Engaging Returned Volunteers in Active Citizenship

Research, learning and best practice from four countries.

Returned volunteers taking part in a Skills in Development Education course.

Contents

Introduction

Funded by Erasmus+, the "Volunteering for the Future" project brings together partners from the Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland and the UK, all of whom are experienced in working with international volunteers. It focuses on developing high quality learning opportunities tailored to young volunteers returning from the global south, to upskill them as active citizens on international development issues. The project's goal is to directly involve 440 participants over three years and to indirectly reach a further estimated 5,100 people.

Utilising innovative outreach and delivery methodologies, it aims to nurture the transformative potential of these young people's overseas experience and translate it into a deepened sense of identity as active global citizens. This will involve the production of a comprehensive suite of research, training and education materials, and online learning opportunities that will be widely promoted through the partners' extensive networks, nationally, throughout the EU, and internationally. The resources will remain publicly available at the end of the project's life cycle.

Research (Comhlámh 2012, 2014) has found that young returned volunteers have a strong commitment to securing a more just and equitable world, as well as having credibility in the eyes of their peers. With the relevant support and training, they can make a significant contribution to confronting the major development challenges of our time. One of the project's key components is research into active citizenship in volunteering, which was conceptualised with the aim of informing the development and rollout of the training and education materials for volunteers.

These resources will focus on recognising and further developing skills that were stimulated while abroad (e.g. critical thinking, multiple perspectives, community participation & strategies, to address global justice, etc.). This will in turn equip participants with competencies that will enable them to participate as active global citizens, not just in the short-term, but throughout their lives.

Research Overview

This report is the culmination of the research into active citizenship and has two main elements:

1)   A literature review based on national research reports, conducted by project partners in the Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland and the UK; and

2)   The results of a survey that was disseminated to organisations throughout the EU that are engaged in international volunteering.

Each partner undertook a national report that focused on three main questions; 'What is active citizenship in their national context?', 'What good practices exist in their national contexts for fostering active citizenship in returning international volunteers?' and 'Any recommendations for improving the way that active citizenship is fostered, in returning international volunteers?'. These reports involved extensive literature reviews and interviews with key stakeholders, as relevant. The main findings were then analysed to draw out any significant similarities between the four countries.

Drawing on the initial findings of the national reports, the partners worked to develop and pilot an online survey for volunteer sending agencies (VSAs), to assess their current practice around fostering active citizenship and identify recommendations for ways in which this could be strengthened by organisations throughout the EU. The initial questionnaire was piloted by each partner organisation, including through a workshop that took place with representatives of 17 VSAs in Ireland. The feedback was incorporated into the final survey, which was extensively disseminated through partners' networks, using Survey Monkey.   There was a high response rate to the survey, which initially aimed to include feedback from 40 respondents in 20 countries, and which ultimately included 75 respondents based in 18 countries.

The survey responses were collated and analysed, and, along with the findings of the national reports, were used to identify good practice across Europe that was summarised into 'Twelve Steps to Active Citizenship for International Volunteers'. These guidelines are presented at the end of the report, and will be used to inform the development of other project resources, as well as to guide practice within each partner organisation. It is our hope that they will be of use to other organisations working with returned volunteers, as they represent the findings of one of the first significant pan-EU surveys on this topic.

Returned volunteers active on trade justice taking part in a TTIP demonstration.

What Is Active Citizenship

There are quite significant divergences between the definition of active citizenship in different national contexts, and also between how common the term is. For example, in Germany, the concept is not common; instead, it is seen as an academic phrase that is used in political contexts, particularly around educational discourse. In contrast, in the UK, the term is well established and commonly used. In fact, it is so embedded within society that, as far back as the early 1990s, successive governments advocated the political element of active citizenship, hoping to foster a healthy climate of political engagement and create greater legitimacy for their policies (Democratic Audit, 2014). Ireland sits somewhat between the UK and Germany: here active citizenship as a term began to gain currency in the 2000s, as part of a government-led taskforce on the topic.

