

## Supplementary Material S1

Table S1

*Data overview on participants in the survey*

| <b>Pseudonym</b> | <b>Sex</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Place of activity</b>  | <b>Education</b>  | <b>Professional activity</b>           | <b>Number of years of experience in volunteering</b>     | <b>Tasks</b>                                                                                   | <b>Status</b>                            | <b>Activities in relation to the pandemic</b>                                                                  |
|------------------|------------|------------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dagna            | Woman      | 34         | Large city                | Master's degree   | Teacher                                | 4 years of work with seniors                             | Long-term individual support of a senior woman aged 79 (the same person as supported by Marek) | Active                                   | No                                                                                                             |
| Klara            | Woman      | 23         | Large city                | Bachelor's degree | No job                                 | Several months of work with seniors and then resignation | Long-term individual support of a senior woman aged 79                                         | Inactive – resignation prior to COVID-19 | No                                                                                                             |
| Laura            | Woman      | 32         | Village near a large city | Master's degree   | Office worker in the commercial sector | 5 years of work with seniors                             | Long-term support for people in a nursing home, age of residents: 60 and over                  | Active                                   | Member of a community support group: providing seniors with groceries, medication, bringing them to the doctor |
| Ola              | Woman      | 22         | Large city                | Secondary         | Student                                | 2.5 years of work with seniors                           | Long-term individual support of a senior woman aged 87                                         | Activity on hold by COVID-19             | No                                                                                                             |
| Paulina          | Woman      | 23         | Large city                | Secondary         | Student                                | 5 months of work with seniors/volunteer                  | Volunteering for specific events –                                                             | Active                                   | Yes, help for seniors:                                                                                         |

|          |       |    |                                               |                 |                                                        |                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                  |                              |                                                                                |
|----------|-------|----|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          |       |    |                                               |                 |                                                        | experience since teenage years, including scouting                                                             | individual support for a person aged 65                                                                                                                          |                              | shopping, walking pets                                                         |
| Wiktorja | Woman | 28 | Large city                                    | Master's degree | Office worker                                          | 1 year of work with seniors                                                                                    | Long-term individual support of a senior woman aged 92                                                                                                           | Activity on hold by COVID-19 | Yes, help for neighbours (e.g. shopping, phone calls), sewing protective masks |
| Antoni   | Man   | 35 | Medium-sized city, approx. 50,000 inhabitants | Master's degree | Office worker in the media and education sectors       | 4 years of work with seniors/10 years of volunteer experience                                                  | Long-term support of a group of seniors through educational/recreational workshops – age of seniors 60 and over                                                  | Activity on hold by COVID-19 | No                                                                             |
| Emil     | Man   | 28 | Large city                                    | Master's degree | PhD student                                            | 5 months/volunteer experience since teenage years, including scouting                                          | Volunteering for specific events – food delivery to private homes of people aged 60 and over                                                                     | Active                       | Yes – food delivery to seniors                                                 |
| Tobiasz  | Man   | 32 | Medium-sized city, approx. 50,000 inhabitants | Master's degree | Office worker in the real estate and education sectors | 5 years of volunteer experience, ad hoc work with seniors                                                      | Volunteering for specific events – organisation of events for senior citizens, long-term activities in the organisation of educational activities for this group | Activity on hold by COVID-19 | No                                                                             |
| Marek    | Man   | 35 | Large city                                    | Master's degree | Office worker in the IT sector                         | 3 years/4.5 years of volunteer experience (previous experience of work with people in the homelessness crisis) | Long-term individual support of a senior woman aged 79 (the same person as supported by Dagna)                                                                   | Active                       | No                                                                             |

## **Supplementary Material S2**

### **General interview plan**

The elements of the volunteer process model addressed by the question are indicated in brackets.

