

Interview

How is volunteering being promoted from the local level?



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Volunteering Office of Sant Cugat del Vallès.

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Volunteering Desk of Santa Coloma de Gramenet.

How does the local approach to volunteering look? How do municipalities promote volunteering? In order to answer these two questions, we have talked to Laia Travé (Volunteering Office of Sant Cugat del Vallès) and Sònia Toro (Volunteering Desk of Santa Coloma de Gramenet).

What is the main challenge of volunteering today?

According to Laia Travé, “the main challenge is to set up a high quality volunteering scheme that is committed to the **needs of society** as a whole”. Sònia Toro, in turn, thinks that “it is indispensable to continuously **promote education** with a positive and growing disposition”. She also adds that “by means of education volunteers gain insight into different visions and approaches of the world surrounding them and they can find some advice about **how to act** in their voluntary action”.

Have individualistic values grown in our society over the last few years?

Both of them agree that even though it looks as if we were living in a very individualistic society, “long lost social and **community values** have now been rediscovered” in the volunteering field. It looks as if the current crisis has helped to develop a collective and more generous **awareness** for the problems we are facing nowadays.

Is volunteering a matter of age?

Sònia Toro strongly denies this. She states that “in Santa Coloma de Gramenet we have had people from the age of 16 to 75. We believe that volunteering has more to do with **people’s value system**, their will to cooperate in solving issues that affect others in order to make them diminish or even disappear”.

From the Volunteering Office of Sant Cugat del Vallès, Laia Travé contradicts the statement as well. She argues that “it is not a matter of age but of values and **commitment**. There are a lot of young volunteers wanting to spend

their leisure time developing voluntary actions, and also many seniors that wish to dedicate their retirement to help other people, after a whole life working. It matters how much time we dispose of, but at each age there are different **motivations** or interests for the world of volunteering”.

What kind of volunteering do we have today?

"We think there are, in a broad sense, **two main volunteer profiles**. On the one hand, those who do voluntary work **out of conviction** and principles; and, on the other, those who want to expand their range of **experiences** so to discover new professional fields", says Laia Travé.

Sònia Toro adds that "one distinctive feature of the present time is the high number of **unemployed people** who temporarily combine their job search with their social contribution through volunteering, as long as their personal situation allows them to do so".

What are the keys to promote volunteering on a municipal level?

According to Sònia Toro, it is about "defining a **common framework** for the several actors that are involved in volunteering. Santa Coloma de Gramenet has developed the Sectorial Committee for Social Volunteering as a participative space that allows to unite efforts, and to cooperatively reflect and deliberate strategies. The municipality has defined three basic pillars for the promotion of volunteering: an integral **support scheme to organizations**, an **educational plan** offered to volunteers and the design of several **plans to raise public awareness** and to plant seeds of volunteering among our fellow citizens”.

Laia Travé, in turn, explains that in Sant Cugat del Vallès they try "to help organizations in **promoting their projects**, to support them so they can offer **educational programs** to their own members, to promote good programs on volunteering management, etc. And, at the same time, to **help volunteers to find their own space**, where they can develop those actions that best fit their personal profile. The final aim would be to define a good network of organizations and volunteers where each can find its space and a good **communication** between all of them is possible”.

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