The term itself is also problematic when comparing different national interpretations. For example, in Ireland, the most recent publication referencing national policy is the 'Active Citizenship in Ireland Progress Report and Action Plan' (2008). The report explores the different ways people in Ireland play an active role as members of their community and society, and identifies factors affecting the level and nature of citizen participation across five different areas: civic, community, cultural, occupational and recreational life in Ireland. The taskforce focused on a number of key themes, which reflected the primary issues raised in a public consultation process: participation in the democratic process; the public service and citizens; community engagement and promoting sense of community; education for citizenship; ethnic and cultural diversity; the challenge of engaging newcomers; and local civic participation.

In the UK, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO, 2004) states that active citizenship is now conceptualised as both a status and an active practice. Such a statement addresses the dual nature of active citizenship, where it is both a right and responsibility. The nature of this definition is once again problematic, as although rights tend to be clearly articulated and set down in law, responsibilities and level of engagement in these responsibilities are left to interpretation by individuals, rather than collective decision-making.

In Germany, the term civic engagement is more prominent than active citizenship and, although not a synonym, can be comparable. In general, civic engagement is based on individual or common actions that are voluntary, where citizens become active without financial benefit

for themselves (WZB, 2009). The main objective of civic engagement in Germany is to improve the circumstances of individuals and of society; at the same time, it also tackles environmental issues. Civic engagement helps to foster stronger societies whilst the volunteers themselves experience how crucial their work is, to strengthen the community spirit.

In the Czech Republic, active citizenship is closely linked with one's identity, as it signifies a willingness to contribute to one's local community. It can take many forms, including for example voting in elections, and enhancing the community cohesion of a neighbourhood by organising social activities. These activities mainly take place at a local level, and are often supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, whose long-term strategy on youth work aims to promote active citizenship education. One of the key goals of this strategy is to engage young people to take up responsibilities in civil society via informal learning activities (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2013). According to The Volunteers Club Manual published by INEX-SDA, an active citizen is someone who: critically reflects on global and social affairs; takes a responsible and sympathetic attitude towards the outside world with a global perspective ; respects others' opinions, values and cultures; and has the potential to actively participate in helping shaping the world at a local level (INEX-SDA, 2011).

For the purpose of this project, and drawing on commonalities identified by the four partners, active citizenship is referred to as the rights and responsibilities of citizens in and to society. We do not limit the concept of citizenship to a legal status, which carries with it the right to hold a passport or vote; instead, we focus upon the active nature of citizenship and the responsibilities that are encapsulated within a dynamic and personal understanding of the concept.

We also embrace the idea of global active citizenship. University College London

(UCL), states that 'citizenship is a feeling of responsibility for the wellbeing of others and the planet and an understanding that concerted action can help to change the world' (2016). Citizens Rising: 'A Report from the People's Conversation' (2015), echoes such sentiments, noting that 'our understanding of citizenship must include our role as global citizens, not as an 'add-on' but as a central facet of our identity' (ibid, p.19).

We therefore define active citizenship as encompassing:

- Political engagement, whereby people engage critically with democratic structures and institutions;
- Social participation, focusing on activities that people could engage in, in their everyday lives, such as being part of a community organisation;
- Individual participation, whereby choices that individuals make in life, such as choosing fair trade goods, impact upon society.

Additionally, we champion a critical approach to active citizenship. Each of the above could be engaged in a 'soft' or 'critical' manner (Andreotti, 2006). A 'soft' version of political engagement would include voting. A critical approach involves engaging with democratic structures and institutions in a more critical, deeper, structural way.

Good Practice in Ongoing Engagement & Active Citizenship

Comhlámh (2010) explored some of the barriers to returned volunteer engagement, in their research 'Barriers to Continuous Engagement'. The study found that 33.7% of respondents were involved on their return, while 18.3% were initially involved, but had since become inactive, and 48.1% never got engaged (ibid, p.8). Interestingly, 67.7% of participants had decided that they would get engaged on return before they had even departed Ireland (ibid, p.10); this highlights the importance of effective training, information and options made available to volunteers about their return in the pre-departure / pre-decision, and the overseas phases of the volunteer journey.

