

## **TANULMÁNYOK / STUDIES**



**Motivations and Barriers  
for Cross-Cultural Volunteering Among International Students:  
A Study at the University of Sopron, Hungary**

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**Abstract:** This study explores the motivations and barriers influencing international students' participation in cross-cultural volunteering at the University of Sopron, Hungary. A quantitative approach was employed, using an adapted questionnaire, to gather data on volunteering experiences, motivations, and barriers. A total of (53) International students responded to the questionnaire. The results show that while international students recognize the benefits of volunteering such as enhancing teamwork skills, community integration, and personal fulfilment, their engagement in voluntary activities significantly decreases after arriving in Sopron. Key motivations identified include career development, personal growth, and a desire to contribute to the host community. However, barriers such as language challenges, lack of accessible information, and academic pressures hinder participation. The findings underscore the importance of addressing these obstacles to improve volunteer engagement and integration within the host community. Recommendations for future volunteer programs and institutional support are provided, aimed at fostering greater participation among international students.

**Keywords:** *international students, cross-cultural volunteering, motivations and barriers, University of Sopron, community integration*

**JEL Codes:** *I23, J24, L31*

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## **Introduction**

Students pursue international education for various reasons, typically related to career aspirations, personal development, and cultural exposure. While obtaining a degree from a foreign country is often the primary objective, studying abroad also offers additional opportunities. One such opportunity is engaging in volunteer work, which can be supported by educational institutions. In recent years, voluntary work has gained considerable attention due to its positive impact on both individuals and communities. For international students, volunteering provides a unique opportunity to integrate into their host communities, develop new skills, and contribute to meaningful social causes.

The University of Sopron, which attracts international students from various countries through its diverse programmes, has recorded a significant increase in enrolments for the 2024-2025 academic year (Linda, 2024). Understanding the motivations and barriers international students encounter when engaging in voluntary activities can help the university design more effective initiatives to enhance student integration and participation in community development projects.

This research aims to explore the factors influencing international students' participation in cross-cultural volunteer work. The findings will provide insights for the International Office to develop targeted activities that encourage international students to engage in voluntary work. To achieve this, the research seeks to answer the following main two questions:

What are the motivations influencing international students' participation in voluntary activities at the University of Sopron?

What are the barriers that reduce international students' participation in voluntary activities at the University of Sopron?

## **Literature review**

International students are an increasingly significant demographic group in higher education institutions worldwide, drawn by the pursuit of diverse educational opportunities, career goals, and personal development. This group promotes cultural exchange and makes economic contributions to host countries. However, international students often encounter challenges such as cultural adjustment, academic pressures, and difficulties with social integration (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Participating in voluntary activities can help ease some of these challenges, offering international students' opportunities to

engage with their host communities, gain new skills, and contribute positively to society (Clary et al., 1998b; Stukas et al., 2016).

Scholars have provided varying definitions of volunteering and its related concepts. Hustinx et al. (2010) describe volunteering as an activity undertaken by individuals who willingly offer their time and skills to assist others without expecting financial compensation, often within the context of civic engagement aimed at promoting social cohesion and community resilience (Hustinx et al., 2010). Similarly, Wilson (2000) defines volunteering as any activity where time is freely given to benefit another person, group, or cause (Wilson, 2000). Volunteerism is also described as activities of general interest that promote intercultural understanding and solidarity, are social or humanitarian in nature, non-professional, and carried out within the framework of nonprofit, non-governmental organizations (Akintola, 2011). In our research, we adopted Wilson's (2000) definition of volunteering as any activity in which time is freely given to benefit another person, group, or cause (Wilson, 2000).

International students often engage in voluntary work for various reasons, Clary and Snyder (1999) suggest that motivations for volunteering typically include career development, personal growth, and a desire to contribute to the local community (Clary & Snyder, 1999). Which assists international students in coping with the challenges of living in a foreign country. It can alleviate stress by providing a constructive outlet for their energy and helping them build a support system within their host community (Clary et al., 1998a). According to Wilson (2012), a key motivation for international students is the opportunity to gain practical experience and improve their employability (Wilson, 2012). Additionally, a sense of moral duty is a common motivator, as explained by Haski-Leventhal et al. (2010). Some international students are motivated by a desire to give back to society and support causes they care about, viewing voluntary work as a means of making a positive impact in their host country, which in turn enhances their personal fulfilment (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2010).

