actions of the government and local public officers in different states. Special attention is paid to the importance of economic contribution of the state to the development of volunteerism with due account to the expenditures and benefits for different social groups, organizations and establishments in order to confront the increasing social inequality. The key stakeholders in this concept are the citizens, as potential and actual volunteers, and the organizations of the third sector, which protect their interests and interact with public officers. The aims of investing in volunteerism and supporting it by the government should be in line with the strategies, priorities and plans of development of specific territories. It is highlighted in the document that the implementation of these ideas requires the development of volunteering infrastructure [State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2018]. Theorists and practitioners managed to elaborate this notion. For UNV, volunteering infrastructure is defined as: an enabling environment, operational structures and implementation capacities to promote volunteerism, mobilize volunteers and support them in their work. The enabling environment includes the body of policies and laws that protect volunteers and provide incentives for volunteer action. Operational structures include schemes through which volunteers are mobilized, deployed and supported. Implementation capacities include functional and technical resources of

volunteer organizations to adapt to changing circumstances, function at high standards of efficiency and achieve results [Grandi et al. 2018]. Three key elements converge to make this definition operational: enabling environment, operational structures and implementation capacities.

Significant results have been achieved in different countries in terms of the first key element. 117 countries have existing or draft policies or legislation specific or generally relevant to volunteering to May 2018. Determined efforts for legalization and development of the volunteering policy have been made almost in all Eastern European countries [Krakowiak & Pawłowski 2018]. Dynamic actions are taken for the promotion of the second key element, namely the development of the volunteer-involving organizations and agencies that support volunteering. It also includes networks and coordinating bodies such as volunteer centers, umbrella organizations, and related networks.

For instance, since 1998 the program aimed at the organization of the international exchange of student volunteers has been carried out in the EU with the support of UN; it contributed to the formation of the network of resource centers on the basis of universities in the Eastern Europe. During the International Volunteers Year (2001) large-scale national projects were implemented by the centers, aimed mainly at the development of volunteering in the cities and countries. In Russia, the public policy aimed at supporting volunteerism was officially announced by the President of the Russian Federation on the threshold of the Olympic Games in Sochi (2014). The regulatory framework was developed swiftly; the processes of establishing resource centers all over the country were launched.

Thus, these processes led to the reformation of the public sector in Russia and the redistribution of the state responsibility for solving social problems. The effectiveness of the implemented managerial solutions largely depends on the position of the principal stakeholders in the Russian regions, who should get the real benefit from the volunteering infrastructure developed at the initiative of public officers on the level of municipal administration.

The aim of this article is to give a critical assessment to the development of volunteering infrastructure in the Russian regions at the initiative of public officers through the analysis of opinions of Russian volunteers, leaders of the nonprofit sector and the heads of the newly established resource volunteer centers.

To accomplish the research aim, the authors used source literature in English, Polish and Russian devoted to volunteering (Emerald and EBSCO). A survey conducted in Russia was also carried out.

Following the introduction, this paper includes a brief analysis of the volunteering development and organizations supporting it. Then the research sample and the method adopted are described. Finally, the research results and conclusion are presented.

1. STUDY OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOLUNTEERING AND THE FUNCTIONING OF VOLUNTEER-INVOLVING ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES THAT SUPPORT VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer management is typically considered by researchers at two levels – institutional and organizational [Smith et al. 2016]. The literature presents studies where the problems of inter-sectorial interaction and the functioning of specific organizations of the nonprofit sector that attract volunteers are studied. However, in

the framework of this article, scientific works on the problems of institutional regulation of volunteering are of particular interest. The institutional regulation of volunteering, from our point of view, can be indirect and direct. By indirect institutional regulation we mean the creation of favorable socio-economic and political conditions for the development of volunteerism and the activation of its potential. Researchers note that the prevalence of formal volunteering in this or that country is positively influenced by higher GDP per capita [Schofer & Longhofer 2011; Stadelmann-Steffen 2011], developed democratic institutions [Smith & Shen 2002; Zhou 2012], high government spending on social security per capita [Hackl et al. 2012; van Ingen & van der Meer 2011]. Institutional factors contributing to the spread and development of volunteer organizations are widely studied, including gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, average level of formal education, extent of civil liberties, government expenditures per capita, prevalence of association-support infrastructure organizations, and experience with democracy [Schofer & Longhofer 2011].

