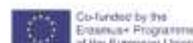




# GUIDELINES FOR ORGANISATIONS WHO WANT VOLUNTEERS AGED 50+



pistes solidaires



## **Partners**

**Dacorum CVS (working name Community Action Dacorum), UK**

**Replay Network, Italy**

**Gulbene Municipality Council, Latvia**

**Pistes Solidaires, France**

**Associação Mais Cidadania (AMC), Portugal**

**Federacja FOSa, Poland**

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# INTRODUCTION

Dear reader! You have probably heard about senior volunteering (volunteers aged 50+). This document is to help organisations who want to know more and have a real interest to involving senior volunteers in their ORGANISATION`S work and Community. As we know interest is not always enough, volunteering is a transversal action requiring skills, knowledge and attitude to between both the volunteer and the organization. By knowing this it raises the involvement of both the organisation and the volunteers. Although these Guidelines are based mainly on non-governmental organisations experiences, they can be used with voluntary work management in municipal and state institutions. The guidelines look at such topics as:

- **ORGANISATIONS' vision and motivation to involve volunteers**
- **Marketing volunteering, reaching and recruiting volunteers**
- **Management and organisational issues of volunteering**
- **Teambuilding, learning, conflict management**
- **Intergenerational volunteering**
- **Appreciating and motivating volunteers**

These guidelines are created in frames of a project Local and International Active Seniors aimed at increasing volunteering in people aged 50+ (especially males), improve processes/policies in volunteering organizations, reduce social isolation and improve literacy, numeracy and IT skills.

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*Volunteering can be appreciated as a great experience and life-long learning process*

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The structure of the guidelines are built to involve the reader in the learning process, offering questions that tend to formulate ORGANISATION`S experiences and capacity to host volunteers. At the beginning of each chapter readers can try to answer the questions for themselves to understand and model the organisation`s involvement in volunteering process.

Besides a descriptive part each chapter includes the real experience and examples of hosting volunteers during the project, good practice stories of involving volunteers, the possible tasks, attitudes and learning process – it all goes hand in hand with the difficulties, obstacles and issues experienced during the project. But the good news we also talk about the solution that was found to solve these.

We believe that volunteering has not only to be considered as an altruistic activity to benefit society. It has to be appreciated as a great experience and life-long learning process, as well. Very important aspect is that volunteering can help to reduce loneliness and isolation and promote the health and wellbeing of seniors. Thus, seniors can become active citizens and feel useful in a society they are living in.

Why seniors only? There is an aging population, increasing life expectancy<sup>1</sup>, unemployment rates, social isolation of seniors and other worldwide tendencies of previous decades give a reason to look for tools to integrate seniors more into the community. There is strong evidence that many older adults feel isolated, and that loneliness is associated with poor health and higher rates of mortality.<sup>2</sup> Volunteering is a tool to decrease loneliness and social isolation. This is a tool all project partners have worked with, have an experience in and believe in. Come with us!

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<sup>1</sup>The 2018 Ageing Report, Economic & Budgetary Projections for the 28 EU Member States (2016-2070), European Commission, p.4. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/ip079\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/ip079_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Health Effects of Social Isolation and Loneliness, Clifford Singer  
<https://www.aginglifecarejournal.org/health-effects-of-social-isolation-and-loneliness/>

# WHY WE NEED VOLNTEERS AND VOLUNTEERING IN MY ORGANISATION?

- **What is the aim and vision of my ORGANISATION?**
- **How much do I know about volunteering?**
- **How volunteers can help to reach the aim of my ORGANISATION?**
- **Why I want to involve volunteers in my ORGANISATION`s work?**
- **What knowledges and skills can volunteers bring to my ORGANISATION?**
- **In which fields do we need volunteers? What tasks they will commit?**
- **What do I need to invest (time/money/organisational resources) to organise volunteering?**

These and other questions are useful to ask yourself before starting to involve volunteers in your organisation`s work. If you think that managing volunteering is trendy, profit orientated and easy – probably it is not for you. Volunteering has to go in line with the organisation`s aims and visions, because it is an altruistic and time/management requiring process itself.

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*An organisation with a clear vision and strategy can plan purposeful and meaningful involvement of volunteers*

Each organisation has its own vision, regardless of the field it works. The mission of the organisation serves as a lighthouse on the way to the achievement of the goals contained in this vision. Volunteers can play an important role in the organisation's mission. An organisation with a clear vision and strategy can plan purposeful and meaningful involvement of volunteers.<sup>3</sup>

The project partner „Associação Mais Cidadania”, Portugal, emphasize that the question “Why we need volunteers and volunteering in my organisation?” is the first step to a successful volunteering project/activity from the point of view of the volunteer and the organisation. The reflection regarding this question should involve the whole organisation: the staff members, the board, volunteers, strategic partners, stakeholders, beneficiaries and the community as well.

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<sup>3</sup> BRIVPRATIGIE.LV rokasgrāmata (BRIVPRATIGIE.LV voluntary work guidelines)  
<https://www.brivpratigie.lv/lv/aktualitates/brivpratigielv-rokasgramata.html>

That's why it is important to:

- **Identify the need for the volunteers and the purpose for attracting them**
- **Be sure on the role of volunteers in the organisation; define specific tasks to the volunteer and justify why they should be volunteer roles and not staff roles**
- **Reflect in which way hosting volunteers would contribute to achieve your vision and mission**
- **Imagine and share within the organisation which benefits you would get for hosting volunteers**

• **THE STAFF-VOLUNTEER STRUGGLE: WHO IS WHO?**

As the main challenge “Associação Mais Cidadania” finds setting strict roles of volunteers and the staff. Volunteers shouldn't become a substitute of paid workers and the staff has to understand the meaning of involving volunteers.

