



DEVELOPING VOLUNTEERING

A document drafted for the purposes of the
Erasmus+ project „Learning to Optimize
Volunteering Experience“

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Youth Association “Youth in the EU”
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This document, drafted as an output of the gathered materials from the activities and participants of the training for youth workers implemented in Šibenik from the 30th of September until the 6th of October 2021, as a part of the project „Learning to Optimize Volunteering Experience“, is a gathered recommendation of youth workers and young people who have gathered and developed their knowledge and drafted material for the development of volunteering activities.

The purpose of this document is to lay out and clearly but concisely describe the fundamentals of drafting and implementing activities for European Solidarity Corps projects, and as such create a useful record to organizations and individuals who want to implement volunteering projects to further the benefit of their local communities.

1 Rights and obligations of volunteers

A volunteer is a person who freely gives their time, skills and effort to be a positive force for the bettering and development of their community. An ESC volunteer is, more specifically, a young person, who displays interest in spreading solidarity in their local community, as well as cross-country. Many young people who decide to embark this type of mobility are not fully aware of what their opportunities are, what awaits them once they are chosen to be volunteers for an organization, and are not comprehensively informed of their obligations and which rights they possess whilst they are completing their volunteering experience.

European Solidarity Corps volunteers are entitled to the following:

- Being fully informed before arriving to the volunteering country and location;
- Be provided a mentor according to their learning needs, appointed after collecting the necessary information prior to their arrival through interviews and/or written correspondence;
- To not be financially responsible for the administration of the project activities
- To be clearly aware of their learning opportunities;
- The opportunity to carry out a well-defined set of tasks for 35 working hours per week (*5 working days*);
- To receive decent accommodation;
- To receive supervision and guidance by hosting organization staff and be introduced to their working environment and duties after their arrival;
- To be introduced to the local city/organization/activities be aided with practical arrangements (local transport, accommodation and food);
- To receive pocket money and food allowance as per ESC guidelines, and with regularity
- To receive a Youthpass certificate if the volunteer wants to receive it at the end of the volunteering activity;
- To receive travel reimbursement

All of these are crucial to the setup of a quality volunteering project which to maximise the experience for the volunteers. Unless they are met, and unless the volunteer is fully aware of them, the organizations cannot hope to implement a volunteering activity as per ESC

standards. The volunteer is central to the groundwork of a volunteering project and activity, and their needs are principal in the arrangement of a project plan. These rights and obligations need to be considered carefully when drafting a volunteering project proposal and are a solid base for what is discussed in the following point of this document.

2 Preparation of a European Solidarity Corps project

2.1 Definition of project and program

A **Project**¹ is a temporary job undertaken to create a unique project service or result. It elects to be defined as a project (and not only an intervention) once it fulfils these three basic characteristics:

1. Have a defined start and end date
2. Provide a unique result
3. Have clearly defined coverage, budget and resources

A **Program**, on the other hand is a group of related projects managed in a coordinated way to obtain benefits and control not available from managing them individually. Programs may contain elements of work outside of the scope of the discrete projects in the program.

The importance of understanding this distinction is vital to starting to set up the volunteering project. For an organization that has the intention to start drafting a volunteering project, having a clear scope of how this project can fit in the framework of their existing activities and how the volunteers can learn and implement activities within the already present projects and activities of the hosting organizations is key to identifying an aim and, therefore, reaching the intended results.

2.2 Setting up the volunteering activities

The first and foremost variables to identify when drafting the project proposals are the following:

1. Finding a pertinent an issue in your community
2. Analysing the opportunity of the project
3. Gathering competences and resources

The way this can be achieved through is the usage of the Problem tree method.

1 A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, third edition, Project Management Institute, 2004, USA

The **problem tree analysis** is a tool which is commonly utilized in mapping out the key problems of the local community prior to a project to clearly identify causes, effects and to

map out the plan for solving the problem at hand. This tool supports project planners to spot the main goals and create manageable steps for reaching said goals.

The three stages of this analysis are:

1. Identifying the negative aspects of an existing situation with the “causes and effects” part of the problem tree
2. Inverting the problems into objectives leading into an objective tree
3. Deciding the scope of the project by analysing strategies. the scope of the project in an analysis of strategies.

The for the success of this method is going through these stages along with the entire project team, to find common ground – a key element in the implementation of the project later.

Consequently, the identified problem and need in the community can be funnelled through the **Logical Framework** or logframe. Essentially the **logframe** is a document that gives an overview of the objectives, activities, and resources of a project; it consists of:

Indicators - a quantitative or qualitative measurement which provides a reliable way to measure changes connected to an intervention. In essence “a description of the project’s objectives in terms of quantity, quality, target group(s), time and place”

Sources of verification - Describes the information sources necessary for data compilation that would allow the calculation of indicators.

The following table indicates the main steps necessary to set up the project, as per the logframe. The table is framed as a bottom-up approach, which means that is to be navigated from the lower end (the activities) which feed into the final item: the goal itself. By applying this method, we retroactively observe which concrete actions are necessary to achieve what is needed by the project.

