

## E-VOLUNTEERING AS A POSSIBILITY OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES DURING THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

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### Summary

Volunteerism has long been woven into the lives of Ukrainians. Since 2014, some parts of the Ukrainian society began to volunteer in the military sphere. Since February 24, 2022, volunteering in Ukraine has received a new impetus. It is due to the possibility of online volunteering that many Ukrainians became volunteers in the Russian-Ukrainian war because not all of them were physically able to get involved in volunteer activities.

This article defines the concept of volunteering and e-volunteering. It outlines the current data on the state of volunteering. The data of the author's study "Volunteering during the Russian-Ukrainian war. Search for opportunities", which was conducted in July 2022 has been presented. The purpose of the study was to identify relevant e-resources for searching for volunteer opportunities. The result of the survey indicated the active growth of volunteer activity during the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

According to the research data, the largest share of respondents gets information about volunteer opportunities through online resources, platforms, and volunteer chat rooms. The authors have presented available online resources to access e-volunteering. They also have provided links to the telegram channel (a platform-based cloud messenger), volunteer platforms, and websites that can help a novice volunteer become familiar with the areas of volunteer activity and identify his or her own associates.

**Key words:** online volunteering, volunteer, online resources, volunteer platforms, motivation for volunteering during the war.

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### 1. Introduction

It is during the active phase of the Russian-Ukrainian war that remote volunteering makes it possible to help without the physical presence of a volunteer, but no less qualitatively and productively. For many people, e-volunteering has been a discovery since 2014, and more people decided to join volunteer activities for the first time, thereby demonstrating their civic position after the full-scale invasion of the territory of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Volunteer activities have changed since the full-scale invasion as somebody went to the front as volunteers, some wrote projects and helped internally displaced persons, and others helped both the Armed Forces and civilians in difficult life circumstances due to the war (Table 1).

Table 1

**Comparative table of the main trends in volunteering before February 24, 2022,  
and after the full-scale invasion**

Until February 24, 2022	After February 24, 2022
Socially useful activity in the priority area of interest of a volunteer	Volunteering for the greatest benefit; often online volunteering
Volunteering in free time from work, study, and family	Volunteering has become the main activity for many and takes all their free time
People volunteer to have the opportunity to communicate with like-minded people	The motivation of volunteers is approaching victory and being useful to society
Volunteer organizations often post vacancies and invite all those who wish to join;	Volunteers are looking for organizations or spot volunteering in the field
There are volunteer schools where everyone can receive support and assistance in their volunteer activities	Ukrainians themselves create volunteer groups to provide assistance
Volunteers receiving bonuses for further career or determined with their further professional activity	Professional skills are used to perform certain tasks as a volunteer

Source: own work based on materials of the online training “Basic Principles of Volunteering” from the Ukrainian Volunteer Service (UBS “Basic principles of volunteering”)

The understanding of the main trends and experiences of volunteering is valuable and important for the analysis and learning lessons about the effective organization of volunteering during the full-scale invasion of Russia on the territory of Ukraine.

## 2. Methodological Basics of Forming E-volunteering

The Law of Ukraine “On Volunteering” states that a volunteer is an individual who voluntarily carries out socially oriented non-profit activities by providing volunteer assistance (*Law of Ukraine “On Volunteering”, 2011*). Volunteerism is charity carried out by individuals on the basis of non-profit activity, without salary, or promotion, for the sake of the well-being and prosperity of communities and society in general (*Minienko & Ihnatusha, 2017*).

Scientists consider volunteering as an activity that benefits an individual, a group of individuals, or organizations and also improves the quality of community life (*Lashin et al, 2022*). According to the “E-volunteering handbook” volunteering is a formal or informal activity carried out voluntarily and without expecting a reward, which contributes to the common good, usually carried out on behalf of a non-governmental organization, association, or community (*Kacprowicz & Borowiecka, 2014*). Ukrainian scientists T. Lyakh and T. Spirina characterize volunteering as a “means of supporting, caring for, and providing assistance to members of the community; interaction between people to jointly develop new ways of solving problems that arise” (*Lyakh & Spirina, 2021, p. 24*).

During the Russian-Ukrainian war and the period of martial law, e-volunteering has received a new impetus. Volunteers use their computers or even phones to help those who need support (*Schindler, 2022*). According to a recent study, it is necessary to understand how to organize and effectively direct volunteering efforts to better organize online volunteering in response to unexpected crisis circumstances (*Zhang et al., 2022*).

