



CREWS

Young people want to volunteer—yet often do not know *how* to start

University of Eastern Finland

February, 2026

Within the CREWS project, our partners are currently preparing a cooperation model for state and municipal authorities. In addition to this work, we have strong interest in better understanding the phenomenon of *spontaneous volunteers* and in exploring how volunteer engagement can be strengthened. We recognise the significant volunteer potential that exists in society, especially among young people.

At the University of Eastern Finland, Assoc Prof Aija Lulle who is also educating future leaders, discussed the draft cooperation model with students in the course “Development Crisis and Globalisation” she teaches. This large, interdisciplinary course brings together more than 100 students from environmental policy, geography, history, biology, and other fields, including numerous international exchange students.

Young people participating in the course expressed very clearly that they **want** to volunteer—yet often do not know *how* to start. Several student quotes further illustrate that **clear information is the key**, in a student’s words, below:.

Clear and accessible communication and a real chance to contact the organizers – coordination, basically.

Therefore, their first priority is **clear, accessible information** on how young people can get involved in volunteer activities.

A student quote:

Good channels for information and communication – making students understand the importance of volunteering.

Further, students emphasised the importance of building an **everyday culture of volunteerism**, where young people are invited, encouraged, and shown concrete pathways to contribute to society. They want to understand the roadmap: whom to contact, where to go, and how their contribution can make a difference.

This exercise has already helped us begin drafting materials for **educating future leaders**, improving university curricula, and embedding volunteerism into daily pedagogical work.

Students also highlighted that volunteerism, civil preparedness, and everyday resilience all begin with **ordinary citizens**—in their homes, neighbourhoods, and local communities. Knowing *who to contact*, *how to stay safe*, and *how to contribute meaningfully* are essential elements of strengthening everyday security.

I live near a main railway crossroads.
Disaster scenario is a big accident
(chemical etc.). Well, I'd contact Finnish Red
Cross local chapter to offer volunteering in
a coordinated effort, whatever that may be.

From authorities students want a dynamic, motivating approach to sustain volunteerism over

Having enough motivation and drive to continue working for the cause (for the volunteer) – community and helping each other.

time, as a student expressed:

We will incorporate these and other into encounters with future leaders and our teaching materials.