



Volunteer Management in International projects

The project, **Time to be Welcome**, aimed at encouraging young volunteers and youth organisations all over Europe to welcome young refugees and migrants. By supporting their integration process through the use of non-formal education and youth work. At the same time, the project wanted to raise awareness among the public opinion in Europe to be tolerant and more open towards migrants.

Young people in Europe were among the first to address the refugee crisis. Youth and civil society organizations supported and welcomed refugees arriving in their towns, even when their countries were closing the borders. When we talk about youth, related with this crisis, we can clearly see two categories of them. Young migrants who saw their world collapse in a night and decided to seek safety and a new beginning in Europe, and young Europeans who want to see a better future and find their place in today's hard reality. Both of them want to believe in Europe's successful future and they are willing to get their hands dirty to make a change in their lives and in their communities.

Youth Organisations are important contributors to enhancing an inclusive society for all culturally and socially diverse young people, empowering them to become active citizens. When it comes to participation, Youth Organisations play a crucial role and share common responsibilities. One of those responsibility in an International project is the volunteer management. The toolkit is the result of the Time to be Welcome partnership between eleven Scout and Non-Scout Youth Organisations in Europe, working together to provide international volunteers adequate support to be able to serve the most vulnerable groups.





Volunteer Management - International projects

Practical aspects, tasks and responsibilities.

General guidelines

When working on international projects it's important that all parties involved are aware of all expectation and guidelines for the successful implementation of the project; from volunteer selection to final reporting.

This document acts as a guide for volunteer management and covers the following.

1. The Sending organisation
2. Open call for Volunteers
3. Volunteers selection
4. Mutual Agreement
5. Pre-departure
6. On-arrival
7. Psychological support
8. Risk Assessment
9. Monitoring and evaluating

The Sending organisation

The sending organization is the actor responsible for selecting and “sending” the volunteer(s). The role and tasks of a sending organisation are:

- to select volunteers in cooperation with the other actors involved
- to supervise and support pre-departure practical arrangements (travel, insurance, etc.)
- to provide a pre-departure training to the volunteer(s)
- to provide support to volunteers during all the phases of the project
- to support the self-reflection and self-assessment process of volunteers (before and after the volunteering period)
- to enable follow up activities at the local level
- to “reintegrate” the volunteer(s) to the society once the volunteering period is over





Open call for Volunteers

When creating an open call for volunteers on an international project there are many pieces of information to include. A guideline can be found below to enable you to cover all aspects of the project and volunteer recruitment. An example can be found in *annex 1*.

Volunteers selection

This section aims to provide **sending partners** with clear guidance on how to have consistent and transparent recruitment processes.

Remember, recruiting volunteers is not about getting as many volunteers as possible, but about making sure you have the right volunteer, on the right project. This is vital for the wellbeing of the volunteer as well as the success of the project. Therefore, it is important to have “screening” processes in place to match the appropriate volunteer with an appropriate project. The guidance below represents best practice in recruiting and selecting volunteers:

1. Ensure clarity in your application processes. Potential volunteers may be discouraged by the lack of a clear application process. It is also important to ensure, as far as possible, that there is parity in the recruitment processes of the different sending partners, in order that the hosting partner and other volunteers can be confident in the transparency of the volunteer selection process.
2. Have a clear point of contact in your organization who people can get in touch with if they want to find out more about the volunteering opportunities on offer through TTBW. This will ensure that people are given the same information on the aims of the project, role, support available, finance and logistics etc., and will avoid confusion. Ideally, it should not take longer than forty-eight hours to respond to an information request.
3. Include an application pack, in your **Open call for volunteers**, including at a minimum:
 - a) a clear role description, including information about the project as a whole
 - b) a person specification - i.e. what skills/motivation/interest are you expecting from your volunteer?
 - c) an application form
4. Shortlist volunteers using a transparent process, so you can provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants if they request it. For example, use a skills matrix like the example below to mark each application so you can compare them:





Skills matrix - Points in profile of candidate specification (1 being no evidence- 4 exceeds specification)	1	2	3	4
Confidence in communicating with individuals and groups...				

5. Organise individual interviews with candidates and, wherever possible a selection day. A selection day would include group activities and an individual interview, allowing you to assess the candidate's' soft skills through their group work, while using the interview to find out more about them and their motivation to participate in the project. A selection day is the best way to get a clear idea of how well an individual may fit into the project, and it also gives them the opportunity to meet other people who might be on placement with them.

6. Communicate outcome of application/interview/selection day to all applicants. Offering feedback if requested. It's important that the whole process is a developmental opportunity for all applicants.

Mutual agreement

Before volunteers take their positions, they need to get a full overview of the job. It is important to have clear agreements in place about the commitment expected both from the volunteers and from the associations. Such expectations defined during the recruitment and selection should be captured in a mutual agreement.