Social media are tools that help create and share information, ideas, and current issues through online communities and virtual networks. As Lashin et al. (2022) mentioned, social

networks influence public opinion, increase participation and raise awareness among users about what should be done to help those in need.

E-volunteering has become a discovery for many, and they began to volunteer for the first time to invest their strength and knowledge to bring victory. Researchers emphasize the online opportunities of information and communication technologies for volunteers in the social sphere, which are basic in the system of human-human interactions (*Pavliuk & Liakh, 2019*).

Scientists G. Goodwin (2019), N. Kapucu (2006), & E. Ostrom (1996) assure that the response of the government during exacerbations and conflicts must be agreed upon and supported by citizens, civil society, public and non-governmental organizations, and others. Internet networks play an important role in recruiting volunteers, delegating, and performing voluntary work, where the volunteer or volunteers perform their tasks online (*Kacprowicz & Borowiecka, 2014*).

At the same time, A. Bezrukov (2017) emphasizes that online volunteering has a lot in common with traditional forms of volunteering. In the table below the main characteristics of volunteering and e-volunteering are compared (Table 2).

Table 2

**Comparative analysis of volunteering and e-volunteering**

<b>E-volunteering</b>	<b>Volunteering</b>
An unpaid activity that is carried out voluntarily and purposefully for the benefit of other people, with one additional condition: the activities are carried out (in whole or part) remotely using the Internet.	Unpaid activity that is carried out voluntarily and purposefully for the benefit of other people; actions are carried out directly on the spot or in contact with a person.
E-volunteering is innovative, bringing traditional volunteering to a new level of Internet communication.	Volunteering follows the traditional form of service provision.
Using the Internet as a daily volunteer tool opens up new opportunities.	Limited opportunities for the latest information and communication technologies
Reduction of time and space limitations.	Requires more time and mobility for the volunteer.
Engage those who do not have volunteer work experience, but have IT skills.	Engage volunteers with experience in performing this type of activity, where there are no restrictions on the professional background of volunteers.
It depends on human compassion, the desire to lend a helping hand, to change the situation for the better, the desire to share one's time and skills, and others.	

Source: own work based on materials of the Handbook of E-Volunteering (*Kacprowicz & Borowiecka, 2014*)

So, both concepts have one common feature that defines volunteering as an activity carried out voluntarily that is non-profitable, and socially beneficial. E-volunteering supports traditional volunteering, being its continuation, and expands opportunities through information and communication technologies.

Ukrainian researchers T. Liakh, T. Spirina, M. Lekholetova, & O. Shved highlight the main advantages of information and communication technologies, emphasizing that they are one of the ways to increase the effectiveness of volunteering during the Russian-Ukrainian war, as the war reduced offline communication to a minimum (*Liakh, Spirina, Lekholetova & Shved, 2021*).

Volunteering during war means support for the Armed Forces of Ukraine and territorial defense; assistance to servicemen and units participating in military operations; help to internally displaced persons and civilians affected by hostilities, assistance to people in the war zone, and informational support using e-volunteering, IT technologies, social networks, online platforms, and the Internet. Each informative post, publicly available information, the publication can save someone's life, as the purpose of online publications is general information about such vital issues as the location of bomb shelters, the location of humanitarian and volunteer headquarters; the algorithm in case of an air raid or interruptions in telephone communication, the provision of first aid or how to behave when meeting soldiers of the enemy army; "green corridors" and evacuation plans; obtaining general information, psychological or legal support; information on the course of the war.

Current events influence the development of volunteer activity and stimulate searching for new forms and areas of activity, new methods, and platforms for working with volunteers.

Several surveys were conducted to study the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war in the active phase on the life of Ukrainian citizens within the framework of the project "Ukraine in conditions of war" (Sociological group "Rating"). Thus, in April 2022, the "Eighth nationwide survey: Ukraine in war conditions" was conducted by the Sociological group "Rating" among 1,200 respondents, age group 18 and older (Sociological group "Rating", 2022, April 6). The results indicated that over 80% of respondents participate in the defense of the country, among them 45% of respondents help to defend the country financially (in March 2022 it was 39%). Also, 35% of respondents are engaged in volunteering and helping people/military, 18% participate in information resistance, 13% work in critical infrastructure, and 6% of respondents participate in the defense of the country.

