



# Implementing extensive sports initiatives for individuals with disabilities, adopting an inclusive strategy

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Dr. Sc.Hist., Associate Professor **N.I. Gorlova**<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Sc.Hist., Professor **L.I. Starovoytova**<sup>2</sup>

PhD, Associate Professor **Z.A. Troska**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Moscow

<sup>2</sup>N.I. Pirogov Russian National Research Medical University of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation, Moscow

Corresponding author: gorlovanat@yandex.ru

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## Abstract

**Objective of the study** was to thorough examination of both domestic and international volunteer initiatives for sporting events that include individuals with disabilities.

**Methods and structure of the study.** A theoretical examination of scholarly and methodological publications on the topic has been conducted. Employing a range of theoretical approaches, the authors have thoroughly examined the issue of integrating individuals with disabilities into the realm of sports volunteering. Through the application of methods such as systematization and comparative analysis, the authors were able to pinpoint the fundamental strategies employed by organizers of large-scale sporting events when implementing inclusive volunteer programs that involve individuals with disabilities.

**Results and conclusions.** At present, the area of physical culture and sports is regarded as a crucial issue on the social agenda of the volunteer movement and the accumulation of volunteer work. The article provides an analysis of the volunteer programs of the organizing committees of international mass sporting events, with a focus on attracting volunteers with disabilities and organizing work with them. The article presents the findings of a study conducted by domestic and international researchers on the assessment of the involvement of individuals with disabilities in voluntary activities in the field of physical culture and sports. Based on these findings, a list of recommendations has been developed to enhance the practice of participation of individuals with disabilities in domestic sports volunteering.

**Keywords:** *volunteers, volunteer program, people with disabilities, inclusion, sports events.*

**Introduction.** Over the past decades, an inclusive approach to the implementation of volunteer programs for sports events has been actively developing thanks to international projects in the field of physical education and sports. Organizers of sports events support people with disabilities and help them in self-realization within the framework of Olympic (sports) volunteering. «Volunteering for All» is the motto of volunteer programs for international sports projects.

**Objective of the study** was to thorough examination of both domestic and international volunteer initiatives for sporting events that include individuals with disabilities.

**Results of the study and discussion.** Currently, the sphere of physical culture and sports is considered one of the priority topics of the social agenda of

the volunteer movement and accumulation of volunteer labor. A special contribution to the popularization of the ideas of inclusion, equality and tolerance was made by the volunteer program for training sports volunteers for the XXX Summer Olympic Games and XIV Paralympic Games in London in 2012. The Organizing Committee took the path of adapting the volunteer program taking into account the characteristics of people with disabilities. For example, the communication campaign for this target audience of the volunteer corps started 7 weeks earlier, on July 27, 2010, than for volunteers without health restrictions. According to the organizing committee, more than 8 thousand people with disabilities applied to participate in the work of the 70-thousand volunteer corps of the sports event. At the selection stage, 3500 people with disabilities re-



ceived an offer to become a volunteer for the games, which amounted to 5% of the total number of volunteer assistants of the large-scale event.

At the end of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the author's team S. Darcy, Simon, Tracey J., Angel M., with the support of the International Paralympic Committee, held an online survey of 786 volunteers with disabilities-participants in the event, which made it possible to create a profile of voluntary assistants [3]. Of the respondents, 15,6 % are volunteers with violation of the musculoskeletal system, 2,2 %-with visual impairment, 4,8 % with hearing problems. The main age of volunteers-disabled games was in the range from 55 to 64 years. As for the employment of volunteers with disabilities, the authors of the study noted that the most volunteers of the games were among working citizens – 41,5 %, 21,5 % pensioners are in second place, then there are respondents with partial employment (part – time mode), In fourth place, student youth - among it, 6,6 % of voluntary assistants, followed by unemployed citizens, but in an active search for work – 6,2 %. 4,7 % of the participants in the online survey chose the position «Another answer option». 86,8% of volunteers had the experience of volunteering behind the «shoulders». Accordingly, 13,2% did not have such experience. Of the total number of respondents, 63,5% of disability volunteers were involved in the Olympic Games and 46,8% worked out their shifts at the Paralympic Games. In most cases, as the analysis of respondents showed, volunteers were involved in the following functional areas of activity: «transport» (24,6 %), «Work with spectators (visitors)» (16,9 %), «Safety» (10, «Safety» (10, «Safety» (10, «Safety» (10,5 %)) [3].

