



Vitalize Volunteer Work

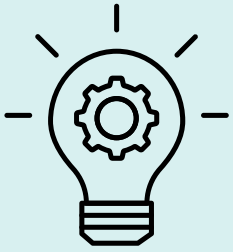
Conference #1 in Finland



www.vitalizevolunteerwork.eu



Co-funded by
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Vitalize Volunteer Work

Volunteering is at the heart of social life in rural areas. However, fewer and fewer people are taking on voluntary roles.



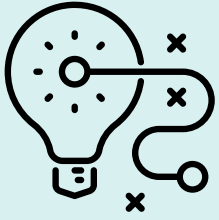
Reasons for this include work pressures, a lack of successors and the integration of young people. This development affects many European villages and jeopardises the cohesion and resilience of rural regions.

The Vitalise Volunteer Work project aims to renew voluntary work. It pools expertise from Austria, Croatia, Finland and Germany, exchanging best practices and developing innovative solutions for the future of volunteering.

As part of an international Project involving eleven LEADER regions from four European countries, we will be holding conferences in Finland, Croatia and Germany from 2025 to 2027, each attended by around 70 committed volunteers from all four countries. In addition to exciting workshops and discussions on current challenges and solutions in volunteer work, the conferences will offer excursions to successful local projects – for Inspiration and practical insights.

The conferences provide new impetus for participants' own work, promote international networking and exchange, and help to strengthen the resilience of rural communities.





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Welcome to Finland!



We are happy to host you in the south-western coast of Finland! You will be staying in Uusikaupunki, which means 'New Town'. It was new in 1617 when the Swedish king Gustaf II Adolf founded it. Finland was a part of Sweden from the 12th Century until 1809. Uusikaupunki is the 12th oldest town in Finland.

Uusikaupunki is located by the sea and has been an important ship building and import-export town. Today many locals own boats and there is a marina and a guest harbour in the centre of town, on the city bay. Your hotels are located next to the sea. The town burned down partially 7 times, before adopting a fire safe town plan, with green fire alleys between houses. The old town with its wooden houses dates back to after the last two fires in 1846 and 1855. The oldest building in town is the old church from 1627 close to the bay. The new church next to the market square dates back to 1863.

Uusikaupunki is most famous from the peace agreement between Russia and Sweden in 1721 that was organized in Uusikaupunki market square and is called the Uusikaupunki Peace. Before that Russia had occupied Finland for 8 years. During the excursions you will get to know the surrounding countryside and towns. The area is called Vakka-Suomi, which comes from a long history of manufacturing and exporting wooden artifacts (vakka is a type of wooden container).

We will take a deep dive into the motivations of volunteers in Germany, Austria, Croatia and Finland today. Our keynote speaker Hazel Salminen, from the Finland Futures Research Center will get us thinking about the future of volunteering and you will work with other volunteers in workshops. Our excursions will show you inspiring examples of volunteering in the area. Local food, culture and winter weather will hopefully make your visit unforgettable!

LEADER

Ravakka





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Conference program

Thursday 29.01.2026

The main day of the conference includes lots of input and joint work in workshops. Everything takes place at 'Monitoimijatalo Wintteri', a new multifunctional building with lots of facilities for sporting, social and cultural activities for all age groups, a kindergarden, elementary school and high school.

Time	Program Item
08:30–09:00	Arrival & meet and greet
09:00–09:15	Official welcome & opening
09:15–09:45	Audience interaction
09:45–09:50	Volunteer film clip: motivations and challenges
09:50–10:20	Volunteering in Finland & partner countries
10:20–11:00	Keynote: Possible futures of volunteering <i>Hazel Salminen, Finland Futures Research Center</i>
11:00–11:15	Coffee break
11:15–12:45	Best practice examples from Ravakka
12:45–13:45	Joint lunch at Wintteri restaurant
13:45–14:00	Workshop introduction
14:00–16:45	Parallel workshops
16:45–17:30	Workshop results presentation
17:30	End of conference day
19:30	Joint dinner at Brasserie Golf <i>(Transport form Hotel Aittaranta or 1 km walk)</i>