A favorable institutional environment for volunteer activities requires specific measures on the part of state and municipal authorities to activate the volunteer movement, which may include: the development of laws and regulations aimed at protecting the interests of volunteers and regulating relations between volunteers and non-profit organizations [Nale et al. 2016]. Researchers include such government decisions as developed state programs for the development and support of volunteers, the promotion of volunteering, etc. The implementation of such programs requires an organizational infrastructure, which should, and is able to implement these programs. According to Koen P.R. Bartels, Guido Cozzi and Noemi Mantovan, governments and voluntary organizations should cultivate local abilities and volunteering infrastructure based on collaborative relationships [Bartels et al. 2013]. Researchers suggest the following concept of the volunteering infrastructure for organizations that provide infrastructure to promote, stimulate, and develop volunteering in general:

- volunteer support: contacting or matching individuals who want to volunteer with organizations that need volunteer effort.
- management support: consulting and supporting volunteer involving organizations, how to make their activities more attractive and inviting for prospective volunteers.
- community support: bringing about the conditions and supporting initiatives that enhance (new forms of) volunteer effort or citizen involvement within the community in a general sense [Bos 2014].

National governments can usually promote greater voluntary association prevalence by funding a variety of decentralized infrastructure-support organizations to help associations get founded and grow strong (e.g., research centers at universities, training centers, certificate and degree programs at universities, and free or low-cost consulting centers) [Smith et al. 2016]. National governments can develop and promote the differences in governmental implementation strategies of volunteer centers [Lorentzen & Henriksen 2014].

By infrastructure organization (support organization) the researchers of the nonprofit sector mean an organization «that has the primary purpose of assisting, supporting, or facilitating other nonprofit groups, volunteer programs, volunteering, civic participation, and related nonprofit sector activities by individuals or groups» [Smith et al. 2016: 1398]. There are Volunteer Centers throughout Canada and Great Britain

which also benefit from a network of “Volunteer Bureaux” coordinated by The Volunteer Centre in Great Britain. Similar clearinghouses can be found in other European countries, though not as diversified in their services as in England, Canada, or the United States. Network organizations of volunteer centers in the USA have the longest history. Still, despite more than 50 years of history, the concept of Volunteer Centers (or other types of nonprofit infrastructure organizations) has yet to receive support in many communities [Ellis 1989; Prentice & Brudney 2018].

Developing the ecosystem for sustainable volunteering in the countries with a weak third sector, requires government resources and government efforts, as well as a planned consistent policy aimed at promoting volunteering, infrastructure development and system support for the third sector [State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2018, Schmidt 2016]. Researchers note that in Russia the third sector faces significant limitations [Mersianova & Benevolenski 2017]. The NPOs lack professionals, volunteer management is not well-developed; besides, before the active state campaign aimed at promoting volunteering on the eve of the presidential elections, the prevalence of volunteering among the population was limited.

Some works are devoted to the study of the activities of specific infrastructure organizations designed to unite the interests of all stakeholders to protect the third sector, study it and improve its functioning [Young 2010]. The activity of large national umbrella organizations created to support and develop volunteerism in different countries is analyzed [Lorentzen & Henriksen 2014]. For example, in Japan, the government finances volunteer centers throughout the country that are responsible for the promotion, registration and management of volunteer activities [Avenell 2010].

A significant number of studies are devoted to the analysis of volunteer management issues at the level of specific organizations; the authors formulate basic steps for successful volunteer management [Hager 2004; Hager & Brudney 2004]. However, despite the fact that volunteer resource centers are considered as one of the most effective areas of Volunteer Resources Management, there are not so many works that analyze the tasks of volunteer resource centers in the sustainable development of local communities. Their relevance on the part of potential and actual volunteers, the ability to integrate the efforts of officials and employees of NPOs, and the potential for the development of interaction between the state and the third sector are not evaluated.

