

IMProVE

Inclusive Methods in Professional
Volunteering in Europe



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

ON HOW TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT

INCLUSIVE VOLUNTEERING

IN THE VOLUNTEER WORLD



2024



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in Europa e.V.



JAUNUOLIŲ DIENOS CENTRAS

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VOLUNTEERING IS FOR EVERYONE !

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Policy recommendations - introduction

In the IMProVE 2.0 project, running from 2021-2024, we are primarily concerned with opening up volunteering to people with disabilities and the associated reduction of mental, physical or practical barriers. The main concept of our project is a volunteer tandem: a volunteer with a disability and an Inclusion Buddy. Inclusion Buddy is a support for the volunteer with a disability, especially at the beginning, in moments when the volunteer feels insecure or needs some help. In the project we found that the biggest barrier is a mental barrier. It is not just the mental barrier of people with disabilities, but the barrier of mostly everyone involved, such as carers, parents and organisations. It is a litmus test of the public's view. Yes, we are used to people with disabilities being just recipients of help. The mission of this project is to overturn this stereotype and enable people with disabilities to be full members of society with something to offer and contribute. That is why we bring these policy recommendations on how to promote and support inclusive volunteering to you, volunteer centres, volunteer-friendly organisations and all those who support volunteering - we believe that our world will be an inclusive one if we make inclusion and inclusive volunteering a normal part of our lives.

The policy recommendations in this booklet are applicable to other minority groups interested in volunteering.

The Policy recommendations on how to promote and support inclusive volunteering are suggestions for volunteer centers and organizations welcoming open volunteering to promote and facilitate volunteer opportunities that are accessible and welcoming to diverse groups of participants. Inclusive volunteering means ensuring that people from all backgrounds, regardless of their age, gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, ability or other characteristics, have the opportunity to engage in volunteering activities. Inclusive volunteering is essential to building diverse and equitable communities. Policy recommendations for inclusive volunteering are essential to creating a more equitable and diverse voluntary sector that reflects the wider community it serves and ensures that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to positive social change.



Inclusive culture, promotion and education

1. Create an inclusive culture

- Ensure that the organisation has an inclusive culture that supports and respects the diversity of volunteers.
- Incorporate the principles of inclusion into the values and goals of the organisation. Provide training to staff and volunteers on the importance of inclusion.

2. Promote inclusive volunteering

- Create promotional materials that show the diversity of volunteers and highlight an inclusive environment.
- Share stories of volunteers with disabilities that show the positive impact of inclusive volunteering on individuals and communities and share them through social media, websites and other channels.

3. Organise education and training

- Provide training for staff on inclusion and the importance of creating a welcoming environment for all.
- Organise workshops, training or seminars on topics related to inclusion and inclusive volunteering for the public.
- Provide training to organisations and volunteers on inclusive volunteering so that they understand the challenges and benefits.
- In the inclusive project IMProVE 2.0 we have developed training curricula for Inclusion Volunteers (people with disabilities), Inclusion Buddies (volunteers without disability who support volunteers with disabilities), Inclusion Volunteer Coordinators and a manual for carers, which are freely available on the project website and on the Erasmus platform sharing project results (links..)
- Ensure that those interested in inclusive volunteering have access to information and resources on inclusive volunteering.
- The IMProVE 2.0 project page informs volunteers and organisations about inclusive volunteering, the possibility to support a volunteer with a disability from Inclusion Buddy, training opportunities and by clicking through to the overview of inclusive volunteer positions (links). The site is in simplified language, accessible to people with mild visual disability.



The main slogans of inclusion are: respect, dignity, equal opportunities, open and transparent communication, inclusion, participation, diversity, flexibility, adaptability, elimination of discrimination, empathy, understanding, safe environment, right to self-determination.

Inclusive policy, inclusive communication

4. Implement inclusive policies and practices

- Support NGOs and voluntary organisations to develop inclusive strategies and practices.
- Partner with different communities and organisations to gain support and understanding of different needs.
- Work with local community groups to create volunteer programs that respond to the specific needs of different communities.
- Actively participate in communication between stakeholders (non-profit organizations, industry professionals, officials, politicians) and promote and demand inclusion in volunteer programs and events.
- Organise a meeting - take inspiration from the Stakeholder Breakfast concept ([link](#)).
- Network and communicate.
- Talk together about barriers and entry points, look for opportunities to connect through inclusion, connect stakeholders to each other, offer inclusive volunteering opportunities to organisations
- Use a collection of good examples - e.g. a photo book ([link](#)) or testimonies from people in your community to promote and persuade.
- If the situation allows push for diversity policies, anti-discrimination strategies and volunteers' rights to access volunteering opportunities.
- Ensure that volunteer programs include diverse roles and provide opportunities for volunteers to apply their skills and interests.

