

## **VOLUNTEERING AS AN ALTERNATIVE OPPORTUNITY AND ANSWER FOR WORLDS NEEDS NOWADAYS**

Maryana **MEYKIV**

*Faculty of Physical Education, University of Rzeszow, Rzeszow, Poland  
marjana.meykiv@gmail.com*

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### **Key words:**

- volunteering,
- free time,
- alternative.

### **Abstract:**

Volunteering is an activity connected with the vocational education and training that a person takes from her own will, own choice, for its own reasons, without payment and selflessly, and that benefit the volunteers, the people, the voluntary association which provides services, as well as the community and the whole society. The main aim of this thesis was presenting the role of volunteering and voluntary participating in Global Citizen program students from different counties in terms of their free time. The importance under the term of validity of the program on terms of student's free time was analyzed. This thesis makes a number of interesting conclusions regarding to the value of volunteering today for students.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism as an element of shaping healthy lifestyle is characterized by active leisure of units or groups. Its foundation is the movement that leads to specific result [3]. Volunteering is one of the form of leisure. Volunteering is generally considered as an altruistic activity which aims to promote human goodness or improve quality of life. In exchange for such action we can gain self-esteem and respect. A person who is a volunteer has no financial profit. Volunteering is also known for the opportunities it gives to the development of various skills, changing the system of values and patterns of behavior as fun. It is also an opportunity to establish new contacts or potential employment [4]. Many volunteers are specially trained in their work, such as medicine, education, rescue or even for simple forms of voluntary activities they are prepared for social work in a suitable environment. On the other hand, it becomes an achievement if we do something without expecting anything in return. Through contact with nature and physical activity we do not only have rest, but we also isolate from everyday life and we combat with numerous diseases and improve physical and mental condition. [3].

It's a pretty common mistake to think of volunteering as just something nice that people can do. Sure, it may make them feel great about helping, but what impact does it really have? Volunteers have an enormous impact on the health and well-being of communities worldwide. Think of all the ways that volunteers make a difference in day-to-day life:

1. Volunteers deliver different services — from serving as volunteer fire fighters to delivering meals to homebound seniors or homeless youth.
2. Volunteers help to keep our neighborhoods, streets, parks, rivers, green spaces, and water clean and safe for everyone.
3. Volunteer tutors, teach, mentor, coach and support young people with everything from the child years.
4. Volunteers educate the public on health and safety; doctors and nurses donate time and medical knowledge for free to clinics and natural/civil disaster areas worldwide.

5. Volunteers build houses and schools, dig wells and repair infrastructure around the globe.

Another way to measure the impact of the volunteers is to take a look at the statistics for example working hours and the economic value of volunteer time. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service 61,8 million individuals in the United States contributed 8 billion hours of volunteerism in 2008 alone. The economic value of all this volunteering is about \$162 billion U.S. dollars. Finally, here's one more way to visualize the impact of volunteers [1]. Try this little exercise: imagine if one day, all volunteers simply didn't show up. What would our cities, towns, state/provincial parks, schools, places of worship and libraries look like? That's why the topic of volunteering was touched as something important and as an answer for today's worlds' needs. Research has been conducted to present the importance of volunteering program and which role it has in the example of the International Student Organization AIESEC, which bases its activities on one of the programs of volunteering, like Global Citizen.

## **METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH**

Object of the research were students from 17 up to 30 years old from the moment of getting the status of student after ending high school.

Main aim of the research is to present the role of volunteering and voluntary participating in Global Citizen program students from different counties in terms of their free time.

The specific objectives:

1. Study the attitudes of young people towards alternative forms of spending free time - called volunteering.
2. The impact of the students and university environments on students choice of engaging in the AIESEC voluntary program.
3. External messages and social media perception of the volunteering with AIESEC by students from Poland.

The problem of the research is does a student see an added value in being a volunteer in Global Citizen program with AIESEC for himself?

To present possible solutions of the problem it is worth to put few hypothesis which will steer us to possible solutions.