Despite volunteering motivations, international students encounter several barriers when participating in voluntary activities. Volet and Ang (2012) identified language barriers as one of the most significant obstacles. Students who are not fluent in the host country's language may struggle to communicate effectively, hindering their full engagement in volunteering (Volet & Ang, 2012). Cultural differences have also been highlighted as a barrier. Handy and Greenspan (2009) explained that international students

may have varying perceptions of volunteering based on their cultural backgrounds, which can influence their participation (Handy & Greenspan, 2009). Additionally, time constraints and academic pressures present further challenges. International students often have demanding academic schedules, leaving little time for voluntary activities. Balancing academic commitments with part-time employment adds additional pressure, making it difficult for students to engage in volunteer work (Holdsworth & Brewis, 2014).

### **Research methodology**

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

What are the motivations influencing international students' participation in voluntary activities at the University of Sopron?

What are the barriers that reduce international students' participation in voluntary activities at the University of Sopron?

To address these questions, a quantitative approach was employed, rooted in a positivist research philosophy, thus allowing the investigation of motivations and barriers through measurable data. Data collection was facilitated through a questionnaire adopted from (Clary et al., 1998a; Wondimu & Admas, 2024). The questionnaire as shown in Appendix (1) included key sections addressing different aspects of volunteering, with an additional five items dedicated to demographic data. Furthermore, open-ended questions were included to allow respondents to provide comments or further details. The questionnaire was accompanied by an introduction that clearly outlined the study's objectives and stressed the voluntary nature of participation. A multi-stage sampling strategy was employed, using both volunteer and convenience sampling techniques. These methods were chosen to ensure broad reach and effective recruitment of potential participants. The survey was conducted online via Google Forms, and participants were recruited through the University of Sopron's International Office, email invitations, and WhatsApp groups dedicated to student communities. A total of (53) individuals participated in the survey. To ensure the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's alpha was calculated, providing a measure of internal consistency. Following this, a comprehensive descriptive analysis was performed to address the research question. This analysis aimed to calculate the (mean scores, standard deviations, relative weights, item rankings), for each dimension of volunteering motivations and barriers, providing a clear understanding of the factors influencing international students' engagement in cross-cultural volunteering.

## Data analysis and discussion

### *Reliability test*

In addition to the demographic and open-ended questions, the questionnaire used in this study includes 30 items -that must be answered by choosing one answer from the scale –, divided into two dimensions: 14 items for volunteering motivations and 16 items for volunteering barriers. As summarized in Table (1), a reliability test was conducted to assess the consistency and internal coherence of the research instrument. Cronbach’s alpha was used as the measure of reliability for the two dimensions: Volunteering Motivations, Volunteering Barriers, and the overall set of items.

**Table (1): Reliability test**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>	<b>Cronbach’s alpha</b>
<b>Volunteering Motivations</b>	14	0.92
<b>Volunteering barriers</b>	16	0.83
<b>All items</b>	30	0.73

*Source: Data analysis from (Own survey, 2024) using SPSS Version 27.*

The Cronbach’s alpha for the Volunteering Motivations dimension is 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency. As the value above 0.90 is generally considered highly reliable, showing that the 14 items measuring motivations for volunteering are closely related and consistently reflect the same underlying concept. The Volunteering Barriers dimension has a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.83, which also demonstrates strong internal consistency. For the overall scale, which includes all 30 items (both motivations and barriers), the Cronbach’s alpha is 0.73. Although this value is slightly lower than the individual dimensions, it still falls within the acceptable range for social science research, where alpha values between 0.70 and 0.80 are considered satisfactory. The results of the reliability analysis show that the instrument is reliable, with well-correlated items that demonstrate internal consistency.

