

3. Getting ready for take-off

3.1 Recruitment and screening of volunteers

In this chapter we look at different ways of recruiting volunteers for IVS. Although primarily aimed at organisations that send volunteers abroad for both long- and short-term assignments, this chapter should also be of interest to host organisations that recruit their volunteers directly without the help of a sending organisation. The majority of our suggestions and tips are targeted at organisations that deal with long-term voluntary service, but they can easily be adapted to shorter programmes. As we pointed out earlier, you do not necessarily have to do all the work yourself: you might opt to co-operate with an existing network (see Appendix 2: Overview of international voluntary service organisations, programmes and platforms).



3.1.1 Basic steps in volunteer recruitment

1. Get to know your programme

Before you start looking for volunteers, you should of course know what you want them for. As pointed out in Chapter 2.2 “The project cycle”, you need to know why you want to work with volunteers, to check if there is a need and backing for the project and finally to develop or receive a detailed “job description” for your potential volunteers, including information such as the aims and place of the project within the hosting organisation, the responsibilities and tasks to be taken up, required skills or qualifications, benefits for the volunteer and the project, time commitment, location, support and training provided, free-time possibilities and the type of evaluation and follow-up.

If you are a sending organisation make sure that the information that you receive from your host partner is what you really need to advertise the existing placements. A good way of doing this is by being involved in the writing of the placements’ description.

2. Get to know your target group

Either you decide what type of people you are targeting, for example by creating an ideal profile of your volunteer, or – looking at it from the other end – you can ask yourself what kind of young people might be interested in your programmes?

3. Create a clear application procedure

Potential volunteers are often discouraged by the lack of a clear application procedure. A lot of confusion can be avoided by having information about the voluntary service opportunities

given by the same person(s) who provides other information (for example, details of the aims, the hosting organisation, the job description). The next step could be an information pack with an application form or an interview or group meeting. It should not take longer than 48 hours for an information request to be followed by a telephone call or a letter!

4. Get a user-friendly message

Adapt the language used in your information hand-outs to your target group and get straight to the point. Make sure that your hand-out answers typical questions new recruits usually ask: What will I be doing? How often? Where and when? What support will I get? But also an answer to the underlying question: Why should I volunteer for your organisation?

You can compose your recruitment message in three parts: a statement about the need or problem to be solved (the cause); what the volunteer can do about it (the task) and what others and the volunteer will get out of it (the benefits). For example:

Adolescents should be given the opportunity to grow up in a caring and safe environment. Unfortunately, not all adolescents have the chance of living in such conditions [the cause]. You can help them by participating in our project in Denmark where we run a shelter hostel for adolescents in distress [the task]. You will be able to help them to learn new skills and start their lives anew. You will also be given the chance to meet new friends and learn about the hosting culture [the benefits].

Of course, this basic message may need to be expanded by supplementary information on each of the three points. You can do this by bolstering each of the three parts with a fact, a personal testimony, a quotation or a personal experience. Whatever your message: be honest. Avoid making things sound too good if the tasks in question are indeed difficult and require a lot of energy.

Recruitment techniques: pros and cons

There are many ways to get your offer to potential volunteers, but all of them have some arguments in favour and some against. The choice is yours.

Word of mouth

The best publicity that your volunteer programmes can get is the one made by your previous and current volunteers, as well as their family and friends. Those who work for you and those who benefit from your volunteers' work will also talk about international voluntary service in positive terms. You could optimise this kind of publicity by systematically asking your volunteers and staff to talk about your volunteer programmes abroad to friends and relatives on a one-to-one basis.

Pros: it is a highly personally engaging method, very user-friendly and with no cost.

Cons: it happens at random and you will have little overview of how and what information is given, both positive and negative.

Meetings of small groups

One way of trying to combine the benefits of word-of-mouth recruitment with a more structured approach is to convene meetings of small groups of people interested in international voluntary service. Previous volunteers could bring their friends or relatives along. To make this more appealing you can organise a little event around it, such as a lunch or a party. Returned volunteers can bring out the more personal aspects of their experience and a staff member could provide more formal input on the programme and application procedure.

Pros: it allows you to reach out to a group of people in both an informal and formal way, who will themselves become multipliers and bring new people in.

Cons: people may be reluctant to commit themselves to anything more than just listening. You should be prepared to invest some of your resources in following up closely after the meeting (for instance by calling, sending more information).

Presentations, speeches and special events

You can organise an open door day where you present the voluntary service opportunities to a wider audience. You could also ask to have a stand or presentation at certain meetings or seminars, especially ones about volunteering, youth or about professional or educational opportunities for young people.

Pros: these types of activities will allow you to reach a bigger audience and to circulate a lot of your materials. They also help your organisation to raise its public profile.

Cons: they are less personal and only a small percentage of those showing an interest will actually ask for more information. So, do not get your hopes up too high.

Printed materials such as brochures and newsletters

A leaflet or brochure explaining the work that you do, with nice pictures and testimonies from volunteers, will give potential candidates a permanent reminder to go back to when deciding to volunteer. You could have a preliminary application form or a detachable slip asking for more information. Remember to make your message user-friendly. In a newsletter, you can include information about your current IVS opportunities and application procedures next to an appetising article about volunteering, for example, a letter from a volunteer abroad, etc.

Pros: printed materials are a good way of getting information out in big quantities for example in mailings or at bigger events and they can be used by other organisations or information services to inform others about your programmes.

Cons: printed materials get easily out of date and they can be costly.

Internet, social media and electronic newsletters

Nowadays it is very common to refer to a website or social media page instead of giving a phone number or a leaflet. You can put easy-to-read appetisers on your website helping people warm to the idea of volunteering. Visitors can also find out more background information on your organisation via Facebook or other social media sites, as well as an overview of the application procedure or even an online application form. You can easily share links to useful related sites. You can market your website at the other recruitment occasions (for instance meetings, articles, brochures, discussions forums, social media).

You can also send newsletters (see above) in an electronic version via e-mail. Or you can use social media to keep your followers updated about the recruitment steps for your project.

Pros: the information on the Internet is dynamic – all it takes is a click on a link. Interested volunteers can access the information from anywhere and you will always have the latest information. The e-mail newsletter is very cheap as it does not need printing and posting.

Cons: an appealing website can be costly. Both your website and your presence on social media need to be updated regularly, so you need to invest enough time in them. They rule out people without access to computers and the Internet.

The media

Getting to know your local or national media (for example newspapers, radio, television) and establishing good relations with some key people can get you some free publicity. Most probably they will not run ads for your programmes but they might be willing to have an article, interview or display about your volunteers and their work. Send regular press releases to the media informing them of your activities and achievements.

Pros: an article in a newspaper, a radio interview or a television show can put you in touch with thousands of people at the same time. Being in the media can boost people's confidence in your programmes.

Cons: you can get a massive response and not be ready to deal with it. Journalists may be interested not only in the nice aspects of your programmes but also in exploring their shortcomings. Be prepared to handle this wisely.

Advertising

An ad can be both paid and unpaid. You can use your own publications and your website, for instance, to run ads about your IVS and respective vacancies. You can do the same, and for free, with publications from organisations friendly to your cause. Alternatively, you can decide to pay for publicity in the media. In these cases, you can ask businesses or others to sponsor your ad.

Pros: ads, depending on their circulation, can reach a lot of people. If catchy they can be a great way to put you on the map in people's minds.