<b>VOLUNTEERING IN „Associação Mais Cidadania”, Portugal – The challenges encountered and how they found a solution</b>	
<b>Challenge</b>	<b>The organisation Solution</b>
<p><b>An organisation that is at the point of starting to host volunteers there could have been questions and doubts about the reactions of the staff member related to volunteers` integration. Staff members could feel the fear of being replaced by volunteers or could feel their presence as a waste of time.</b></p>	<p><b>It is very important to involve the key persons of the organisation in the process of reflection about the reasons to involve volunteers in the organisation and the clarification about the difference between a staff member and a volunteer.</b></p> <p><b>It is also very important to define a person in the organisation in charge of the process of the volunteer integration that will also be available to support the process of adaptation of the staff members of the organisation.</b></p> <p><b>Creatie moments of informal and social exchanges between volunteers and staff members.</b></p> <p><b>Start for the integration of short term volunteers connected with specific roles and tasks.</b></p>

## REACHING AND INVOLVING VOLUNTEERS

- **What social media and other networks I have to spread information about volunteering opportunities?**
- **Which information platforms are most popular for seniors? Facebook? Newspapers?**
- **Who will make a visual/audio identity for the announcement?**
- **With whom I will cooperate and ask for a help to spread the information?**
- **Is it better to address the information personally?**

There are different ways, communities, approaches when talking about marketing voluntary work opportunities and reaching seniors. And there isn't be one right answer to above mentioned questions. The thing to do is to analyse your individual area and what the seniors do. While some seniors are thrilled with handicrafts others enjoy intergenerational activities or active life-style. Finding the right volunteer for "Your needs" requires to send the right message to the potential seniors interested in organisation's offer.

Seniors who haven't previous experienced volunteering maybe are not really aware of the voluntary work approach and it can scare them away. That's why the essential is to deliver a clear and easy comprehensible message to the target group. Such an obscure sentence as "Become the volunteer!" doesn't raise awareness of what is meant by this message. It is necessary to deliver clear information on how to become volunteer, responsibilities and tasks, benefits, emphasise that it doesn't require a previous experience.<sup>4</sup>

- **ORGANISATION "FOSA", POLAND, GIVES ADVICES FOR THE SPECIAL APPROACH REACHING AND INVOLVEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS AGED 50+**

The recruitment process and reaching volunteers aged 50+ may require slightly more involvement by the organisations compared to the recruitment of young people. To be effective, you must follow simple but key principles:

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<sup>4</sup> Senioru brīvprātīgais darbs. Senioru motivēšana un iesaistīšana sabiedriskajā dzīvē/Senior Volunteering. Motivating and involving seniors in social life  
[www.veseligriznieks.lv/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Guidelines\\_A53mm\\_LAT.compressed.pdf](http://www.veseligriznieks.lv/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Guidelines_A53mm_LAT.compressed.pdf)

- Direct contacts instead of social media promotions - older people use Facebook or Snapchat less frequently - meetings in places where they are staying are much more effective - churches, health centers, libraries, universities of the third century;
- Examples of good practices and visualisation instead of theory - older people react much more spontaneously to examples of actual volunteering experiences supplemented with photos, films, presentations that affect their imagination. Very good too, if your stories are shared by a person of their age who has already worked as a volunteer, which will allow for the presentation of good practices and positive moments, emotions and a sense of fulfillment provided by volunteering;
- Simple incentives work wonders! - ask meeting participants to bring one or two people with them - if it works, give them a small gift - chocolate? box of chocolates? diploma? a magnet or other gadget with the logo of the organization? It will definitely work!
- Have a ready offer - seniors will not decide to engage in unclear initiatives - they must have a ready description of specific projects in which we want to involve them. To feel the emotional bond with our idea must be real to them!
- Listen, listen, listen ... - seniors are struggling with numerous problems, they also have various needs - to connect a group of older people together, they must be convinced that we understand them and we will respond to their difficult situation and support them - in return they will repay commitment;
- Appreciate commitment and talk about it - we try to promote our volunteers' activities at every possible opportunity - a small article in the local press with a photo, videos on YouTube, invite them to the radio, television, tell their stories or give them the opportunity to talk about themselves at meetings, conferences - every occasion is good and very important for the senior. Listening to it will also encourage others to get involved in volunteering;
- Seniors who haven't previous experience with volunteering are not really aware of the voluntary work approach and it can scare them away. That's why the essential is to deliver clear and easy comprehensible information

**VOLUNTEERING IN ORGANISATION "FOSA", POLAND – The challenges encountered and how they found a solution**

Challenge	The organisation Solution
<p><b>In the process of recruiting seniors, it may be difficult to break with the habits related to recruitment. We tend to simplify our lives and use standard tools, especially Internet ones. It is an easy solution but its effectiveness in the context of this particular target group is small. Often the problem is access to the meeting place - distance, the need to travel by bus, no</b></p>	<p><b>It is very important to make direct contact with seniors, it is best to organise meetings in places that they already know and feel safe in them.</b></p> <p><b>Invitations to the recruitment meeting should be communicated through institutions in which seniors gather - community centers, help houses, libraries, church institutions, etc.</b></p>

elevator, steep stairs, no clear signs - all this can make the seniors do not reach the meeting. Seniors often have a problem with awareness of the idea of volunteering - some of them have doubts whether someone does not just want to use them. Often, volunteering is associated with walking on the street and collecting money or simply providing free work in favor of an organisation.

It is worth having a representative of these institutions appear at the first meeting - it will facilitate building mutual trust.

Be sure to signpost the place where the meeting is taking place at - colorful posters, arrows, passwords (remember the large font!) will make it easier for seniors to find their way to the location.