Research has also identified that someone who participates in a volunteering experience is more likely to go on to volunteer in the future (Smith et al 1999). Although this is not specific to returned international volunteers, they are also included in this category: for example, 75% of VSO UK's returned volunteers on their Youth for Development programme said they would like to re-volunteer (VSO, 2005). The two above points highlight that there is a desire from returned international volunteers to continue to engage as active citizens, but that the correct support and framework needs to be provided. The national reports from each country identified a number of examples of good practice, resources, and areas for learning around fostering ongoing engagement post-

return.

United Kingdom: The International Citizen Service (ICS) is the UK's largest provider of international volunteer opportunities for 18-25 year olds. It is delivered by VSO, International Service and Raleigh International (amongst others), and supported by the UK Government, with around 20,000 young people who have taken part in it since it was established in 2011. As part of their delivery, ICS has a programme called 'Action at Home'. This programme focuses on supporting returned volunteers to undertake at least one project that benefits their local community or brings about positive social change, within six months of them returning home.

ICS has a dedicated space on their website for 'Action at Home'; this space acts as a portal to help returned volunteers to find local community actions or volunteer opportunities, the majority of which are delivered by other NGOs such as Oxfam, UNICEF and Greenpeace. ICS also provides a range of documents and tools that are available online, such as the 'Action at Home Handbook', planning templates, and reports. Additionally, ICS actively recruits Alumni Ambassadors to help spread the word about their work and volunteering abroad. The level of support and/ or training available for these 'Actions at Home' is likely to differ widely, as they are typically delivered by NGOs not directly involved in ICS.

There are also returned volunteer weekends held by ICS that aim to foster on-going active citizenship and allow returned volunteers to (re)connect. Although these are viewed as positive by returned volunteers, they vary in terms of content and delivery. An evaluation conducted by DFID (UK Department for International Development: 012), reflected upon how DFID sought to minimise the budget allocation for returned volunteers' engagement. During the evaluation it became clear that considerable support, and therefore resources, were needed in order to provide good quality return actions. The evaluation also highlighted

that there was a lack of clarity about what the returned volunteers' actions should look like and, as a result, the uptake from returned volunteers was quite low. However, the uptake was improved when ICS provided clarity about the purpose of returned volunteers' weekends.

Germany: In Germany, there are a range of networks and organisations that help foster active citizenship in returned international volunteers. For example, the association 'Grenzenlos e.V' ('without borders'), was founded by returned volunteers from different international programmes and provides a platform for exchange, as well as communication with other actors, such as sending organisations and politicians. The association advocates for the rights of international volunteers and lobbies politically (Grenzenlos, 2016a). Besides several other projects, Grenzenlos e.V publishes a guide for returned volunteers ("RückkehrerInnen-Fibel"), which consists of an overview of ideas and initiatives about where and how returned volunteers can get active in Germany. Parallels can be drawn between this initiative and the Action at Home Handbook in the UK. They also organise a big conference called "What Now?", every year, where returnees come together to discuss, work out ideas and elect the delegates for political representation (Grenzenlos, 2016b). Such an event allows for greater capacity and solidarity between returned volunteers.

Another important network in Germany is WinD or Weltwärts. WinD is organised by regional groups of returned international volunteers, from different sending organisations. A virtual platform helps the groups to connect and exchange their ideas. The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) supports the groups with coordinators at a regional level who consult the returned volunteers and provides funds for projects and activities the WinD-groups want to achieve (Engagement Global, 2016).

In addition to the self-organized engagement of returned international volunteers, another

example of good practice comes from non-governmental organisations that provide a series of seminars to teach returned volunteers the skills they need to create their own projects. For several years, finep (the forum for international development and planning) has offered a training course for returned volunteers, which consists of three seminars a year. The aim is to motivate participants to use their experiences from their voluntary service and create their own projects in Germany. As well as knowledge about global issues, returned volunteers improve their skills and gain competencies in areas such as project management, how to allocate resources and the responsible use of media. After the training, the participants design and implement their own projects and then evaluate them (finep, 2013b).

