

# **Volunteers at the FINA World Championships: Planning, Implementation and Evaluation**

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## **Aim**

The aim of the present study is to evaluate the volunteer recruitment, training and management methods implemented during the 17th FINA World Championship organised in Budapest and Balatonfüred during the summer of 2017. The question was whether the time contribution and the retention of volunteers were influenced by their affiliation to the local community, sports participation, experience in previous events as volunteers, and relations to sport as a profession.

## **Theoretical Background and Literature Review**

Similar to the traditions of other international sports events (Chalip, 2006;) the local organising committee used the assistance of volunteers to deliver the event. The planning and implementation of the Budapest2017 Volunteer Program and the retention of volunteers during the event faced the challenge of the four years shorter time period available for event preparation as originally planned, and the overall low willingness for volunteering of Hungarians registered among EU countries (Eurostat, 2015). As supporting drives the experiences from several single-sport and single-venue continental and world events organised in Hungary such as the 31th European Championship in Swimming in 2012 were implemented. Previous literature in relation to volunteer retention emphasized the role of acknowledgement of volunteer contribution, assigned volunteer coordinator, intangible benefits (Piatkowska et al., 2017). Research also showed that volunteers' engagement is higher upon contribution to the loved sport, to own local community, or chance for experiences in line with future career goals (Bang & Ross, 2009; Kristiansen, 2015). Regardless that the important drivers for volunteers' retention identified by previous research were implemented in the different phases of the Budapest2017 Volunteer Program the number of shifts completed by volunteers showed wide diversity.

## **Research Design and Data Analysis**

Based on volunteer registration data N=2856 volunteers participating in FINA World Championships 2017 were included in this analysis. Following data cleaning statistical analysis was performed on the data of N=2500 volunteers in SPSS 18.0. The analysis described the gender, age, and main activity breakdown of volunteers and the total and average number of completed shifts. Also, looked at how participation in sports, local affiliation, volunteer experience and sports related studies or profession would have a positive relation to the number of shifts completed as a volunteer on the event. Categories for measuring sport involvement were 1) non-sport participants, 2) participants in FINA sports and 3) participants in other sports; categories for volunteer involvement were 1) no previous volunteer experience, 2) volunteer experience at FINA sport events, 2) volunteer experience at events other than in FINA sports; categories for local affiliation were 1) no affiliation 2) place of birth, permanent or temporary address was in Budapest or Balatonfüred, 3) affiliation in foreign countries; professional involvement had categories 1) area of study related to sports, 2) area of employment related to sports, 3) no relations to sport in profession. Inter-group differences were examined with ANOVA.

## Results

It was found that women were over-represented among volunteers (75.5%, N=1889 female vs. 26.5%, N=661 male); 61.8% of volunteers were below 22 years of age, 30.4% between 22-45, and 7.8% above 45; 75.2% were students, 19.8% employed, and 5.0% inactive (retired, mothers with small children, or unemployed). Volunteers all together delivered 30745 shifts of eight-hours from the altogether 31278 shifts promised, which meant 98% fulfillment of volunteer promise; volunteers delivered an average of 12,30 shifts. There was significant difference in connection to the delivered shifts in case of two of the measured variables: volunteers not having local affiliation completed significantly higher number of shifts in comparison to the local and foreign volunteers [ $F(2,2497)=11.09$ ;  $p<0.05$ ], and volunteers of previous FINA-sport events performed significantly higher in comparison to volunteers with no previous volunteer experience at all [ $F(2,2497)=6.17$ ;  $p<0.05$ ]. There was no significant difference found in connection to sports participation and sports related professional engagement. Also, age and main activity showed no significant differences, however, women's results were significantly higher than men's.

## Conclusion and Implications

Even though the composition of volunteers represented diversity representing people with a variety of ages, education backgrounds and from over five hundred settlements from Hungary, the core of the volunteers over-represented females and young adults. Volunteers can be found among those participating in sports, but a large scale event may call upon those with no previous volunteer experience on sports events. It seems that the local affiliation and feel for own city, furthermore the engagement in FINA sports may not play a crucial role, however, previous volunteer experience in FINA sports events makes volunteers to get deeper engagement. The findings of this study reinforce the decision of organising committees to accept out of the city volunteers and provide them with accommodation and travel vouchers as their contribution seems to be well-realised during a long and intensive event. Also, call upon for FINA sports to build up their own volunteer pool that can follow upcoming events.

## References

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