### Sample analysis

A descriptive analysis of the sample was conducted, as summarized in Table (2). The sample consists of 53 respondents. The gender distribution is nearly equal, with (49.06%) male (26 individuals) and (49.06%) female (26 individuals). Only (1.89%) of respondents (1 individual) preferred not to disclose their gender. This balanced representation suggests that the survey includes insights from both male and female perspectives, which helps reduce gender bias in the results.

**Table (2): Sample analysis results.**

Category	Frequency	Percent	Category	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Level of Study</b>		
<b>Male</b>	26	49.06%	Under-graduate	14	26.42%
<b>Female</b>	26	49.06%	Master's	20	37.74%
<b>Prefer not to say</b>	1	1.89%	PhD	19	35.85%
Category	Frequency	Percent	Category	Frequency	Percent
<b>Age</b>			<b>Duration of Stay in Sopron</b>		
<b>18-24</b>	20	37.74%	Less than 6 months	10	18.87%
<b>25-30</b>	16	30.19%	6 months to 1 year	6	11.32%
<b>31-35</b>	13	24.53%	1-2 years	16	30.19%
<b>36 and above</b>	4	7.5%	More than 2 years	21	39.62%

*Source: Data analysis from (Own survey, 2024) using SPSS Version 27.*

Regarding educational level, the majority of respondents are pursuing either Master's degrees (37.74%) or PhDs (35.85%), while (26.42%) are undergraduates. This indicates that most participants are engaged in advanced studies, which may influence their level of involvement in academic activities, including volunteering. Higher education students, particularly those at the post-graduate level, may have more opportunities and motivation for participating in cross-cultural volunteering activities.

In terms of age distribution, (37.74%) of respondents are in the (18-24) age group, followed by (30.19%) in the (25-30) range. The (31-35) age group

makes up (24.53%), while only (7.55%) are (36) years or older. The majority of respondents are younger. Younger individuals may be more open to new experiences and more actively involved in university life, which could influence their participation in cross-cultural activities and volunteering.

The analysis of the duration of stay in Sopron shows that (39.62%) of respondents have lived in Sopron for more than two years, while (30.19%) have stayed between (1-2) years. About (18.87%) have been in Sopron for less than six months, and (11.32%) have stayed between (6) months to (1) year. This shows that a significant portion of respondents (around 70%) have been in Sopron for over a year, likely making them more familiar with the local culture and community. This familiarity could lead to higher engagement in cross-cultural volunteering. On the other hand, newer arrivals (approximately 30%) may still be adapting to life in Sopron, which could impact their willingness or ability to participate in such activities.

### ***Analysis of Volunteering Engagement Before and After Arriving in Sopron***

The analysis of volunteering engagement among respondents before and after arriving in Sopron as shown in table (3) shows a notable decline in participation rates. Prior to their arrival, a significant majority 69.20% (36 respondents) reported having participated in voluntary activities, indicating that they were familiar with and likely committed to community engagement in their home countries. In contrast, after arriving in Sopron, this number decreased to only 19.20% (10 respondents) actively participating in voluntary activities,

**Table (3) Volunteering Engagement Before and After Arriving in Sopron.**

Category	Before Coming to Sopron		After Arriving in Sopron	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Participated in voluntary activities	36	69.20%	10	19.20%
Did not participate in voluntary activities	16	30.80%	41	80.80%

*Source: Data analysis from (Own survey, 2024) using SPSS Version 27.*

while a staggering 80.80% (41 respondents) reported not engaging in any volunteering activity in Sopron. This sharp decline suggests that, despite their prior experience and predisposition to volunteer, substantial barriers may be hindering their participation in Sopron.

### *Volunteering motivations*

Table (4) presents respondents' attitudes toward various statements related to their motivation for volunteering in Sopron. The analysis includes mean scores, standard deviations, relative weights, item rankings, and the overall attitudes of respondents toward 14 statements about volunteering motivations. This provides a comprehensive overview of the key factors influencing participants' willingness to volunteer.

