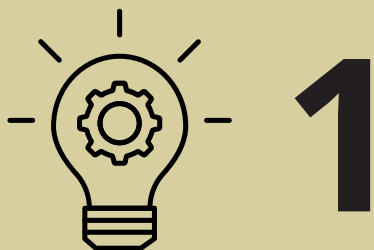


Vitalize Volunteer Work

Conference #2 in Croatia



Photo: Alamy/Myo - Via Adobe Stock



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 increasing work pressures, a lack of successors, and the challenge of motivating young people to get involved. This development affects many villages across Europe and threatens the cohesion and resilience of rural regions.

The 'Vitalise Volunteer Work'-project aims to strengthen and revitalise volunteering for the future. To achieve this, experience and expertise from Austria, Croatia, Finland, and Germany are brought together, best practice examples are exchanged, and innovative solutions for the future of voluntary engagement are developed.

As part of this international project, eleven LEADER regions from four European countries are working together between 2025 and 2027. Conferences are being held in Finland, Croatia, and Germany, with around 70 dedicated volunteers from each of the

four countries participating in each event. In addition to workshops and discussions on current challenges and solutions in volunteering, the programme includes visits to successful local projects. These provide inspiration and practical insights for participants' own work.

The first international conference already took place in Finland at the beginning of 2026. There, participants explored the challenges facing volunteering in a creative way. Through group work, difficulties related to different target groups, such as young people, families, and older adults, as well as structural challenges in volunteering, were addressed and visualised through videos, songs, and other creative formats. However, the focus was not only on analysing problems. During the workshops, participants also developed creative approaches to better engage different target groups, encourage them to become involved in voluntary work, and support their long-term participation.



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1. Introduction

At the second conference in Croatia, participants will move on to developing more concrete and practical strategies. The overall aim of the international cooperation is to create a diverse toolbox of methods, strategies, and ideas by the end of the conference series. This toolbox will help associations, initiatives, projects, and municipalities reach different target groups, recruit volunteers, and retain them over the long term. The results will then be made available to all interested stakeholders as practical support for volunteer engagement and community initiatives. Be surprised!





Conference #2

Welcome to Croatia!

21 and 22 september 2026, Zadar/LEADER Bura

We are delighted to host you in the LEADER area of LAG Bura, in the hinterland of Zadar County on Croatia's northern Dalmatian coast. Our LAG takes its name from the bura – the famous cold north-easterly wind that rushes down from the Velebit mountain to the Adriatic. At the Maslenica bridge in the municipality of Jasenice, some of the strongest

bura gusts in the world have been recorded, at over 200 km/h. Locals will tell you the bura clears the air, dries the finest prosciutto and shapes the people: strong, direct and warm-hearted.

Our area stretches between mountain and sea, gathered around the emerald Novigrad Sea – an



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2. Welcome to Croatia!

enclosed bay that feels more like a fjord than the open Adriatic. On its shores lies medieval Novigrad, a fishing town beneath the Fortica fortress where a Hungarian-Croatian queen was once imprisoned, and today famous for its shellfish. In neighbouring Posedarje, the bura wind cures the celebrated Posedarje pršut (prosciutto) – a taste you will not forget. Along the open coast, Ražanac guards its 16th-century tower built against Ottoman raids, while Vrsi offers sandy beaches, olive groves and the island sanctuary of Zečevo, a centuries-old pilgrimage site. Inland, Poličnik represents the agricultural heart of the Zadar hinterland, with olive oil and vineyards at the centre of village life.

To the north and east, the landscape turns dramatic. Starigrad-Paklenica sits at the entrance to Paklenica National Park, part of the UNESCO-lis-

ted Velebit biosphere reserve and one of Europe's great climbing and hiking destinations, dotted with mirila – mysterious stone memorials unique to this region. And in Obrovac, the river Zrmanja has carved a spectacular canyon so cinematic that the classic Winnetou westerns were filmed here.