- What is the general scope of your volunteering tasks? (experiences)
- How often do you engage in voluntary work? (experiences/results)
- Is this the only volunteering you have been involved in?  
(antecedents/experiences/results)
- Why did you decide to engage in this form of volunteering? (antecedent factors)
- What expectations did you have of this work at the beginning? (antecedent factors)
- What are your expectations of this work at the moment? (experiences/results)
- What is interesting about this work? (experiences)
- What is enjoyable about this work? (experiences)
- Please recall and describe the most interesting situation from your volunteer work.  
(experiences)
- What is difficult about this work? (experiences)
- Please recall and describe the most difficult situation from your volunteer work.  
(experiences)
- What is the value of this work? (experiences/results)
- What is the contact with the people you help through your volunteering? (experiences)
- What is exciting about this work? (experiences)
- How would you describe the ideal volunteer in your area of volunteering? (results)
- Please look back at your volunteering history. How would you describe yourself at its beginning and how do you describe yourself now? (results)
- What have you learned through your volunteer work? (results)
- Would you recommend this work to others? a) To whom? b) Why? (results)

**Supplementary Material S3**  
**The process of identification of emerging themes**

- All transcriptions were printed.
- All transcriptions were read three times. Interesting passages were highlighted. During the second and third readings, notes and comments (known as memos) were written down.
- The fourth reading was to generate codes from the memo. Preliminary names for codes and themes were generated.
- Themes were written on a separate sheet of paper.
- Themes were combined into groups.
- Texts were reread to verify appropriate matching of the themes to passages.
- The final reading focused on the appropriate assignment of the topic to a text passage.

## **Supplementary Material S4**

### **Quotes assigned to the topics**

#### **The context of the start of volunteering**

‘Well, as they say, if you get something out of life, it's nice to give something back as well, so it's a kind of... [pause] well, a desire to give something from yourself, some kind of internal need, also maybe a break from the dull reality, an attempt to look for something new, because, you know, like, professional work (...), also an attempt to [pause] maybe relieve stress, yeah?’ (Antoni)

‘I mean, I was always thinking in a way about doing some volunteering, but I was always short on time, somehow I couldn't get down to it... And a friend once told me that I'm the over-analysing type, and I generally think about things too much, so I should just get on with helping someone, so that I don't have any more time for it.’ (Wiktorja)

‘It was during my first year of university and I felt that I had some free time, plus I would like to get involved in something new so that, especially since in Warsaw... there are a lot more opportunities like that than in my tiny hometown, though. But at first I thought I'd like to get involved in some volunteer work with children (...) in some orphanage or something like that. But I think it popped up on my Facebook or somewhere about this volunteering [with seniors]. And so I had it in my head. And I just remember there was a moment when I was talking about something with my roommate about just elderly people or something and I suddenly decided, okay, I'm going to quickly sign up for this volunteering thing after all.’ (Ola)

‘Somewhere within me I find these elements of simply a community person. But it can also be probably unhealthy to build one's own... value on the basis of this volunteering (...) [In the first voluntary work - with people in the crisis of homelessness - note I. N.] in there, the curiosity was more like that and there was more of that curiosity, and now it's more on the basis of actually generating time in one's life for something that is not obligatory, to help selflessly, but also within certain limits, within some wise ones’ (Marek)

‘[I joined - note I. N.] probably because of my husband's persuasion, really. My husband had been in a few volunteering projects before and we just talked about it at home a lot. (...) He basically talked me into (...) sending an application’ (Dagna)

‘I remember conversations that my wife, since we first met... we talked about this volunteering, because in my case it was a kind of, let's say, interesting part, which I talked about, my wife got curious about it. A few years have passed, the desire was still there and one time I decided that I would like to encourage her and show her once again, not necessarily that something would come out of it, but I just decided that such a first step was missing (...) I saw the willingness in my wife, I wanted to sort of support her in taking her first steps in volunteering’ (Marek)

‘I want to bring awareness to a group of people just to make this world look a little different. (...) One has a free choice, but what free choice is it when I choose to go behind one closed door or the other. That is not a choice, that is a lottery. So if I know what is behind the door, then I can make a choice (...). I believe that, among other things, education is the way to go about this. (...) It can be assumed that one of the elements that allows you to actually have free will is knowledge’ (Tobiasz)