**Table (4) Volunteering motivations items.**

Item	Item Ranking	Mean	Std. Deviation	Relative Weight	Respondents' Attitude
Volunteering allows me to practice teamwork skills.	1	4.37	0.73	87.54	strongly agree
I believe in giving back to the community and helping others.	2	4.35	0.83	87.16	strongly agree
Volunteering helps me to meet new people and make friends.	3	4.32	0.80	86.41	strongly agree
Volunteering gives me a sense of personal achievement and fulfillment	4	4.13	0.87	82.64	Agree
Volunteering helps me to integrate better into the local culture.	5	4.03	0.75	80.75	Agree
Volunteering helps me to improve my language skills	6	4.01	0.79	80.37	Agree
Volunteering would help me understand the local culture better.	7	3.98	0.79	79.62	Agree
Volunteering will help me in career development.	8	3.98	0.84	79.62	Agree
Volunteering will be added value to my CV.	9	3.96	0.91	79.24	Agree
My culture values community service, and I feel its important to uphold this value while abroad.	10	3.90	0.88	78.11	Agree
Volunteering allows me to practice leadership skills	11	3.88	1.01	77.73	Agree
volunteering helps to reduce stress and improve your mental health.	12	3.83	0.87	76.60	Agree
participating in voluntary activities to reduce feelings of loneliness	13	3.79	0.98	75.84	Agree
participating in voluntary activities helps to reduce feelings of homesickness	14	3.54	0.99	70.94	Agree

*Source: Data analysis from (Own survey, 2024) using SPSS Version 27.*

The top three statements (Volunteering allows me to practice teamwork skills with mean (4.38) and relative importance (87.55), I believe in giving back to the community and helping others with mean (4.36) and relative importance (87.17), and Volunteering helps me to meet new people and make friends with mean (4.32) and relative importance (86.42) ) indicate a strong belief in

the social and collaborative aspects of volunteering, suggesting that respondents view volunteering as a significant means to enhance their teamwork abilities, contribute to their community, and build social connections.

On the other hand, the lower-ranked statements, such as “Participating in voluntary activities helps reduce feelings of homesickness” (mean = 3.54, relative weight = 70.94), indicate that while respondents recognize the emotional benefits of volunteering, such as mitigating homesickness and loneliness, these aspects are viewed as less significant compared to other motivations like skill development and social engagement. Items related to reducing stress and improving mental health (mean = 3.83, relative weight = 76.60) and practicing leadership skills (mean = 3.88, relative weight = 77.73) also reflect a moderate level of agreement, suggesting that although these are important factors, they are secondary to the more dominant social and community-oriented motivations.

The standard deviations for the motivation statements range from 0.740 to 1.013, indicating a moderate level of variability in responses. Overall, respondents tend to lean toward “strongly agree” and “agree” for most statements, reflecting a generally positive perception of volunteering. However, the variation in standard deviation values highlights differing opinions on specific aspects, such as the impact of volunteering on leadership skills and its role in reducing homesickness. The higher standard deviations for these items (1.01 and 0.99, respectively) suggest that while many respondents recognize the benefits of volunteering in these areas, their views on these particular aspects are more diverse.

In contrast, the lower standard deviations for the top-ranked items, such as teamwork skills and community service, indicate stronger agreement, reinforcing the idea that these social and collaborative aspects of volunteering are more valued among the respondents. Overall, the data indicates that respondents are primarily motivated by the social, cultural, and skill-building opportunities volunteering provides, with less emphasis on emotional benefits such as stress relief and combating homesickness. These findings emphasize the need to tailor volunteer programs to enhance these key areas of motivation, while also addressing the emotional benefits for those who may find them important.

### ***Volunteering barriers***

The analysis of barriers to volunteering, as presented in the table (5), shows significant insights into the challenges faced by respondents in Sopron. The

top-ranked item, “I have difficulty finding information about volunteering opportunities in Sopron”, has a mean score of 4.07 and a relative weight of 81.50, indicating strong agreement among respondents regarding the lack of accessible information. This suggests that a significant barrier to engagement in volunteering is the difficulty in obtaining relevant information about available opportunities.