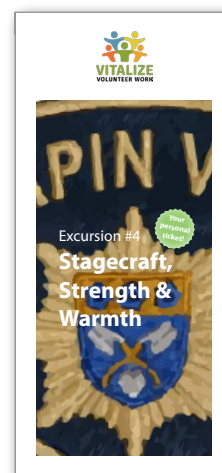
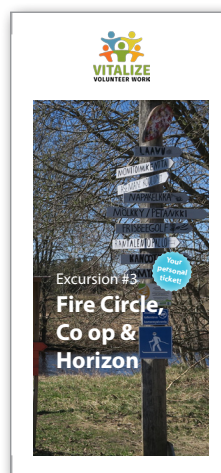
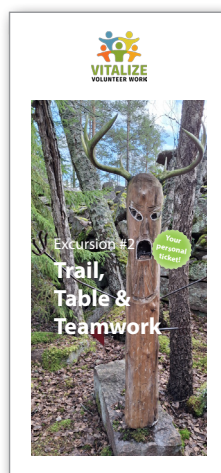
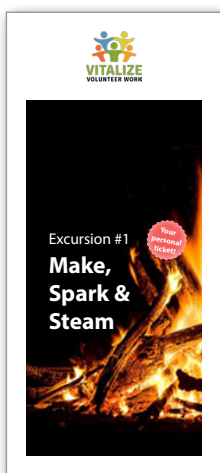
Please notice

The schedule looks very strict and fixed. This is not the case, as the conference focuses on the participants and their interests. It is therefore possible that program items or times may change. **If this happens, it is not a bug, but a feature!**

Friday 30.01.2026

There are many good examples of volunteer projects in the Ravakka region. On Friday, there will be four different excursions to visit them. The excursions are planned as 'blind date tours': participants do not know exactly where they are going, but it will definitely be exciting and inspiring! In the evening, there will be a joint dinner with a cultural programme.

Time	Program Item
09:00	Meeting for the excursion program (Parking Aquarius Hotel)
09:30–17:00	Excursion program Four different excursions will take you to places that are involved in various aspects of voluntary work. The organisers have selected in advance who will take part in which excursion. You will find some information on your personal ticket. But it won't give too much away, because it's supposed to be a surprise for everyone! A bit unexpected and unfamiliar? Yes, please!
17:00–18:15	Free time
18:15	Bus leaves for evening venue Pyhämaa Youth Hall (Parking Aquarius Hotel)
19:00	Evening program Reception, Joint dinner, Evaluation, Theme of the next conference, Cultural program



Excursion tickets



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Locations





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People from four countries are taking part in the conference. They are involved in voluntary work in different ways.

Participants

Please note: The information about each individual was obtained from the detailed information they provided when registering. It is possible that some details may be incorrect or missing. If this is the case, we ask for your understanding! Furthermore, everything can be clarified or supplemented in a personal conversation. So take the opportunity to get to know each other!

... from Austria



Thomas Brandtner

Civic participation, creative work, ideas and innovation for society



Raffael Fischl

Professional connection to voluntary work



Melanie Hutter

Pillerseetal/Leukental Volunteer Center, supporting volunteer work in social, intergenerational, integration-related and public welfare fields



Michaela Kasper-Furtner

Volunteer coordinator at 'Freiwilligenzentrum Kitzbüheler Alpen'



Claudia Radford-Grießer

Working at a second-hand shop run by the Red Cross; Working with residents in a retirement home and with Ukrainian women



Theresa Ritzer

Involvement in the 'Jungbauernschaft' (young farmers association) and 'Landjugend' (rural youth) as essential part of the social environment



Claudia Schröder

Active participation in Nature Conservation



Carmen Schwinghammer

LEADER regional manager; Head of regional volunteer center that matches volunteers with organizations, provides advice and services and carries out own projects



Andrea Silberberger

Member of the traditional brass band 'Bundesmusikkapelle Auf-fach' that actively shapes village life with events and activities