'I'm a girl scout and I think it's just so firmly ingrained in me this sense of, I don't even want to say volunteering, actually, because it doesn't seem right for me. I have the impression that volunteering was just going, I don't know, in middle school to get extra credit (...) It's more just, I don't know, I think it's more useful, and more appropriate, to define it as duty' (Paulina)

'There was a period of time when you could move around on the streets if you had some important cause there... I was covered in the way that I had the right document there, the right ID as well, that I was a volunteer and I was working against COVID-19. So I was able to get out of the house a bit more freely. And I wanted to use that a little bit as well' (Emil)

'The perfect volunteer. First and foremost, the perfect volunteer should not be driven by the need to have something that looks nice in the CV, or that he or she can gain something from it, but that they really want to get to know someone and spend time with that person. And, of course, it has to be an empathetic person, someone who will also be able to talk to an elderly about more difficult issues, not just trivial ones. (...) You need to have some empathy and understanding for the other person. What else? Openness' (Ola)

'There was also a benefit when I sent out my CV one day and wrote that I was a volunteer, and I could see that those people who later called me back pointed that out, once a lady said, oh yes, that's very, very nice, this thing here with the seniors. So I think that's also a plus (...) I would also recommend (...) to people (...) whose fields of study are a bit related to this, like psychology, maybe education or something like that. Because, as I said, it looks nice on a CV' (Ola)

'Well it has to be an empathetic person who finds an element of that kind of community person within themselves, because that kind of element just occurs more widely in some people and not in others, and there's nothing wrong with that. It is kind of a human baseline, I think. It has to be a person who is relatively aware, including of oneself, surely this supports the person in their care, who is a human being, including an elderly person. Well, to that I would add some experience actually from the area of volunteering with a human being, it would be good for them to have' (Marek)

### **Personal characteristics**

'I think it's hard to generalise (...) But surely it has to be someone who is patient and has a lot of like, of good intentions. Because it is often the case that with these older people, you have to take the initiative to do various things, and you have to be fairly open to their moods and needs, but these are certainly individual issues. You have to have a lot of subtlety, because they often have different norms and as they get older, certain things become, I don't know, more sensitive, they get overly sensitive on various matters and it can depend on the day, so you have to be very careful about what you say and do, so that you don't upset anyone' (Wiktoria)

'People are different. (...) You have to be good to these people. (...) I definitely learned more humility. Humility, because I've always been the kind of person that sometimes says too much. Things I shouldn't say. And now I've learnt to be more careful about the words I say, though' (Laura)

'[A volunteer should be - note I. N.] mature. In the sense of mental maturity. It seems to me that it should be a person who has their life somehow arranged and thought out. So that we don't

needlessly burden older people with this. Certainly to be empathetic, empathetic. So that we don't just look at older people as older people, but simply as people' (Dagna)

'[A volunteer should be - note I. N.] first of all, patient, open to the other person, but also interesting, because as I say, well, seniors are a very specific group - on the one hand they require attentiveness, and on the other hand patience, well, because not everyone is able to approach the other person and immediately open up, right? And also some, I think, certainly honesty, because here we cannot talk about any [pause] anyone being a liar or a schemer, right? Because that's going to come right out. [pause] I think empathy as well, for the other person, because older people are also different, there's no denying that, right?' (Antoni)

'Working with seniors is actually a blank page in the book, because every meeting turns out to be different, despite the fact that the people are the same, that we learn something about each other' (Antoni)

'[A volunteer should - note I. N.] be friendly. Maybe not sociable, because everyone is a bit, everyone approaches contacts (...) with seniors differently. However, this friendliness should be present and it would be good (...) for this friendliness to be constant, so that there are no situations in which something could disturb it. For example, that every senior should have a clean slate' (Emil)

'First of all, I would say that [a volunteer - note I. N.] must be punctual. With this punctuality, I would also combine reliability. It's a bit like our normal life, that we need some kind of stability, some kind of a support' (Emil)