**Table (5) Volunteering barriers items analysis.**

Item	Item Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Relative Weight	Respondents' Attitude
I have difficulty finding information about volunteering opportunities in Sopron.	1	4.07	0.99	81.50	strongly agree
I am not familiar with how volunteering works in this Sopron.	2	3.79	1.18	75.84	Agree
I feel uncomfortable volunteering due to language barriers	3	3.50	1.33	70.18	Agree
I am hesitant to volunteer because I do not feel fully integrated into the local community.	4	3.32	1.23	66.41	Neutral
Volunteering can lead to frustration when expectations are not met.	5	3.28	0.98	65.66	Neutral
I have trouble finding transportation to volunteering locations.	6	3.16	0.99	63.39	Neutral
The cost of volunteering (e.g., transportation, meals) is a barrier for me.	7	3.11	0.97	62.26	Neutral
I do not have enough time to volunteer due to part-time work commitments	8	2.90	1.24	58.11	Neutral
I lack the necessary skills or training for some volunteer roles.	9	2.86	1.09	57.35	Neutral
My academic schedule is too demanding and doesn't allow time for volunteering.	10	2.86	1.00	57.35	Neutral
I feel voluntary work is not highly valued in Sopron.	11	2.77	0.97	55.47	Neutral
Volunteering sometimes causes me emotional exhaustion or burnout.	12	2.6	0.99	53.96	Neutral
I have concerns about the legality of voluntary activities in Sopron.	13	2.60	0.86	52.07	disagree
I have concerns about the safety of voluntary activities in a Sopron.	14	2.56	0.93	51.32	disagree
I am concerned that volunteering might affect my studies negatively	15	2.47	1.03	49.43	disagree
I feel voluntary work is not highly valued in my home culture.	16	2.45	1.20	49.05	disagree

*Source: Data analysis from (Own survey, 2024) using SPSS Version 27.*

Following this, the second-ranked item, “I am not familiar with how volunteering works in Sopron,” with a mean of 3.79 and relative weight of 75.84,

reflects a moderate agreement, suggesting that many respondents feel uncertain about the volunteering process in the area. This lack of familiarity may hinder their willingness to participate in volunteer activities. The third item, “I feel uncomfortable volunteering due to language barriers”, has a mean of 3.50 and a relative weight of 70.18, indicating that language challenges are a significant concern for some individuals, which may affect their confidence and comfort in volunteering environments.

The remaining barriers show varying levels of agreement, with items such as “I am hesitant to volunteer because I do not feel fully integrated into the local community” (mean = 3.32, relative weight = 66.41) and “Volunteering can lead to frustration when expectations are not met” (mean = 3.28, relative weight = 65.66) receiving neutral attitudes from respondents. This suggests that while these concerns are present, they may not be as pressing as the higher-ranked barriers. Additionally, logistical challenges, such as transportation difficulties and costs associated with volunteering, are indicated by lower-ranking items like “I have trouble finding transportation to volunteering locations” (mean = 3.16, relative weight = 63.39) and “The cost of volunteering (e.g., transportation, meals) is a barrier for me” (mean = 3.11, relative weight = 62.26), which contribute to the overall hesitation to engage in volunteer activities.

Most items in the barriers section exhibit mean scores that reflect neutral attitudes, with several items falling below 3.00. For instance, concerns about the legality of volunteering activities (2.60), safety (2.56), and the potential negative impact on studies (2.47) received lower mean scores, suggesting that these are not significant barriers for most respondents. This indicates that while there are perceived obstacles, many respondents may not prioritize these concerns as strongly as issues related to information accessibility and integration into the local community.

The standard deviations for the barrier items range from 0.86 to 1.33, showing a moderate level of variability in responses. The higher standard deviation for the item related to language barriers (1.33) suggests greater diversity in opinions about this particular barrier, indicating that individuals experience these challenges differently. In contrast, lower standard deviations for items concerning transportation and costs reflect more consensus on these logistical barriers.