Project summary	Indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
Goal Overall objective, projects contribution to policy of program objectives (impact)		How will the information be collected, when and by whom?	
Outcome Direct benefits to the direct group (specific objective)	Which indicators clearly show that the objective of the action has been achieved?	How will the information be collected, when and by whom?	If an outcome is reached, which assumptions should be satisfied to reach the goal?
Outputs	What are the indicators to	How will the information be	If the result is been achieved, which

Results delivered by the project	measure to what extent action achieves expected result.	collected, when and by whom?	assumptions should be satisfied to reach specific goal/outcome?
Activities Implemented activities in order to deliver the desired results	What means are required to implement these activities?	Costs	If activities are implemented, which assumptions are satisfied in order to reach results.(pre-conditions)

Table 1 – Representation of the logframe method with the purpose of drafting project activities

The outcome of the abovementioned sourcing and planning methods is a well-rounded frame upon which to rely on during the drafting of the project proposal. This frame serves as a “sketch” which needs to be drafted in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders which will be involved in the implementation of the project activities. By doing so, the project has a fixed base upon which the rest of the project can be built.

3 Selection of European Solidarity Corps volunteers

Volunteers apply for their European Solidarity Corps volunteering experience through the European Youth Portal, where they upload their details along with their CV (although not mandatory). They can also provide a short motivation to indicate to hosting organizations in more detail why they are specifically interested in that particular volunteering experience. In the following points, you may find in more detail how to navigate the volunteering selection process, along with useful tips which may be of use along the way.

3.1 The selection process

The selection process is mostly implemented through the PASS system, on which the hosting organizations receive most, if not all the applications for the volunteering project. The project coordinator with or without members of the hosting organization then completes an initial screening thanks to which they can get a sense of the candidates, of what they can bring to the organization and local community, and, perhaps most importantly, identify if the volunteering project can bring something to the applicant and benefit their development.

In selecting the participants who will actively participate in the activities of the ESC volunteer project, the hosting organization needs to rely on the needs which are defined by the project itself. There needs to be a clear emphasis on non-discrimination of any kind in the selection of the participants as well as the understanding that any young person, independently of their experience and level of education can apply to a volunteering project. Having an initial interview is a useful way of getting more detailed information about the applicant, their motivations for applying, as well as providing more information to the applicants should they want to have a more wholesome picture of what potentially awaits them.

3.2 Pre-departure activities and preparation

Sending organizations, which are based in the countries the volunteers originate from, are a vital part of preparing as well as implementing a volunteering project. And their role is most useful at the beginning of a project. Once the volunteer(s) are selected the sending organization collaborates with the hosting organization to implement a pre-departure training, useful to familiarize the arriving volunteers with the European Solidarity Corps, the mission and vision behind the program and the aims of the volunteering project they have been selected for, the local context of the host country, and the useful information about travel arrangements and necessary personal items which they could need in the host country.

Prior to departure, the volunteer needs to sign all necessary documents (such as the Activity Agreement) and needs to be informed of all their rights and obligations (see Point 1 of this document).

The volunteer is assisted throughout the journey to the destination country and is familiarized with the staff and operative space of the organization, their accommodation, as well as relevant services of the city or town they are residing in.

They are prepared for the project activities, given information about the project and their role in the organization.

4 Conflict resolution and mediation methods

Working in teams, being active in a context that is not familiar to your own, meeting and collaborating with people that were unfamiliar prior to the volunteering experience, etc... These are all stressors which can lead to conflict. As project coordinators and mentors, it is the job of the hosting organization responsible staff for the project to be skilled at mediation and conflict resolution techniques in order to prevent, recognize and manage discord which can arise throughout the project.

When we deal with conflict effectively, it is possible to see the positive aspects of it; we can learn a lot about ourselves and others from it, we can come up with creative ways to deal with problems, and we can even get closer to people through conflict. When we deal with conflict ineffectively, it can escalate quickly and lead to physical and/or emotional violence.

There are many elements which influence our reactions and behaviour. Those connected with our pre-conditions as human beings we can call “**internal factors**”. Those connected with everything around us we can call “**external factors**”.

Understanding these factors might help give us better insight into our own behaviour and also the behaviour of the people around us.

External:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather • Language barrier • Noise • Time pressure • Time of day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations from others towards us • Culture (of country, region, organization, group) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional system • Living conditions • Social values • Social background
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Table 2 – External factors of behavior

Internal:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs • Stress • Emotions • Education • Needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mood • Attitudes, values • Physical conditions • Temperament • Ambitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills • Interest • Habits • Experiences
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Table 3 – Internal factors of behavior

Conflict is inevitable. Heterogeneous groups with variety of diverse viewpoints, backgrounds, interests will naturally have differences. How differences are discussed, managed and resolved are critical to the work of the people involved in the volunteering activities.

5 Evaluating volunteering activities

The evaluation process collects measurable data that can then be used in the preparation of project results, but also to be able to assess the quality of the project and its activities. At the beginning of the implementation of the main activities of the proposed project in volunteers can fill out an evaluation questionnaire that contains their expectations and what they want to gain from participating in the project activities. A similar evaluation questionnaire can be filled in by the participants at the end of the main activities, where they can present the general assessment of the project and main activities, their level of satisfaction with the

accommodation, engagement of the coordinator and mentor as well as the hosting organization staff and all competencies and knowledge gained by participating in the project.

The mentor on the project evaluates the work of volunteers on a weekly basis. This gives useful provide feedback on the learning outcomes of the volunteers through each week, and volunteers are able to evaluate the regular activities and additional activities that are intended for that week.

At the end of each activity during the project, participants can fill out evaluation sheets on which they can rate their satisfaction with the project, the level of acquired new knowledge, skills, language competencies, and the engagement of the hosting organizations around their volunteer activities. In addition to numerical assessments, participants can present their comments, suggestions, praise and dissatisfaction through descriptive answers.

The success of the volunteering project will be determined based on several parameters which will need to be defined in the project application. At the very end of the project implementation, an internal evaluation should be conducted to determine whether all project activities planned to be implemented in all phases of the proposed ESC volunteer project have been completed.