The increase in volunteer activity after the invasion of Russian on February 24, 2022, was also evidenced by the survey "Volunteering during the war" in June 2022. The survey was conducted among 6,250 respondents by the International Youth Project of the United Nations Children's Fund (Ureport, 2022, June 25). The answers to the question "How long have you been volunteering?" indicated that 54% of respondents became volunteers after February 24, 2022. In the context of our research, the answers to the question "Where do you get information about volunteer initiatives/opportunities/organizations, and others?" were representative. The answers were as follows: 42% in social networks groups, 19% from friends and relatives, 18% using online resources and platforms, and 15% using volunteer chats.

Based on all of the above, we decided to conduct our own research "Volunteering during the Russian-Ukrainian war. Search for opportunities". The goal was to provide reliable information about e-volunteering opportunities. The study was conducted in July 2022.

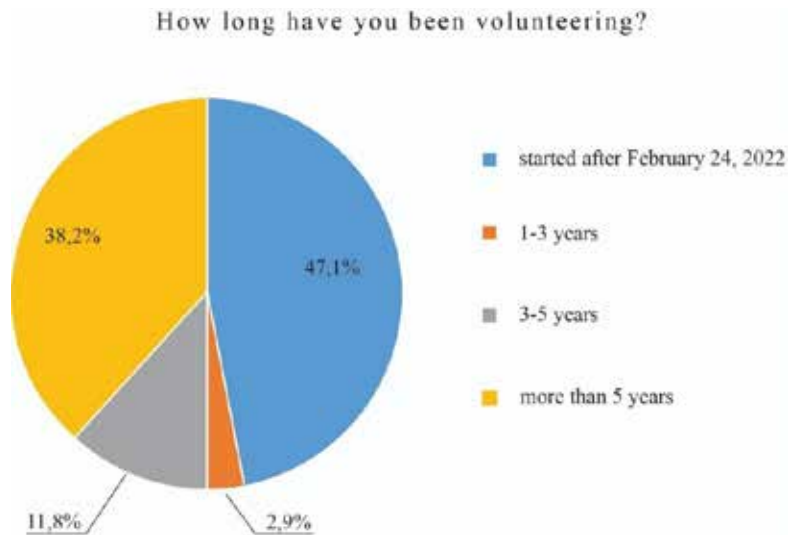
### **3. Results of the Author's Survey Conducted in June 2022**

Since 2014, many studies have been conducted to explore volunteering from different perspectives. However, none of them was aimed at identifying e-resources through which interested parties can learn about opportunities for themselves, which became especially relevant during the acute phase of the war.

34 respondents took part in the online survey, among them 5 men and 29 women. The survey was conducted by distributing a Google form among Telegram volunteer chats and on Facebook messenger through personal messages to practicing volunteers. The age of respondents was distributed as follows: 18-25 years – 8.8%, 25-30 years – 32.4%, 30-35 years – 32.4%,

35-40 years – 8.8%, respondents over 40 years – 17.6%. Thus, we can see that all age groups were represented, and young people aged 25-35 were the most active participants.

The question “How long have you been volunteering” was indicative (Fig. 1). Almost half of the respondents (47.1%) answered that they started volunteering after February 24, 2022. The rate of those who have been volunteering for more than five years was approximately high (38.2%). Some began volunteering 3-5 years ago (11.8% of respondents), which means they started when the war was already going on in Eastern Ukraine, and one person (2.9%) answered that he had been volunteering for 1-3 years.



**Fig. 1. Answers to the question “How long have you been volunteering?”**

The answers to the question “What prompted you to start volunteering?” were also indicative. “*My friend was called to the front, so it started helping his unit.*» Most respondents (73.5%) stated their desire to be useful to society. More than half of respondents (52.9%) answered that they want to do everything possible to bring victory closer. 29.4% of respondents answered that they cannot just wait, they want to help, which indicates a desire to be useful to society. Some respondents answered that it is interesting to try something new (20.6%).

Since within the scope of the study we were interested in the issue of using e-resources, the subsequent questions were specifically aimed to investigate this situation.

The next question was “Which direction of volunteering did you choose after the war started?”. Five respondents wrote their specific areas: “*English language club for IDPs*”, “*Assistance to people affected by the full-scale Russian invasion, to people who were left without houses or had their houses damaged*”, and “*Debris sorting, repairing roofs, covering windows with film, individual assistance*”, “*Transfer of funds to the Armed Forces and other funds/enterprises, assistance at the border*«. The highest percentage of responses (41.2%) received the option “Help for IDPs” and the option “Finding the necessary resources upon request and redirecting them to those in need”. Such assistance is mostly carried out both online (searching for requests) and offline (directly assisting). The answer “Collection and transfer funds for the

needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and IDPs” was chosen by 32.4% of respondents, 29.4% are involved in “Online volunteering”, and 26.5% are engaged in “Informational defense”. More than half of the respondents (55.9%) answered that they are engaged in volunteering using the Internet to find information about volunteering opportunities and performing certain tasks. An equal number of participants (20.6%) stated they volunteer to provide “Psychological support (online or by phone)”, and “Help at the humanitarian hubs”.