Overall, the findings suggest that while respondents recognize several barriers to volunteering, the most significant challenges relate to the accessibility of information and a lack of familiarity with the volunteering landscape

in Sopron. Addressing these barriers through targeted outreach and support could enhance participation in volunteering, ultimately fostering greater community engagement and integration among respondents.

### ***Volunteering Activities***

#### ***Previous Volunteering Engagement***

The survey aimed to gather insights from respondents regarding their prior engagement in voluntary activities before coming to Sopron. The questions were designed to elicit detailed responses, allowing participants to specify their experiences in various categories of voluntary work. The findings are summarized in table (6):

**Table (6): Previous Volunteering Engagement of International Students**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Type of Voluntary Work</b>
<b>Community Engagement</b>	Community Services
	Maintaining Elderly Homes and Supporting Street Boys
	Working with Kids (Foundation and Church)
	Feeding the Hungry and Visiting Elderly Homes
	Social Work
	Youth Parliament
	Elected Member of the General Students' Committee
<b>Environmental Initiatives</b>	Planting Trees and Cleaning Beaches
	Afforestation and Reforestation
	Environmental Clean-ups
	Ecological Volunteering
<b>Educational Support</b>	New Students Orientation
	Teaching and Helping with Organizations
	Teaching Arabic to Non-Arabic Speakers
	Education and Community Engagement
	Tutoring Kids from Disadvantaged Backgrounds
	Graduate Training in Entrepreneurship
<b>Other Activities</b>	Charity Run and Charity Flea Market
	Helping Special Needs Individuals at Sporting Events
	Assisting Small and Medium Entrepreneurs with Financial Statements

*Source: Data analysis from (Own survey, 2024) using SPSS Version 27.*

These results indicate a rich variety of previous volunteering experiences, with significant participation in community services, environmental initiatives, and educational support. This variety suggests that the respondents are

well-acquainted with diverse types of voluntary work that foster both community development and individual growth.

### *Volunteering Activities in Sopron*

Upon arriving in Sopron, respondents were asked to specify their volunteering activities, revealing a somewhat narrower scope of engagement. The summarized activities in table (7) shows the volunteering activities that international students engaged in since their arrival at Sopron.

**Table (7): Volunteering Activities of International Students in Sopron**

Category	Activity
<b>Educational Activities</b>	Mentorship for New Students
	Project Week in Faculty of Economics
	Youth Exchange
	International Student Mentorship
<b>Mental Health</b>	Mental Health Programme
<b>Environmental Activities</b>	Replanting Burned Forests

*Source: Data analysis from (Own survey, 2024) using SPSS Version 27.*

These findings indicate that the majority of volunteering activities in Sopron are by university-led initiatives. This reliance confirms the lack of accessible opportunities for students outside the university context as explained in the barriers analyses.

### *Preferred Areas of Volunteering in Sopron*

The analysis of preferred volunteering areas highlights the specific interests of students regarding their future engagements in Sopron as shown in table (8).

The results show a preference for environmental matters (32 occurrences) underscores a significant inclination toward ecological sustainability. Following this, education and academic matters (25 occurrences) reveal a strong desire to support educational initiatives. Other noteworthy areas include social and disability matters (20 occurrences) and humanitarian services (18 occurrences), reflecting a commitment to social justice and community welfare.

**Table (8): Preferred Areas of Volunteering for International Students in Sopron**

#	section	Occurrence
1	Environmental matters	32
2	Education and Academic Matters	25
3	Social and disability Matters	20
4	Humanitarian Services	18

*Source: Data analysis from (Own survey, 2024) using SPSS Version 27.*

The comparison of volunteering activities that international students engaged in their homelands or in Sopron and the preferred activities illustrates a dichotomy between the students' rich history of volunteering across diverse sectors and their current concentrated interests in environmental sustainability and educational support. While their previous experiences reflect a broad engagement in community and individual development, the present opportunities in Sopron appear limited to university-organized activities. This alignment between past experiences and preferred volunteering areas suggests that local organizations could benefit from creating targeted volunteer opportunities that resonate with students' skills and interests, thereby enhancing their engagement and integration within the Sopron community.