### **Daily difficulties of older people**

'I was definitely scared in general, because I was sort of scared that I would commit to doing something and, for example, I would come across this older person and it would turn out that, well, we don't really get along, that he or she is tiresome, well, because I like older people a lot, but I also know that some people can be very tiresome' (Wiktoria)

'I discovered that older people are really different from each other, because Ms Ula [name changed - note I. N.] is completely different from both of my grandmothers, for example. When it comes to political views, let's say, it's completely a different story. I also try, because of the kind of studies I'm studying, not to... put people into the same category. Well, but such are the stereotypes about older people, that they are all this and that. So this work has definitely shown me that people are different' (Ola)

'I think it takes a lot of patience to listen to the same thing over and over again, literally every time. It takes a lot of empathy, too, to listen to someone mostly complain all the time. I think it's hard to handle, especially for us young people (...) I think it's also a challenge to communicate properly with a much older person, to get along with them, with generational differences and strong differences in opinion, which was also a challenge. And not to be nervous and to keep calm and have a smile on your face, no matter what the other person says' (Klara)

'I've already given it a lot of thought, I've already talked about it a number of times, that usually when we go to help someone, we think that, oh, I'm going to do something good, this lady is going to melt with joy. Well, I just expected this kind of gratitude (...), [but - note I. N.] this lady probably needed help, she imagined it differently than I did. So there was a discrepancy between the vision of the person helping and the person in need of help. (...). Here, in the case of this lady, well, let's say it's not as much of a demanding attitude, even though she sometimes

has very direct statements, but I have the impression that she knows that I don't have to come there if I don't want to, so she tries to be nice and so on' (Paulina)

'[In relation to volunteering to deliver meals to seniors - note I. N.] it seems to me a little bit that this monotony, this repetitiveness is already coming in too much. This repetition of everything. And I think this is where the problem is, that it just goes on a bit too long already [laughter]' (Emil)

'It's all very nice, but well still these meetings are quite and the conversations are quite repetitive, that we tend to do the same things, talk about the same things. So there's something that's not so exciting, but I think that despite that it doesn't have to be like all exciting to make it enjoyable' (Ola)

### **Accompanying the senior in his or her transience and loneliness**

'Ms Janina (name changed) is, well she's just old, she's 92 years old and she's very ill. I know she's cheerful and optimistic about the world and so on, but I also know that she's been through cancer, she's lost her family, she's got an adopted son, but he doesn't really have time for her, so she's kind of lonely and she suffers a lot, basically, because she's got some problems with her leg, I don't even know what it is, and it can't be operated on, because her body's too weakened by the cancer, and it just causes her a lot of pain, and that's why she moves around in this wheelchair. And sometimes I sort of know that it's so, so difficult for her and like there's been moments where she's started to cry to me, for example, that, that basically she'd like to die already, that it's as if her life doesn't make any sense, she's lying down, and someone gives her food, I don't know, moves her over to that wheelchair, but actually the nurses think that she shouldn't even get into the wheelchair by herself often, that she should wait for someone. And she's such a very independent character too, and still with the physical pain of it all, so I sort of know that basically these last years of her being like that, well they're not happy she's not happy either. And she's trying to approach it as positively as possible, but it's surely difficult and at the point when it gets her somewhat depressed, I would say that for me it's also very upsetting and it's not even because I don't know, uncomfortable or awkward, it's just that I agree with her that, that it's already quite a horrible life and I feel very, very sorry for her, so, so those are probably the most difficult moments' (Wiktoria)

'Ms Ula (name changed) is aware that she won't live forever and from time to time she says, for example, that she'd like to live until I finish my studies, but that it won't happen for sure. And these are the moments that I really, well sometimes I don't know what to say. And it's sometimes difficult, but usually, well, we end up saying that what will be, will be. You just have to accept what's going to come. How much longer does God give her, she'll live and that's it. And also I know that she kind of wants to talk about it a little bit, because she mentioned that whenever she mentions something to her son, because he also calls her a lot. So as soon as she mentions to him that, well, that she's not going to live forever after all, he immediately drops the subject, that he doesn't want to talk about it. And she still, well, she has this need to say it simply, so that, well, it might not be long now' (Ola)