Possible issues regularly identified in the agreement are:

- Facilities: insurance, expenses, budgets, space, working conditions.
- Terms: subscribing to the Mission and principles of the association, performance appraisal, compliance with agreement
- Personal development plan: overview of current competencies vs those required, training needs, guidance, training conditions.
- Wider view: where and how this role fits in achieving the Mission of the associations.
- Accountability: to whom and by whom.





Knowing that the management of adult resources in Volunteering is based on an agreement or contract rather than command this principle highlights the relation between the individual and organizational objectives and focuses on the personal development of the volunteer. This agreement is based on a set of mutual expectations and serves as a starting point of measurement and review in order to improve the performance of volunteering. In this sense mutual agreement is supported by the Psychological Contract formed between the volunteer and the organisations.

Not forgetting the importance of the cultural aspects beyond the process of mutual agreement, it can take concrete form in a simple document which should always reflect the expectations of both parties.

Pre-departure

Responsibility - sending partner

Once you've selected your volunteers, your role is to prepare them as best you can before they depart to their hosting countries. Pre-departure preparation is vital as it ensures that the volunteer has the chance to prepare practically and emotionally for their placement. At a minimum, this should include:

1. A pre-departure pack (*annex 2*) including practical information about the project, the host country, and how to access help and support while on placement
2. Contact with the hosting organisation's project manager - ideally, a face-to-face Skype meeting facilitated by the sending organisation. If this is not possible, the volunteers should be given contact details for the hosting organisation project manager, and the sending partner should send an introductory email to introduce the project manager and the volunteers
3. A structured [training event](#)
4. If possible, sending organisations should liaise with hosting partners to find out if there are any opportunities for language classes when the volunteers arrive in the host country

Responsibility - hosting partner

The hosting organisation is responsible for:

1. Ensuring that there is safe, secure accommodation for the volunteers on arrival
2. Designating support staff for volunteers - at a minimum, a project supervisor and mentor for each volunteer staying for 6 months or more.





3. Liaising with the local partners to create an activity rota for volunteers (ideally with input from the volunteers so that activities are relevant to their skills and interests)
4. Introducing the volunteers to all relevant staff/volunteers in the hosting organisation and to local partners (facilitating visits to local partners)
5. Providing on-arrival training for volunteers

Safe from Harm

Youth NGOs have the responsibility to provide children and young people a safe environment to grow and develop, whereas the relationship between young people and adults takes a key role.

To fulfil this responsibility, it's compulsory for all volunteers to complete Safe from Harm e-learning courses as part of their preparation for the project abroad.

Find here examples of e-learning courses developed by the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) in this topic.

https://www.scout.org/elearning_sfh1

https://www.scout.org/elearning_sfh2

Volunteers failing to pass the courses, shouldn't be able to take part in the project.

Training

Providing all volunteers with in-depth training ahead of their project is essential to experience and success of the project and the volunteers involved.

At least one training event for all volunteers should be held before the departure date. It could include;

- Information about travel plans, insurance and medical cover
- Intercultural training
- Finance - Allowances and claiming expenses
- Mental health first aid - "looking after yourself and others"
- Project relevant training - e.g training on working with vulnerable groups
- Information on who they can contact in sending organisation in case of any issues
- [Psychological first aid](#)
- Any other information specific to the requirements of the sending partner

More information on training and intercultural learning can be found [here](#).

It's recommended that all participants participate in a **risk assessment** session, including risk management.





If the pre-departure is comprehensive, the volunteers should be feeling excited and supported when they arrive- the on-arrival training should then help them to get more concrete details about their placements and what to expect in their new home.

On-arrival

Just as important as the preparation prior to departure is the introduction for the volunteers once they have arrived. The volunteers are anxious and somewhat insecure because they do not know what they will find. The first impression they receive is crucial to reassure them and make them feel safe in their new environment.

On arrival the hosting organisation should;

- Introduce the volunteer to project staff (mentor, facilitator, coordinator and other members of the NGO) and other volunteers (where relevant)
- Help the volunteer to find their way through the city; where accommodation is, local bus routes, facilities - e.g. supermarket, post office, bank;
- Local information - e.g. about local communities, customs, activities they can get involved with
- Facilitate contact with local partners and stakeholders

On-arrival training should be prepared with an understanding about the content of the pre-departure training, to avoid too much repetition and ensure the training is relevant for volunteers. It should include, at a minimum:

- Practical information - e.g. when allowances will be paid and how (e.g. in cash, through a bank account etc); any bureaucratic information - e.g. registering with local authorities getting social insurance number etc (this will differ in different countries, so it is up to the hosting partner to find out the relevant information)
- Information about the hosting organisation and local partners
- Cultural guidance relevant to local community
- Any relevant local legal information regarding their volunteering

It's important to establish on arrive, regular meetings between volunteers and the project manager at hosting organisation, to ensure that there is a safe space for communication and ensure that issues are resolved in a constructive manner.





