

Professionalization of Volunteering: Bridging Commitment, Competency, and Sustainability in the IRDO Model

Marko Lavrenčič

IRDO Institute for the Development of Social Responsibility
Department of Social Responsibility and Volunteering
Cesta 13. julija 65A, 1261 Ljubljana_Dobrunje, Slovenia
E-mail: marko.lavrencic@irdo.si | www.irdo.si

Abstract

This paper investigates the professionalization of volunteering as a strategic mechanism for enhancing volunteer retention, motivation, competency development, and long-term organizational sustainability (Wilson, 2000; Hustinx et al., 2010). The study is grounded in a qualitative case analysis of the IRDO Institute for the Development of Social Responsibility, a Slovenian non-governmental organization with over two decades of experience in volunteer-driven work and social responsibility development (IRDO Institute for the Development of Social Responsibility, n.d.). The research addresses the growing tension between traditional, informal volunteering structures and the increasing need for systematic volunteer management in contemporary civil society organizations (European Volunteer Centre [CEV], n.d.). The methodology combines institutional analysis, policy review, and comparative examination of Slovenian and European volunteer frameworks, including the Volunteering Act and the Volunteering Development Strategy in the Republic of Slovenia until 2030 (Republic of Slovenia, 2024), as well as European approaches developed through the Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe (P.A.V.E.) and the Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030 (BEV2030) framework (Centre for European Volunteering [CEV], 2011, 2021; CCIVS, n.d.). The findings indicate that professionalization, when appropriately implemented, strengthens volunteer engagement through structured onboarding, mentoring systems, competency-based training, and systematic evaluation (Clary et al., 1998). The paper proposes the IRDO model of volunteer professionalization as a conceptual framework integrating human resource support, education, evaluation mechanisms, and community networking.

Keywords: volunteering, professionalization, mentoring, IRDO, healthcare volunteering, competency development