Czech Republic: When engaging volunteers on a long-term basis, INEX-SDA finds it crucial to offer those returning from the global south opportunities to continue to develop their skills. One example of this work is the development of the IM-PROVE app. This helps volunteers to translate the experience they acquired while volunteering into 14 different competencies, then recommends areas of improvement, and helps with finding new volunteering or professional challenges. The app also guides its users to improve their skills by encouraging participation in local volunteering projects and eventually learning how to set up their own project or going to the global south.

A further initiative developed by INEX-SDA is the Dobrovolnický Klub, or Volunteering Club, often referred to as DoK. Through DoK, mentoring support is offered by experienced volunteers or INEX-SDA staff. A crucial part of its activities is a yearly after-return weekend camp. During the camp, a non-formal learning approach is used to make participants aware of the educational potential of volunteering, as well as to assist them in acquiring new skills. The participants share and reflect on their experiences in international projects with other volunteers. Additionally, they generate

ideas for project groups that serve as the basis for future Volunteer Club activities (INEX-SDA, 2011).

Ireland: In Ireland, Comhlámh provides 'Moving Forward' opportunities. These are residential coming-home weekends for returned international volunteers who have been on placement for a significant period (over three months). These weekends have been offered for over a decade.

There is also a one-day 'Moving Forward' course for those that return from shorter placements. The courses critically explore development issues and encourage continuous engagement, including delivering small action projects. Other courses that are specifically tailored to encouraging returnees' ongoing engagement are the 6-week "Be the Change" course, which provides participants with the skills to develop and implement action projects and campaigns, and the 10-week "Skills in Development Education" course, which equips participants with the skills and methodologies to work effectively with groups on global development and social justice issues.

As well as the above courses, Comhlámh has developed a 'Coming Home Book' which provides a comprehensive guide to issues such as health, reverse culture shock, support services, how to remain engaged in social action and be an active citizen. Comhlámh has also developed a Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Organisations (Comhlámh, 2015): at present, 43 Irish-based VSAs are signatories to these standards, which involve both self-and external audit, as well as peer support and mentoring. Principle 9 of the Code explicitly focuses on supporting continuous engagement of volunteers: "Our organisation supports volunteers to understand the wider context of development in which volunteering is taking place and encourages continued learning and engagement". Finally, Comhlámh works with returned volunteers who develop

and lead member groups on issues of common interest: this frequently draws on their experiences overseas and assists them to link global and local issues, with one current prominent theme being trade justice.

Conclusion: A majority of volunteers express a clear desire to continue to engage in active citizenship upon their return from the global south. Yet, existing research into the topic coupled with anecdotal feedback suggests that only a minority remain active in doing so. In order to gain a better understanding of the ways in which VSAs work to mentor returnees and identify common gaps in existing practice and barriers to fostering active citizenship, a survey was conducted to assess the state of current practice amongst VSAs across the EU, the findings of which are discussed in the following section.

Survey

Introduction

Building on a workshop conducted as part of the partners' first transnational meeting, and on the initial findings of the individual country reports, the partners developed and piloted an online survey for volunteer sending organisations, to assess their current practice around fostering active citizenship and identify recommendations for ways in which this could be strengthened.

The initial questionnaire was piloted by each partner organisation, including through a workshop that took place with representatives of 17 VSAs in Ireland. The feedback was then incorporated into the final survey, which was distributed across Comlámh's, finep's, Inex's and Volonteurope's networks. The survey was designed and distributed using Survey Monkey; respondents conducted the survey online via an emailed link. The survey remained open for just over three weeks, between June and July 2016.

The survey was divided into three parts.

The first part helped establish the current situation within the respondent's organisation, including how they foster active citizenship in returned volunteers and the percentage of volunteers that remain engaged with the organisation post-deployment. The second section looked at what support the respondent would like to see offered and what conditions would be needed in order to provide this support. The third and final section took a broader view of fostering active citizenship and asked for recommendations on how to encourage active citizenship more widely in society.

Sample

In total, 75 organisations responded to the survey, which far exceeded the initial target of 40 respondents. Due to the international nature of the survey and the project, and the extensive dissemination of the request to complete it among partner organisations, responses were received from a wide range of countries. The most responses received were from Germany (38) with the rest coming from 17 different countries, which was marginally less than the 20 countries that the research had aimed to reach. Some of the responses were from respondents outside of Europe, which has helped to extend the research's original aim of capturing good practice and views in Europe.

