



**International evaluation report of the trainings for volunteers  
- a summary of results achieved -**

**Name of trainers involved in the preparation, facilitation and evaluation of the trainings:**

**Germany:** Perdita Wingerter, Kathrin Zenger, Konrad Beß, Cornelia Schuh-Stötzel, Helga Hensel, Rainer Gaßler, Sabrina Kanski, Sybille Holz, Anton Süß, Gabi Guadamillas Cortés

**UK:** James Moon, Jean Michelle Jordan, Adriana Rackley

**Romania:** Adriana Laslo, Mariann Kinga Árkosi, Anca Miheşan, Oana Țicle, Ioana Bere

**Czech Republic:** Lenka Černá, Zuzana Unčovská, Martina Lohniská (Vlková)

**Number of direct beneficiaries**

In total 264 persons participated in the full length of the training. Another over 519 persons took part only in certain training sessions. Most often the size of the actual working group was between 10 to 20 participants.

The size of the group provides both opportunities and challenges: with a smaller group it is easier to support the training in a tailored way, while in larger groups eliciting the questions can be quicker as the responses are coming from more persons. In both cases, make sure that you intervene with a dynamic approach if you notice that the attention of people is waivered.

**General schedule of the training**

The basic schedule of the sessions varied from training to training. Depending on the context, specificities of the target group and the objectives to be reached, a variety of options exist. Two opposite approaches which were tested and proved to be efficient are:

- intensive trainings with continuous sessions for 5 days, with 6 working hours / day;
- regular meetings (weekly or more rarely) of various length over a longer period of time (up to 4 months), approaching a certain (part of a) module every time.

**The most usual objectives of the training were the followings:**

- to provide the participants information regarding the general context in which the volunteering activities in a certain country / NGO are taking place;
- to support the participants in the process of identifying the volunteering opportunities both at local and international level which fit the best their needs and expectations;
- to ease the work of the participants in turning social ideas into projects while addressing the needs of the community;
- to create the frame in which participants develop useful skills in order to successfully take part in various volunteering activities;
- to increase the employability and overall well-being of the participants;



- to offer a prosperous context for the exchange of experience among the participants, as well as among the participants and the team of facilitators.

**Topics included:** Volunteering, Objectives/roles, Project/ time management, Communication, Human resources, PR in NGOs, Event management, Networking, Finances, Legal issues

Always consider adding additional training sessions / modules to your design in case there are relevant topics for your objectives which are not included in the proposed modules. These can become crucial for the participants, especially in case they are going to get involved in the same volunteering activity. In order to efficiently use the time reserved for the training sessions, treat certain modules as optional and undertake a 'pick and mix' approach to the curriculum.

### Pros

Clarifies the types of activities which fit the best each participant, making them to recognize which are the skills they would like to put in practice and / or develop through volunteering. With the huge and diverse amount of information provided, it makes a lot easier for the volunteers to decide what and how to do in the field of volunteering in their future. Also, the training offers the possibility to develop skills that are transferable for future employment, making participants understand also that through volunteering they can benefit and learn something useful for their professional life.

In case the participants are involved in the same volunteering activity, the training improves the functioning of the volunteer programme as it clarifies the expectations and prepares the volunteers for their (upcoming) activity, making the role and the aims of the volunteering that they would undertake far clearer. As well, it provides the knowledge regarding certain very specific aspects related to the volunteering activity and is able to increase the success rate of social initiatives of various groups of interest. The training was found to contribute to an increased enthusiasm about starting / continuing the volunteering activity. From the trainers' point of view, while training the participants, the interaction and activities create the context in which the level of commitment of the volunteers and their suitability for the role can be assessed.

In case the participants are newcomers in the field of volunteering, the training makes people discover that they have the power to make a difference and that they can contribute positively to society. As well, it enriches the participants so that they are able to run their own social action projects, increasing their enthusiasm and level of preparation for their upcoming volunteering work. The curriculum has proved to be useful in setting up concrete actions in order to solve various issues in the community through a practical way of learning, using the theoretical background provided by the modules.

In case the participants have various profiles, the training creates the context in which more and less experienced volunteers coming from various backgrounds and socio-cultural realities could teamwork and collaborate.

## Cons

Is very much indicated to include participants with similar profile and background in order to be able to really answer the learning needs and expectations of all the participants.

An international group of participants or participants with different language skills might arise the challenge of bi-/plurilingual training which slows down the learning process due to the translation which has to be provided in real time. Include more non-verbal methods in such cases. Also, consider the time investment for the translation of the learning materials / handouts prior to the training.

## Recommendations related to the topics involved

**Volunteering** – it gives a general overview and it's a very important starting step both for the participants and the trainers. From the participants' point of view, it warms up the initial process, helping them getting to know each other and getting acquainted with the field of volunteering, while vanishing certain stereotypes or myths related to the field. In case the participants have a certain role in a project, emphasis their role in relation to the needs of the community – in this sense, make sure that they understand that the contribution is always in a practical way and tightly connected to the needs of the community. From the trainers' point of view this module helps to better understand the profile and background of the participants. You can expect a debate on the history of volunteering and already detect to which extent the participants are motivated for the training.