Cons: ads can be very expensive to make and run. Results are not always as high as expected and they can also give the impression that you are desperate to get volunteers.

3.1.2 Volunteer screening techniques

Recruiting volunteers is not only about getting as many volunteers as possible, it is also about getting the right volunteer for the right project. Therefore screening becomes necessary in order to match the appropriate volunteer with an appropriate project. Two basic screening techniques are the application form and the interview.

The application form

Whether doing long- or short-term IVS, you will see that there are many advantages in having an application form for each of your candidates. An application form is not just a way of collecting personal information for filing, it is a powerful instrument that allows you to assign volunteers to their placements and gives you the chance to know more about the people you are attracting and in this sense to review your future recruitment strategy.

What should an application form look like? You should make it short but there are a few basic things that you ought to put in:

- personal details (for example, full name, address, telephone, age, gender);
- duration of the programme (for example, if you offer placements of variable duration);
- preferred projects/activities (for example, if you offer projects in multiple areas of interest);
- preferred country/region (for example, if you have placements in more than one country or region);
- health and special needs (for example, allergies, dietary needs, disability, medical care, etc.) and the contact details of next of kin in case of emergency;
- these are the hard facts of an application form, but there are also soft facts, enquiring about motivation, expectation, attitudes, needs and fears, which are even more important sources of information for finding the right volunteer for an IVS;
- you can also leave space for feedback from the applicant. Is there something you would like to ask or tell us? How did you get to know about this project?

If you need to pass on all this information to different people or partner organisations, you might want to consider having electronic application forms. Registrations via the Internet can also reduce invalid applications (for example, missing details, wrong data) and facilitate computerised data management (printing lists, mail merge letters, etc.).

Some organisations are very careful in drawing up their application forms because some questions might scare people. How will a candidate react when you ask about certain skills, if this person does not have these skills (yet)? You could instead opt to find out this information indirectly, in an interview for example. Also bear in mind the privacy of personal details.

Using the Internet

The Internet is used more and more for collecting information about candidates, whether it is for a job or a volunteering position. It is easy to search the Internet for someone's name and find information that would not be mentioned in an application form or interview.

However, information on the Internet often is pulled out of context. What people write on a personal blog has a different value to what they contribute on a professional forum. And what a candidate wrote 10 years ago is maybe not relevant any more (even though that information often remains available on the Internet). Funny (or compromising) pictures or statements of a person that were meant as a joke should not be taken as seriously as a letter to the editor on the website of a newspaper. Also, make sure that you only consider information about the right person as there are many people with the same name online.

The bottom line is: use online information with care, if at all.

The interview

Many organisations skip meeting their applicants on a one-to-one basis because it is either too time-consuming or because they are satisfied with the data on the application form. But an interview can give you more information about the applicant's level of commitment and it allows you to better match the applicant and the specific placement abroad.

Tips for conducting an interview

1. Choose the setting

The interview should be held in a friendly environment, not too formal and not too informal (for example in a quiet room, not too big, in your offices), ideally without any physical barrier between you and the applicant (such as a desk or counter).

2. Introduce yourself

Tell the volunteer your name and explain your link to the organisation (for example your title or function). This shows openness and transparency.

3. Break the ice

Try to put the candidate, and yourself, at ease by exchanging a few words on neutral things such as the weather, the trip to the interview, tea or coffee.

4. Start with a thank you

The person sitting in front of you has shown an interest in what you have to offer so you might want to thank the applicant for considering volunteering with your organisation.

5. Confirm the data

Check that this is the person you are supposed to be meeting (right person coming for the right project). The application form will come in handy at this stage.

6. State the purpose

Explain briefly the purpose of the interview, tell the candidate about its duration and give one or two examples of the type of questions that will be asked. Inform the candidate that he or she can also ask questions about your organisation and voluntary service.

7. Introduce your organisation and programme

Take some time to explain the background of the voluntary service (aims, strategy, job description, etc.) before starting to question your applicant.

8. The questions

A set of prearranged questions can be a guideline for an interview, but should not come across as artificial. Add or leave out certain questions depending on the evolution of the interview. Avoid yes-or-no questions. Some open questions could be:

- Why is volunteering important for you?
- What experience do you have of volunteering in this field?
- What did you enjoy about your work or previous volunteering experience?
- Have you ever lived abroad and, if so, what was it like?
- How would you handle conflicts with people in the hosting organisation?
- What do your family and friends think about your choice?
- Why do you want to volunteer in this particular area/country/project?

Give feedback as the applicant answers your questions; this can be a nod of your head, a "yes" here and there, or more elaborate comments on what you are hearing. Do not overdo your questions – 10 to 15 questions should be enough – but go back if you were not happy with one answer or if you have doubts about something.

9. Conclude the interview

Conclude the interview by making sure that you have covered all the questions you wanted to ask and that the applicant has nothing more to say or ask. Explain to them what will be the next steps (how long it will take for you to get in touch, will it be by letter or phone, etc.).

3.1.3 When extra screening of volunteers becomes a must

When working with so-called vulnerable client groups (children, minors, the elderly, people with a mental or physical disability, people who suffer from chronic illnesses such as cancer or Aids, former alcoholics or drug-users), you want to know that your clients are safe with the volunteer. Therefore extra screening (and preparation) can help minimise risks and optimise the service to your client group. We do not want to instigate paranoia, but promote a conscious and transparent screening strategy. Here are some principles that can help:

1. Clarify the nature of abuse or misconduct

Your organisation should be clear on what is considered (by law or according to your own ethics) as abuse or misconduct in the way your volunteers deal with and relate to your clients. These guidelines defining abuse or misconduct and the procedure to follow when misconduct happens should be written down. Both staff and volunteers should be informed about them and adhere to them (for example, what is appropriate in terms of physical contact with children and adolescents, the use of alcohol at the project premises, etc.).

2. Check the volunteer's job description

The description of the tasks of the volunteer, the required supervision, the skills and experience needed, for example, will tell you if the voluntary service is of high risk. Accordingly you can decide to have extra screening through a longer application form, special written tests, personality questionnaires, interviews with different people in your organisation or simulation games.

3. Include different people in the screening

During an interview, for instance, one person may pick up certain signals that others have missed. Peer interviews (by former or current volunteers) again can shed another light on the candidate, from the point of view of someone who really knows the job.

4. Collect information from multiple sources

If you think that the tasks of the volunteer will require someone with a sound and trustworthy background, you should consider asking for personal referees who have first-hand experience of the applicant's work with the client group in question. Ask them specific questions such as:

- Do you have any concerns about this person working with our client group?
- Would you recommend this person for the post and, if so, why?
- If we were to take this person, what type of training would you suggest or do you think that this person would require a lot of supervision?

5. Trial period

For certain high-risk clients you may wish to introduce a trial period for your volunteers. This will complement your initial screening process and will give you the chance to assess the suitability of the new volunteer before making a definite decision.

6. Police checks

In certain countries (the United Kingdom, for example) police checks may be routine or even compulsory for volunteers dealing with special client groups, for example children. In other countries there are declarations of “good behaviour” for these purposes, stating that you have no criminal record. You should make sure that your organisation fulfils the legal requirements in your country for recruiting and screening volunteers for certain posts with certain people, without of course scaring off the volunteers.

Note! Respect the right to privacy. The purpose of extra screening is not to delve into the private life of candidates, but to know them well enough to make a judgment about their capacities and limitations. The personal information about the volunteer should only be communicated to the people who need to know (such as the support person in the hosting organisation) and be kept confidential from others. Be sure to comply with national legislation regarding the use and storage of personal data.