Results

The first question on active citizenship was, 'Approximately what percentage of returned volunteers remain engaged with your organisation after deployment?'

The majority of respondents (53.33%) answered between 0-25%: 37.33% answered 26-50%, with only 5.33% answering 51-75% and 4% answering 76-100%.

Question 1: Approximately what percentage of returned volunteers remain engaged with your organisation after deployment?

Returned volunteers remaining engaged after deployment
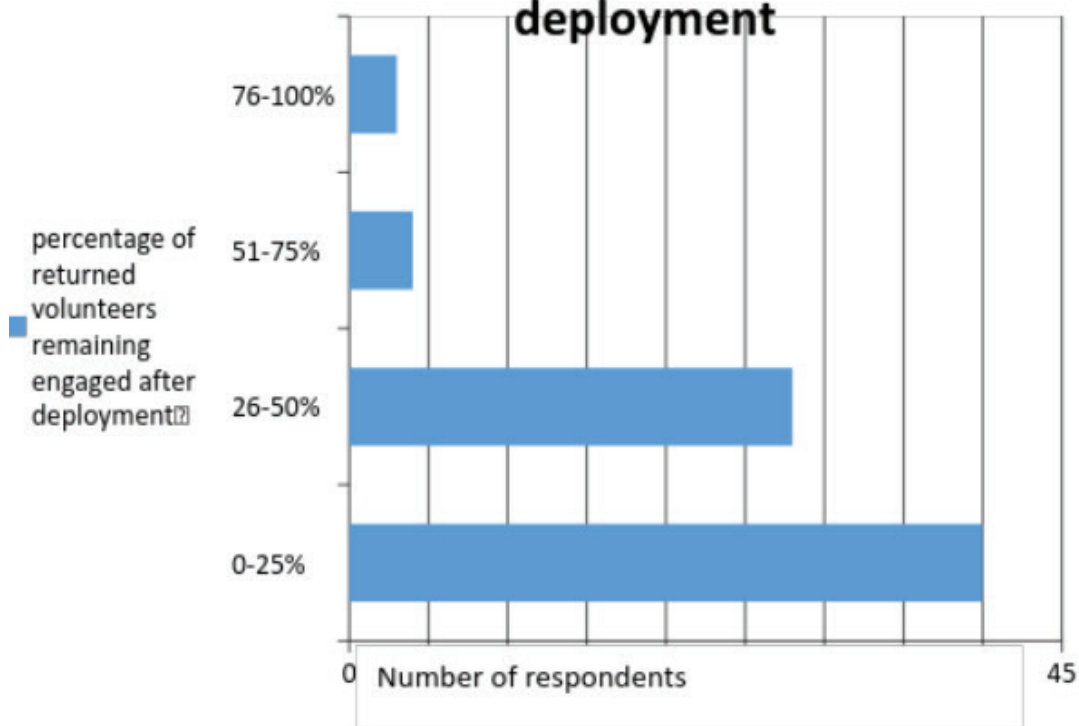
Broadly speaking this fits with Comhlámh's previous research (2010), which found that 33.7% of respondents were involved on their return, while 18.3% were initially involved but had since become inactive, and 48.1% never got engaged.

The second question asked 'Do you currently foster active citizenship in international volunteers?': 88% of respondents answered yes, with 12% answering no.

In response to the third question, 'If you answered yes to the above, at what stage(s) do you foster active citizenship in international volunteers?', 79.10% selected pre-departure, 59% selected during deployment, 77.81%

selected post deployment, with 2.99% selecting other.

Category	Effectiveness		
	Effective	**Somewhat Effective**	**Not Effective**
Involvement in sending organisation (e.g. recruitment)	17	17	1
Networking and establishing alumni	16	13	3
Training (future and ongoing)	15	8	0
Debriefings and post deployment support	9	10	0
Signposting	8	14	3
Engaging with sending organisation in local projects	8	3	1
Workshops	5	8	3
Mentoring/Ongoing individual support	5	4	0
Careers advice/support	3	2	2
Recognition	1	1	0
Financial support	1	2	0
Literature provided	0	2	1

Questions 5 and 6 were linked, asking what support volunteer sending agencies currently provide to foster active citizenship and how effective they perceive this to be. The wide range of responses is presented in the table above.