This is a region where communities are small and volunteering is a way of life – from volunteer fire brigades (a true institution in every Croatian village) and heritage associations to youth initiatives and local festivals. During the conference, excursions will take you to inspiring examples of volunteer work across our municipalities, and local food, wine, olive oil and Mediterranean hospitality will do the rest.

Enjoy our region!





3

Conference program

Sunday 20.09.2026

The participants will arrive throughout the day, check into their accommodation and start to enjoy the surroundings. A dinner has been booked for all participants, which will be served at 'Club Funimation Borik' (see the map in this brochure). As some groups will be arriving later, the restaurant there will stay open for longer.

Monday 21.09.2026

The main day of the conference includes input and joint work in workshops. Most of the time will be spent working on ten different 'case studies' that participants from all four countries have brought with them. We're counting on you to contribute your skills and abilities!

Time	Program Item
from 08:30	Arrival & check-in to the conference
09:00	Official welcome & introduction to the conference
	Audience interaction
09:45	Recap of the first conference in Finland – <i>Impressions and statements from the event</i>
	Input: Volunteering in Croatia – <i>Representant of BURA-region</i>
	Input: How to find new volunteers – reflection and ideas – <i>Meike Kamping & Hannah Kath, projaegt GmbH</i>
10:25	Coffee break
10:55	Introduction to the workshop phase – <i>Nadja Schürmann & Izabela Czarnojan, rePACKtheBAG</i>
	Workshop phase #1 – <i>Ten parallel working groups based on specific 'case studies'</i>
12:45	Joint lunch – <i>A five-minute walk together to 'Club Funimation Borik'</i>
14:00	Workshop phase #2 – <i>Continuation of the parallel working groups</i>
16:30	Short break – <i>Preparation of the results presentation</i>
16:40	Presentation of the results of the workshops
17:30	Information about Tuesday's excursions – <i>Meeting point, departure time, destinations? ...</i>
17:45	End of conference day
19:30	Joint dinner at 'Club Funimation Borik'

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!**



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Tuesday 22.09.2026

There are many good examples of volunteer projects in the Bura region. On Tuesday, there will be two different excursions to visit them.

Time	Program Item
08:15	Meeting for the excursion program – Meeting point: Near the accommodation on the campsite (Details to follow on Monday evening)
08:30 - 18:00	Excursion program <i>Two different excursions will take you to places in the region that are involved in various aspects of voluntary work. The organisers have allocated the participants to the excursions based on the interests and backgrounds they specified when registering for the conference. The 'tickets' will be handed out when participants check in on Monday. If you feel that the excursion isn't right for you at all – perhaps someone else would be willing to swap?</i>
around 18:00	Meet up of the two excursions
20:00	Joint dinner, cultural program etc.
around 22:00	Return journey by bus





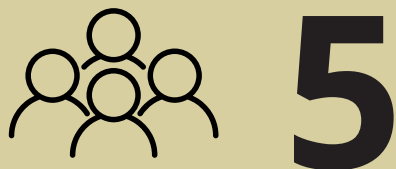
4

Locations



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4. Locations



People from four European countries are taking part in the conference. They are involved in voluntary work in different ways. Take the opportunity to get to know each other!

Participants

On the following pages, you can find information about the participants at the conference in Croatia. In addition to a photograph and a brief description of each person's voluntary work, this also includes the topics related to voluntary work which every person is particularly interested in. They are represented symbolically by the following icons:



Culture



Music



Traditions & heritage



Nature & environment



Religious topics



Social



Participation



Leisure



Languages



Event production



Sports



Management



Education



Rescue & safety duties

... from Austria



Thomas Brandtner

„I am a visionary, connector and founder. I help shape the future of communities and regions through innovation, collaboration, and meaningful impact.“



Birgit Danzl

„I do volunteer work in sports and social clubs.“



Raffael Fischl

„I have a professional connection at work as well as a private one. In the future I try to volunteer more in my community (acting, other services).“



Melanie Hutter

„I work at the ‚Pillerseetal/Leukental Volunteer Center‘ which connects volunteers with local projects, supports associations, and strengthens community in Tyrol.“