It was this volunteer program of the event that laid the foundation for modern volunteer management in working with disabled people. For example, the organizers paid special attention to the creation of a barrier-free architectural environment, the structure of space in the territory of a sports event, the presence of free space, the absence of obstacles to the following volunteers with disabilities along the main routes of movement on sports facilities.

In 2011, an ambitious task was set to the ANO «Sochi 2014» organizing committee: in 3 years to prepare a 25,000-strong qualified volunteer corps, guided by the principles of diversity and inclusion. The implementation of the volunteer program provided for the creation of 26 volunteer centers on the basis of higher educational institutions, and only the profile of

the activities of two centers of Moscow State University named after Sholokhov and the Russian State Social University (hereinafter – the Russian State Social University) was associated with the preparation of volunteers for the XXII Olympic and XI Paralympic winter games of 2014 in Sochi. The International Paralympic Committee provided directors of the training centers for the necessary methodological and consulting support in matters of the participation of disabled people in a sporting event, training and seminars were held [1].

In 2013, employees of the Volunteer Center of the Russian State Social University initiated an applied study of candidates for volunteers with disabilities [2]. According to the results of the survey, the gender asymmetry of volunteers of the sports event was identified. 64,8 % of respondents accounted for men and 35,2 % for women. In the age structure of the target audience, a group from 26 to 38 years (70,6 %) predominated. As for the family status of candidates for games, the largest percentage indicator accounts for people with disabilities who are not married. As shown, the results of the survey, its participants had different experience in the practice of socially significant activities. 44,7 % of respondents announced the lack of experience in volunteer groups, but at the same time expressed a desire to acquire it in the near future. The leading motives of volunteer activities in the role of volunteers of the games were «the desire to be involved in the common cause», «help to other people», «self – realization», «leisure organization» and «acquaintance with interesting people». According to the results of the qualifying stage of the ANO Organizing Committee «Sochi 2014», about 100 people with disabilities became part of a large volunteer game team, each of which worked at least 13 shifts. The functionality of inclusive volunteers varied from streaming in the Olympic Park, including the creation of a positive mood, meeting, guests' wires at the airport and at the station, before helping in the organization of the zone for honored guests at the objects of the event and work on information racks, stands with spectators and the audience and Fans in stadiums. On the eve of games in test competitions in 2012-2013. The functionality of volunteers with disabilities was worked out.

The road map of the candidate with disabilities in the Games volunteers from the registration procedure to participation in the event itself can be presented as follows: filling out online questionnaires, testing (personal questionnaire, test for determining the level of



ownership of English), interviews (interviews), training and orientation, conclusion of contractual Relations with ANO «Organizing Committee of Sochi – 2014», direct work in the functional direction at the sports facilities of the event event.

The games in Sochi were followed by a series of sports events that popularize people with disabilities in event projects. Thus, the team of 480 volunteer corps of the XVIII Winter of the Surdlimysk Games included hearing disabilities, who provided the organizers with invaluable assistance in meeting athletes and guests at the airport, navigation, receiving accreditation and when checking the hotel.

Another volunteer program of the FIFA 2018™ World Cup, held in Russia, made a bet on the participation of people with disabilities, emphasizing special images that the presence of disability in the candidate could not affect the decision when they are selected in the volunteer corps of a sports event. The only restriction for volunteers is age. The selection in volunteers based on the results of testing was carried out among all candidates, including with disabilities, on general conditions.

In conclusion, we note that the qualitatively new integration of people with disabilities, the destruction of false stereotypes become the priority tasks of the volunteer programs implemented by large – scale sports events.

**Conclusions.** In general, as the analysis showed, volunteer programs served as a catalyst for the development of inclusive volunteering, expanding the boundaries of participation and practice of using volunteer work of people with disabilities. Today, not a single significant mass sporting event takes place

without the participation of disabled volunteers. However, there is no need to talk about the large-scale inclusion of people with disabilities in the field of sports and physical education on a voluntary basis. In this regard, we have formulated a list of measures to expand the practices of participation of people with disabilities in domestic sports volunteering:

- creation of a barrier-free environment at sports facilities and in places where sports events are held;
- adaptation of all stages and processes of working with people with disabilities, from establishing a communications campaign, recruiting procedures, organizing training and education;
- implementation of support programs (individual and supportive) for people with disabilities before and during volunteer shifts;
- conducting trainings for sports event staff and volunteers without health restrictions on issues of tolerance, understanding of disability, as well as the specifics of interaction with volunteers with different noologies.

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