The next set of questions focused on potential areas for improvement and the conditions that would be required to enable this improvement.

Respondents were asked 'what support, that you do not currently offer, would you like to provide that fosters active citizenship in returned volunteers?'

There was a wide range of responses, as set out below, with training, establishing networks of returnees, and involving returnees in local projects featuring most prominently.

What support, that you do not currently offer, would you like to provide that fosters active citizenship in returned volunteers?

Category	Responses
Training	17
Establishing networks	11
Involving them in local projects	9
Finance for projects	8
Support (general)	7
Signposting to other opportunities	4
Debriefing (individual and group)	3
Involving them in organisation	3
Cooperation with community & NGOs	3
Awards and accreditation	2
Social events	2
Setting up advocacy groups	1

When asked what conditions would be required in order to provide the above support, we received the following responses:

Question 5: what conditions would be required in order to provide the above support?

response percentage
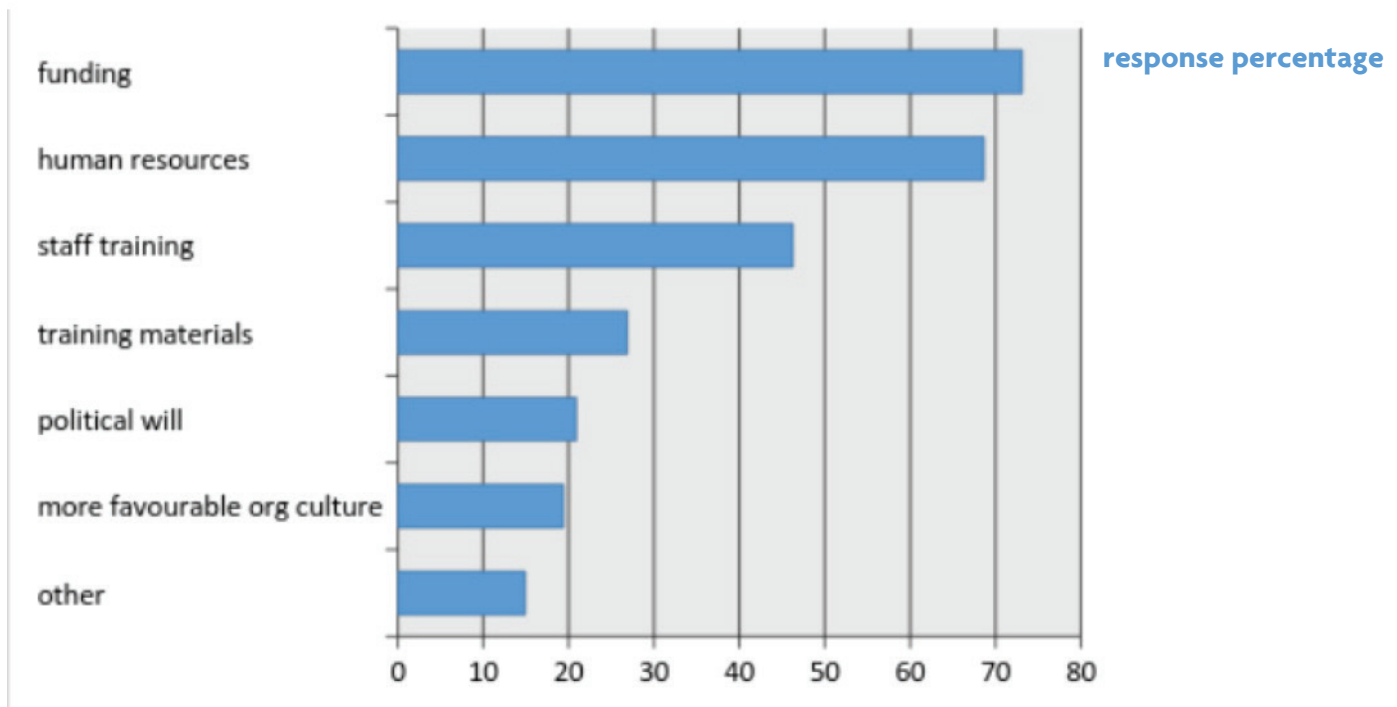
Of the 15% of respondents that chose 'other', the responses included:

1 We need a social environment with more practical opportunities for participation;
2 We need information about what former volunteers need;
3 Pressure on students is high, so no time, space;
4 Geographical barriers: we are based in Berlin but our returned volunteers very often live somewhere else in Germany;
5 Paid staff.