### **Conclusion and suggestions**

The research highlights the critical factors influencing international students' participation in cross-cultural volunteering at the University of Sopron. The findings reveal that although international students recognize the benefits of volunteering – such as improving teamwork skills, social integration, and contributing to the community – their actual engagement in voluntary activities significantly decreases after arriving in Sopron. This decline, from 69.20% participation before arriving to only 19.20% after, suggests that despite students' initial interest in volunteering, substantial barriers limit their involvement.

The primary motivations for volunteering are rooted in social and cultural integration, personal achievement, and skill development. Respondents strongly agree that volunteering helps them practice teamwork, give back to the community, and build social connections. However, emotional benefits like reducing homesickness and stress, although acknowledged, are not as

highly prioritized. These insights reflect a general orientation toward the interpersonal and collaborative aspects of volunteering, rather than individual emotional gains.

Conversely, barriers to volunteering include challenges such as difficulty finding information, unfamiliarity with the volunteering process, and language barriers. These factors contribute significantly to the sharp decline in participation rates. Although logistical barriers such as transportation and time constraints are present, they are not as influential as informational and cultural obstacles.

The research confirms that international students possess a wealth of experience in diverse volunteering sectors, particularly in community services and environmental initiatives. However, their participation in Sopron is largely limited to university-led initiatives, and for reducing the gap the study suggests below Suggestions:

- **Improving Access to Volunteering Information:** The University of Sopron should prioritize making volunteering opportunities more accessible to international students. For instance, integrating volunteer fairs into student orientation programs would allow new students to explore opportunities early in their academic journey.
- **Targeted Volunteering Programs:** to better align with students' interests and previous experiences, the university and local organizations should create targeted volunteer programs in areas such as environmental sustainability and education, which were the most preferred fields among respondents.
- **Language Support Initiatives:** since language barriers pose a significant challenge, offering language support in volunteer activities – either through bilingual coordinators or language training workshops – would enable students to participate more confidently. This could also enhance their integration into the local community.
- **Cultural Orientation on Volunteering:** organizing workshops that familiarize international students with local volunteering norms and expectations could reduce uncertainty and hesitation. Such initiatives would help students better understand how volunteering works in Sopron and how they can contribute effectively.
- **Collaboration with Community Organizations:** encouraging collaboration between the university and local organizations could help diversify volunteering opportunities beyond university-led initiatives.

This partnership would not only provide students with more avenues to engage with the local community but also foster stronger ties between the university and the broader Sopron community.

### Recommendations for Future Research

- Conduct qualitative interviews to explore deeper insights into the varying opinions, particularly for statements with higher standard deviations.
- Investigate potential barriers to volunteer participation, especially for those who may not strongly agree with the benefits outlined in the lower-ranked statements.

By addressing these barriers and enhancing support structures, the University of Sopron can significantly boost international students' engagement in cross-cultural volunteering, fostering stronger social integration and personal development for the students, while contributing positively to the local community.

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## Appendix (1): Research instrument

### Survey questionnaire.

Dear Student,

My name is **(will be added after review)**, a PhD student at **(will be added after review)** , Iam conducting research titled:

**“Motivations and Barriers for Cross-Cultural Volunteering  
Among International Students:  
A Study at the University of Sopron, Hungary.”**

As part of the research process, I invite you to participate in a survey designed to gather valuable data that will contribute to a better understanding of the cross-cultural Volunteering in our University.

**Confidentiality:** Rest assured that all information provided in this survey will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used exclusively for scientific purposes.