3.1.4 Voluntary service for “disadvantaged young people”



What is in a word ...?

First of all, we should be careful with the term “disadvantaged” young people. It has a lot of negative connotations and tends to stigmatise the people we are referring to in this chapter. Mostly the young people themselves do not want to be labelled “disadvantaged”. Then what should we call those young people in precarious situations?

In the inclusion strategy of the Youth in Action programme, this sensitive issue was solved by talking about “young people with fewer opportunities”. This term actually regards young people as people first, and then adds that they have fewer opportunities compared to their peers. This can be because of various obstacles – social, economic, educational, cultural, geographical, disability or health.

This definition also takes the particular situation of the person into account. In a country where most buildings are accessible, a person in a wheelchair will not necessarily be at a disadvantage. It depends a lot on how the person deals with a particular social situation. Coming from an ethnic minority can engender social exclusion, but a black person may well gain access to the same opportunities as the rest of society. Therefore, in this chapter we use the term “young people with fewer opportunities” for those who need special support and additional resources for participating in a voluntary service programme.

Voluntary service as a tool

IVS projects should be accessible for all, and maybe especially for those young people who all too often fall out of the boat. International voluntary service could be a life-changing experience for a young person with fewer opportunities. Being part of a volunteer project

abroad provides some opportunities for change that are all too often lacking for those target groups.

But IVS is not a goal in itself. Sending a young person with special needs abroad will not solve all problems. What is more, IVS can do as much harm as good if not planned properly.

IVS is a tool that youth workers or mentors can use with young people when they are ready for it. This implies that there is a process before and after the international project. IVS is just one step in the longer-term pathway of young people with fewer opportunities. There are aims beyond IVS that are set from the beginning of working with them (such as independent living or finding a job). So it is more likely that a youth social worker will initiate IVS than one of the young people with fewer opportunities themselves.

Preparing for the big jump

Preparing young people for a longer stay in another country has many facets. The general preparation remarks are valid for young people with fewer opportunities too, but some issues require special attention, depending on the target group. Find out what is important for the young volunteers you work with.

Reduce uncertainty

Young people with fewer opportunities rarely have the chance to go abroad or to cope independently with new situations. New and uncertain situations are scary, especially when you do not have a lot of practice in dealing with them. One way to prepare volunteers for IVS is to gradually familiarise them with the kind of situation they will end up in. International exchanges or holiday travel could give the volunteers a better view of what it is like to be in another country (buying train tickets, being confronted with a different language, a different religion, etc.), but still in the safe environment of a group of friends from their own country who speak their language.

Other methods and techniques of working on intercultural sensitivity are described in the T-Kit on *Intercultural Learning* (available to download from <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int>).

The voluntary service aspect can be stimulated by gradually increasing involvement and tasks in volunteering in the home society. Before leaving for an ecological project abroad, the volunteers could take up some responsibilities within a local nature organisation. This way they can already get a feel for working in a project, carrying out tasks, working with others and so on. The stay abroad can be short at first, but gradually prolonged if wished, or longer in a future IVS project.

A relation of trust

Other concrete measures you can take, to increase the volunteers' ability to cope with the new situation, could be a familiar person that joins in the project. This could be a friend, a youth worker, a peer volunteer in the same situation or simply someone who can speak their mother tongue. Visiting the project with the volunteers before the actual (longer-term) voluntary service can reduce considerably the anxiety about where they will end up.

It is very important to build up a trust relationship with your volunteers, so it is advisable to have regular (informal) meetings with them to show that they are respected and listened to. Always involve the volunteers in decisions that concern them. Furthermore, sending volunteers to a foreign country where the same language is spoken could make the stay considerably less challenging and frightening for them.

Use adapted methods

The way you go about preparation and the whole project is very important. Especially when working with volunteers who have learning difficulties or a turbulent (or short) school record, a formal academic approach might pose a lot of obstacles. Some volunteers might even be (semi-)illiterate, so in this case visual material (video, pictures, etc.) or oral contact would probably work best. It is advisable in this case to do away with everything that reminds them

of school. In this case, the most appropriate way to learn skills, tasks and even language is learning by doing, on the job.

One of the aims of voluntary service is to give back some necessary self-esteem to the volunteers and to move away from life in the margins of society. Achievement is beneficial to enhance self-esteem, whereas failure punches it down. Therefore it is very important to create successive successes for the volunteers, starting with small tasks but gradually providing bigger challenges, always, however, with enough support and follow-up. Positive feedback (from significant others such as colleagues or peers) is an important element in raising self-esteem. Failures should be put in perspective and used as a learning experience for the future.

Keep up the motivation

Besides work satisfaction, there should also be an atmosphere in which the volunteers feel at ease. You can easily make volunteers feel welcome by making time for a chat, some jokes, a little attention, etc. However, be careful not to create situations that make the volunteer feel awkward or a burden by overdoing it (see also Chapter 4.2.1 “Motivating the volunteer”).

Sometimes motivation is a big problem for socially excluded youngsters, especially when the idea of voluntary service comes from someone else. It is therefore important to closely monitor the level of motivation and keep it up by using the methods mentioned in the chapter on motivating volunteers. In order to keep motivation of the volunteer high, it is important to limit the delay between the decision to do IVS and leaving for the actual placement.

And even if you manage to keep the volunteers’ motivation high, do not forget that they are not isolated persons – sometimes you also need to convince parents or explain the project to peers.

Clear and confidential communication

Given the diversity of the target group of socially excluded young people, it is essential that the sending and hosting organisations communicate with each other about what this “social exclusion” actually entails for the young people. The background and profile of the volunteer should be clear to both sides.

This raises, however, the issue of confidentiality: what do you communicate about the volunteer and to whom? The support person in the host organisation is probably the one who should get all the necessary details about the volunteers in order to coach them in the best possible manner and to ensure the physical and moral safety of all. Previous health or drug problems should be communicated, as well as possible offences (theft, sexual abuse, etc.), preferably with the consent of the volunteer. Other workers or volunteers in the host organisation mostly do not need to know these private details, unless they need to know to be able to co-operate with the volunteer.

When the going gets tough ...

Support at different levels

During voluntary service, it is very important that the volunteers get support to help them cope with the new situation. This support should take place at several levels, as mentioned in Chapter 4.3 “Ongoing support of volunteers”: intercultural (explaining cultural differences or misunderstandings), professional (training support: induction to tasks and work environment) and personal (social support in the day-to-day life of the volunteer, for instance, arranging social activities to meet new people). It is important not to take any skills or knowledge for granted.

If the volunteers have limited social skills or language problems, it is important to structure their free time in such a way that the situation offers them what they need: friends, contacts in their own language, fun and so forth. Peer groups can be very useful – you might introduce the volunteers to young people in the host country who share the same music taste, who have a similar background, or who can speak the same or a related language. One important need the project should address is the need to belong and to be part of a group.

Regular feedback moments

For the well-being of the volunteers, regular contacts with the “home front” may be crucial. This provides them with a safety valve, talking to someone they know in their own language or dialect. It also shows that people back home are interested in what the volunteers are doing and have not forgotten them.

It is necessary to have regular meetings with a support person in the project, to discuss the work and the volunteers’ living conditions, feelings and motivation. This is an important thermometer mechanism to check whether the volunteer is still keen on the project (see also Chapter 4.3 “Ongoing support of volunteers”). If motivation gets a bit low, more time can be put into fun or leisure activities.