Johannes Wiechenthaler

Working with international volunteers within the framework of the European Solidarity Corps (ESC)



... from Croatia



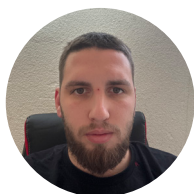
Natalija Brala

Support of educational, creative and social activities for children and young people; Organization, coordination and implementation of local cultural events



Marina Lučić

Organizing training sessions with professional coaches for women in the local community; Organizing children's workshops



Antonio Maričić

Logistics of local events e. g. structural safety, event layout and setup of audio-visual equipment; Expert in 'hands-on problem-solving'



Marta Pintur Bosna

Association for Rural Development 'Ravni Kotari' – Improving the quality of life in rural communities



Josip Šare

Deputy Manager of Local Action Group Bura; Volunteering as a manager of an archery club



Maja Zdunić

Volunteering in local events, education and mentoring



Vladimir Dedić

President of LAG Bura; Rural development and improvement of living conditions in the countryside



Ana Mamić

Manager of LAG Bura; Volunteering as a Deputy Manager for 'Caritas' and as a member of Steering Committee Youth in LEADER by ELARD



Ante Miletić

Volunteer in organization cultural and sport manifestations; President of Fisheries local action group (FLAG) 'Three seas'



Marko Rončević

Volunteer firefighter; Volunteering in local events and environmental and ecological actions organized in the municipality



Franjo Špalj

Involved in search and rescue operations with the Croatian Mountain Rescue Service (HGSS); Chief Nature Warden in Paklenica National Park



Petra Zubčić

Active member of cultural Artistic Society 'Luzarica'; Leading and training new members and children; Helping in organising cultural events and activities



... from Finland



Tiina Hero
Project Manager Ravakka region



Heidi Jaakkola
LEADER regional manager



Ulla Kallio
Project expert; Former LEADER regional manager



Antti Karlin
Volunteering at nature and environmental associations; Interested in genealogy, heritage and traditional culture



Tuula-Riitta Karlin
Volunteering in local associations in culture, heritage and outdoor activity; Voluntary search and rescue; Working with elderly people; Secretary of 'Pohjola-Norden' (Nordic collaboration)



Jaana Malmberg
Project manager Ukipolis



Noora Mantere
Project expert



Marjaana Naatula-Kauppila
Active member of a village association, projects e. g. construction of a versatile outdoor area and a music festival



Sari Salonen
Former active member of a voluntary fire brigade; Active member of a village association



Sandesh Tamang
Ambassador for 'International House Rauma' (helps people from abroad to settle into life in the region); Helps with organizing events in the town



Soile Vahela
Project manager Ukipolis

... from Germany (1)



David Bathe

Chairman of a regional sports club; Active member of a music association; Involved in local politics



Claudia Belke

Volunteer, managing director and staff member in environmental education and youth work



Michael Bünner

LEADER regional manager; Volunteer work e. g. for the artist collective '3000GRAD Musik & Kultur e. V.'



Izabela Czarnojan

rePACKtheBAG
Moderation of the conference



Winfried Dickel

Chairman of the Brilon Heritage Association, of the Board of Trustees of the Brilon Citizens' Foundation and of the 'Brilon Eisenberg and Trades Foundation' – Town Museum Brilon



Ursula Eichert

Board member of an arts and culture association



Franziska Marie Eick

LEADER regional manager



Britta Ewert



Maria Theresia Gerwin

2nd Chairperson of a LEADER-Region; Volunteer coach; Board member of several associations



Thomas Glade

1st Chairman of the 'Oldtimer Friends Hallenberg e. V.'



Kerstin Glade

Head of Social Media and Digital Communication of the 'Oldtimer Friends Hallenberg e. V.'



Nataša Gødde

Treasurer of the 'Association of Supporters of Nova Iguacu' (collecting donations for projects in Brazil); Supporter of a local library

... from Germany (2)



Christoph Hammerschmidt
LAG manager LEADER Region 'Hochsauerland'; Head of the Village Association 'HGV-Deifeld e. V.'; Head of the Cultural Association 'Wir sind Medebach e. V.'