**Contact Information:** if you have any questions or require further clarification, please feel free to contact me: **(will be added after review)**

**Your cooperation and generous response are highly appreciated.**

Best regards,

**Volunteerism Definition:** Any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or Society.

### Section 1

Volunteering experience	Elements
Before coming to Sopron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you participated in voluntary activities before coming to Sopron?</li> </ul> <p>If the responder answered Yes She/he will be asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes, please describe the type of voluntary work you have been involved in</li> </ul>
After arriving in Sopron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you participated in voluntary activities since arriving in Sopron?</li> </ul> <p>If the responder answered Yes she/he will be asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes, please describe the type of voluntary work you have been involved in</li> </ul>

## Section 2: Volunteering motivation statements

Motivations	Elements
Motivations statements with Likert scale optional answers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteering will help me in career development</li> <li>• Volunteering will be added value to my CV.</li> <li>• Volunteering allows me to practice leadership skills</li> <li>• Volunteering allows me to practice leadership skills</li> <li>• Volunteering helps me to meet new people and make friends.</li> <li>• Volunteering helps me to integrate better into the local culture.</li> <li>• I believe in giving back to the community and helping others</li> <li>• Volunteering gives me a sense of personal achievement and fulfillment</li> <li>• My culture values community service, and I feel it's important to uphold this value while abroad.</li> <li>• Volunteering would help me understand the local culture better.</li> <li>• Participating in voluntary activities helps to reduce feelings of homesickness</li> <li>• Participating in voluntary activities to reduce feelings of loneliness</li> <li>• Volunteering helps to reduce stress and improve your mental health.</li> </ul>
Open ended question:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would motivate you to Engage more in voluntary activities while studying in Sopron?</li> </ul>

### Section 3: Volunteering barriers statements

Barriers	Elements
Motivations statements with Likert scale optional answers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am concerned that volunteering might affect my studies negatively</li> <li>• My academic schedule is too demanding and doesn't allow time for volunteering.</li> <li>• I do not have enough time to volunteer due to part-time work commitments</li> <li>• I am not familiar with how volunteering works in this Sopron.</li> <li>• I am hesitant to volunteer because I do not feel fully integrated into the local community.</li> <li>• I feel voluntary work is not highly valued in my home culture.</li> <li>• I feel voluntary work is not highly valued in Sopron.</li> <li>• Volunteering sometimes causes me emotional exhaustion or burn-out.</li> <li>• Volunteering can lead to frustration when expectations are not met.</li> <li>• I have concerns about the safety of voluntary activities in a Sopron.</li> <li>• I have concerns about the legality of voluntary activities in Sopron.</li> <li>• I feel uncomfortable volunteering due to language barriers</li> <li>• I have difficulty finding information about volunteering opportunities in Sopron.</li> <li>• I have trouble finding transportation to volunteering locations.</li> <li>• The cost of volunteering (e.g., transportation, meals) is a barrier for me.</li> <li>• I lack the necessary skills or training for some volunteer roles.</li> </ul>
Open ended question:	-Are there any reasons not mentioned above that discourage you from engaging in volunteering activities?

### Section 4: open ended question for general feedback:

- Please add any notes or information that you fill that's its important for the study

**Section 5: General Information:**

<b>Age:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18-24</li> <li>• 25-30</li> <li>• 31-35</li> <li>• 36 and above</li> </ul>	<b>Country of Origin:</b> (Open-ended)
<b>Level of Study:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undergraduate</li> <li>• Master's</li> <li>• PhD</li> <li>• Other (please specify)</li> </ul>	<b>Duration of Stay in Sopron:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less than 6 months</li> <li>• 6 months to 1 year</li> <li>• 1-2 years</li> <li>• More than 2 years</li> </ul>
<b>Gender:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> </ul>	<b>Language Proficiency in Hungarian:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginner</li> <li>• Intermediate</li> <li>• Advanced</li> <li>• Fluent</li> <li>• Do not speak Hungarian</li> </ul>
<b>Preferred Areas of voluntary engagement:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental matters.</li> <li>• Education and Academic Matters</li> <li>• Social and disability Matters</li> <li>• Humanitarian Services</li> <li>• Other (Please specify)</li> </ul>	