Michaela Kasper-Furtner

„I work at the ‚Freiwilligenzentrum Kitzbüheler Alpen‘, where I am involved in volunteer coordination and social innovation.“



Claudia Radford-Grießer

„I am currently working (and have done so for more than 20 years now) as a volunteer salesperson at a second-hand shop run by the Red Cross.“



Theresa Ritzer

„I am volunteer leader in an association of young farmers and rural youth organizing events, preserving traditions, and strengthening community.“



Claudia Schröder

„I do voluntary work in the field of environmental protection.“



Carmen Schwinghammer

„I manage the Volunteer Center KUUSK.“



Melanie Steinbacher

„I am LEADER-Manager in the KUUSK-region.“



Johannes Wiechenthaler

„I coordinate European Solidarity Corps volunteers, supporting their journey from recruitment to successful integration.“



... from Croatia



Sandra Babac

„I open my fig farm in Poljica to volunteers each harvest season, sharing my passion for community-grown Dalmatian figs.“



Vladimir Dedić

„I am President of LAG Bura. We support rural development, strengthen local partnerships, and help improve living conditions through volunteering.“



Zrinka Klanac

„I lead the Croatian Red Cross Obrovac, organizing first aid courses, blood drives, support for older residents, and activities that engage young people in our community.“



Ljubo Majica

„The main activities carried out by the HGSS Zadar Station are focused on saving human lives in hard-to-reach terrain of Zadar County, accident prevent.“



Ana Mamić

„Manager of LAG Bura; Volunteer deputy manager for ‚Caritas‘ Petřčane; Steering Committee member, LEADER Network Croatia & Youth in LEADER (ELARD)“



Marko Rončević

„I am co-president of the Vrsi voluntary fire brigade and I volunteer in local community events and environmental actions in the municipality.“



Josip Šare

„I have been actively involved in volunteering since 2014, primarily through my role in the Archery Club Zadar, where I serve as president.“



Šime Stojak

„The biggest challenge for me as an independent volunteer is that the continuity of his initiatives depends almost entirely on one person.“

... from Finland



Tiina Hero

„I am project manager of Vitalize Volunteer Work and also volunteering in a choir association and Soroptimist International.“



Anna Jalkanen

„I do secretary work in local associations.“



Ester Karkoinen

„I am a volunteer with the ‚Mynämäen Asemanseudunkylät Association‘ a local civic organization that promotes the vitality, well-being, and community spirit.“



Salme Lehtola

„I am board member of ‚Leinmäki village association‘ and do projects, communications and public relations“



Noora Mantere

„I am project adviser at ‚LAG Ravakka‘ and volunteer communicator for a sauna association.“



Marjaana Naatula-Kauppila

„I am long-term active board member of ‚Mynämäki Asemanseutu Village Association‘, organizing events and maintaining the village recreation area.“



Anne Niemi

„My volunteer work includes communication, marketing and events.“



Jani Niemi

„I am a chairman.“



Henriikka Saine

„I’ve been active in various NGO’s for over 20 years, serving in positions of trust. Also my work focuses on the development of associations.“



Soili Valtanen

„I am board member of ‚Leinmäki village association‘: cooking, catering, food supply, and recycling.“



Markus Ylis-Junttila

„I am the chairperson of the board for ‚Mietoisten Kirkonseudun Kyläry‘ and have been an active member of the association for nearly 20 years.“



... from Germany (1)



Gina Christin Bender

„I volunteer with ‚Smily Kids‘ supporting children from families affected by addiction and helping create a safe and supportive environment.“



Michael Bünner

„I am a regional manager supporting mostly volunteer initiatives and a hobby musician, concert organiser, and part of a volunteer setup crew for my friends festival.“



Franz Georg Clute

„Village Representative / Chairman, Fire Department Support Association / Allendorf Music Association“



Izabela Czarnojan

*rePACKtheBAG
Moderation of the conference*



Winfried Dickel

„I am 79 years old and serve as a volunteer representative for various associations and foundations. I see it as my task to inspire younger generations“