1. About 70% of students do not understand the external message of the voluntary program which is proposed for students.
2. More than 50% of the students go volunteering with AIESEC to widen their contacts with people.
3. Today's education system does not develop in the students socially responsible residents willing to go volunteering to another country.

Introduced problems and hypothesis will allow to understand deeply whether volunteering is necessary part of community life and whether students perceive it as an alternative form of their leisure time or not.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE EXAMINED TARGET GROUP**

1706 students took part in the Global Citizen program over the last 2013 years, where 1,144 students from various countries came to Poland and 562 students went to other countries. Chart 1 shows the individual statistics of cities, where there are local chapters of AIESEC in Poland are located.

It may be noted that there are more students coming to Poland and they presented the bigger half of all, but less number of students leaving Poland and it is - 33%.

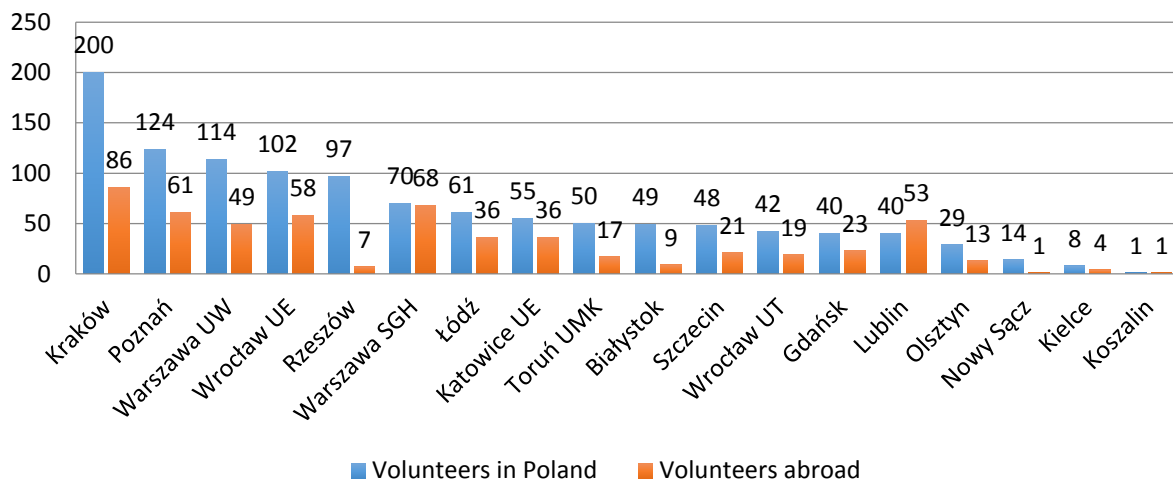
The survey involved 62 participants from every continent, as shown in chart 2. The majority are however people from Europe and represent 48,4% of recipients and the least in North America – 1,7%.

Such indicators telling about that the students preferences which can be caused by high travel costs to chosen country or volunteer personal preferences.

From all respondents 71% are women and 29% - males.

Most people who see the need for planning their leisure time by taking part in voluntary work are women, although men are born statistically more in the world. These results indicate the nature of women, who are more emotional, socially responsible and see the need in helping other people.

The average age of the participants of the Global Citizen ranges from 21 to 24 years and is 64, 5% of respondents. The second largest group of people are students aged 17-20 years.