It is best to organise the first meeting in places close to the place of residence of the candidates, within their local environment, among people who already know each other. This provides them with a sense of security that makes it easier to explain to them what is involved in volunteering.

You have to clearly and efficiently present the idea of volunteering by referring to specific examples - a photo or a short movie bring more content and evoke more emotions than any words.

Have a plan of action - the idea is usually not enough for seniors, you have to show a specific vision of future activities!

Invite an experienced senior volunteer to the meeting – let him tell his story. What has he experienced? How has volunteering influenced his life? This can convince others to take up the challenge.

# GET READY! MANAGING VOLUNTARY WORK

- **Who will be responsible for managing volunteers in my ORGANISATION?**
- **Do my ORGANISATION`s staff has enough time for voluntary work management?**
- **Does my country have a legislative frame for volunteering (a law regarding voluntary work)?**
- **How we will set duties, responsibilities and rights of both parties (contracts? agreements?)?**
- **How I will integrate volunteers in my organisation`s collective?**
- **How will I measure and evaluate both volunteers` and staff`s satisfactory during the volunteering process?**

So, we have come to the point that is directly concerned to volunteering itself – volunteers working in the organisation and everything connected to the management of the work process. The quality of volunteering management is rooted in:

- **Your awareness of what motivates every single volunteer in your organisation**
  - **Volunteers` awareness of their role and what kind of are trainings provided**
  - **Volunteers` awareness of their contribution to the objectives of the organization**
  - **Volunteers` awareness of the support and help they can rely on**
  - **Volunteers` appreciation<sup>5</sup>**
- **ORGANISATION "COMMUNITY ACTION DACORUM" EMPHASISE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF RESPONSIBILITIES, ROLES AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER**

Both the volunteers and organisations need to look at documents and have the information clearly outlined. Things that both parties have to take into account are:

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<sup>5</sup> Brīvprātīgā darba organizēšanas rokasgrāmata, 7 soļi/Volunteering Management, 7 steps [http://jaunatneslietas.lv/sites/default/files/editor/Rokasgramata\\_BD\\_brivpratigais-lv.pdf](http://jaunatneslietas.lv/sites/default/files/editor/Rokasgramata_BD_brivpratigais-lv.pdf)

## VOLUNTEERS

- Find out why they want to volunteer, what their motivations are;
- Look at what skills they have, especially skills that can be transferred;
- Clearly understand what they are doing ie the role and what the organisation expects from them;
- Get a full understanding of what the organisations can provide;
- Make sure they clearly know the health and safety requirements of the role, including safeguarding;
- Have a full understanding of the organisation and what their mission statement is and what they want from their volunteers;
- Be flexible with their expectations;
- Know what support is in place to help them understand what is required;
- Clear programme of timing and tasks.

## ORGANISATIONS

- Organisation to look at how they can manage a volunteer;
- Find out what the volunteer wants and what their motivations are;
- Look at what skills the volunteer has to match them to correct role, especially transferable skills;
- Clearly outline what they are going to do and their role within the organisation;
- Make sure the volunteer knows about the health and safety requirements of the role, including safeguarding;
- Provide a full understanding of the organisation and what their mission statement is and why they use volunteers;
- Be flexible with their expectations;
- Provide support to the volunteers, so they fully understand what is required;
- A clear programme of timing and tasks.

### VOLUNTEERING IN ORGANISATION “ COMMUNITY ACTION DACORUM“, UK – The challenges encountered and how they found a solution

Challenge	The organisation solution
<b>When hosting volunteers from different cultures and languages it can be difficult to do the following:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Find out people’s motivations and backgrounds</li></ul>	<b>To overcome the challenge discussed the best solution is to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Provide language support;</li><li>- Provide a mentor who can support the volunteer</li></ul>

- **Understand the role and its responsibilities**
- **The organisation's mission statement and why they need volunteers**
- **What skills the volunteer has**
- **Outline what the organisation provides.**
- **Outline the health and safety requirements of the role, including safeguarding**
- **Explain what support is in place to help them**
- **Explain local settings and cultural differences.**

**This is generally due to their understanding of the language and cultural differences. In addition the physical health of the volunteers needs to be taken into account.**

- **Have a clear programme outlining times, tasks and what is expected of them, what equipment is required**
- **The description of the volunteer's role needs to fully outline health & safety requirements**
- **Provide a full list of contacts and who does what**
- **Take time to get to know the volunteers fully and understand their motivations**
- **Match the volunteer to the correct opportunity, taking into account their physical health**
- **Outline the cultural differences and concepts clearly at the start**
- **Be flexible and adapt to meet everyone's needs and expectations.**

# VOLUNTEERING AS LEARNING EXPERIENCE

- **What and how can volunteers learn from volunteering?**
- **Is it better to offer a teamwork or individual work?**
- **What if there is a problem or risk appear during volunteering? How to solve or to prevent them?**
- **What and how my ORGANISATION can learn from volunteers?**
- **How can I recognise and measure the learning outcomes of volunteers?**

In the frame of the project “Local and International Active Seniors” we approach volunteering as learning experience and it is based on non-formal and informal learning approach. Non-formal and informal learning is organised outside the formal education system or parallel to it. It aims to develop or increase a person`s civic, political, social and cultural participation in social life, as well as volunteer`s abilities, competences and values.<sup>6</sup>

The learning within a volunteering experience is an experience of active education, based on learning by doing that encourages individual reflection as a way of increasing self-awareness on one`s own development. The volunteer assumes an active role for him/herself and for the other people involved. Volunteers gain transversal skills such as communication skills, team work, conflict management, language skills, intercultural skills, as well as they develop their creativity, flexibility and adaptability.