Be ready for emergencies

Just in case something goes really wrong – incredible homesickness, problems at work, accidents and the like – it is important to establish an emergency procedure with the volunteer. This can be a phone number, a sealed envelope with some extra money, an emergency packet of cigarettes for a person that recently quit smoking, and so on. The conditions in which the emergency procedure can be used should be known to all people involved (volunteer, host project, youth worker at home). See also Chapter 4.5.2.

Deal with language problems

If language could be a problem, it is important to keep things very visual – instead of explaining a task verbally, you can show it. Contact through working together on practical tasks works best. Free-time opportunities should be provided in which the volunteer can do non-verbal things with others. Instead of going to the pub for a chat, you can go and play darts. Talking about your trip becomes showing the photo album. Talking to friends could be playing sports instead.

However, through all these little active things the volunteer will probably learn a huge amount of practical vocabulary. The volunteer should also be prepared for these ways of communication in the preparation process.

Different interactive language learning methods are described in the T-Kit on *Language Learning* (available to download at <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int>).

You have not finished yet

Prepare re-entry

What counts for “classic” volunteers probably counts double for volunteers coming from a disadvantaged background. After the IVS you are not finished yet! One of the things every volunteer will bump into is re-entry shock. The volunteer might have progressed or changed tremendously during their IVS, but mostly the home front has not. Back home the friends and family expect the volunteer to be the same as before and the situation often provides them with the same temptations as before (drugs, criminality, social problems, etc.).

So it goes without saying that it requires decent preparation to go home again and face the old reality and the people who have not experienced IVS and grown as the volunteer has.

Reflect on the experience

It is important in work with young people to make an inventory, to see what they have learned and gained during their period abroad in voluntary service. It is beneficial to the volunteers’ self-esteem to see improvement and to talk about this achievement with other people, to express themselves. This gives social status and recognition to the volunteers, which before was perhaps not there.

Another way to make volunteers feel valued is to involve them in preparing future volunteers. This way you let the volunteers know that they possess something very valuable – experience

that they can share. The youth worker in the sending organisation back home is also vital in supporting the volunteer if the experience abroad was not felt as positive. The youth worker should be able to turn the volunteer's experience around in a constructive way and combat the feeling of failure.

Solve practical problems

Returning home might seem easy, but often – when dealing with young people from difficult social backgrounds – there are all kinds of practical challenges, such as obtaining housing support, unemployment benefits or social security after having spent some time away from home, outside the system.

Getting back into the system might require quite a lot of help from the youth worker of the sending organisation (see also Chapter 5.2 “Follow-up”). Besides these practicalities, the end of IVS and coming home is also a time to reflect on the next steps to take in the volunteers' pathways, depending on the objectives that the volunteer and/or youth worker (preferably both together) had set for the project.

Jump into the future

Perhaps they were striving for more independence and the voluntary service abroad has been a successful test, so the volunteers now feel comfortable enough to go and live on their own. If not, perhaps next time the volunteers could try a longer placement. Perhaps the volunteers are now skilled and can find a job in the area of work done in the placement, or they can begin education or training in this direction. Giving them a Youthpass or other certificate to recognise the competences they used and developed during the IVS project can support them in their next steps. See also Chapter 5.3 “Recognition and certification”.

Basically, the volunteers go on to plan their lives – better.

3.1.5 Gender in international voluntary service

“What's gender got to do with it?”



Statistically, more women than men volunteer. For example 70% of young people taking part in European Voluntary Service in Youth in Action programme countries are female and only 30% male (2005). In Western countries, there seems to be a trend for more women than men to join voluntary service activities.

It is not always easy to explain why more women than men volunteer. Some traditionalists might justify this difference in terms of women's perceived “natural interest” in caring activities. Given the fact that most voluntary activities are in the social field and given the fact that many women in our society still play the role of primary carers (as mother, housewife, nurse, etc.), voluntary work might be more appealing to women. Our view is that women's role as carers is an effect of socialisation and not a natural trait. Nonetheless, caring and volunteering are still perceived as feminine activities, so more women go on IVS than men.

Male social representations of voluntary work are often less positive. Men attribute low social status to unpaid activities in the social and cultural field and this diminishes their motivation to join voluntary service activities. Besides this, many of the personal qualities that voluntary service programmes look for in their candidates are more often found in women than in men, again due to the socialisation experienced by both genders (for example, interpersonal skills or co-operative working methods). Of course men can develop the same level of quality in their human relations, but in general the gap is still there to be bridged by them.

The problem of recruiting male volunteers

The lack of male volunteers to run voluntary programmes and activities is felt by many organisations as a major shortcoming. Organisations working in the social field should be representative of society at large. By equal participation of men and women in volunteering, the social sector can help to define a caring positive image of men and provide role models for other men who might feel reluctant to volunteer because of the lack of male examples they can identify with. Here are some suggestions that could help you to balance gender participation in your voluntary service:

- Ask your previous or current male volunteers about their motives in joining your IVS.
- Ask men outside your organisation what would make them wish to join an IVS project.
- Use their answers to create a recruitment message that addresses their points and change your programmes accordingly.
- When presenting your programmes to a wider audience, make sure you have a male speaker too.
- In your publications, use images of male volunteers doing traditionally feminine activities, such as working with children or cooking; this can help other males to identify themselves with these activities. Conversely, you can also show your male volunteers doing more traditionally masculine activities, such as building a wooden bridge in a forest, to attract others to join your programmes.

The problem of recruiting female volunteers

In contrast, in some cultural contexts the difficulty is to recruit female volunteers, especially for voluntary service abroad. If you are aware of the particular difficulties that some young women face when deciding whether to participate in voluntary activities abroad, that can give you an insight into how to recruit, guide and support them. For example, a group of young immigrant women from Morocco showed significant interest in joining the programme, but they were not able to face their parents' opposition. Their parents were not only negative about their participation but also could not understand what their motive might be for joining the programme. Factors such as age, employment history and personality played a role in their determination to go against their families' wishes. Here are some possible ways to overcome such obstacles:

- Try to involve their families in the process as much as possible (for example, involving an older brother or sister, or another relative open to your programme, could help the parents to change their minds).
- Be ready to clarify their families' doubts and dispel their fears by foreseeing them and responding clearly and directly to questions about, for example, separate male and female living quarters, the type of supervision (and sex of the supervisors) or opportunities to contact or visit their daughter.
- Try to see whether or not some of your activities could become more gender-oriented (for example, certain activities could be developed in all-female groups).

- If your IVS project has been successful in recruiting female volunteers who experienced strong cultural barriers, ask them to help you to reach out to other young women in the same situation and use them as role models in your recruitment campaigns.

Gender and culture

Gender plays a role in your voluntary service programme, not only in equality of participation but also in perceptions, which vary from culture to culture. Some cultures are very open to socialising between men and women while others tend to separate men from women in very rigid ways. A female or male volunteer coming from a more open culture to a closed type of culture, for instance, could experience particular problems in adapting and integrating. Situations of this nature are usually intensified by the size of the host community. The smaller the community, the higher the risk of “gender shock” (comparable to culture shock).

One way of dealing with this is to refer to gender issues when preparing the volunteers.

- If you realise that your volunteers are going to do their IVS in a country where gender relations are very different, make sure you have this as one of the elements of your preparation activities, highlighting the potential points of conflict.
- It is more important to teach your volunteers how to find the right negotiation strategies to cope with the potential for “gender shock” than simply to describe the cultural differences at stake. If you are a sending organisation, ask your host partner to advise you on the best strategies that your volunteers could use.