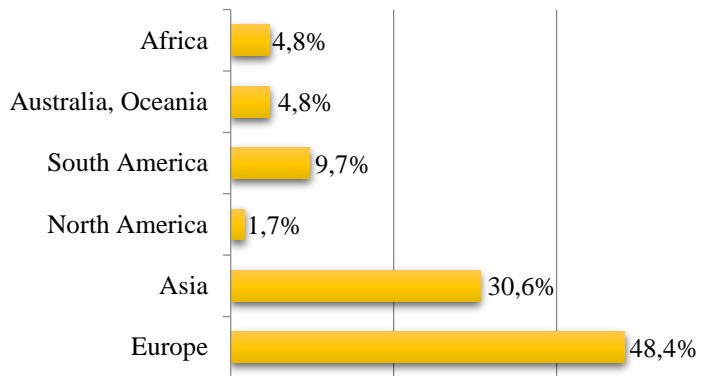


**Chart 1.** Volunteer statistics to and from Poland in the term of 1 of January 2013 till 1 of January 2014.

Source: <http://myaiesec.net/> from 12.04.2014.<sup>1</sup>

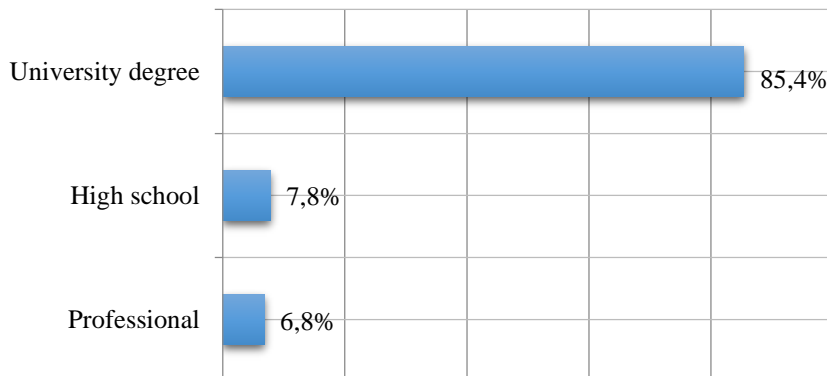
Students who have decided to travel to another country for at least 6 weeks, working there for the local community as a volunteer - mostly than 60% students at their 2-3 year in the university. Just then, they see the value of what is voluntary and that it leave to gain experience or relax. The second group, which is 19,4% is more specific, because some of the respondents, at the time of departure, according to international standards has not yet reached the age of an adult - 21 years old. Such information indicates that the current young generation feels the need to learn about other cultures, gain experience working in an international team or acquire other skills that will help them in further shaping their life or career path.

<sup>1</sup> Internal basis of the organization AIESEC.



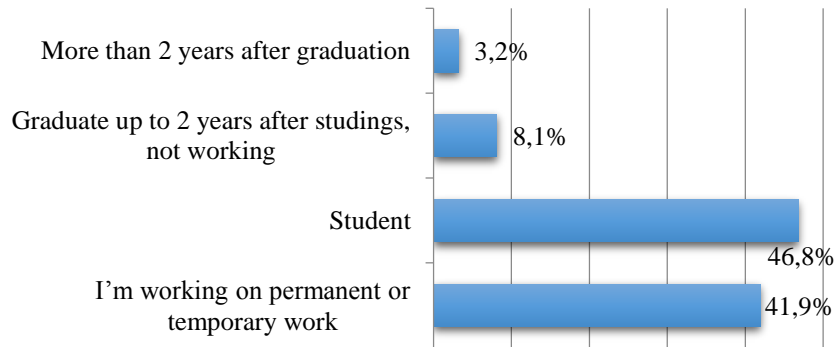
**Chart 2.** Countries of origin of people who took part in the Global Citizen.  
Source: Description on the individual basis.

Choosing to go volunteering with AIESEC person taking up the decision according to the research in 85,4% already had university education and 6,8% - professional degree (Chart 3). The following information state that being a student or already having university degree education help to go to another country to learn something new, additional than at the university. This indicator confirms that the studies have an impact on the choice of the student and whether this was due to the favorable opinion of the college or the negative one - is an open question, because everyone has their own motivation.