Clear lines of communication between ALL project staff and volunteers - that means:

- Between host organisation project manager and volunteers
- Between sending organisation and their volunteers
- Between coordinating organisation and all partners and volunteers
- Between local project staff (i.e. shelters, youth centres etc) and volunteers
- Between host organisation project manager and local project staff
- Between hosting and sending partners
- A budget for resources should be held by the hosting partner so that volunteers are not paying out of pocket for resources to run their activities.

Psychological support

With any international volunteer project and extend time away from home its essential the right psychological support is available to all project volunteers. Training for all volunteers and support teams on psychological first aid for both themselves and those around them is really important for effective volunteer management and project delivery.

Recommendations of activities to explore and develop the mental well-being and preparation for all volunteers can be found in *annex 3* and includes the following.

- Managing personal risk- psychological dimension, understanding stress
- Understanding burnouts and how to prevent it
- Mental health first aid

Good emotional and psychological support result in a positive experience for any volunteer abroad looks like;

- The volunteers need to feel recognized
- The volunteers need to have the right project
- The volunteers need free time
- The volunteers need social contact
- The volunteers need to be motivated
- The volunteers need to feel secure
- The volunteers need to have ownership
- The volunteers need to have flexibility
- The volunteers need achievable tasks
- The volunteers need to be able to reflect on their experience





Risk assessment

Assessing risk in order to reduce or remove it is at the heart of safe Scouting and is present in everything we do.

Risk assessments are best described as disciplined, common sense applied to everyday life. With international projects there is often unexpected risk or risks we are not ordinarily used to preparing for. With this in mind, it's important all volunteers feel prepared and fully aware of the risk assessment. They need to step back and think about assessing risk and, safety management in more detail, especially as international projects are often dealing with groups of adults and young people in situations, we do not encounter every day.

So, a structured approach makes the task easier and helps us to identify all the potential risks.

There are just five steps to a proper risk assessment

1. Look for the hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed, and how
3. Evaluate the risks
4. Record your findings
5. Review and revise

To prepare volunteers you can discuss different scenarios and create a personal risk assessment. In *annex 4* you will find some example scenarios to help volunteers consider potential risks in the environments they are volunteering. There is also an example of a personal risk assessment template, volunteers may find it useful to prepare this, especially if they are volunteering alone.

Following these sessions, you will then need to assess the level of risk, using the risk rating in *annex 4* to help volunteers understand their level of risk.

It's essential to design a clear action plan and escalation policy for your volunteers, to ensure they are confident in how to respond to and deal with risk.

It's compulsory for all sending organizations and volunteers to complete the Safe from Harm eLearning and training as part of their preparation for the project abroad.





Monitoring and evaluating

Monitoring

Monitoring is the process of collecting the facts and figures throughout the lifecycle of the volunteering experience. Monitoring helps to check that the activities are being implemented as expected. To collect this information step by step helps to see if something isn't working or even if something is working better than expected, and whether changes need to be made. Monitoring is basically an on-going evaluation.

Regular debriefings and feedback meetings throughout the project will support the development of volunteers, project management and overall outcomes.



Evaluation & Debriefing

Evaluation can be seen as a step further: it is the process through which we observe an activity from its beginning to the end. Evaluation, in fact, is time specific and it's performed as to judge whether the project (or the volunteering period in this case) has reached its goals and delivered what expected according to the original plan. Evaluation also leads to adding something to change or improve. There are different types of evaluation: Short - term, intermediate, long term.

Within any project, we can use different monitoring and evaluation levels:

1. Self - evaluation of volunteer(s), including reflection over original expectations and goals
2. Internal evaluation: evaluation of volunteers works and his/her cooperation with the organization staff and all relevant internal actors
3. Self-evaluation of the organization, concerning the supervision of the volunteers and the different features and dynamics of the project
4. External evaluation: the volunteering experience could also be evaluated through the consultation and confrontation with external actors (beneficiaries, families, partner organizations, etc.)





After an international project it is advised to complete a full debrief and evaluation, including all of the above areas. This will ensure shared learning for future projects, personal development for volunteers and feedback for the hosting/project organisations. This evaluation should aim to;

- To measure the quality of the volunteers' experience within the project
- To identify the impact that volunteers have on the project
- To identify areas of improvement within the project
- To find out how they are developing/they developed themselves;
- To express what they think about tasks they're doing/they did;
- To compare right and wrong things they're doing/did and give solutions to improve/change their work
- To talk about the competencies of the volunteers

Finally, volunteers should return to their sending organisation with recommendations for similar projects, volunteer management and general evaluation outcomes that have a positive impact on the development of their organisation. Being able to tell their story, experience and learning is really important for all volunteers and NSO's.