Sexual harassment – The darker side of gender relations

Sexual harassment is an important element to take into account when looking at the gender dimension of voluntary service. Experience and numbers show that women are its victims more often than men, and that the main perpetrators of sexual harassment are men. It is important to have a look at what is considered – in your country or in the context of your organisation – as inappropriate or illegal, and what is not. This could again be part of the preparation of the volunteers.

Some organisations see the sharing of living space by men and women as part of their working philosophy. However, the people involved may not be mature enough to deal with the ensuing sexual tension, and organisations that promote voluntary work in group settings need to be aware of this. Men and women can, of course, share the same living space (for example, a dormitory) without it necessarily becoming problematic, but when young people are involved, this can create opportunities for sexual tension and sometimes harassment.

Whether or not your volunteers share the same living quarters, you should make sure that your organisation has thought about sexual harassment and how to deal with it. Here are a few things for you to consider about mixed living quarters.

- Make sure that male and female volunteers are conscious of the advantages and disadvantages of sharing the same living quarters.
- Make sure that your staff or other volunteer support persons are aware of the potential for sexual harassment and violence in this type of placement and that they know how to handle these cases.
- Volunteer preparation activities for this type of placement should not avoid tackling difficult questions such as: What are your doubts and fears about sharing the same living quarters? How to deal with sexual desire? What constitutes sexual harassment? What are the formal procedures for dealing with it?
- Facilitate the agreement of both gender groups on a common set of rules to be followed by all in the community for the entire duration of the placement and make sure that these rules are followed by all.

Discussing these issues requires the organisers to be open-minded enough to admit that desire is an important dimension to take into account when men and women are brought together under the same roof. Confronting people with this reality does not interfere with harmonious living; on the contrary, it increases the chances of managing the situation in a rewarding way for everybody.

Gender discrimination is not always a bad thing

Some voluntary placements may require volunteers to be either female or male, depending on the context and tasks to be executed. Although we tend to see men and women as equal and thus capable of doing the same things, there are circumstances where it might be justifiable to target specifically a female or male volunteer. This is not because the tasks in question are perceived as being either more or less feminine, or more or less masculine, but because there is a strong and legitimate reason to require a person of one gender to do the work.

For instance, an organisation supporting women battered by their male partners may wish to engage a volunteer to help the women with their personal healing process, and they may have very strong and legitimate reasons for wanting a female volunteer. In such a special situation it may be advisable, if not an absolute criterion, that the volunteer in question be a woman.

A similar but opposite example could be the case of an organisation working with street gangs in a run-down neighbourhood that would like to engage a volunteer to help them with their outreach work. Street gangs are frequently male-dominated and structured around masculine role models. Therefore, it would be legitimate for the organisation in question to argue that a man would be more suitable for the work than a woman.

In both these examples it would be inappropriate to accuse the organisation of discrimination, since they would only be trying to match the right person to the right job and the gender sensitivity of the work would plainly justify their choices.

3.2 Preparing the actors



IVS is about creating new perspectives by confronting different realities – of organisations and their people. The success of an IVS project depends to a large extent on the quality of the preparation of all actors involved. A lot of crisis and conflict situations can be prevented by thorough preparation.

3.2.1 Preparation of the volunteers

As pointed out in Chapter 2.1 “The actors”, the preparation of volunteers for IVS is largely the responsibility of the sending organisation, even though it should ideally be the product of negotiation with the hosting organisation, which can in this way complement the preparation and fill some gaps (see also Chapter 4.1 “Induction and on-arrival orientation”). Some of the

elements described below are more appropriate for long-term stays than for short-term projects. Generally speaking, the longer the period abroad and the more different the host culture, the more intense the preparation should be.

Preparation of the volunteer can be structured around three axes: motivation and expectations, the work and living conditions at the placement and the intercultural preparation.

Why does the volunteer want to do it? Motivation and expectations

Knowing why volunteers want to participate in IVS is essential to avoid misunderstandings from the very beginning. It is equally important to raise the volunteers' awareness of the hosting organisation's motives in receiving volunteers from abroad. The expectations from both sides should be adjusted to each other (see also Chapter 1.4 "Reasons for international voluntary service").

Next to these specific motivations, it can also be valuable to give new volunteers an introduction to the voluntary service movement, to place their own engagement in its socio-historical perspective (see also Chapter 1.3 "Background of international voluntary service").

The following exercises can be used to discover and document the volunteers' and other people's reasons for being part of an IVS project. When the volunteers realise that the motives of the host organisation are not 100% congruent with their own, they might be more willing to let go of some of their original ideas and prepare themselves for the needs of their hosts in order to satisfy the needs of both sides as much as possible. The same is true the other way around.

- **Motivation brainstorm**

Ask the volunteers to take some time to reflect on their reasons for going abroad. Let them write down their expectations and concerns about their stay. In a second step, ask them to think about the expectations and concerns that the hosting organisation might have about their stay. When they are finished, ask them to get together in small groups and discuss the results. Ask them to give feedback in the plenary about the items they wish to share with the others.

- **A letter to myself**

Ask the volunteers to write a letter to themselves about their reasons for choosing a given project, and the expectations and concerns connected to it. Provide a relaxing atmosphere (for instance music, a comfortable room) that allows the participants to let their thoughts wander. The letter then remains strictly confidential: it is sealed and kept by the sending organisation until the evaluation meeting at the end of the project. This method allows the participants to be very honest with themselves, without having to expose the letter to anybody.

The debriefing exercise takes place at the evaluation session months later. It allows the participants to remember the state of mind and the ideas they had before their departure and helps them to see the development they have gone through.

- **Creative expression of fears and expectations**

Provide a few metres of white wallpaper and lay it on the ground; then ask the participants to gather around it and to draw what comes into their mind when they think about their stay abroad. Calm instrumental music can provide the appropriate atmosphere for this exercise. Change or interrupt the music from time to time when you ask them to move and start on a new drawing/element. They could also add things to the drawings of other volunteers.

- **What is a volunteer?**

If the group of volunteers at your preparation is an international one, it can be interesting to explore with them the meaning of the word "volunteer" in different languages and countries in order to highlight the different notions (and implicit motivations) linked to the term in different cultural contexts.

Information about working and living conditions

The hosting organisation must be sure that it has given the volunteers (through the sending organisation) all the information necessary to have an idea of the working and living condi-

tions during their IVS. The immediate comfort of the volunteer depends on reducing the uncertainty linked to a jump into a new project and country. Having appropriate information – having answers to questions and doubts, having the feeling of being taken care of, having a nice place to sleep and eat and having a fairly clear idea of what to expect and what is expected – will reduce the volunteers' anxiety and make them feel welcome in the project. Here is a checklist of the things the volunteers (and the sending organisation) will probably want or need to know.

Checklist for an information session

About the project

- Detailed project description and job description (aims, tasks, benefits, time frame, etc.)
- Volunteer profile requested (age limits, skills, language skills, etc.)
- Support available during the project (training, support person, language training, etc.)
- Description of the host organisation and the different people working there
- Safety rules and a code of conduct for volunteers (if made necessary by the cultural background or special requirements of the host project)
- ...?