Ursula Eichert

„I am the chairwoman of a volunteer cultural association. We organize a wide variety of concerts and three festivals.“



Franziska Eick

„I am regional manager of the LEADER region ‚SauerSiegerLand‘.“



Britta Ewert

„Chairperson of a volunteer group dedicated to protecting the local environment through conservation activities and environmental awareness.“



Marita Gerwin

„I serve on the board of the LEADER region ‚Am Sorpesee‘. At the same time, for the past ten years, I have been active as a mentor for Integration.“



Kerstin Glade

„As Head of Communication and Social Media, I volunteer to make our association more visible and to promote community engagement.“



Thomas Glade

„As Chairman of ‚Oldtimerfreunde Hallenberg e. V.‘ I volunteer to promote community spirit, youth involvement, and social cohesion.“



Nataša Gödde

„I am responsible for marketing and fundraising at a library and serve as treasurer of an association supporting social projects in Brazil.“

... from Germany (2)



Heike Grebe

„I am chair of the local friends' association for the Kindergarten, help at 'Operation Christmas Child', play music and I'm a coach for a children's gymnastics group.



Robert Heite

„I am a local representative, city councillor, chairman of a village association, and musician.“



Frank Holthaus

„I am LEADER regional manager, volunteer firefighter, youth and family officer in a hiking association, and board member of the German Youth Hiking Association.“



Tomas Irle

„I volunteer as a youth coach in sports and manage a local educational initiative. Professionally, I serve in the German Armed Forces.“



Meike Kamping

*projaegt GmbH
Moderation of the conference*



Lukas Koch

„I am the board leader of a voluntary based theater and event club.“



Christoph Hammerschmidt

„As LAG Manager of the Region Hochsauerland, I support many volunteer projects and I am also personally involved as president of two local associations.“



Daniel Hofmann

„I am head of the cultural association ‚Metal Diver e. V.‘, director and producer of documentary ‚Ehrenamt‘, and project manager for ‚Dorfzukunft.online‘.“



Kathrin Hunstig-Bockholt

„As a LAG-manager I'm part of the organization team of the transnational cooperation project. In my personal life, I'm involved in a sports club.“



Christian Jung

„I am village mayor of Rahrbach, representing residents, supporting local projects, coordinating community affairs, and strengthening village life.“



Hannah Kath

*projaegt GmbH
Moderation of the conference*



Beate Korn

„I am the chairwoman of the Elben Woman's choir. I look after the needs of our members, as well as managing all aspects of the choir's activities.“



... from Germany (3)



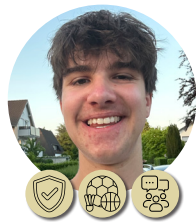
Helena Kottowski

„As a Leader manager I'm member of the steering group for vitalize volunteer work and I'm involved in the main organization of the project.“



Carina Lohmeyer

„I am the volunteer coordinator for the town of Bad Lippspringe.“



Vincent Peters

„I am a coach in a sports club, involved in youth work with the Red Cross, organize youth leisure activities, and support the local food bank..“



Daniela Petry

„I am working with a self-help group for families affected by addiction.“



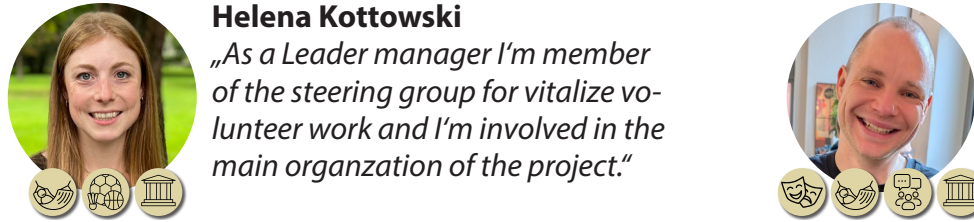
Rehana Rühmann

„I'm the managing director of a park. I'm here to learn how to attract, motivate, and retain volunteers while creating a rewarding experience for all.“