When asked for more detail, a number of strong trends emerged: money, time and people were the main ones. However, there were also responses identifying the need for more trained staff, more peer learning and information about returned volunteers, and a space for young people to have a voice and be involved in decision making and support from government.

The final question of the survey was more open-ended and asked respondents whether they 'have any recommendations on how active citizenship could be fostered more widely in society'? There was a range of responses to this answer, with 45 people answering it and 30 skipping it: six out of the 45 (16%) respondents reflected on the education system from primary to third level, with all stating that education is in a position to foster active citizenship more widely. Feedback included: "In Germany one should start already in schools. People need to learn to think for themselves and to realize that they are part of society and hence can form it accordingly" and "We need societies which are based on mutual support and not so much on alleged individualism and individual fulfilment. And young people need to see that it is worthwhile to engage and that they can experience self-efficacy through their actions. Concerning former volunteers, it seems important to provide clear opportunities for them to become involved and to experience both learning and respect for their perspectives

- and that what they get involved in actually has an impact".

Another significant trend was those that felt that fundamental change to social or economic policy would help to foster wider active citizenship: 6 (13%) out of the 45 respondents discussed the need for redistribution of wealth or a change in political paradigms. The other significant trend within this answer was those who reflected on the role of organisations (NGOs and CSOs) in fostering wider active citizenship: 6 out of 45 (13%) respondents felt that they had a responsibility to reach out more to the public in order to encourage activism.

Conclusions

Based on the above responses, it can be stated that most sending organisations claim to/ try to foster active citizenship to varying degrees at different stages, with 88% of respondents saying they do foster active citizenship. However, when we look at the percentage of volunteers that actually remain engaged with sending organisations post-return, a majority of VSAs stated that this was between 0-25%. It is interesting to note that this was slightly higher amongst respondents from the UK and Ireland, with most estimating the percentage who remain engaged to be between 26-50%. It should be noted that these figures do not mean that returned volunteers are not being active citizens in their communities, just that they may not be doing it through their sending organisations.

When analysing the most common methods of encouraging active citizenship, ongoing involvement directly with the sending organisation (such as recruitment of returnees for continuous engagement projects, debriefings and networks) stands out as an effective methodology. Broadly speaking this is in line with the initial national reports and the recommendations that were identified in these. These recommendations include provision of pre-departure and post-return training, good quality debriefing, and the importance of networks. Involvement in the sending organisation, post-deployment, should not only focus on fundraising for the sending organisation or recruiting future batches of volunteers.

As finep suggests in its own recommendations, "When volunteers come back to Germany, they bring a broad knowledge about their projects and the people they worked with. This has great potential, which can be used on several occasions. First, they can inform their sending organisation about the status quo of their project and participate in the development of future programs to support the partner organisation, as the volunteers know best about the daily life and needs on-site. This exchange can not only be a benefit for the work of the sending organisation,

but also encourage the returnee to stay involved."

General workshops and signposting, although common, had a more mixed response in terms of effectiveness. Signposting is a common form of fostering active citizenship across the partner organisations' countries; this is perhaps because it is not very resource or time intensive for the organisations. When asked what support organisations would like to provide that fosters active citizenship in returned volunteers, financing, training, networks and involvement in local projects were considered the most important. Such responses are broadly in line with the aims and the objectives of Volunteering for the Future. The training that will be developed and rolled out through the project will focus on supporting returned volunteers to set up their own local social action projects, and to establish their own networks.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most common barriers to implementing the above activities were finances, human resources and time. All of these barriers are of course intrinsically linked, as with better finances more staff can be hired, providing more capacity and time. Although it is beyond the scope of the project to address these barriers, we recognise and empathise with these responses.