About the living conditions

- Practical details (insurance, financial, health, social security, emergency procedures, etc.)
- Food and housing arrangements, location of the work and living quarters
- Travel arrangements (visa, travel instructions, local transport, etc.)
- Financial arrangements (contributions, pocket money, etc.)
- General information about the host country (cultural, economic, social and political)
- ...?

Note! A sending organisation can ensure full preparation of volunteers only if communication between the two organisations is already efficient before the project starts. Especially in the case of long-term projects, it is useful to put the volunteer in direct contact with the hosting project at an early stage to allow them to resolve any further questions directly and get to know each other from a distance.

Information should be transmitted by a variety of methods:

- Keep the session interactive, even if a lot of information just needs to be “given” – always open the floor for questions, suggestions and discussion.
- Invite former volunteers to give their testimony.
- Invite people from the host country to give presentations on the country.
- Use games and audiovisual material to introduce the country.
- Let the participants discover parts of the information themselves through literature or websites that you provide, and ask them to present the results to the rest of the group in a creative way.
- Provide a fact pack with basic information and details of the contact person in the hosting organisation.

Intercultural preparation

The third element of preparatory training is the intercultural aspect of voluntary service across borders. An intercultural pre-departure session should raise awareness about cultural concepts that exist, the volunteers' own cultural background and the culture of the host commu-

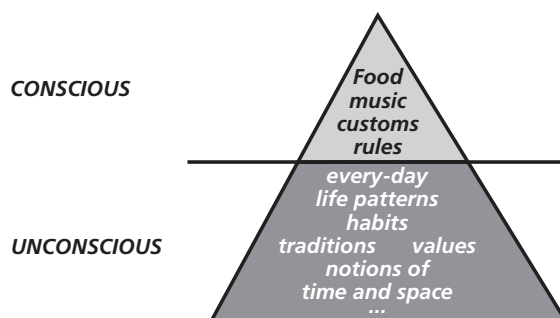
nity. It should strengthen the volunteers' sense of observation and prepare them for difficulties they might encounter in this respect, though without providing the volunteers with behavioural recipes. Since there is a T-Kit on *Intercultural Learning* (available to download at <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int>) and an education pack on informal intercultural education (available at www.coe.int/ecri), we will not go into extensive detail about intercultural preparation here.

When going to work and live abroad, it is important to see the influence that culture has on people, but also the diversity that exists within a country or culture, depending on factors like age, belief or sexuality. Culture gives people a sense of belonging even though they do not personally know all the other members of the group. This principle might also affect the volunteer who has to live without his/her original (cultural) group, but still needs to belong to some group (age, music, sports) in the host country.

A number of exercises explore personal and cultural identity, and train the volunteer to deal with complexity instead of using stereotypes. An exercise of this kind is the "onion exercise", which is based on the idea that any person is shaped by many different layers, not only culture but also family, friends, education and so on (see T-Kit on *Intercultural Learning*, p. 43: "the onion of diversity").

It is also useful to convey certain notions of culture, because this helps people to understand how it functions and what influence it has on us. Another way to visualise the complexity of culture is the "iceberg model", which describes culture as being defined only to a small extent by visible elements like fine arts, music, food and dress whereas the great majority of cultural elements are invisible and also unconscious (for instance: attitudes, role models, notions of time and space). Other models allow a gradual classification of countries according to certain values, which may be interesting for the volunteer and help them see what in general will be different from the own culture. The T-Kit on *Intercultural Learning* goes into more detail about concepts of intercultural learning.

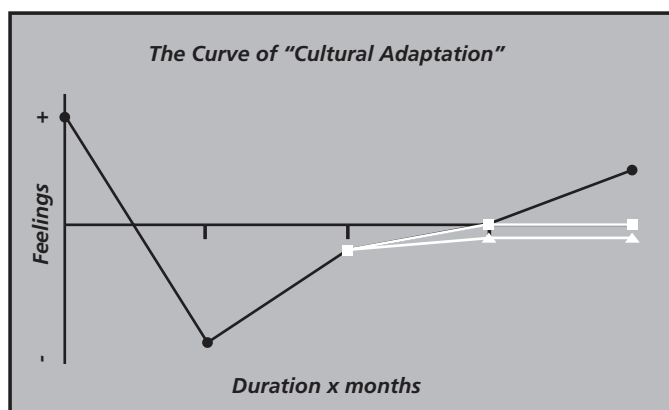
The triangle of culture



(Adapted from "Training Course on Project Management and Transnational Voluntary Service: Final Report (7-14 March 1999)", Council of Europe Youth Directorate, DJ/TC VOL(99)2, p. 29).

Finally, it is helpful (especially for long-term stays) to discuss the typical development of a stay abroad through the "adjustment cycle". This tries to visualise the various phases one might go through during a stay abroad, highlighting the possibility of living through a period of "culture shock", which can develop into a phase of adaptation and stability of varying degrees, depending on the way the person digests the negative feelings and moves on from there. At the preparation meeting it is useful to introduce the idea of a development that the participants will live through, and then come back to it at the evaluation, asking participants to draw the actual line of what they experienced.

The adjustment cycle



(Adapted from Grove and Torbiörn, "A New Conceptualization of Intercultural Adjustment and the Goals of Training", in M. Paige, *Education for the Intercultural Experience*, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, 1993.)

This list of tips for overcoming culture shock can be introduced to the participants as a tool that they can refer to in case of necessity.

Culture shock?

If you feel bad during your stay abroad, take some time to reflect on the reasons behind these feelings before you confront everybody else around you with your anger.

- Of course you will find hundreds of specific little things that justify your miserable feelings, but try to distance yourself a bit from all the small things to get the whole picture of what might be happening to you.
- Explain to the people around you how you feel. Try first to solve your problems on the spot with the people concerned. Avoid emergency phone calls or letters to those closest to you at home. You will unnecessarily worry them and by the time they answer the situation might already have completely changed. Writing a diary can be very helpful to clarify your thoughts. If the problems persist you should, of course, inform your hosting and sending organisation so that a solution can be sought.
- Try to share some elements of your culture with the people around you: cook for them or organise an evening about something that you find interesting about your own country (for example: cultural traditions, the situation of young people, education, politics or economic system).
- Try not to judge. Even if it sounds trivial, try to tell yourself: it is not better, it is not worse, it is just different!
- It can be helpful to have a change of scenery for a few days in order to look at everything from a distance in a more relaxed way. However, do not run away from your problems. If you want your host country to become your second home, you should think of investing more time in building human relations in this place.

Minimum standards for training and evaluation within EVS

Within the European Voluntary Service of the Youth in Action programme, minimum quality standards have been developed for the preparation and training of volunteers. A volunteer should receive:

- adequate preparation before departure;
- participation in pre-departure training;

- on-arrival training at the start of the placement;
- language-learning opportunities;
- mid-term meeting or evaluation;
- final evaluation upon return in the host country.

You can find these quality standards in the Youth in Action programme at www.ec.europa.eu/youth.

3.2.2 Preparation of sending and hosting organisations

It is not only the volunteers who should be prepared; the sending and hosting organisations should also get ready for their tasks. The following suggestions for preparation are perhaps more valid for the hosting organisation than for the sending organisation, but both parties are responsible for ensuring that these preparatory measures are taken, irrespective of where they are taking place. Here are some issues to consider.

Why are you embarking on an international voluntary service project?