2. DATA AND METHODS

The studies have covered the specific range of innovative changes under the conditions, created for the activities of Russian volunteers, the achievements and challenges in the implementation of the state policy in this direction. The documents and the data of the governmental information resources were also used. The results of the analysis of documents have been supported by two questionnaire studies of Russian volunteers and experts (held in September-December of 2018).

The first study is the survey carried out in December 2018 among Russian citizens having the experience of volunteering. It characterizes the organized volunteer movement in different subjects of the Russian Federation, the assessments of the key aspects of organization of volunteer activities in different subjects of the Russian Federation from the viewpoint of the members of the volunteer community. The sampling included Russian citizens from 14 to 60 years old who had the experience

of volunteer activities, organized by nonprofit organizations, involved in the projects carried out by universities and secondary specialized colleges in the region, centers and institutions functioning within the frames of municipal administrations, leisure and social organizations of all subjects of the Russian Federation (N = 830, quota sampling). The sampling was based upon three characteristics: gender, age and the share of volunteers in the structure of the population of each federal district [Mersiyanova 2018]. 44% of the participants were male, and 56% female. The sampling included 14% of respondents with secondary general education, 23% of respondents with college diplomas, 22% of respondents with incomplete higher education, and 41% of respondents with higher education. In terms of the territory of residence, 16% of respondents came from the cities with the population of more than 1 million people, 57% of respondents from the cities with the population from 250 thousand to 1 million people, 16% from the Russian cities with the population from 250 to 50 thousand people, and 11% from the towns with the population of less than 50 thousand people.

The second study was a semi-formalized survey of experts organizing volunteer projects in various subjects of the Russian Federation in social, educational institutions and regional NPOs, as well as the heads of regional volunteer resource centers (N = 121, type of sample – target). The study allowed to evaluate the development of resource regional volunteer centers. Among experts, 72% were women, 28% men; 82% had higher education, 12% incomplete higher education, 3% had a diploma of secondary special education, 3% general secondary. 11% of experts had experience in the organization, which they were representing, of over 15 years, 8% from 10 to 15 years, 15% from 5 to 10 years, 66% less than 5 years. 48% of experts represented the organizations, where volunteer activities were among their duties, 33% worked in educational institutions as teaching staff members, 14% were the specialists in other institutions, 5% occupied other positions. 41 experts were the heads of the regional resource volunteer centers.

Since relatively few time has passed since the establishment of the resource centers as infrastructural organizations, empirical studies measured the following variables: “awareness of stakeholders about the established resource centers”, “assessment of the effectiveness of the resource centers at the first stage”, “expectations of stakeholders from the functioning of the established regional resource volunteer centers. ”

3. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

3.1. Infrastructure of the volunteering development in Russia

Prior to the Universiade in Kazan in 2013, there was practically no infrastructure for the development of volunteering in Russia. Resource centers and the training of volunteer organizers only got their start due to the 2014 Sochi Olympics [Gorlova 2016]. Over the past five years, the volunteer movement has been rapidly developing in Russia. Volunteer initiatives of citizens are increasingly becoming the subject of public attention. 2018 was declared the Year of the Volunteer by the President of Russia. In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in the institutionalization of volunteering management in Russia. The state-sponsored organizational infrastructure of volunteering is quite positively assessed by both officials and all interested parties.

In accordance with the methodology of the UN Volunteers Program within the first direction of the development of volunteering infrastructure in Russia, the first steps have been already taken for the creation of the body of policies and laws that provide incentives for volunteer action. In 2016, the federal expert council for the development of volunteering started to operate; later it was transformed into the Coordinating Council under the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation. Under the authority of the President of the Russian Federation, an action plan for the development of the volunteer movement [Action Plan 2019] was developed. In November 2018, amendments were made to federal law No. 135-ФЗ “On charitable activities and charitable organizations”, which determined the status of volunteer organizations, organizers of volunteer activities and volunteers, enshrined the requirements that such organizations and individuals must comply with. The Agency for Strategic Initiatives presented the strategic initiative “Development of Volunteering in the Regions”, the result of which was the development of a standard of state support for volunteering in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation [Standard of Volunteer Support 2017].