'She just needed the support of her immediate family, which she wasn't getting as much as she wanted. Oh, that was also the reason why she became more and more bitter, because she felt that her daughters just weren't interested in what was going on with her, she just felt very rejected by them and she was losing that desire to do anything at all because of that' (Klara)

'These depressive states, well when basically you can't help at all with just a normal conversation, well that's really the most difficult and that's basically when it's the most difficult



and there have been situations where (...) we go out and we know that this condition hasn't improved' (Marek)

'[In the work of a volunteer - note I. N.] what is difficult? First of all there is watching a person pass away slowly. I mean, I don't see them dying, but I see, for example, that day by day they have less and less strength. It's like they don't want to talk. That's how faded these people are. Where they already feel that their time is actually approaching. This is the worst, yeah. Hearing just that I'm ready, that I'm about to leave and so on. And that's the worst of it' (Laura)

### **Attachment and relationship between the volunteer and the older person(s)**

'Our relationship is (...) basically just a friendly one, so it's like meeting a colleague, if we're in the mood and feel like it, we'll talk about one thing, if not, we'll talk about something else and just hang out (...) Back then [when I started volunteering - note I. N.] I just wanted it to be there... for it to give me some sense of satisfaction. Now I have the impression that it no longer comes down to satisfaction at all, it just comes down to, well, the pleasure of everyday contact' (Wiktorja)

'[Ms Janina - name changed - note I. N.] is (...) a mixture of different interesting stories and she also has a great sense of humour and optimism and such a distance to herself, so it's just kind of great just to have contact with her and she teaches me a lot, and she also shows me what I would like to be when I'm old and it's kind of, well, it's really great' (Wiktorja)

'I stopped looking at it as volunteering after those four years. I see it more as simply my relationship with the senior lady and I treat her... I don't know if I would consider her a part of my family, but certainly someone very close to me (...) The very fact that a person who was a complete stranger to me and basically two and a half times my age has managed to form such a close bond with me over this period of time (...) What would I expect... well, probably, as in any relationship, some kind of reciprocity, right? Well, it would be a bit strange if I suddenly started to go there and she, I don't know, stopped being interested in what was going on with me or asking me about things. I think that if the relationship was one-sided, it would be much harder for me (...) A senior can open up to us, but I'm sorry, it's difficult to open up to someone who doesn't say anything about themselves (...) I saw myself more in this role of a person, as this volunteer who comes and helps. And this volunteer gives something to the older person. And now I see that very often it's the opposite [laughter]. That I draw from this volunteering' (Dagna)

'It is like a conscious choice of this volunteering, so the excitement is [pause] present, that's why there is no boredom [pause]. And it kind of depends on who has what predispositions, because it is excitement, as it is on the basis of the changeable dynamics of the relationship with another human being (...) for me there is excitement every now and then on such a level of communication with another human being' (Marek)

'I will honestly say that [contact with the seniors - note I. N.] is very good. We understand each other. Despite the big age difference, we understand each other very well. I have the impression that some of them treat me as their friend with whom they can talk and vent. I also sometimes give them advice. Of course, they have much more life experience than I do, so it happens a lot that they, for example, advise me on what to do in a given situation. Really, the people are extremely friendly and our contact is great, so to speak. That we can rely on each other (...). Above all, exchanging experiences with older people and learning from them. That's the exciting thing about it all' (Laura)

'It's like a person gets used to these people and well they are no longer here, yeah. New residents appear. However, these people are somehow missed, right? You know, when you get used to someone or like someone, it's a problem later on, of course. But you have to come to terms with it somehow. That is the way things are. That's how I explain it to myself' (Laura)

'There is always a kind of, I mean, at least I used to have it, this fear that I might not be able to cope, that these are people who are often better [pause] educated than me, much more experienced in life, and where such a, well, you could say a schmuck, would try to, I don't know, advise them, spend time with them, and so on and so forth. Of course, in this... in this group there were some people who tried to impose some kind of an opinion on me or tried to prove to me that what I was saying was not exactly as they imagined it to be, but I also came across groups of enthusiasts who were very willing to share their knowledge, their life experience with me' (Antoni)