**Objective / roles** – In case of volunteers with similar roles within the same volunteering activity, this module helps becoming more comfortable with the work: to understand the purpose of the project in relation with the role of the volunteer, but also the main challenges that arise within the specific volunteering programme. If there exist a certain community-related issue and therefore a common goal that brought the participants together, it is much easier to define a joint objective and the roles of (subgroups of) volunteers. Newcomers into volunteering work might require more support in this initial module so that they understand what and why they would like to do; in this sense, adaptation of the module to suit the group is recommended. In any case, it is important to be very clear about the boundaries of the role of a volunteer and that of volunteer work, as well as to clarify how to cooperate with the professional staff of an organisation. In order to deepen in the personal understanding of their own motivational factors, as well as the types of projects / activities and therefore types of roles and responsibilities they are able / ready to assume, the "Development cards" proved to be very much appreciated instruments. Beside other important aspects, the module helps to clarify the difference between a volunteer and volunteer coordinator.

**Project / time management** – be prepared to encounter proposals for "fantasy projects" also, a.k.a. ideas for concrete activities which would cost a lot of money and have little impact. Having a real project to be implemented within a set timeframe can be very motivating in setting up a detailed agenda

and keeping to a project plan. In case the participants are involved in a certain volunteering activity, best practice examples of previously used methods / implemented activities are welcome to be shown.

**Communication** – the teambuilding exercise is a very good starting point for bonding the trainees and developing a good atmosphere. Also, it is useful for outlining the ways and learn the technics in order to efficiently communicate and solve problems under various types of pressures, as well as the possible solutions and ways for future improvement. The trainers can benefit from the module as it helps to get to know the group of participants. This module is highly relevant for volunteers who continuously communicate with the beneficiaries, also in term of understanding the existing language barriers. The module can be tailored also to the need of the participants to find the best communication channels among themselves while turning an idea into reality. In case you notice tendencies that the group of participants divides into smaller sub-groups, improve the communication among the sub-groups through this module. In case tensions exist among the participants or the participants and the trainer(s), take these real life experiences to approach the topics on conflict and people management, using the proposed methods to solve the emerged issues (e.g. how misunderstandings happen and how they can be avoided). In case of multicultural background of the participants, consider an input on intercultural communications and misunderstandings. You might find difficult to integrate smoothly certain elements of this module into the existing design or see no use of certain exercises – a recommendation is to link the topic “Presentation, moderation, public speaking” with the modules “Event management – PR in NGOs”.

**Human resources** – the aspects related to building a team is highly relevant for the participants in case new volunteers should be recruited / involved in a volunteering activity / programme which had previously been or is being developed. It is also useful for the participants as they understand how groups are formed / developed and efficient teamwork achieved in smaller and larger groups. Study cases with actual experiences of the participants in various former situations are appreciated. You might find difficult to integrate all the components of this module into the sessions, without letting the impression of rather abrupt changes. An advice can be to link the topics of the module with other modules (especially Communication) and activities (e.g. invitation of other volunteers to discuss about their experiences). Also, the phases of a conflict and methods / actions to prevent or solve a conflict link well with the module on Communication.

**PR in NGOs** – press releases / press conferences can be used so that they promote the volunteering activity / programme in which the participants of the training are involved or for increasing the visibility in the local community of the training opportunity. For such, use the training session to create the article(s) and/ or to practice for the press conference. Another option is to provide information to a larger audience or address invitations for cooperation to other NGOs active in the field, linking this module with the module on Networking.

**Event management** – the part related to feedback might be considered less relevant for some volunteers and therefore some exercises might seem less relevant for their role. In general, the

practical materials are appreciated. In case of participants involved in a volunteering activity which does not imply organization of events, this module is less relevant and therefore better covering it briefly. Planning a real event, jointly is always a good choice.

**Networking** – might become a long-expected module in case it is among the last ones, as volunteers are many times interested in new potential sources for networking. Include here the possibility for the participants to explore the online world (platforms, databases, resources, social media groups, mailing lists) that are relevant for the volunteers to remain updated and inspired, keeping the track with the existing opportunities and trends on a local, national and international level. In case the participants are from the same NGO / group of interest, draw their attention to other NGOs / groups working in the field with whom they could collaborate, empowering each other and mutually increasing the impact on the community. Another options are to provide an overview on different volunteer organisations / volunteer positions available or organisations / services existing for certain issues / problems participants might have. Some of the exercises might seem difficult to adapt and some participants might feel that the input is too basic compared to what they know / use already.

**Finances** – how to do fundraising for a social initiative, non-profit tax aspects and finances might be less relevant for the trainees, while the information about how to set up an organization might be more interesting for those with more initiative. Also, you might consider not approaching this module at all, replacing it by subject-specific training in case the participants are going to be involved in the same volunteering activity.