As for the second direction of the development of the infrastructure for volunteering (development of volunteer-involving organizations and agencies that support volunteering), active measures are taken to develop the network of resource volunteer centers. Since 2014, in the implementation of state policy in the field of volunteering support, a targeted strengthening of the infrastructure has been formed, contributing to an increase in the number of volunteer organizations, social projects and civic initiatives. To date, the infrastructure of the volunteer movement is represented by numerous volunteer centers that operate on the basis of educational organizations, specialized state and municipal budget organizations, as well as non-profit organizations in various organizational and legal forms, for which volunteering is a leading or one of the leading activities. In Russia today, there are more than 20,000 organizations like this [Rostovskaia & Kozak 2019].

In accordance with the Minutes of the meeting of the Organizing Committee of the Year of the Volunteer in the Russian Federation of February 21, 2018 No. 1, an order was formulated to envisage the development and approval of regional programs (subprograms, plans) for support and development of volunteering, which include activities to form the infrastructure for supporting volunteering in the subjects of the Russian Federation (resource centers for the support of volunteering). The largest volunteer organization in Russia, the “Volunteer Centers Association” [Volunteer Centers Association 03/18/2019] implements the federal program “Resource Volunteer Centers”. Under the resource volunteer center (RVC), the program refers to a professional organization that provides a range of organizational, consulting, and methodological services to organizations and citizens in the field of volunteering in accordance with the objectives of the socio-economic development of the subject and in order to increase socially useful employment and the population and the effective use of volunteer resources [Federal program Volunteer 10/07/2019].

The goal of the program is to develop the infrastructure for supporting volunteering in the regions of Russia, increasing the level of competence of managers and members of teams of resource centers, supporting each volunteer resource center on an individual development path, taking into account the specifics and socio-economic priorities of a particular region [Federal program Volunteer 10/07/2019]. Within the framework of the program under consideration, methodological support and certification of resource centers, training of teams, implementation of federal

programs and effective social practices at the regional level are provided. A network of volunteer resource centers that are part of the Volunteer Centers Association is formed in all subjects of the Russian Federation.

The roadmap of the program “Resource Volunteer Centers” for 2018-2019 provides for the establishment of the resource volunteer centers on the basis of an already existing or newly established nonprofit organization, or a partnership of a nonprofit organization and an educational institution. Within the frames of the Program it is planned to unite resource volunteer centers in a single network within the sphere of the Volunteer Centers Association, which will help to build effective horizontal ties, carry out the exchange of experience, and consolidate the efforts of the volunteers’ community aimed at improving the volunteer movement infrastructure.

At the end of 2018, within the framework of the federal program, 30 resource volunteering centers were already operating in Russia, of which 13 were created in the organizational and legal form of state (budget) institutions, 11 in the form of nonprofit organizations, 2 centers were created on the basis of educational organizations, 4 centers unite several legal forms. In 50 other subjects of the Russian Federation, centers are in the process of active formation.

3.2. Activities of regional volunteer centers in the assessment of volunteers

When measuring the awareness of stakeholders about the established resource centers, we asked the respondents the question: “Has a resource center for volunteering support been created in your region?” 53% of the volunteers surveyed answered in the affirmative, 19% negatively, and 28% found it difficult to answer. 69% of volunteers surveyed in the Central Federal District are aware of the existence of a volunteer resource center in their region. 62% of respondents in the Ural Federal District, 59% in the Far East, 58% in the North Caucasus and 54% in the Northwest Federal District know about the availability of a resource center. In other districts (3 of 8), less than half of the volunteers are aware of the existence of a volunteer resource center, while in the Southern Federal District 36% said that there is no volunteer resource center in their region.