Based on a research of the World Economic Forum we have identified 8 key areas of development that can be fostered by a volunteering experience at local or international level:

- **Communication and use of Information technologies**
- **Working with others**
- **Critical reflection and problem solving**
- **Creativity and entrepreneurship**
- **Attitudes for work performance (Responsibility, flexibility and adaptability)**
- **Effective organisation**
- **Learning to learn**
- **Management, leadership and developing others.**

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<sup>6</sup> Guide on International and Local Voluntary Work, project “Senior Plus”, Lisboa, 2017  
[http://www.cemea.eu/senior-plus-volunteering-50/?fbclid=IwAR3qd7f1JUi3m1Hkb9akRQI5rIYCNgiY0llspIYMKphtH\\_yMs-2kPDFdFl](http://www.cemea.eu/senior-plus-volunteering-50/?fbclid=IwAR3qd7f1JUi3m1Hkb9akRQI5rIYCNgiY0llspIYMKphtH_yMs-2kPDFdFl)



*Gulbene (Latvia) seniors during the training process before volunteering: learning the volunteering*

Senior volunteering programme of the activities should foresee practical activities in which the volunteer can easily integrate, even if he/she is not familiar with the field of work of the organisation or, in case of international volunteering, if he/she is not familiar with the language of the hosting country. The advantage of the activities that have a practical side is that they allow the senior volunteers to feel active, to do something concrete, to see immediate tangible results of their volunteering. Also, it allows senior volunteers to identify in a short time their place, their role within the organisation.

Work on the expectations of the volunteers: adapting expectations to the context. The volunteers may have different and various reasons for volunteering and expectations from a volunteering experience. Their expectations are naturally linked to their personal profile and their previous experiences. But for expectations to be realised, they need to be formulated in relation to the reality that is lived. Thus, for a successful volunteering experience it is important for the volunteers to understand its context and to make a reflection on their expectations.

- **DEFINING THE FRAME OF THE VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE AS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

The volunteers should be encouraged to live their volunteering experience as learning experiences based on learning by doing, experimenting situations or activities meant to

encourage reflection. The volunteering experience facilitates a process of human growth towards the increasing of self-awareness. The volunteers assume an active role for themselves and for the other people involved, in a process of lifelong learning.

The international volunteering is a learning process lived during an experience abroad, that only apparently is aimed to mainly knowing the other (a person, an organisation, the hosting society). In reality the intercultural process enables the cultural identity to come to surface, increasing self-awareness and auto determination, being able so to become a catalyst of knowledge and curiosity towards everything is different. These are fundamental bases for an active citizenship experience.

• **THE ROLE OF THE MENTOR DURING THE VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE**

The mentor will constantly support the volunteers during the experience, and will go with them through the achievement of their learning process consciousness. The mentor is a guide, a person volunteers can trust and can rely on. The mentor stimulates the volunteers’ reflection and helps volunteers to put things into context and into perspective.

Balance the involvement of the volunteer, set appropriate tasks. The activities foreseen for the volunteers should be adequate for them, respecting their limits and putting in value their interests and competences.

<b>VOLUNTEERING IN REPLAY NETWORK, ITALY – The challenges encountered and how they found a solution</b>	
<b>Challenge</b>	<b>The organisation solution</b>
<p><b>The need of volunteers to feel they have a role within the hosting organisation, to have tangible results, to be aware of the impact of their volunteering.</b></p> <p><b>Volunteers may have difficulties to recognise or to express the struggles and distress they might experience during the volunteering experiences.</b></p> <p><b>The challenge of communication in a foreign language in the case of international volunteering.</b></p>	<p><b>The programme of the volunteer should be outlined in a clear manner and communicated in a clear way to the volunteer. At the same time, it check that the volunteer understands the programme is important to.</b></p> <p><b>Continuous communication and regular meetings (at least once a week) with the mentor. The senior volunteers need to be dedicated time and attention, they need a dedicated space to express themselves, the occasion to exchange their thoughts and impressions. Being adult people with a structured way of thinking and with a structured identity often the senior volunteers have a more structured way of reading the context and the volunteering experience. The exchange with the mentor gives the chance for them to see things from different points of view, to ask themselves new questions and to have a constructive dialogue. Often senior volunteers may not be familiar with a non-formal learning experience as the volunteering one, so the mentor can facilitate the volunteers to identify their learnings and to</b></p>

**recognize the contributions they bring to the organisation through their volunteering.**

**The appointment of a referent person within the activities to which the volunteers can turn to for any questions and doubts connected to the volunteering service. The referent person will take care of the volunteers' integration in the work team and will be their guide through the developing of the tasks given. The referent person for the activities and the mentor of the volunteers should be in constant contact throughout the volunteering project in order to spot out any points of attention and be able to support as best as possible the volunteers and to adapt their involvement on the basis of their competences, their limits and capacities. This attention for the volunteers creates the conditions to build together the volunteering experience and maximise the added value both for the volunteers and for the organisation.**

**If the volunteer may seem reluctant to recognise the role of the mentor or to bound with a particular mentor, it can be useful to identify another person linked to the organisation with whom the volunteer may relate. This person can play a key role and collaborate with the mentor in case of crisis situations.**

**Both volunteers and organisations need to start from the approach that language communication may be more difficult and that it is anyway part of the experience. It is important to check that the volunteers understand well the information regarding the volunteering. There might be different strategies to put into practice to facilitate communication in a foreign language: translation online tools, resource person that can help in translation, meeting involving also the sending organisation, information materials translated, etc.**

# INTERGENERATIONAL VOLUNTEERING

- **Is it important to involve volunteers of different age?**
- **How can I promote intergenerational volunteering?**
- **What are the benefits of intergenerational volunteering?**
- **With whom I can cooperate to strengthen it?**