5. Communicate in an inclusive way

- Create a communication strategy aimed at diverse groups and different languages to make volunteers feel welcome.
- Make your events as inclusive, accessible, language and communication barrier-free as possible. For your online meeting you can try language interpreter on Zoom: https://support.zoom.com/hc/cs/article?id=zm_kb&sysparm_article=KB0064768&fbclid=IwAR2jFFSgtbBeVSt8Q-Zy3stKgK6e90aiyd-Y-GKJLu7EePjr4iQ6bqTB_24
- Learn to use simplified language. [link to brochure from our first IMProVE \(when it's on EPAL\)](#)
- Ensure that websites and materials are accessible and can be easily interpreted into sign language or clearly visible (large print, contrasting colours) see <https://www.designmantic.com/blog/accessible-design-guide-2021/> .



Simplified language is inclusion.

Accessible environment, diverse offer, inclusion

6. Make the environment accessible

- Provide a physically and socially accessible environment for volunteer activities, including accessible spaces and a friendly atmosphere. More about accessibility you can find here: <https://cap-able.com/understanding-disability-inclusion/accessibility-a-barrier-free-environment/>
- Ensure that all volunteer events are communicatively accessible to all citizens, including those with different needs. This includes barrier-free access to information.
- Provide assistance and support, such as transportation or Inclusion Buddies, for volunteers with different needs.

7. Diversify your offer

- Develop a variety of volunteer opportunities including short and long-term assignments, projects and events.
- Get inspired - look for volunteering opportunities around the world, in your neighbourhood, online
- Ask questions - your volunteers with disabilities will know best what activities they would like to do - they also know best what they can do and what they can offer.
- Brainstorm - put your heads together with organisations open to volunteers in your area and you will surely come up with ways for a volunteer with a disability to get involved in their organisation.
- Use experience - people with disabilities have their own experiences: they can help as advisors to others in different life situations, or help others in the early days of volunteering, for example. Or they may know well how to navigate in a certain area.
[Here you can add link to your pool of volunteer positions](#)

8. Include the voices of diverse groups

- Involve diverse groups in decision-making processes about volunteer programmes and strategies, invite them to a breakfast with stakeholders or to a team meeting.
- Ensure that volunteers have the opportunity to share their views and feedback.
- Ensure inclusive organisation and leadership, including the involvement of diverse individuals in the leadership of organisations and volunteer programmes.



Exercise:
**Imagine yourself as a
volunteer, how would
you like to be involved?**

Appreciate, promote, evaluate

9. Appreciate, promote achievements

- Encourage and recognize volunteers from various groups and recognize their contributions with volunteer awards or recognition.
- Nominate your volunteers with disabilities for various volunteer or charity awards
- You can thank volunteers in person, regularly at volunteer meetings, you can thank them with a donation, you can thank the whole volunteer team or the volunteer tandem (volunteer with disability + Inclusion Buddy)
- Promote their achievements [link to your national or local volunteer awards, awarding pvd](#)

10. Monitor and evaluate

- Put in place mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of inclusive volunteering to track progress and identify areas for improvement.
- Define objectives and indicators: the first step is to define clear objectives for inclusive volunteering. What do you want to achieve? For example, if you want to achieve a diverse group of volunteers, determine the percentages of the group composition (representatives of people with physical, intellectual or sensory disabilities).
- Collect data and information: this may include demographic information about participants, records of their participation, and feedback from volunteers and organizations. Thoroughly document all aspects of monitoring and evaluation. This will ensure sustainability and consistency of your practices.
- Volunteer feedback: Actively solicit feedback from volunteers on their experiences and needs. This will allow you to better understand their perspectives and adapt your programmes. Again, you can organise regular supervision or interviews.
- Analyzing and interpreting results: compare results with original goals and expectations. Collect data regularly. Monitor what can be improved and whether programs are achieving their stated goals.
- Reporting and transparency: Produce reports on results and make them available to all stakeholders. This increases transparency and enables more effective communication of results.



Innovate and
modify programs
according to the
needs of
participants.

Finances

11. Financial support is suitable for:

- Recruitment (marketing, promotion),
- Training and education.
- Insurance
- Material costs: equipment, clothing and tools for volunteering activities.
- Administrative costs: administrative activities such as running and managing volunteer programmes, bookkeeping
- Transport: the cost of transporting volunteers to the volunteering activity site or to visit clients or communities can be significant.
- Promotion of your activities in general
- Appreciation of volunteers

Barriers: especially in inclusive volunteering, funding may be needed for accessibility of the events organised (sign language interpreters, costs for a good sound system, projector for good visibility of voice-to-text transcription, creating a physically accessible environment in the organisation or volunteer centre. Furthermore, the purchase of various aids to facilitate communication with deaf volunteers, or for example compensatory aids for volunteers with visual impairments (software magnifier with voice support, voice screen reader).

12. How and where to get funding?

- Create grant programmes or projects for inclusive volunteering to provide financial support for your inclusive volunteering activities.
- Fundraising and Collections. You can organise a charity event, product sales or online collections.
- Sponsors and Partners: Finding sponsors and partner organizations to support your volunteer activities can be helpful. Companies are often looking for opportunities to get involved in volunteer projects.
- Crowdfunding: Use online crowdfunding platforms to ask the public for financial support for your project. This allows you to reach a wide group of people.



Financial support is always useful, even when it comes to developing inclusive volunteering.