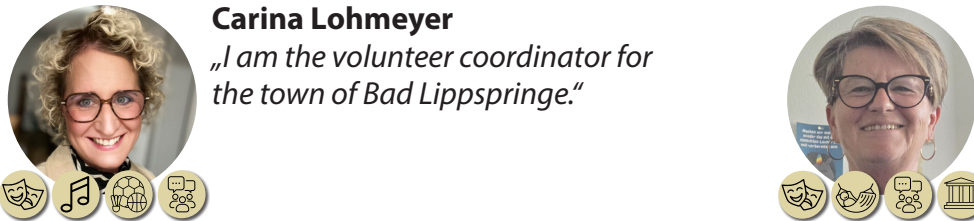
Miriam Schulte-Remmert

„I am a board member of my choir and village association, active in my local church, and professionally a LEADER regional manager.“



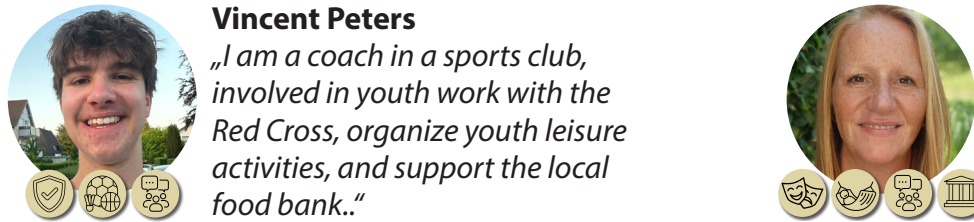
Felix Krogmeier

„I work at Hövelhof town hall and am responsible for our French twin town. I coordinate the voluntary twinning committee.“



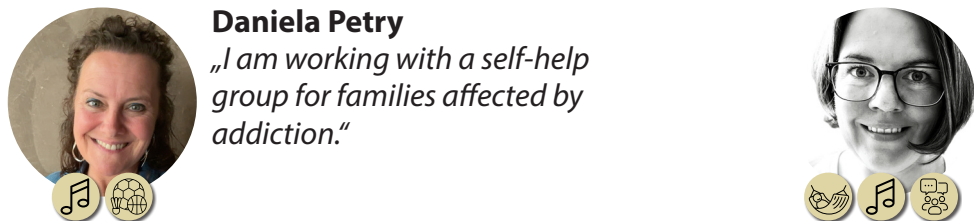
Ulrike Mikitta

„I am the treasurer of an executive Board.“



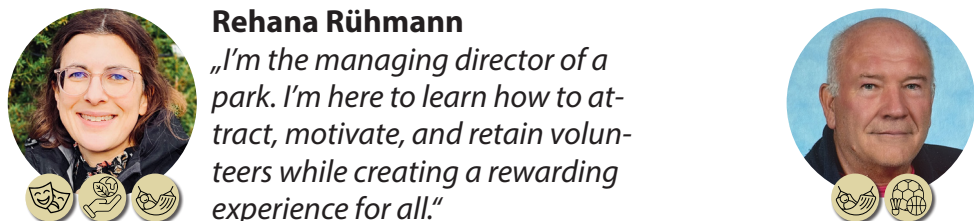
Andrea Peters-Wiggerich

„I am a member of the leadership team of the ‚Stockum kfd women's association‘. The ‚kfd‘ is one of the largest women's associations in Germany.“



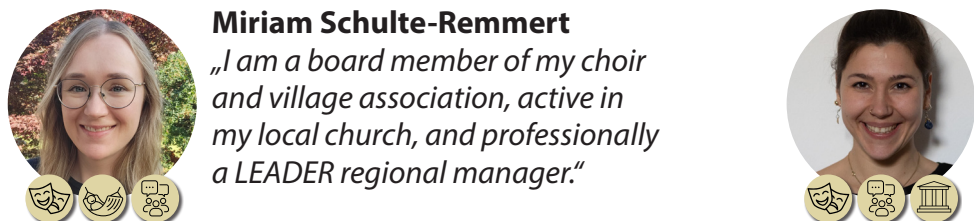
Rebecca Pütter

„I am one of two treasurers of ‚kfd‘ (Catholic women's association) in my hometown and support voluntary community work.“