**Chart 3.** Education of the volunteers from Global Citizen.  
Source: Description on the individual basis.

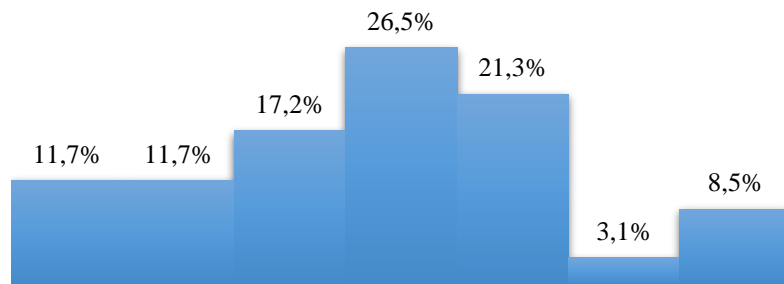
Analyzing the chart 4, which shows professional status of the volunteer, it is worth noting that 46,8% were students and 41,9% - are people after graduation, who went volunteering. An interesting fact also that graduates - 6,5% of the examined group, found out value in going volunteering, and 3% are those who are or where the members of AIESEC and have a privilege to go on Global Citizen whenever they want up to 30 years.



**Chart 4.** Professional status of the volunteers.  
Source: Description on the individual basis.

### MOTIVATION ELEMENTS TO GO VOLUNTEERING WITH GLOBAL CITIZEN

Travelling to another country, choosing an alternative way of spending free time, which is volunteering in the Global Citizen participant were guided by such factors (Chart 5).



**Chart 5.** Participants' motivation of the Global Citizen program.  
Source: Description on the individual basis.

Research shows that 26,5% of people went volunteering to get new contacts, meet new people and spend time usefully. The second group of people who were motivated by the fact that they will gain new experience, is also a major part of the respondents – 21,3%. However, those who go volunteering through volunteer activities promote values important for themselves and this third group is 17,2%. Activities of the organization AIESEC guided by six important values (acting sustainable, enjoying participation, activating leadership, striving for excellence, demonstrating integrity, living diversity) that drive the work and are reflected in each implemented program especially in exchange program Global Citizen.

Another group of people who followed the fact that if they help others, others will help them create a percentage of 11,7%. The same number of people said that they go volunteering because they are interested in such activities, which in turn became the reason of choosing volunteering with AIESEC. Less numerous are the rates that volunteer participants hoped to work in another country and the opportunity to gain professional experience. This group charge 8,5%. However, there is one last group that followed the knowledge that their friends are volunteers, what motivated them to apply and go for volunteering with AIESEC. It is the smallest percentage of all respondents – 3,1%.

Travelling to another country, choosing any program, in this case the Global Citizen, participant has his expectations and besides do not want to waste time wishing such a trip to be valuable. In 91,9% the tested group of volunteers said that volunteering with AIESEC met

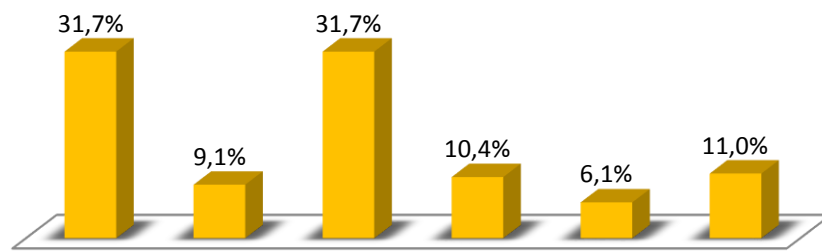
their expectations. However, not everyone thinks so. In 8,1% of the respondents gave negative answer, due to the fact that they are no longer students and are not able to make so "long vacations" for them. Despite the fact that the time spent in another country was worth spending their time it involves high costs and not everyone can afford it. Other people believe that one time is enough and later continue to grow in a different direction, choosing a different standard of living and gain other experience. Almost one fifth of people would like to continue their experience with AIESEC but by gaining more professional experience and taking part in the Global Talents program, which enables them to work in an international company with an appropriate reward for the completed practice.