To assess the effectiveness of the volunteer resource centers at the first stage, respondents who knew about their creation and functioning were asked: “If a resource center operates in your region, please rate it on a 5-point scale for the effectiveness of its activities for the development of volunteering.” The following distribution of grades was obtained – more than half of the respondents (54%) rate the work of the center at “5”, and 33% at “4”. The assessment of the activity of the resource center does not depend on the federal district where the respondents live, how often they engage in volunteer work, which organizations they help, and whether they consider themselves to be volunteers or not. The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents also do not affect the assessment of volunteer resource centers – most respondents are unanimous in their appreciation of their work. According to respondents familiar with the activities of volunteer resource centers, these organizations are best able to identify the problems and needs of volunteers (61%), organize interaction between volunteer organizations and officials (57%), and popularize volunteerism in the regions (52%).

3.3. Assessment of the development of regional resource volunteer centers by the organizers of volunteer activities in different subjects of the Russian Federation

When measuring the awareness of stakeholders about the established resource centers, we asked the experts – organizers of volunteer projects in social, educational institutions and local NPOs the question: “Has a volunteer resource center been established in your region?”. 58% of the experts noted that a volunteer resource center was established in their region; 41% of respondents cooperate with the center, and 16% do not interact with it in any way. Experts, in whose region of residence the resource center of volunteering was established, evaluated both the effectiveness of its activities in general and in terms of some specific areas.

To assess the effectiveness of the volunteer resource centers at the first stage, experts who knew about their creation and functioning were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of their activities for the development of volunteering on a 5-point scale. In general, the efficiency level of volunteer resource centers was 3.9 out of 5 points (average score, N = 46). 30% of respondents rated the work of volunteer resource centers at 3 points out of 5. Expert estimates do not depend on the type of organization, the size of the settlement, the federal district, and other parameters due to the small sampling.

Probably the reason for such assessments is the contradiction between the way resource volunteer centers (in the person of their leaders) evaluate their work and the way their activities are characterized by representatives of volunteer organizations who should interact with these volunteer resource centers. We asked the experts – organizers of volunteer projects and heads of volunteer resource centers – to evaluate the effectiveness of the tasks that resource centers perform in the region.

Most of the experts believe that volunteer resource centers, generally, effectively organize the interaction between volunteers, volunteer organizations and officials. This view is shared by 57% of the organizers of volunteer projects and 73% of the leaders of the volunteer resource centers. The task which comes second is the popularization of the volunteer movement in the region. 57% of the organizers of volunteer projects and 83% of the heads of volunteer resource centers suppose that this task is solved efficiently. In assessing these two points, both the organizers of volunteer projects in institutions and local NPOs, and the leaders of volunteer resource centers were relatively unanimous.

At the same time, significant differences in evaluating the performance of volunteer resource centers by their leaders and the organizers of volunteer projects persist in many areas. The biggest gap is related to the aspects of evaluating the information support for the activities of volunteer organizations in the region and identifying the problems and needs of volunteers. Volunteer resource centers in the person of leaders give high marks to their work, but probably do not fully meet the expectations of colleagues: volunteer project organizers and representatives of volunteer organizations expect more activity from volunteer resource centers in the direction of interaction with local non-profit organizations.

To assess the expectations of stakeholders from the functioning of the established regional volunteer resource centers, the experts were asked an open question: "How exactly can a regional volunteer resource center help your organization?"

Despite the gap in evaluating the effectiveness of volunteer resource centers, the organizers of volunteer projects and local NPOs need their support. 29% of

respondents believe that the creation of a resource center in the region would contribute to the development of volunteerism. A volunteer resource center can help organizations to inform and coach their staff. Its task is to carry out coordination activities, ensure interaction with all volunteer organizations in the region, local NPOs, with officials, volunteers, etc., to act as a mediator in the negotiations. Respondents note the importance of the educational and methodological function of volunteer resource centers, their assistance in attracting volunteers, and the popularization of volunteer activities in mass media (Table 1).