As we mentioned in Chapter 2.2 “The project cycle”, the first step in your project is to define the aims and to determine whether there is a need for IVS. Not only the project co-ordinator, but the whole organisation (board, colleague, volunteers, etc.) should know, and preferably be convinced, of the aims and benefits of this enterprise. Having volunteers for the first time can have a significant impact on your organisational culture and is often a source of anxiety. Therefore it is vital that colleagues who will be working with the volunteers are involved in the development of the whole project, to ensure it has their backing (see also Chapter 4.2.2 “Staff motivation – The forgotten dimension”).

Potential reasons for organisations entering into IVS:

- strengthened international relations;
- enriching work;
- positive impact on clients;
- creation of opportunities for young people (or people with special needs);
- promotion of the idea of volunteering in the local community;
- more prestige for the organisation among funders, clients and partner organisations;
- improved working atmosphere in the organisation;
- enhanced co-operation with the partner organisation;
- the ability to realise an idea that you would not have the resources for otherwise.

For a practical example see the story of ELKA in Chapter 2.2 “The project cycle”.

Note! It goes without saying that you need to know beforehand what you want to achieve, in order to be able to measure whether you were successful in your IVS project. Evaluation should be an integral part of any project from the very beginning. Think about the tools you want to use for evaluation (for example: a diary, interviews, questionnaires) to be able to plan accordingly (see also Chapter 5.1 “Evaluation”).

What needs to be provided for the volunteers?

Studies have shown that one of the major reasons for the early return of long-term volunteers is an unrealistic placement in which basically there was no real need for a volunteer, and so no adequate work for them. Organisations should therefore have a clear idea of the tasks for

the volunteers and ensure the technical needs or tools necessary for these tasks are in place – before the volunteers arrive, naturally.

If they feel they cannot contribute to the work of the organisation (because of lack of work or tools), volunteers will have severe difficulties in integrating. Answers to the following questions about the work to be done are at the basis of volunteer care.

Volunteer care

What needs doing? Where is there a real need for help in the organisation?

Based on the needs assessment, what is one project, job, assignment or task in which you could involve volunteers?

What is the job? What will the volunteers do?

Is the job meaningful to the volunteers and to the organisation?

Are there any opportunities for the volunteers to grow and learn in this job?

Will the job give the volunteers a sense of ownership and responsibility?

What are the qualities the volunteers should have for this job?

Suggestion for training

Devil's advocate

Divide the group into two camps. One camp has to come up with as many arguments as possible in favour of having the volunteer and IVS. The other camp (or the facilitator) should find as many arguments as possible indicating that the placement would not be suitable for the volunteer. After 15 to 20 minutes of brainstorming, one representative of each camp is given five minutes to defend their extreme point of view. After this a discussion can take place about the validity of different arguments, both in favour and against.

Even more essential than the content of the work is the whole framework of the project that ensures the volunteer's basic human needs are satisfied. If the board and lodging provided, for example, do not meet the desired standards of the volunteer, there is little hope for success. It is absolutely vital to arrange appropriate living conditions for the volunteers, depending on their needs. Social and leisure needs also need to be satisfied before you can expect fruitful work. Information for the volunteer on the placement therefore should include details of board and lodging and options for leisure-time activities (sports, bars, music, disco, etc.) nearby.

Some ideas for board and lodging

Lodging:

- in a student house;
- in a host family;
- in a shared flat with other volunteers;
- in a dormitory;
- ...?

The living situation of the volunteer is very important for the success of the project, so it can be a good idea (in long-term voluntary service at least) to find out the needs and preferences of the volunteer before making final arrangements. Accommodation in an individual room in a student hostel is probably great for volunteers with social skills, but a host family might be better for more insecure or dependent volunteers. Generally, the longer the project, the more need for private space, so it is an absolute must that volunteers in long-term projects have a room for their private use. For a short period (a work camp, say) dormitory accommodation is mostly okay.

Food:

- daily lunch allowance;
- deal with a local restaurant or cafeteria that provides meals;
- weekly or monthly food allowance;

- meals in the host family,
- ...?

In group projects with international volunteers, it is good to take turns in cooking a meal for the rest of the group.

Generally the start of any IVS should be devoted to making the volunteer feel welcome and at ease. The first day of the volunteer in the new environment sets the tone for the rest of the stay. It can be detrimental to the whole project if the volunteers arrive and nothing has been organised. The importance of little gestures on the first day, such as picking the volunteers up at the airport or station, a tour of the organisation to meet all the colleagues, explanations of the board and lodging facilities and a welcome drink, is often underestimated (see also Chapter 4.1 “Induction and on-arrival orientation”).

Who is involved in the implementation of the project?

The success of the project depends to a large extent on whether it is a team effort or not. To guarantee the co-operation of other staff members, a project manager should inform and prepare them. Everybody involved should understand the role of the volunteers in the organisation and the distribution of responsibilities regarding volunteers. Last but not least, there should be an understanding of the specific intercultural situation the volunteer is in – as a newcomer not only to the organisation but also to the whole living environment.

As part of the preparation process, the roles of supporting the volunteer have to be clarified. There are several needs for support, but not all tasks have to be done by one person. Generally you divide the support tasks between three main functions:

- dealing with the broader aspects of living in another country and a different culture, because it is important to help the volunteers to acclimatise, to deal with their emotional problems and come to terms with their situation so that they can contribute effectively, and learn and develop from the experience;
- giving the volunteers support in their daily tasks, agreeing a plan of work, ensuring they have the necessary skills and sorting out problems related to the job;
- being a resource person who helps volunteers to integrate into the social life of the local community where the project is situated (this obviously applies more to long-term projects).

(See also Chapter 4.3 “Ongoing support of volunteers”.)

Training of people supporting volunteers

It is advisable that people who are in direct contact with the volunteer, and fulfil one of these roles for the first time, attend some training. Becoming competent in supporting international volunteers requires quite a lot of knowledge (trends affecting volunteering, rights and duties of volunteers, roles and responsibility of supervising staff, legal issues), skills (delegating tasks, interviewing, conflict resolution, communication, motivation, performance reviews) and attitudes (valuing volunteers, intercultural awareness, willingness to share). It is up to the support person, depending on the situation in question, to decide on the training needs.

Training for people supporting volunteers is offered through various channels. In countries where volunteering has a long tradition, training courses are often offered by volunteer centres or even by private companies. Possible providers of such training at an international level are, for example, the Council of Europe (www.coe.int/youth) and the European Voluntary Service programme (check with the responsible national agency for the YOUTH programme in your country; you can find the addresses at www.ec.europa.eu/youth). A training session for support persons could look like the following.

One-day training for volunteer support person in the hosting organisation

Background

A hosting organisation co-operating with several local organisations providing the placements for their international long-term volunteers offers a one-day training session for the support people of the volunteers.

Objectives

- Participants should be able to create a job description for volunteers.
- To raise the participants' awareness of their role vis-à-vis the volunteer.
- To clarify their expectations towards the volunteers.
- To develop a common understanding of the rights and duties of volunteers.
- Initiation of a support network between the participants.
- Clarification of co-operation between the hosting organisation and local hosting projects.

Methods used

As preparation, participants are asked to discuss the following questions in their organisation: What would a volunteer do in their organisation? What tasks do they envisage for the persons supporting the volunteer? What do they expect from the volunteer?