The next questions were aimed at revealing respondents' preferences for certain E-resources to determine the most relevant resources. To the question “How often do you use information from friends/relatives/acquaintances to find volunteer opportunities?” most respondents (73.5%) answered that they do it almost all the time or often, that is, they have determined that this type of information is relevant for them.

The next block of questions was directly related to determining which e-resources respondents are more frequently used to find information on volunteering opportunities.

The answers to the question “How often do you use online resources, platforms, and sites to find volunteer opportunities?” were diverse. The largest number of answers received the opposite answer options: very rare, rarely (32.4%), and very often, almost all the time (32.4%). Some respondents (14.7%) use these resources from time to time. Other respondents answered they use online resources often (11.8%) or rarely (8.8%). The general tendency of the answers to this question is controversial.

The next question was “How often do you use Telegram chat to find volunteer opportunities?” The answers to this question were distributed more evenly. Most respondents answered they use this e-resource very often (32.4%) or often (14.7%); 17.6% of respondents use Telegram chat from time to time while 35.3% rarely use it. So, almost half of the respondents (47.1%) actively use Telegram chat to find volunteer opportunities.

The last question was “How often do you use social media groups to find volunteer opportunities?” The answers to this question show that the majority of respondents (50%) use this option in searching for volunteer opportunities. So, social media groups are used very often/almost all the time by 26.5% of respondents, and often 23.5% of respondents. Contrastingly, very rarely/almost never use social media groups 23.5% and rarely 5.9% of respondents. A high percentage of participants (20.6%) answered they use social media groups time from to time.

Thus, it can be concluded that the search for volunteer opportunities with the involvement of electronic resources is relevant, and in some cases, the only possible type of volunteer activity in Ukraine now.

#### **4. Characteristics of Available E-resources for Online Volunteering During the Russian-Ukrainian War**

Based on the results of the survey, the team of authors provided a scientific search of the available electronic resources. The extended goal of our work was to explore and introduce the most relevant volunteer platforms for those who can be interested. Online platforms have emerged as a powerful technology through which public organizations can interact with volunteers. These platforms connect people looking for volunteer opportunities with charitable foundations, volunteer groups, or directly with those in need. By joining a project on online platforms, volunteers can complete tasks entirely online or receive tasks for physical completion (Urrea & Yoo, 2021). Several platforms emerged after February 24, 2022, as a reaction to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The analysis of the possibilities of various e-resources to generalize reliable online resources that can be useful to e-volunteers was the task of this stage. It should be mentioned that the high level of involvement of Ukrainian society in volunteer activities during the war was also manifested in the creation of new e-resources. Those resources that have emerged in response to a full-scale invasion or have added military-related areas through volunteering are presented and characterized below. (Table 3).