People whose expectations have been met represents more than one third of respondents. They see the options of further participating in Global Citizen. More than half one sees the value in the internationality of experience including the work in a different environment, getting to know so many people with different worldviews, religions, different race what normally you would not get to do every day in your country. Although society is becoming more open to new cultures but growing negative attitude towards people of another color of skin. AIESEC does not accept such attitude. On the contrary, it creates opportunities to work in a multicultural environment and learn how to work with people from different nationalities. Shapes also tolerance towards others on the background of the local environment. About 40% of respondents highlighted the fact that being a volunteer helps to develop themselves and others. Themselves - by learning how to communicate in general, and in an international environment. The ability to cope with different situations, being in a country where others do not speak English. The purpose of each trip is to work in the local environment, which allows volunteers to teach others, to have positive impact on them, to share their knowledge and skills to help the community in the manner in which the local environment is not able to. Another important aspect that motivates participants to take part in the program once again is getting to know a new culture, the opportunity to travel and the benefit from the path, the AIESEC presents and among other things development of leadership skills, which is a response to the demands of present society.

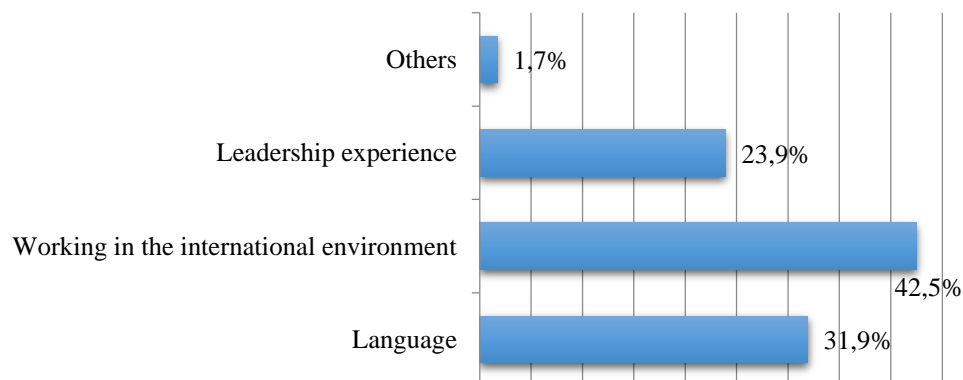
Following the lead of next program selection - three out of four Global Citizen volunteers would recommend it to their friends. Such statistics is a very good result as it is proved that the person is seeking information about a product firstly from friends. If 87% of participants in the Global Citizen recommend voluntary departure at the same time that creates a very high added value of volunteering. The research proved that recommending volunteering abroad person uses arguments such as getting an unforgettable experience, the way to achieve their goals, broadening the horizons of their thinking about the world, about themselves and the way of life, the possibility of its development and gaining new leadership skills and learn about new cultures, people and just for having fun.

Another issue, which allows solving the researched problem on the added value of volunteering with AIESEC is the answer to the question, what experience gained participants in the Global Citizen (Chart 6). More than half of the volunteers pointed out the answer - getting to know a new culture and people, as well as gaining life changing experience. Only 10% of the participants recognized the value of professional development in one of the selected program. Looking to volunteering as an opportunity to have fun and to organize for themselves the longest and demanding holiday recognized the 6 % of respondents. Analyzing volunteering for the vision of AIESEC (peace and fulfillment of human kind's potential) it is worth noting that 11 % of respondents have recognized this value.

In addition to the experience volunteers have acquired were selected also skills that stand out from the others and which in most cases are acquired by participants. Percentage comparison of acquired skills and at the same time their classification according to the validity of volunteers is shown in the chart 7.



**Chart 6.** Experience gained by volunteers during participating in Global Citizen.  
Source: Description on the individual basis.