Recent research demonstrated that there may be a range of biopsychosocial benefits for older adults who form relationships with children through intergenerational volunteering programs.<sup>7</sup> Our experience shows it quite clear illuminating the positive energy and benefits for both parties – the older and the younger ones. There are a lot of possibilities to bring different generations together. When talking about intergenerational volunteering we can talk about two general ways:

- **Seniors working together with volunteers – kids and youngsters**
- **Senior volunteers leading activities for kids and youngsters**

Both approaches outline positive – tangible or quite personal and intangible – benefits, such as:

- **Helping to remain active and “loose” some years**
- **Learning new skills and feel valued by society**
- **Reducing the generational gap, raise the value of old people in the eyes of kids and youngsters**
- **Filling the emptiness for those seniors who are not in touch with family`s youngest representatives, and opposite – give the possibility for kids to enjoy the grandparenting**
- **Sharing skills and knowledges that younger generation otherwise wouldn` t reach**

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<sup>7</sup> George, Daniel & Singer, Mendel. (2011). Intergenerational Volunteering and Quality of Life for Persons With Mild to Moderate Dementia: Results From a 5-Month Intervention Study in the United States. The American journal of geriatric psychiatry : official journal of the American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry. 19. 392-6

• **SOME GOOD EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES TO USE ORGANISING INTERGENERATIONAL VOLUNTEERING (SUGGESTED BY GULBENE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LATVIA)**

Cooking activities, involving different generations, also local or foreign senior volunteers and younger volunteers - possibility for volunteers to come up with own ideas and initiatives, active involvement of different generations, cultural exchange, intergenerational experience exchange, communication without words, exciting process;

English language course held by senior volunteer (native speaker) - great way to practice speaking English, nice cultural exchange and very intensive learning;

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*Nice experience with letting work together international senior and youngster volunteers – support for each other, the way to learn from each other*

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Creative workshops or “different class” for children - creating Easter cards, doing journalism activity with creating newspapers, dramatising fairy tale, learning some dance, doing handicrafts etc. - an opportunity for senior volunteers to share their experience (professional or some talents) with children, learning from doing, learning from other generations;

Excursion with cultural exchange - great team building activity, non-formal language learning, practicing;

Nice experience with letting work together international senior and youngster volunteers – support for each other, the way to learn from each other.



*English workshop with volunteer from UK, Gulbene Elementary School, Latvia*

• **FROM ASSISTANT TO LEADER: SUPPORTING AND GIVING A TIME**

There is no life without challenges and issues, and intergenerational volunteering is not an exception. The best news is that working different generations together or providing activities for kids organised by seniors almost never raises a generational clash. The opposite – it gives the opportunity to learn from different backgrounds and experiences. During the project Gulbene Elementary School (Latvia) encountered some difficulties to get the volunteers to come up with their own activities and step off the assistant role in the organization. See the table below.

<b>VOLUNTEERING IN GULBENE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LATVIA – The challenges encountered and how they found a solution</b>	
<b>Challenge</b>	<b>The organisation solution</b>
<p><b>The challenge was to get the volunteers comfortable and brave enough, with the support of their hosting organisations, to come up with own ideas and initiatives. By doing this it was hoped that it would help with their personal growth, not only assisting the organisation in their activities.</b></p>	<p><b>Time is an important factor to solve the situation. At the beginning it is necessary to spend some days to introduce with the place, environment, usual activities and people they will work with. They could see how it normally works and where they can bring some new ideas.</b></p> <p><b>It is important to plan all activities together in details, support with necessary materials etc., ensure support of a colleague from the team or foreign youngster volunteer.</b></p>

# MOTIVATING AND APPRECIATING VOLUNTEERS

- **If I were a volunteer, would and how I would like to be appreciated?**
- **Are there any benefits my ORGANISATION can offer to volunteers (free meals, transport fee etc.)?**
- **What keeps volunteers motivated long-term?**
- **How do you measure and recognise the motivation of volunteers?**

Motivating and appreciating volunteers is very important aspect of volunteering. Motivation helps to keep existing ones and attract new volunteers. It is ideal that the “Best volunteers” would like to stay with the organisation. Good news spreads fast – so others looking for volunteering opportunities will contact them and would like to volunteer with them. Motivation boosts productivity – If achievements and performance are rewarded, the volunteer will do everything possible to be productive and stay at your organisation.<sup>8</sup>

Here are some tips and suggestions (by ORGANISATION “Pistes-Solidaires”, France) to keep the volunteers motivated and satisfied with their work and emotional environment:

- **To develop a welcome programme to present the context of the organisation, its board, its objectives, its actions, to make them clear for the volunteers**
- **To create a space, through activities and events, where they can present themselves, talk about their experience**
- **To use their experiences, know-how and skills in all the activities in a participative approach**
- **To use activities to create a group dynamics, so they can leave their comfort zone**
- **To have a group between 8 and 10 volunteers (less is too few, more is too much)**

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<sup>8 8</sup> BRIVPRATIGIE.LV rokasgrāmata (BRIVPRATIGIE.LV voluntary work guidelines)  
<https://www.brivpratigie.lv/lv/aktualitates/brivpratigielv-rokasgramata.html>

- **To recognise in formal moments the work and commitment of the Seniors (general assembly, public events, newsletters, website, social networks, etc.)**
- **To propose trainings for the volunteers**
- **To allow the volunteers to evaluate their own action**
- **To organise informal moments to create social links (whether it is during the hosting of international volunteers or for our own local volunteers)**
- **To organise collective decision-making**



*Shoulder to shoulder volunteers of different kinds of nationalities and generations, "Pistes Solidaires", France*

• **THE GROUP NOT WORKING TOGETHER. DEALING WITH CONFLICTS**

ORGANISATION “Pistes-Solitaires” shares their experience of dealing with challenges that are connected with different characters, approaches and attitudes that tend to destabilise the group and spoil the motivational atmosphere.