'At first glance, it would seem like nothing interesting at all. Because when you talk about it a little bit, it might sound like some Uber or first-class food delivery. What's nice about it, though, is that these are the seniors with whom, if you go a bit beyond this pattern of coming, saying <<Good morning, I've brought you a meal, Bon appétit>> and going on, it turns out that [reflection] you start to build some kind of relationship there, somehow it looks a bit different. And I still... it looks a bit different, because in the sense that I don't come here with a meal to the senior anymore, I just come to the senior. And the fact that here I have this meal, it's already a kind of a different thing' (Emil)

'The contact was fine. Well, we talked, you know, sometimes it was hard to find a common topic, because she wasn't that super talkative, so sometimes there were these moments of prolonged, awkward silence, so to speak. But, you know, I tried to ask some questions. She also had, you know, her story, but she didn't like to talk so much. She was really happy to have a volunteer, because she was, you know, like people who volunteer, a lonely person (...) [Upon deciding to resign - note I. N.], we talked about it, because these meetings were less frequent. And at that time I wanted to leave the city for a longer period of time, my contract was coming to an end, and we decided not to prolong it, because she felt much worse about it, and I actually wanted to leave for longer. And so it worked out somehow, by so-called mutual agreement. I was a bit sad and I didn't feel good about it, because you know that you get attached after a while. And I was also a bit afraid that things would get worse, for example, or that something would happen to the lady, but you could see that it wasn't quite what she needed' (Klara)

'I think the whole process of establishing a relationship, getting to know the other person [is interesting - note I. N.]. But hearing the life story of someone older. I mean, in general, every life story is interesting, and it's known that the older someone is, the longer their story is' (Klara)

'There are days that, for example, here I'll be on a business trip or I'll catch a cold or something and I feel bad that, for example, I didn't come to see her this week, I tell myself I'll make up for it, but I know she's waiting somewhere out there and, well, it's just that it's harder for me for sure, it's so problematic' (Wiktoria)

'I felt a little bit like I let her [the supported senior citizen - note: I. N.] down, because she called me and asked me to go to the doctor with her, and I had just left Warsaw at that time and so I had no way of arranging it. And I felt sorry for her, because I knew that she would have to go

by herself somehow, whether by public transport or taking a taxi, but it's also, well, that she has to do it herself' (Ola)

'I feel a responsibility to make sure that even if I, for example, physically can't go out tonight, that someone is there' (Paulina)

'I can see that volunteering is also, in a way, about being so determined and sticking to your decision. Because I don't always feel like going, well let's be honest. But it's a commitment I've made and I've made it to a person. So I also feel, I think more responsibility than at the beginning. That you don't play with someone's needs and emotions (...) I'm a rather responsible person in general. But now, after these few years (...) I see that this is really very important. And also this determination to find the motivation within myself, that even if I don't want to, it doesn't mean I'm not going' (Dagna)

### **Personal benefits of involvement in volunteering**

'[When starting volunteering - note I. N.] I guess I didn't think in such terms of benefits about it. I mean I wanted more to give something from myself than to get something for it. (...) But of course those benefits came. Because the first thing was that the organisation (...) from time to time gave, for example, theatre tickets, some vouchers (...), so that's always a plus. But most of all, I think that the relationship between me and Ms Ula [name changed - I. N.] developed, that I had someone I could always go to. Well, I usually came on Sundays, so I felt a bit like a family, like I was going to my grandmother's for dinner or a coffee (...) ' (Ola)

'They [the supported women] are very grateful, yes, and the lady says: <<Oh, we would be totally lost without you. You devote so much time here, you come<< or she says: >>Hey, you must not feel well<<. I think: I feel better immediately when I hear something like that. So I have the impression that they are, if I may say so, quite warm towards me, and they are somehow grateful, but I don't know if it is like that towards all the people who come to them' (Paulina)