**Chart 7.** Skills acquired by the volunteers during Global Citizen.  
Source: Description on the individual basis.

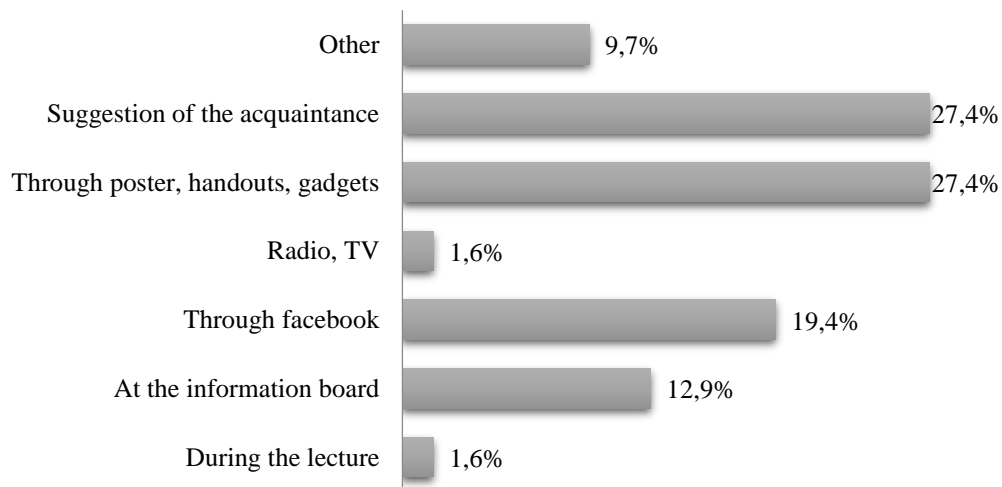
Almost half of the volunteers appreciate gained skills like working in an international team, which in total is unchangeable part of any voluntary departure of Global Citizen. 32% of the participants improved their language skills what is a very important element, especially welcomed in the labor market, which requires knowledge of foreign languages, not to mention the fact that English is essential and inseparable part of even a good resume. Almost one quarter gained leadership experience that employers expect in candidates for certain positions. Leadership experience gives the opportunity to be an uncommon resident in their environment. The person-volunteer is responsible for their actions, decisions, not afraid to take risks, open to new challenges, new people, hardworking and efficient functioning. There is also a group of people whose skills do not fit within certain answers. They relate to the socialization of the world, faster adaptation in certain circumstances, active approach in life.

## PERCEPTIONS OF THE GLOBAL CITIZEN THROUGH THE PRISM OF DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Helpful in obtaining data in present world of computerization and technological development of society could be various sources, including forums, blogs, social networking sites, the usual printed guides, radio, newspapers, meetings, TV, rumors and many others. Participants of the Global Citizen also met with the theme of getting to know the organization and its program using a computer source (Chart 8). In the case of the respondents 27,4% worked in the so-called "whispering advertising", and specifically references that were mentioned in the previous question, and which once again underlines the truth of the source data. Important are recommendations and references because a person faster trusts a man, especially a close friend than the wider social media and other transfers. On the other hand,