<b>VOLUNTEERING IN ORGANISATION “PISTES-SOLIDAIRES”, FRANCE – The challenges encountered and how they found a solution</b>	
<b>Challenge</b>	<b>The organisation solution</b>
<p><b>The power struggle : The conflictive personalities who try to split the group</b>  <b>The person didn't understand the aim of the activities or found them childish such as the ice-breaking activities.</b>  <b>The difficulty to respect the time planned</b></p>	<p><b>Regarding the conflictive personalities, there are two options: either we stop them, remind them the rules and aims of the activities, or we let them speak if we see that the group doesn't follow them. This way, following the pressure of the majority, they stop by themselves.</b>  <b>Regarding the time issue, we have to channel the most imposing persons so they don't hog the discussions. We have to watch the time spent not to frustrate the volunteers because the activities wouldn't be completed.</b></p>

# ABOUT THE PROJECT AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Local and International Active Seniors is a project which aimed at increasing volunteering in people aged 50+ (especially males), improve processes/policies in volunteering organisations, reduce social isolation and improve literacy, numeracy and IT skills.

Community Action Dacorum and six other non-governmental bodies in Europe, including Pistes Solidaires, Replay Network, Gulbene Municipality Council and Associação Mais Cidadania, and FOSa, are working together to help educate and train seniors who would otherwise face social exclusion and/or early retirement.

Through the involvement of the other local organisations, who were willing to welcome senior volunteers both locally and internationally, courses were developed to prepare the organisations for the hosting of the volunteers. This hopefully would encourage positive integration of the senior volunteers beyond project lifetime.

## • THE PROJECT CONTEXT

During the project, senior (participants aged 50+) volunteering activities have been carried out in 6 countries – UK, France, Italy, Latvia, Portugal and Poland. Organisations involved in the project have been coordinating both local and international volunteering in amount of:

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**LOCAL VOLUNTEERING – 53 senior volunteers and 27 hosting organisations**

**INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING – 24 senior volunteers and 20 hosting organisations**

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Before the volunteering activities, both the volunteers and organisations took part in training programmes which were designed in framework of the project. This was to ensure a clear understanding of volunteering, introduce the volunteers and organisations to each other, support and prepare both parties for a fruitful cooperation.

The volunteers feedback on what was useful in the training was as follows:

- **Possibility to do a “volunteering trial” – a chance to help at one event to see what the organisation does before the volunteer had to commit to a DBS check and volunteering for more hours**
- **Getting to know possible hosting organisations and their staff before the volunteering, the integration process of volunteers based on the volunteering duration and context, the role of the volunteer**

- **Getting acquainted with clear procedures on how to feel safe in the organisation in which they will engage with: the type and location of the activities, responsibilities, specific plan and schedule, work environment, serving the permanence of cooperation with volunteers, especially seniors**
- **Ability to work in groups, ability to exchange without having a common language - to listen - to share**
- **Awareness of opportunity to volunteer in the field that is totally different from the career chosen**
- **A clear understanding what volunteers should expect from the organisation: training, health and safety issues and policies**
- **The training have offered such emotional, life-long learning and social aspects as: fulfilment, socialising and making friendships, becoming more open minded, adaptation and willingness to learn, gaining new skills from others, being part of a team, empowering others, developing communication skills, reflection on active participation and active citizenship, perceiving volunteering as a learning experience, intercultural exchange, learning to listen, plan, express leadership and cooperate with others etc.**

Organisations feedback on what was useful about the trainings was as follows:

- **Awareness of important elements needed for the hosting of volunteers (coordination between the people in the organisation that interact with the volunteers, motivation, a defined programme of activities, capacity to be flexible, etc.)**
- **Getting acquainted with new non-formal education methods.**
- **Organisations need time and space to analyse their needs, skills, experience and expectations**
- **Ability to work in groups - will to be trained - there is always time of environmental education - ability to exchange without having a common language - to listen - to share**
- **Provided welcoming atmosphere, discussions and workshops (e.g. language and digital literacy) that helped to integrate and prepare for volunteering**

- **The training gave an opportunity to strengthen interaction with volunteers**
- **Getting aware of both the challenges in the communication process with volunteers and the importance to appreciate volunteers for their work - not necessarily in material form, but simply by saying "thank you for your help - it was very important to us", as well.**

Both organisations and volunteers have gained positive experience during volunteering process. The things volunteers liked the most about the volunteering experiences were:

- **The work organisation and atmosphere in the hosting organisation: welcoming attitude**
- **The types of activities and engagement possibilities provided in local community: various activities, wide range of volunteering opportunities**
- **Possibility to engage in totally different life-changing experience: interaction with people from different cultures, intergenerational aspect, making friendships and socializing, connection with local authorities, getting to know new context, social issues and a new target group, to receive a positive energy from volunteering etc.**
- **A clear understanding of what volunteers should expect from the organisation: training, health and safety issues and policies**
- **To gain a sense of being useful and productive, for example, to have a contribution for the environmental protection, create awareness in the community of the domestic violence problems as a way to intervene and be able to help on this problem, contributing to support the growth of other people, the opportunity to use ones skills to help others, feeling appreciated and needed etc.**
- **The work of the organisation served as a trigger to help unemployed people, with almost no means, to help raise their self-esteem, give skills and competences and help improve their look as preparation of job interviews.**