'There is certainly a need [pause] for such selfless gratitude of the other person [pause]. If (...) such a relationship is created between people (...) and it is relatively healthy, we also receive gratitude, naturally, although we don't go there to receive this gratitude (...) our beneficiary is, well, just healthy at this point, well, it happens that she also wants to show gratitude to us, and it is on our side to accept this gratitude, and not to avoid it' (Marek)

'I think there is already such an attachment between us that I can't imagine not speaking to her or visiting her anymore (...) I would feel strange if she was no longer in my life (...). ) I gained another person who is important to me and who I know cares about me and that I can always reach out to her and I will be able to talk to someone (...) I had even more to take care of at this new point in my life, plus I gained the kind of person I had in this new city and... So it was all beneficial for me' (Ola)

'I've learnt a little bit, like just... [pause], assessing and accepting sort of my field of influence and what is not my area of control (...) We also have a lot of responsibilities simply as a married couple and professional responsibilities of our own, so sometimes we now come across this limit of helplessness somewhere, that we would... we could, we would like to help, but it's just not, for example, our role or we don't have the competence for it' (Marek)

'I was a bit like, sad that I didn't last longer and that I didn't even want to try with someone else, so I felt definitely let down by that. And I felt such a clash with reality already, that it's not always nice and fun like in the movies, that you get along with someone just great, but it's a really hard thing to work with older people. And it got to me that it's not something I can do, and that I admire everyone who manages and is able to persevere (...) I've learnt maybe a little bit of patience and something that I have to be more tolerant of my own grandmother and grandfather, because older people have their own faults and you have to accept that' (Klara)

'We meet a need like that here (...) in the marriage, so to speak, as we also have some sort of common area where we talk about it, it's some sort of... part of our lives, so building the marital relationship, that's also something that is supported [pause]. So that well [pause] that's the way I would say it, those kind of needs are met in this volunteering' (Marek)

### **Social benefits of volunteering engagement**

'I continue to do this activity because I have become close to these people who are active in [name of organisation]. And I'm also doing it a little bit for them, because I know that they will benefit from the help that I offer. And it's also helpful for these seniors. (...) So now it's probably the people who keep me there the most who are also involved in activities for seniors. And I've already made friends with a few of them, I can say (...) But the other way round [from the seniors to Emil - note: I.N.] the friendliness is not quite there (...) And it seems to me that the problem is that it's simply been going on for too long [laughter]. (...) I have this belief in myself that as long as the task is not over, well, as long as there is a need to distribute these meals, well, I should be available' (Emil)

'I hope it will end, that this lady will recover and they [the supported people - note I. N.] will simply be self-sufficient. (...) I'm sure the feeling that you're helping someone, that it's needed somehow, that it wasn't like sitting in front of a computer for an hour and scrolling through Facebook, but that I did something actually useful, which brings one closer to independence' (Paulina)

'I've certainly acquired some sensitivity to the fact that this help is needed. Rather, to help, as I would call it for the benefit of society, so that the individual simply becomes independent and functions in a certain way, so as not to deepen the state of some helplessness, lack of ability and so on' (Paulina)

'I think first of all (...) it's helping someone who is no longer resourceful enough on their own, so on the one hand (...) it's an added value to society that we just have a person who is taken care of in some way, and as a personal benefit there is certainly a sense of such satisfaction, but also of bonding with others and learning something new' (Wiktoria)

'I'll be honest and say that I've always had the opinion that the elderly used to look after someone, then now it seems to me that they should be looked after' (Laura)

'I also try not to say no, (...) when someone asks me for help, I always try not to refuse that help. [pause]. Like, well... I try not to say no and I follow the principle that the good comes back' (Antoni)

'So for me it's a bit like learning that kind of hope that this goodness, if I need it one day, it will come back to me' (Emil)

'People, when you want to do something for someone, they have a suspicion that someone has a hidden agenda. And very often I see that someone doesn't want that help simply because he or she doesn't. Because you're going to want something from me here a minute after. No, I don't want anything from you, man, I just want to help you. Just in case, right? That's somewhere as the first thing that comes to my mind, that's kind of the biggest problem' (Tobiasz)