Table 3

**E-volunteering resources**

No	The resource name and link	Description of the resource
1	<p>“Hello, Neighbor” telegram chat was created by the “Zhyttelyub” foundation to help the elderly and IDPs living in Kyiv. Those interested writes to @Zitteluba</p>	<p>The chat was created to help the elderly and IDPs who lost their homes and property. Verified requests for help are received in the chat. Each request has a hashtag of the district (Kyiv city) and needs (medicines, products). A volunteer from the chat who can help at the moment complete the task and reports in the chat.</p>
2	<p>“Zgraya” is a group of volunteers who worked with the military in Eastern Ukraine from 2014-2015. Resumed work after February 24, 2022. Website: <a href="http://surl.li/cnqfk">http://surl.li/cnqfk</a> FB group: <a href="http://surl.li/cnqft">http://surl.li/cnqft</a></p>	<p>Aid to civilians; hospitals; the Armed Forces, TrO Forces, law enforcement agencies, equipment, equipment, medicines, and food products. They help all over Ukraine. Regular reports in the FB group and on the website.</p>
3	<p>SpivDiya is a volunteer P2P platform initiated by the Coordination Headquarters for Humanitarian and Social Affairs of the Office of the President of Ukraine. Website: <a href="http://Spivdiia.org.ua">Spivdiia.org.ua</a> Instagram: <a href="http://surl.li/cnqfz">http://surl.li/cnqfz</a> Facebook: <a href="http://surl.li/cnqgb">http://surl.li/cnqgb</a></p>	<p>Verified volunteers and real-time help: the population and volunteers, institutions that host IDPs, and shelters. You can request help if you need it. Areas of assistance and cooperation: hub, children, shelter, legal support, psychological support, Spiv-Diya employment, SpivDiya entrepreneurs.</p>
4	<p>The Ukrainian Volunteer Service was created in 2017 (the development of the culture of volunteering in Ukraine). After February 24, an operational headquarters was created, which monitors the need for volunteer assistance throughout the country and mobilizes people to help the military and the population. Website: <a href="http://surl.li/cnqgj">http://surl.li/cnqgj</a> Telegram channel: <a href="http://surl.li/cnqhz">http://surl.li/cnqhz</a></p>	<p>There is a form for volunteers on the website. Announcements about the need for volunteers appear promptly on the Volunteer Platform: <a href="http://surl.li/cnqgp">http://surl.li/cnqgp</a> A selection with a list of volunteer tasks appears on the Telegram channel every few hours. There are telegram chats for every city in Ukraine that one can join.</p>
5	<p>Palyanitsa.Info is a platform created by the Ukrainian Volunteer Service together with the IT company SoftServe to help people during the war. Website: <a href="https://palyanytsya.info/">https://palyanytsya.info/</a></p>	<p>An open database of organizations that provide humanitarian and volunteer assistance to the people in Ukraine. There is a filter that allows you to find the right organization, depending on the location and category of the request. If you are a representative of a volunteer organization, you can add information about it by filling out a special form.</p>

6	<p>VzayemoDiya is a team of volunteers who created a page for a quick and easy search for information on Ukraine during the war. Sections are constantly updated, and resources are carefully checked by a team of specialists.</p> <p>Site-platform: <a href="https://viyna.net/">https://viyna.net/</a>          Telegram: <a href="http://surl.li/cnqig">http://surl.li/cnqig</a></p>	<p>The platform contains the following sections: relocation and housing, how to get various types of assistance (humanitarian, legal, transport assistance, medical, hotlines, and services), everything for children, everything for animals, and psychological support.</p> <p>Unique sections: I have foreign friends and I have Russian or Belarusian acquaintances.</p> <p>There is also a section on how to provide help online and offline, or financially.</p>
7	<p>Ukrainian exchange of volunteering and work. The site was created immediately after the full-scale invasion – on February 28.</p> <p>Website: <a href="https://v-tylu.work/">https://v-tylu.work/</a>          Telegram: <a href="https://t.me/v_tylu">https://t.me/v_tylu</a>          Facebook: <a href="http://surl.li/cnqik">http://surl.li/cnqik</a>          Instagram: <a href="http://surl.li/cnqim">http://surl.li/cnqim</a>          Chatbot in Telegram: @vtylu_bot</p>	<p>There are two types of ads – needs and help. It is possible to leave an ad. The advantage of the platform is cataloged and up-to-date content.</p> <p>Requests for online jobs in the fields of information warfare, texts/translations, marketing/design, coordination, and IT/development. The exchange is focused on finding volunteers, but you can also find paid vacancies.</p>

This is only a part of the possibilities available today for the manifestation of the civic position, but these resources provide an opportunity to be engaged in different spheres of activity. Each resource provides information on the current needs of both the civilian population and the military. The number of initiatives is increasing every day, despite the war, which has been going on for more than 5 months, Ukrainians do not lose motivation and help each other.

## 5. Conclusion

During the Russian-Ukrainian war, e-volunteering gained considerable relevance and involvement among those who expressed a desire to be a volunteer. Several studies conducted by various organizations, as well as by our author's team show this trend. Thus, 80% of Ukrainians participate in the resistance, and this indicator is stable during several months of the active phase of the war. Many Ukrainians not only go to protests and show their civic position on social media, but they also volunteer physically and online, help with information, and in many other ways.

To systematize resources with opportunities for volunteers, we created a table summarizing the main areas of volunteering. The presented table contains reliable online e-resources with relevant information.

The results of the study are partially covered on the Facebook pages of the Scientific Society of the Human Institute of Kyiv University named after Borys Grinchenko and on the page of the Department of Social Pedagogy and Social Work of Grinchenko University. The results of the study are partially covered on the Facebook pages of the Scientific Society of the Human Institute of the Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University and the page of the department of social pedagogy and social work of Grinchenko University.

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