**Legal issues** – you might realize that many of the participants are not familiar at all with this important topic, therefore we consider crucial to discuss the legal issues in the first part of the training for volunteers, before entering into more specific topics. Put emphasis on the rights and responsibilities of the volunteers, the law of volunteering in your country and the benefits volunteers can have when the legal frame of their involvement is created. Some participants might be more interested in the topic of setting up their own organization, particularly social enterprises. On the other hand, for certain groups this module can be less or with no relevance, case in which you might consider approaching it in less detail. If you have a group with a specific volunteering activity, consider an input on the existing laws relevant to that activity.

The modules of “Event management”, “Project/ time management” and “PR in NGOs” can be approached using the main frame of the planning of a one-day public event. Trainers giving feedback to the working groups while they are working on their idea can be very much appreciated, especially related to the organizational details and possible risks / difficulties which can be foreseen. In this sense, we suggest to maintain the “facilitator to group” type of feedback until the final presentation (to all the groups) of the results attained through the “trio” of modules.

Another option is to approach all the modules through planning and implementing concrete activities for a social cause, such as fundraising, collection of certain resources, organizing a local event

with various activities or reconditioning a public space. Linking the experience during the planning and implementation to the theoretical background of the curriculum proved to be an efficient way to mobilize newcomers in the field of volunteering especially because of the positive contribution and the emotional reward after carrying out “something good”.

### **Tips and tricks**

In case your target group includes students, make sure you plan the period and schedule of the training suitable for their regular timetable in schools and universities. In general, the fluctuation in the persons (people joining and leaving) or the number of participants during the various sessions due to persons unable to join for the whole length of the day or not available for certain days of the training interfere with the group dynamics and might cause challenges both for the facilitator(s) and the entire group. Do your best to maintain the attendance rate high by making the participants from the very beginning responsible towards joining the entire training.

When recruiting for the training, make sure you gather a rather homogeneous group so that you avoid the challenge to answer the needs, cover the expectations and find a common ground for the efficient learning process of participants with very different background in volunteering (especially in terms of the time spent in volunteering activities).

In case the participants are newcomers in the field of volunteering and therefore most probably very much eager to get information about the existing volunteering opportunities (local and international), structure the order of the sessions so that you include a discussion about it in the first part of the training. It can happen, though, to have newcomers who are unmotivated to participate, showing resistance and disrespect towards volunteering activities and therefore to the training in general – in such cases, consider adapting the whole curriculum, transforming it from a “theoretically and written” input and material to an entirely practical learning through study cases (real examples) and concrete project activities (practical experience in volunteer work, doing something “for real” from setting a goal through planning to implementation and evaluation).

If the participants are from different volunteering backgrounds, consider inserting more often breaks, as at time their attention might be waived due to the differences in the level of understanding and experience in various topics approached. Also, make it more engaging through more practical / dynamic exercises. You might expect to encounter a certain reluctance or difficulty to make the participants spend considerable time on setting aims and objectives.

In case the volunteering role of the participants is the same or very similar (e.g. they were recruited for the same project / activity), certain modules of the training might be less relevant or certain aspects treated in a module might become irrelevant. In such cases, cover these modules in a smaller amount of detail compared to the indicated size of the module or leave the irrelevant aspects aside, always orienting the design depending on the nature of the volunteering role and the main community issues that the volunteering programme seeks to solve.



In case (the majority of) the participants know each other well, some of the getting to know each other exercises should be adapted or not used at all.

Give space and put emphasis on peer-learning in order to allow space for the more experienced participants and avoid getting them bored.

Inviting volunteers active in various areas can bring a spot of colour in the dynamics of the learning process and lifts the spirit of the group, prompting the participants to be more opened and learn from the experience of the others. Choose these invitees so that they are able to share their personal experience in volunteering related to certain modules / topics included in the training design.

In case you are unsure or feel less experienced with certain topic, but it is relevant for the expectations and learning needs of the participants, consider inviting a professional in that topic. This proved to be highly appreciated by the trainees.

The more interactive and practical you make the sessions, the most appreciated it is going to be. Still, be aware that some of the participants might not understand what non-formal education means. Also, in case the training is delivered in a formal institution where listening theories is the most usual way for learning, don't expect that for the beginning the participants would be either interactive, or ready to contribute actively. If you encounter such a case, the advice is to talk about the practical approach and the importance of proactive attitude in the non-formal learning process right at the beginning of the training, emphasising that less input should be expected from the facilitator(s) compared to a usual teacher / professor.

### **Final remark**

Without exception, the methods and the way of presenting the content, including also the evaluation forms, had to be adapted, depending on the specificities of the target group, focusing more on certain aspects due to the range of volunteering activities which exist, the differing national and organizational realities, etc. The continuous necessity to adapt the curriculum highlights the difficulty to effectively develop and facilitate / deliver on a wider scale a pan-European training.