This research report, and in particular the survey, have identified a number of positive, constructive approaches to fostering active citizenship in returned volunteers. There are strong trends across organisations and different national contexts and it is important that these are disseminated and discussed more widely.   However, it is also worth reflecting that while active citizenship can be seen as a responsibility, as well as a right, it cannot be forced. One response to the question of 'Do you have any recommendations on how active citizenship could be fostered more widely in society?'

stated 'Why should they if they do not want to?".

This is a key point that should not be overlooked and reflects the recommendation set out below: 'Remember that it's ok for volunteers not to engage': it once again brings into focus the problematic nature of active citizenship and the tension that exists between rights and responsibilities. As a counterpart to this, the relatively significant number of respondents who raised the need for broader societal and political change reinforces the research's original identification of political engagement, whereby people engage critically with democratic structures and institutions, as an important dimension of active citizenship.

12 Recommendations for Improving the Way that Active Citizenship is Fostered in Returning International Volunteers

All of the following recommendations, which draw on the findings of the national reports and the survey responses, are underpinned by the principle that the engagement of returned volunteers is an essential part of international volunteering. As such, engagement with international volunteers, post-deployment, needs to become common practice and institutionalised by any organisation involved in placing or supporting international volunteers. It should also be recognised that international volunteering does not just benefit the partner country where the activities take place but also offers a potential benefit to the home countries of the international volunteers, as the volunteers have the potential to be active citizens within their own society given the right conditions.

1. Sending organisations need to stick to their principles and values, encouraging debate, to keep relevant and in touch, and to respond to changing social justice issues (Comhlámh et al, 2015). At the same time, there is a need to create spaces whereby the voluntary and community sector, civil society and governments may develop structured dialogue around advocacy (Harvey, 2014).

2. Sending organisations should be open to changing their traditional organisational structures and welcome ideas and suggestions from former volunteers. This can help returned volunteers to feel appreciated and strengthen their identification with the organisation.

3. Organisations should not only focus on the 'soft' view of active citizenship but also on a more critical form of active citizenship, where action by returned volunteers is fostered in a critical way that can encourage change in political paradigms (Comhlámh et al, 2015).

4. Networks should be established, supported and maintained for returned international volunteers. This will provide greater peer support, enthusiasm and solidarity amongst returned volunteers.

5. Returned volunteers should be acknowledged and their contribution to organisations and society celebrated (MacRory 2009).

6. Sending organisations should form partnerships with locally or nationally based organisations that support people in active citizenship. Such partnerships should go beyond signposting.

7. Pre-departure training should not only focus on volunteer deployment, but should address the issue of sustainable active citizenship. International volunteers should be encouraged to think about their actions after deployment and areas in which they can work during pre-departure training.

8. Post-deployment debriefing is essential. Lovell-Hawker (2009) reported that 60% of development workers returning to the UK report predominantly negative feelings. This can manifest as disorientation, exhaustion or a sense of loss. As such, it is vital that post-deployment debriefing is provided for the health and well-being of the returned volunteers and to mitigate reverse culture shock.

9. Training and support should take a long-term view and not solely be conducted just directly after deployment. Training, learning and tools should be provided to volunteers to help springboard them towards further engagement as an active citizens, once they have re-integrated back into their home country. Long-term commitment is achieved through a combination of theory and practice that is not only delivered directly after deployment.

10. Funding is key to providing safe, high quality support when undertaking active citizenship in a structured way. VSO Nigeria (2014) received feedback from returned volunteers stating that they had difficulty accessing small-scale funds to help support their active citizenship. It is crucial that the retuned volunteers' active citizenship is recognised and that either sending organisations redistribute funding to recognise this or that small grants are made available.

11. Research should be conducted on the long-term impact of returned volunteers on their local community and how they encourage others to engage in community action at home (Machin 2008). Collecting such data may improve political and financial will towards fostering active citizenship in returned volunteers.

12. Remember that it is OK for volunteers not to engage and that the optimum time for them to get involved is when they are ready.

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