Programme

Programme elements	Time needed (approx.)	Objective	Brief description of method
Introduction of the programme and objectives for the day	15 min.	Participants should have a clear indication of what is happening throughout the day	Visual presentation (flip chart, which remains visible on the wall all day)
Getting-to-know exercise, ice-breakers	15 min.	Participants should feel comfortable in the group and get to know the names of the others	Any kind of lively, interactive exercise (focus on people, not their organisations)
Presentation of all placement descriptions for the volunteers	45 min.	Participants should get to know the other organisations present; and they should learn what information is needed for a volunteer to make a choice	Participants are asked to produce a marketing poster for a fictitious forthcoming volunteers' fair, where volunteers can choose a hosting place (they can be as creative as they want); once all posters are on the wall, the participants should imagine they are volunteers about to choose a project and look at all the posters and make a decision for one
Discussion of the needs of volunteers versus expectations of the hosting projects	1 hour	Participants should learn about accommodating the needs of volunteers in the light of the expectations of the organisations	In small groups (4-6 people), participants should share the choice they made and explain why. They should discuss how much information they as volunteers would want before choosing a project and how does that affect the preparation needed in the organisation

Summarising input	30 min.	Participants should get a better idea of how to prepare for receiving a volunteer	In the plenary, participants should say how they would change their description now, and why. What follows should be a summarising input on preparation for hosting long-term volunteers in the hosting organisation
lunch break			
Roles of support people	1.5 hours	Participants should get a better understanding of their role vis-à-vis the volunteer	Participants should first individually reflect on what they think are the five most important tasks of a support person and the qualities needed for it. Then work in small groups and try to come up with (on one sheet) the five most important tasks. Groups should report back in the plenary and then close the session with a summarising input on supervising volunteers
Discussion of rights and duties	30 min.	Reaching a common understanding of the rights and duties of volunteers	Explain the legal administrative requirements and legal framework, then discuss with the group rights and duties (working time, free time, board and lodging, training, etc.); try to come up with an agreement
Discussion of future co-operation	45 min.	Participants should discover that they can use the contacts in this group to support each other	Explain how you see future co-operation in terms of sharing work concerning the volunteers' stay and then do some brainstorming regarding other ways of co-operating

3.2.3 Obstacles to mobility

One of the main objectives of IVS is mobility across borders, mobility to co-operate on international projects, mobility to live an intercultural experience, mobility to foster solidarity without frontiers. The freedom to cross borders to another country is one of basic conditions for running IVS activities. However, there are still obstacles to international mobility that you will need to surmount when organising your IVS.

The obstacles to mobility differ from country to country. The table below gives an overview of different mobility situations (at the time of writing) according to the country of origin of the volunteer and the hosting country. Within the European Union, freedom to move around is nearly unlimited, apart from some administrative procedures. Between other countries the situation is often more complicated, especially for a stay of more than three months.

- There is useful information on travel and mobility in Europe at www.europa.eu/travel.
- Contact the embassy of the country in which you will carry out your voluntary service for the latest up-to-date information.
- The national agencies of the Youth in Action programme can also give you more information as they send and receive hundreds of international volunteers every year.

Volunteer comes	from an EU country and has citizenship of this country	from an EU country, does not have citizenship of the country but has a permanent residence permit there	from a European non-EU country	from a non-European country
Country in which the IVS takes place				
EU country	EU law is applicable; for IVS lasting longer than three months it is necessary to apply to the authority of the hosting country (need to obtain a residence permit)	Some specific conditions can apply; it is necessary to check these conditions with the authority of the host country	National law in the EU country governs it. Some EU countries have a specific agreement among themselves regarding mobility. Necessary to check specific requirements for short (less than three months) and long stay (more than three months) in their territory	National law in the EU country governs it. Some EU countries have signed bilateral agreements with non-European countries regarding the free movement of persons. Necessary to contact the authority of the hosting country
European non-EU country	National law of the country governs it. Necessary for presentation of medical certificate as regards infectious diseases	National law in the country governs it. Possible requirement of a visa, medical certificate as regards infectious diseases	National law of the country governs it. Necessary to check all specific requirements with the authority of the hosting country	National law in the country governs it. Necessary to check all specific requirements with the authority of the hosting country
Non-European country	National law in the country governs it	National law in the country governs it	National law in the country governs it	National law in the country governs it

What to think about when sending your volunteer abroad

Visas

Volunteers from an EU or EFTA country going to an EU or EFTA country do not need a visa. Volunteers moving between non-EU and EU countries generally need to get a visa to enter the host country. In general, visas for short stays (for example, work camps) are valid for a maximum of three months. In most cases volunteers need to have a valid passport and fulfil some additional criteria (for example: passport valid for at least six months, certificates of health insurance). Usually, they are asked to present a letter of confirmation from the hosting organisation and sometimes they may be interviewed by embassy representatives. The cost of a visa varies from country to country; obtaining a visa can take from a week to several months, so start the procedures early enough. When running long-term IVS, the visa is a precondition to get a residence permit in the host country.

Residence permit

One possible obstacle listed in the table above is obtaining a right of residence for the full duration of the volunteers' IVS. A residence permit authorises a person to reside in the host country. It is usually required for a stay of three months or longer. It is important to check in

advance what kind of documents the volunteers might need in order to get this permit (for example: a certified translated birth certificate, proof of sufficient resources, insurance cover, visa, letter of the hosting organisation, police check).

Work permit

IVS is not a substitute for work. However, in some countries volunteers need to get a work permit because these countries do not have a legal category for “volunteers”. In this respect, volunteers may be considered as workers and the hosting organisation has to obtain work permits for them from the local employment authorities. Check before sending your volunteers whether they need a work permit in the host country, and if they do, where to apply and what procedure to follow.

Social insurance schemes and additional insurance

The social insurance schemes differ from country to country. It is also important to find out whether the volunteers are insured or not under the social security scheme of the host country. In some cases volunteers must take out additional insurance (for repatriation in case of illness or accident or death, for third-party risks). Some countries have signed bilateral agreements on medical treatment. Find out, via your social insurance office or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, what the situation will be.

Taxation

So-called compulsory contributions, which include tax and social security contributions, could create a nasty financial aftertaste during or after your voluntary service. Some countries regard pocket money or board and lodging as taxable income. In this respect, volunteers can be subject to deductions at source or after the voluntary service. The risk of double taxation (once in the host country and again in the home country) also exists, even though it should not. Contact your tax office to clarify what regime the volunteers will be under during the voluntary service abroad and after returning.

Necessary medical certificates

When going abroad, volunteers may also need documents to certify that they do not have any infectious diseases. Sometimes it is enough to hold such a medical certificate, issued by a health institution in the volunteer’s country of origin. However, some countries do not recognise such certificates and may ask volunteers to get an additional medical examination in the host country. Your IVS partner can help you by passing on information about the rules applicable in the host country.

Unemployment and other benefits

Going abroad often has consequences for certain benefits that young persons may receive in their host country. When coming back, procedures to obtain the benefits again often have to be started from scratch. Therefore it is important to lobby your unemployment office or social welfare office about the benefit of IVS and hopefully find some understanding in the system. In some countries there are even partnerships between the employment office and IVS organisations for giving unemployed young people a voluntary work experience abroad. In financially challenging cases, when coming back from IVS, there should be considerable support from the sending organisation in order to rearrange the life of the volunteer.

Steps towards volunteering-friendly policies

As part of the European Year of Volunteering 2011, a road map towards the creation of an enabling environment for volunteering across Europe was drawn up. It aimed to mainstream volunteering in different policy agendas so that no policy initiatives would have an adverse effect on volunteering or voluntary service. Stronger mechanisms will be created at EU and national level to support organisations, programmes and conditions for volunteering.