Robert Heite
Local district representative; City council member; Chairperson of a village association; Member of a local music club; Active member of the local church council



Daniel Michael Hofmann
Head of Cultural Association 'Metal Diver e. V.'; Director and Producer of the cultural movie 'EHRENAMT'; Project Management for 'DorfZukunft.online'



Frank Holthaus
LEADER regional manager



Kathrin Hunstig-Bockholt
LEADER regional manager; Organization of a transnational LEADER-project; Volunteering in a sports club; Organization of activities in school



Dr. Christian Bernhard Jung
Local council chairperson for the Villages Rahrbach, Kruberg and Arnoldihof; Voluntarily involved in local groups, associations and initiatives



Hannah Kath
projaegt GmbH
Moderation of the conference



Lukas Koch
Chairman of a regional theatre club



Beate Korn
Chairwoman of a choir; Planning objectives and executing events such as festivals and concerts



Helena Kottowski
LEADER regional manager; Organization of a transnational LEADER-project



Lisa Kregel-Hobein
Chairperson of regional womens club; Active participation in the 'Kinderkirche' (children's church) and in integration projects



Bettina Kreutzmann
Head of the grassroots volunteer initiative 'NaturRanger e. V.' focused on nature conservation

... from Germany (3)



Jan Felix Krogmeier

Responsible for the town twinning arrangements of the municipality of Hövelhof; Active participation in youth work at 'Kolping'



Carina Mönnikes

Volunteer coordinator for the town of Bad Lippspringe; Active member of a sports club



Vincent Romeo Peters

Active member and trainer of a sports club; Experience in youth work with the 'Red Cross'; Organization of youth leisure activities; Support for the local food bank



Andrea Peters-Wiggerich

Chairperson of regional womens club; Active member in various sport clubs



Daniela Petry

Active participation in 'Smily Kids', a self-help group for children and teens from families affected by addiction



Rehana Rühmann

Managing director of the regional garden show 'Gartenschau Bad Lippspringe'



Huberta Sasse

Chairperson of a tourist association; Member of various committees in the community



Hanno Schmidt

Board member responsible for community and recreational sports; Certified sports instructor; Involved with the District Sports Association; Active member of an arts and culture association



Miriam Schulte-Remmert

LEADER regional manager; Member of a choir's board; Member of the board of a village association



Nadja Schürmann

rePACKtheBAG
Moderation of the conference



Melanie Thiele

LEADER regional manager; Member of a school support association



Patricia Vanderlinden

Civic engagement, senior citizens' service office and disability officer of the town of Hilchenbach

... from Germany (4)



Swenja Vollpracht

Children's coach and member of the youth team of the Gymnastics and Sports Club Hilchenbach



Jana Zimmermann

Young Forum of the 'Bertelsmann Foundation'; Volunteer Coordinator of a Sports Club; Volunteer Manager of a State Sports Federation Initiative



Helena Zwebe

Local representative ('Ortsvorsteherin') of Medebach-Referinghausen; Head of the Village Association; Treasurer of the Tourist Association



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General emergency number in Finland:

112

Emergency contacts

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General help and Excursion #4

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Excursion #1

Heidi Jaakkola

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Excursion #2





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Your Task

The 'Vitalize Volunteer Work' project aims to get people talking about volunteer work and to develop joint solutions for making it sustainable for the future. The goal is to compile as many ideas as possible into a **toolbox** at the end of the project. The path to achieving this should not be too narrowly defined, so that there is enough room for the wishes and ideas of the participants.

That is why **your personal involvement is needed**: In order to plan the programme for the rest of the 'Vitalise Volunteer Work' project, possible further topics will be compiled at the end of this conference. All participants will then jointly select which of these topics should be addressed in the two subsequent conferences in Croatia and Germany.

So, whenever you have an idea about which topic should be explored in more depth, make a note of it. To ensure you don't forget anything until the closing event on Friday evening, you can also write down your thoughts here:

