



SUMMARY

Volunteering for popular music

A CROSSROAD BETWEEN THE 5 FIVE MUSIC RIGHTS AND THE 5 WAYS TO WELLBEING?

LIVEDMA



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

Introduction

This resource provides a condensed overview of research on volunteering in the live music sector, highlighting different cultural approaches, motivations, benefits, and risks. It also includes a panorama of legal definitions of volunteering in different European countries.

Volunteering in Europe: A General Overview

Volunteering varies greatly across Europe. There is no unified definition or legal framework, and practices differ by region:

- 1. Rhine Model** (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands): Focuses on cultural, religious, and social volunteering, often publicly funded.
- 2. Anglo-Saxon Model** (UK, Ireland): Emphasizes individual initiative and volunteering in health, housing, and local development.
- 3. Scandinavian Model** (Sweden, Norway, Finland): Involves non-profit organizations working for their members, mainly in culture, sports, and leisure.
- 4. Mediterranean Model** (Spain, Italy): Volunteering is less common, focused on health and education, influenced by historical restrictions.
- 5. Central & Eastern European Countries:** Volunteering is often associated with the legacy of communism, leading to low participation in civil initiatives.

Sources: classification done by Edith Archambault with the John Hopkins programme & [Executive summary of the European Commission on volunteering](#)

Volunteering in Music Venues and Festivals

Volunteering is common in the music sector: Live DMA Survey shows that 7,8% of venues part of the Live DMA network are exclusively run by volunteers.

Definitions of volunteer vary by country. Common elements include free commitment, open participation, no salary (though may receive small compensation, if allowed by national legal framework), and educational or social value. However, legal restrictions in some countries prevent certain venues from recruiting volunteers, depending on the venue's legal status.

Volunteer Roles

Volunteers in the music sector can hold different roles:

- decision-making: board members, president of association, programming committee...
- organizational: coordination of other volunteers, administrative task...
- operational: handling the bar or the wardrobe, technical and operation on-site tasks, managing waste...

Why Do People Volunteer?

Motivations include standing up for a cause, sharing skills, gaining new experiences, and feeling part of a community. Younger volunteers may seek to build their resumes or gain professional skills, while older volunteers may seek social interaction and the opportunity to pass on knowledge. Gender, level of schooling and personal experience are other key elements that guide a volunteer towards a particular sector or task.

Within the music sector, we note some extra reasons to justify a volunteer commitment:

- To get to know an ecosystem from within / to discover
- To get professional skills / build a CV
- To get a free access to music / culture
- To discover new artists / bands
- To have professional networking opportunities

Volunteering in the music sector, whether at venues or festivals, often exists in a space of in-betweenness:

- It balances co-creating value with enjoying the experience,
- Blurs the line between work and pleasure,
- Moves between structured organization and «creative chaos,»
- And it merges aspects of work with social life.

Volunteering: A Path to Well-being

Volunteering aligns with the «5 Ways to Well-being,» contributing to personal and collective well-being.



Volunteering Risks: Exploitation

While volunteering can be rewarding, it can also lead to exploitation if not managed carefully. Volunteers may face excessive demands, lack of support, and poor working conditions. It's crucial for organizations to create a safe and supportive environment for volunteers.

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the volunteer crisis, with many venues struggling to recruit volunteers, jeopardizing the entire live music ecosystem.

Conclusion

Volunteers are vital to the live music sector. Their contribution should be valued and appreciated to ensure the sustainability of live music events.