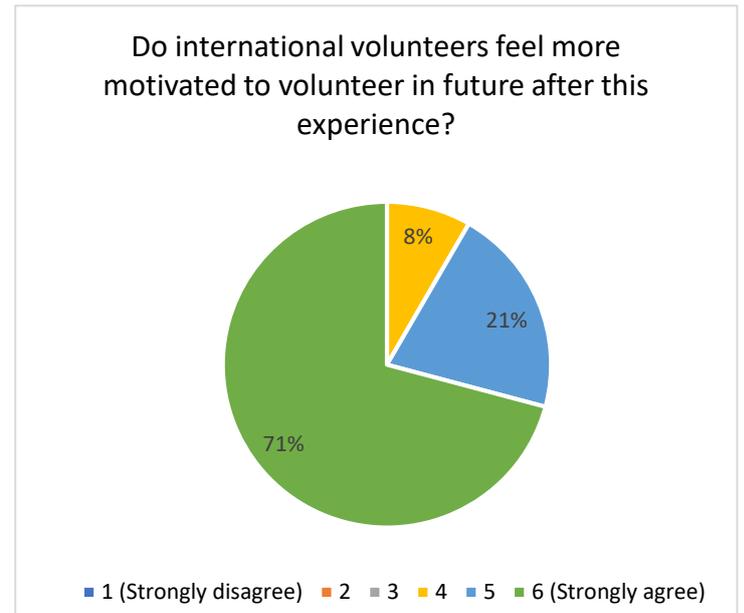
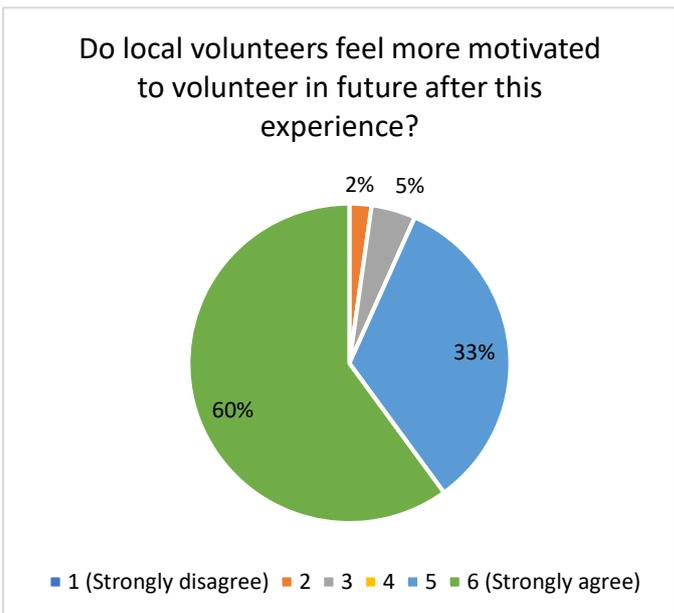
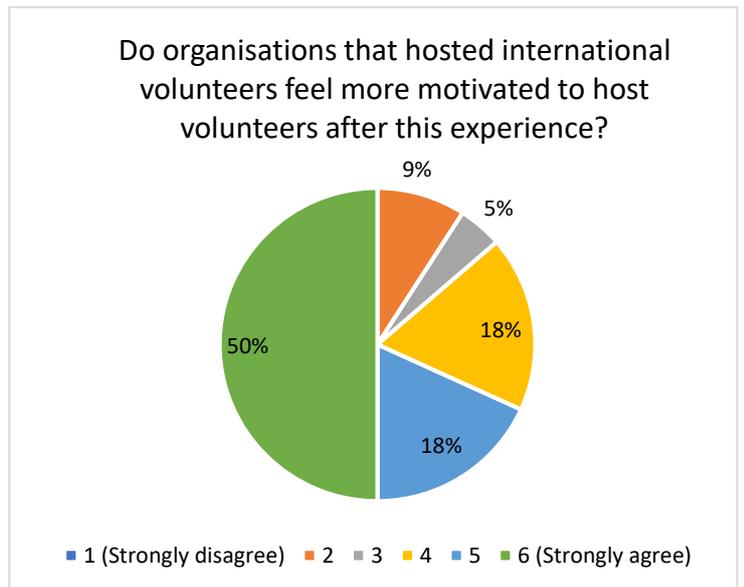
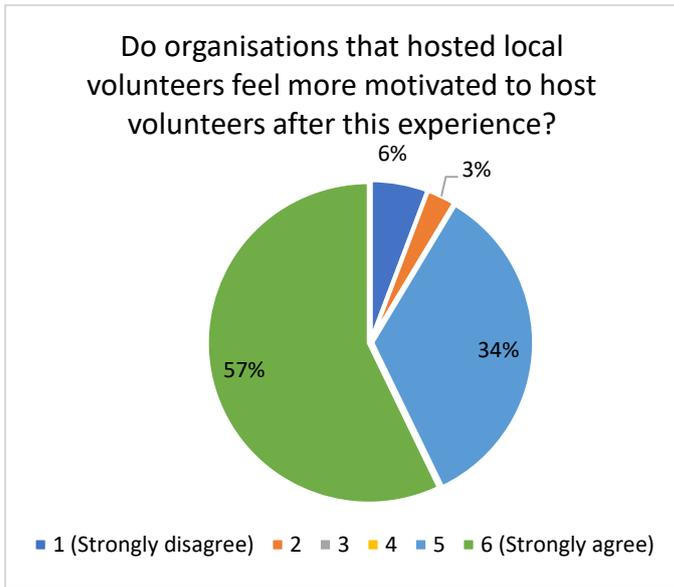
The things organisations liked the most about hosting volunteers were:

- **The possibility to interact with different people, the possibility of sharing experiences, the contributions the volunteers gave to the work with their life experiences, exchange of good practices with the staff members of the organisation**
- **To be able to introduce the institution and the work of organisation – the exchange between volunteers, the members of the organisation and its beneficiaries**
- **The contributions and work quality volunteers expressed: the availability of the volunteers, their motivation and involvement, the proactivity of the volunteers and good collaboration, the intergenerational exchange between the volunteers and the beneficiaries, creativity**
- **A new vision, initiatives and suggestions, new approaches of work, new points of view that the volunteers can share about the work carried out by the organisation**
- **Positive contribution to organisations` work style and development: learning to be more flexible, positive work with open-minded volunteers**
- **Especially regarding international volunteering: the possibility to practice a foreign language, getting over the language barrier and find other ways of communication without using a single word.**

- **BOOSTING UP YOUR MOTIVATION BY VOLUNTEERING AND RAISING NEW SKILLS**

The volunteering process helped to raise the motivation for participants to volunteer and host volunteers in the future. One of the project aims was to increase long-term voluntary approach in organisations where voluntary work was implemented. Both volunteers and organisations after involving in the voluntary work process provided during the project have completed evaluation forms to assess to which level participation in project activities have raised their

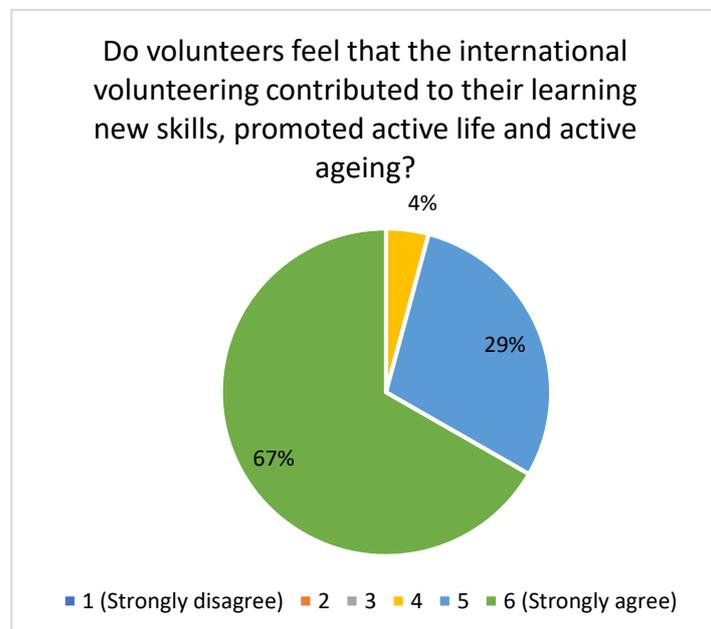
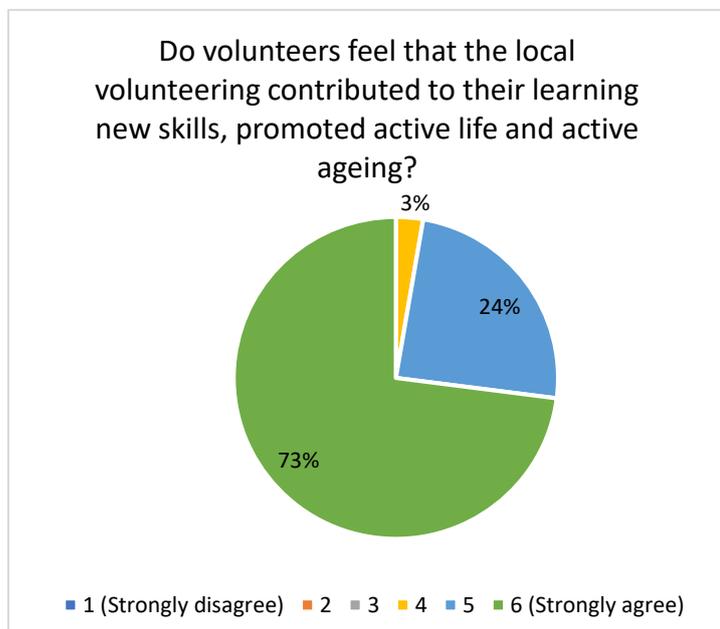
motivation to continue the volunteering in the future as well as whether the participation has contributed to learning new skills, promoted active life and active aging.



The charts above show the impact on participants' motivation to involve in voluntary work activities in the future. As we can see, 50% of organisations that hosted international volunteers and 57% of organisations that hosted local volunteers strongly agree that they are motivated to involve in voluntary work activities in the future after this experience. If we look at volunteers the project impact is even higher – 60% of local volunteers and 71% of international volunteers have admitted that they are strongly motivated to continue the volunteers in the future after

this experience. Thus we can clearly see that international volunteering aspect has given the highest contribution on volunteering motivation.

In the same time the volunteering approach implemented in the project has given an opportunity for volunteers to gain new skills and promoted active life and active aging.



67% of international volunteers strongly agree that volunteering contributed to their learning new skill, promoted active life and active aging. Regarding this aspect the most fruitful experience have been for local volunteers (73% - strongly agree).

**• INSPIRE, READ MORE AND COME WITH US!**

This document is one of 4 intellectual outputs compiling knowledges and analysis of all the project results – Best Practices and Research, Training Manual for Senior Volunteers and Training Manual for ORGANISATION`s. All the project results can be found on our website:

[www.senioractive.co.uk](http://www.senioractive.co.uk)

We hope that our project experience, approach and results will serve as an inspiration to implement similar activities in other communities.



LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL  
**ACTIVE**  
SENIORS

Erasmus+ KA2 ADULT Project

“Local and International Active Seniors”



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