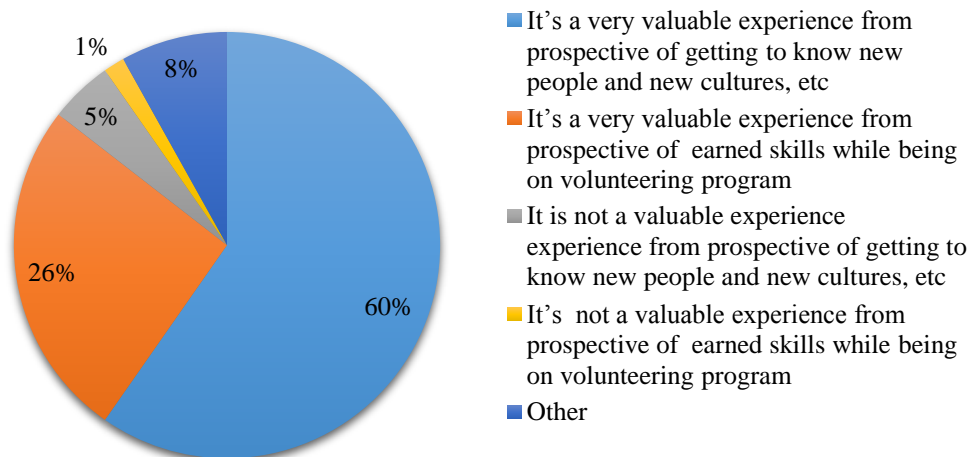
the results contradict earlier research finding. Visual materials in the same extent fulfilled important role and also convinced 27,4 % of the participants to apply for the volunteer program. Moving on to mention that the role of social media, particularly Facebook has grown in recent years and during some time will become an integral part of marketing strategies. About 20% were looking for information from that portal. No less important is the direct contact with the student environment which is possible by organizing information stands between breaks at various fairs for students. Such contact, and the first information reached the 13% of students. It is worth mentioning also about lectures which increases the efficiency of the connection to the information stand, which in this case is not existing. The standard source of promotion such as radio, television every day are becoming less popular. They were reflected in the interest of the participants in 1,6 % of the overall respondents. Deliberately been omitted 9,7% other users, for which it is something that has already been mentioned - human contact. In the present case are the members of the organization. These people know from the inside what is the program like and decided to go and get the same experience, they are both good advertisement edifying image.

Then examined the situation of participants (Chart 9), which already knew something about volunteering, and 60% had information that this is a valuable experience to meet new people and culture. This information has once again confirmed the partial veracity of the hypothesis mentioned in the previous chapter. 26% of people knew that the departure of the Global Citizen is beneficial in terms of gaining new skills. In addition, 8% of people in general have not heard about AIESEC, 6% received information that volunteering Global Citizen is not valuable.



**Chart 8.** Sources of the first information's about Global Citizen.  
Source: Description on the individual basis.



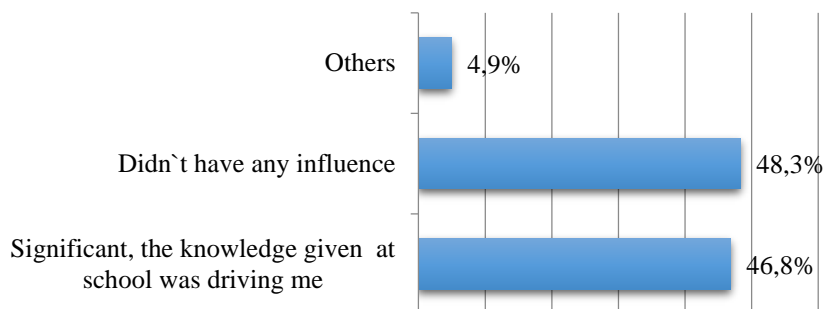


**Chart 9.** How good people are informed about volunteering with AIESEC  
Source: Description on the individual basis.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ON THE CHOICE OF PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL CITIZEN

The student is a person who spends most of his time in the university environment except of social portals, web search or spending time with friends. This environment has a huge impact and according to an analysis conducted research 47% plays a key role. As can be seen in the chart 10 views of volunteers participating in the Global Citizen are divided. For 48% of respondents in the university environment had no impact on their choice of which more in a 5% were opinions that supported these responses emphasizing that the university cannot and does not teach all the necessary skills and is not interesting from the point of view of some students.