Hanno Schmidt

„I worked as a teacher of sports, technology, and biology before retiring. Today, I continue to be actively involved as a board member of a sports club.“



Nadja Schürmann

*rePACKtheBAG
Moderation of the conference*

... from Germany (4)



Melanie Thiele

„I am the regional manager of the LEADER region ‚BiggeLand‘ and, in my private capacity, a member of the support association of a local school.“



Patricia Vanderlinden

„I work as a municipal coordinator for volunteer engagement.“



Swenja Vollpracht

„I am active in the youth team of a sports club. I am also a track and field coach for children and youth.“



Heleen Zwebe

„I am the local mayor of Referredhausen, chairwoman of the village community association, and treasurer of a tourist association.“



6

Emergency and organisational contacts

General emergency number in Croatia:

112



Ana Mamić

Local organisation/Excursion #2
Mob: +385-98 968 1862



Josip Šare

Local organisation/Excursion #1
Mob: +385-99 473 5340



Hannah Kath

Moderation
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Meike Kamping

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Nadja Schürmann

Moderation
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5. Participants

6. Emergency contacts



Useful Croatian Words and Phrases

English	Croatian
Greetings	
Hello!	Bok!
Good morning!	Dobro jutro!
Good day! / Hello!	Dobar dan!
Good evening!	Dobra večer!
Goodbye!	Doviđenja!
See you!	Vidimo se!
Have a nice trip!	Sretan put!
Being polite	
Please.	Molim.
Thank you.	Hvala.
Thank you very much.	Hvala lijepa.
You're welcome.	Nema na čemu.
Excuse me.	Oprostite.
I'm sorry.	Žao mi je.
Yes.	Da.
No.	Ne.
Maybe.	Možda.
Meeting people	
How are you?	Kako ste?
I'm fine, thank you.	Dobro sam, hvala.
Nice to meet you.	Drago mi je.
I come from Finland/Austria/Germany.	Dolazim iz Finske/Austrije/Njemačke.
What a beautiful place!	Kako je ovdje lijepo!
Language and communication	
Do you speak English?	Govorite li engleski?
I don't understand.	Ne razumijem.
Please speak more slowly.	Možete li govoriti sporije?
Can you repeat that, please?	Možete li molim vas ponoviti?

English	Croatian
At the conference	
I work as a volunteer.	Radim kao volonter / volonterka.
I volunteer in my community.	Volonter sam / Volonterka sam u svojoj zajednici.
I work in rural development.	Radim u ruralnom razvoju.
I work for a LEADER region.	Radim za LEADER regiju.
We have similar challenges in our region.	Imamo slične izazove u našoj regiji.
Thank you for the interesting conversation.	Hvala na zanimljivom razgovoru.
I would like to stay in touch.	Želio bih / Željela bih ostati u kontaktu.
Can we take a photo together?	Možemo li se zajedno fotografirati?
Finding your way	
Where is ...?	Gdje je ...?
Where is the toilet?	Gdje je zahod?
How do I get to Falkensteiner Camping?	Kako mogu doći do kampa Falkensteiner?
Food and drinks	
I would like ...	Želio bih / Željela bih...
Water	Voda
Coffee	Kava
Beer	Pivo
How much does it cost?	Koliko košta?
The bill, please.	Račun, molim.
Cheers!	Živjeli!



Vitalize Volunteer Work brings together volunteers, community organisations and local initiatives from Germany, Austria, Finland and Croatia to strengthen volunteering in rural areas across Europe. Through international exchange, peer learning and hands-on collaboration, the project helps participants develop innovative ideas, tackle real-life challenges and discover new ways to attract and support volunteers.

Together, we are creating stronger communities and a vibrant future for voluntary engagement in Europe!



**Co-funded by
the European Union**