Table 1. How can a resource center help to volunteer organizations (N=74), results of processing the answers to the open question*

Variants of support a resource center can offer to volunteer organizations	Frequency	%
Information support and consultancy	16	22
Coordination activities, ensuring interaction with all local nonprofit organizations of the regions, public offices, volunteers etc.	15	20
All-round support and contributing to the development of organizations (general comments)	13	18
Methodological support and training of volunteers	12	16
Volunteers database, help in engaging volunteers	6	8
Promotion of volunteering initiatives, providing assistance in getting media and social media coverage and information distribution	6	8
Financial aid, finding facilities	5	7
Protection of the interests of the organization	1	1
Nothing specific	3	4
Not sure	4	5
Total	81	109

* total amount of % is more than 100%, as some of the respondents gave more than one answer.

Source: own study, 2018.

Organizers of volunteer projects in social and educational institutions and local nonprofit organizations need support in fundraising (consultancy in preparing grant applications and projects, cost estimating and reporting), they consider resource volunteer center as a source of well-qualified consultancy and a platform for exchanging experience (“such centers could organize duly the work with all famous volunteer centers”, “they could work on solving the problems arising in the volunteer activity in the region. Also, by exchanging experience with other resource centers you can increase your level”).

Organizers of volunteer projects also consider resource volunteer centers as the source of:

- Financial support (fundraising and grants);

- Providing facilities for organizations (co-workings, event venues);
- Information support and promotion of events in mass media;
- Developing a database of volunteers and providing support in finding volunteers for projects;
- Protection of interests of the organization and NPOs.

At the same time, the resource centers themselves face the same problems: lack of funds, lack of qualified personnel, low level of activity of population and the necessity to recruit more volunteers, lack of methodological regulations, necessity to train staff, lack of facilities.

Resource volunteer centers feel the need in the organization of effective interaction with local NPOs and regional authorities – they do not have enough support to start a constructive dialogue. Some heads of the newly established resource centers pay attention to the regional specificity of work – territorial remoteness of some locations, limited navigation during the winter period which presents difficulties for the organization of the large-scale events in the region. It should be note that the heads of such center are generally more oriented at the large-scale volunteer actions and events, included in the regional plans of supporting volunteering and financed from the regional budget in a target manner.

Summarizing, the most high-demand areas of work of regional volunteer resource centers — the forms of support for volunteer organizations, volunteer organizers, and volunteers (Table 2) is the training of volunteers (68% consider it important), in the second place – the coordination of the third sector in the region, the organization of interaction between volunteers, local non-profit organizations and officials (49%), information support for volunteer projects (49%). The direction which comes third is the provision of facilities to volunteer groups.

Table 2. The most high-demand forms of support for the volunteer organizations, volunteer organizers and the volunteers in the region*

High-demand forms of support	Frequency	%
Training of volunteers (including the development of methodological materials)	28	68
Organization of interaction between volunteers, nonprofit organizations and public officers	20	49
Information support of volunteer organizations and projects	20	49
Providing a co-working / venue for volunteer activities	19	46
Providing financial support to volunteer associations and projects on a competitive basis	17	42
Providing consultancy (legal, grant, accounting, etc.) and other services aimed at solving the problems of volunteers	14	34
Other	118	288

* total amount of % is more than 100%, as some of the respondents gave more than one answer.

Source: own study, 2018.

It should be noted that these directions are relevant both from the viewpoint of the organizers of volunteer projects in social and educational institutions and local nonprofit organizations, and of the heads of volunteer resource centers; there are no significant differences between them. Thus, the effectiveness of operation of the volunteer resource centers largely depend on how they are going to develop the areas, being in demand of all volunteer organizations and local nonprofit organizations in general.

CONCLUSIONS

The article indicates a contradiction in the assessments of the activities of volunteer resource centers by their leaders and organizers of volunteer projects in social, educational institutions and local NPOs in terms of the information support and the focus on coordinating the activity of all volunteer organizations on the part of the established volunteer resource centers in Russian regions.

Volunteer resource centers represented by their leaders give high assessments of their work, however, they do not quite meet the expectations of colleagues from the non-profit sector in relation to the orientation towards regional politics – the indicators set by officials reflecting government assistance to volunteering. The creation of a national umbrella organization is a management decision successfully implemented in such countries as Denmark. On the one hand, such model of organizational infrastructure formation is based on centralized trends. In case of lack of competencies among the organizers and employees of the regional volunteer resource centers, local programs and teaching materials, with due account to the problems that were highlighted in this article, such solution is feasible. However, it increases the risks of the integration ability of regional volunteer resource centers, as it does not take into account the broader acceptance of local welfare variations. Independent legal form in which local associations are members may have helped Danish centers bring about a sense of local ownership. In Norway, volunteer centers had weak ties to other local voluntary associations and were at times perceived as a threat to them [Lorentzen & Henriksen 2014].

Representatives of volunteer organizations and organizers of volunteer projects expect that the resource volunteer centers would focus on the needs of volunteer and nonprofit organizations rather than on the expectations of the officials. Orientation of the regional resource volunteer centers on the collaboration with local nonprofit organizations may strengthen the nonprofit sector. Only in this case it is possible to expect some real growth of volunteerism in the country, just as it happened in Poland, where the civil society organizations have played a central role in this process [Ekiert et al. 2017]. It is also important to note that such effect of volunteering.

It is also important to note that such effect of volunteer engagement in a former communist country was achieved, inter alia, due to the engagement of volunteer not only in traditional social work with poor and undereducated population, but as well to social work related to leisure activities (sport, tourism, hobby), having a positive effect on the life of society and external environment [Brenk 2016; Metelski 2018]. In this case, satisfying the needs of local nonprofit organizations in terms of the training of volunteers, information and consulting support on the part of the regional resource volunteer centers may guarantee the variability of the forms of social work, having a positive impact, in the local nonprofit organizations, and thus to attract more volunteers.

At the same time, the problems which resource volunteer centers as the organizations of the third sector face are, to a large extent, the same that all other nonprofit organizations face. Polish researchers identify the remaining vulnerabilities that continue to plague Polish nonprofit organizations as a consequence of its reliance on short-term contracts, limited access to public procurement procedures, and a general pull-back of the state from the provision of human services [Nale et al. 2016].

The state strategy of developing the volunteer infrastructure “from the top down”, implemented in the majority of former communist countries, leads to the similar problems, related to the dependence of resource volunteer centers on the financial and information support of the state, and their bind to the economically developed territories of the country. Thus, in Romania the majority of nonprofit organizations and volunteers in the age from 14 to 25 are located in the economically developed regions, being most attractive for human resources. In such regions usually volunteer resource centers and national umbrella organizations are developed. During the last five years a number of umbrella national organizations have carried out large-scale volunteer actions “Days of waste collection” or “Trees planting campaigns”. These national initiatives were widely covered by the mass media across the country and gain huge popularity. Still, such mobilization campaigns represent only a one-time volunteering activity, which cannot have an actual impact on the local community and its development [Dragan & Popa 2017].

As the practice of using direct democracy instruments in European Union countries [Musiał-Karg 2016], the development of volunteer infrastructure for the countries of Eastern Europe is effective for EU integration, EU development and overcoming the crisis. Such solutions have both prospects and risks.

Despite the problem points presented in the conclusions of our study and the highlighted discussion issues, further development of the organizational infrastructure of volunteering in Russia is an objective reality. From the position of key stakeholders, namely real Russian volunteers, the activities of these organizations are in demand in the regions, and the population's expectations from their development are positive. Thus, further studies of this problem can be developed in two directions. First, as part of a comparative study in the former communist countries, it is important to evaluate and describe the nature of the interaction between hybrid national organizations and local nonprofit organizations in search of an answer to the question: does the activity of such organizations create a culture of volunteer participation, solidarity and trust in local communities? Secondly, within the framework of the Russian case study, it is important to study the organizational development of the umbrella network of regional volunteer resource centers and their impact on volunteer participation in regional organizations of the third sector, answering the question: did the expectations of the population and leaders of local nonprofit organizations from the established volunteering infrastructure come true?

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