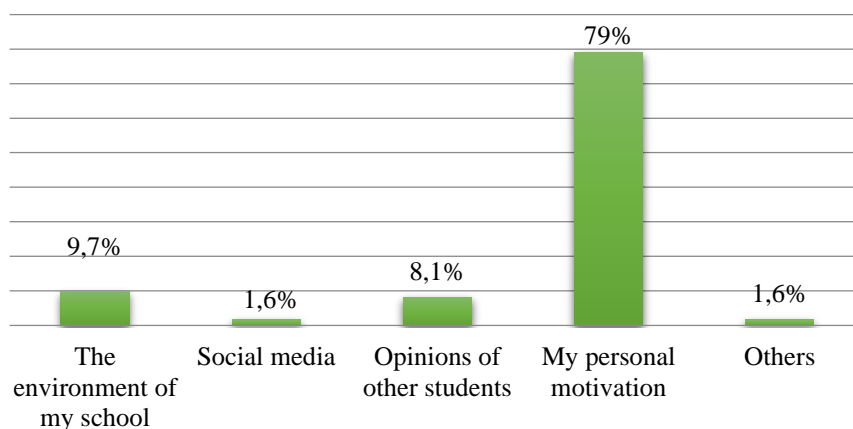
To sum up, the respondents emphasize that the university environment has a not so big influence on the choice of the student. What is the impact is shown below in the chart 11 analyzing the responses of participants the biggest impact on their selection was self-motivation, which is 79%, to a lesser extent, the university environment and the opinions of other students. Only 9,7% of volunteers were making their choice taking into consideration what the university teaches their environment.



**Chart 10.** Participation of the university environment in choosing Global Citizen program.  
Source: Description on the individual basis.

Some people got suggestions by the opinion of the student community and only 1,6% said their choices were guided by information from social media. From the previous chart,

you can also see that 1,6% of people opted for something else and the Association of AIESEC. The organization itself, opinions about her, knowledge about her actions from the inside has an amazing impact on whether a student chooses Global Citizen or not.



**Chart 11.** Environment that influenced the choice by the participant of the Global Citizen.

Source: Description on the individual basis.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Volunteering is increasingly becoming an alternative way of spending free time. Leisure plays significant role, the same as professional working time [1].

Students are beginning to recognize the value of alternative actions, those for which they are not paid but they do with more pleasure and desire. Volunteering is an activity for the benefit of other people, also, looking for personal development is becoming a more popular way to gain new skills, experience and expand your circle of friends from different countries.

The concept of voluntary work and leisure time have become inseparable because of the needs of present society and the environment, that makes the man try to learn something new where possible. Lack of leisure has strong negative influence on personal achievements and self esteem [1]. Over time volunteering came to a higher degree of cooperation with every person, starting from the youngest generations. Today a large number of organizations and institutions operates that offer volunteer work including Caritas, the Foundation Friend, Noble Pack, Youth in Action, The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity and many others for the support and operation of which everyone can find something for themselves.

In each of the above subsections is analyzed at least one assertion, which represents confirmation or rectification of the problem through the prism of the research hypotheses.

This research has allowed to achieve its purpose and to determine what role volunteering plays in the life of a young man, and especially at the time when you are a student and when you have the chance to make the most efficient use of your time off and find for themselves a valuable alternative actions. Investigated and analyzed the attitudes of young people towards volunteering with AIESEC. Then, it was found that students willingly leave and will leave volunteering abroad because of the needs of actively changing labor market. For such a choice there is an influence of the media environment and the coverage that always puts the young generation before making choices that affect their future.

To summarize the data analyzed there is presented the silhouette of volunteer in Global Citizen, which looks like this: student who scores university education or already has it, is between the age of 21 to 24 years, it is a woman coming from Europe.

It should also be noted that more students are coming to Poland than leaving to take part in abroad volunteering. In 47 % respondents sent an answer to the fact that the university environment today has an impact on the development of socially responsible attitudes in students which in turn effects on the decision they make, like choosing various volunteer programs. So one hypothesis was not confirmed in the research. In the case of one quarter of respondents volunteers indicated that gaining new contacts and meet people from other countries motivated them to leave the country with AIESEC. The hypothesis of the sentence was also not supported by the research. A simple statement should be summarized that the common people and social experiences are the most important part of any trip, whether it is voluntary or a private one. Last hypothesis was not confirmed in the study, since only 8% of respondents did not understand the external media message through various sources of promotion. Taking into account the above conclusions it is worth noting that none of hypothesis was confirmed. It is also an important information that students and particularly socially active person is the future of the world today, who sees value in being an international citizen with a sense of responsibility for the world in which he lives.

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