
Be Volunteer Inclusive!

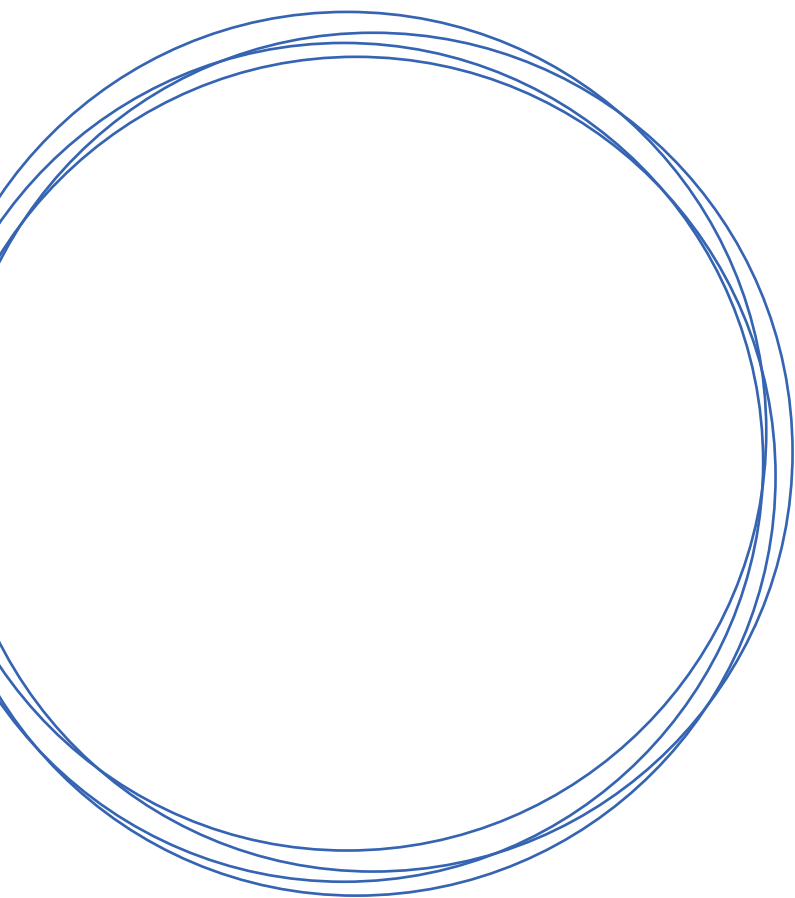
**Recommendations about How
to Work with Young Volunteers
with Fewer Opportunities**

Ioana Bere

Alžbeta Frimmerová

Nicoleta Chis Racolta

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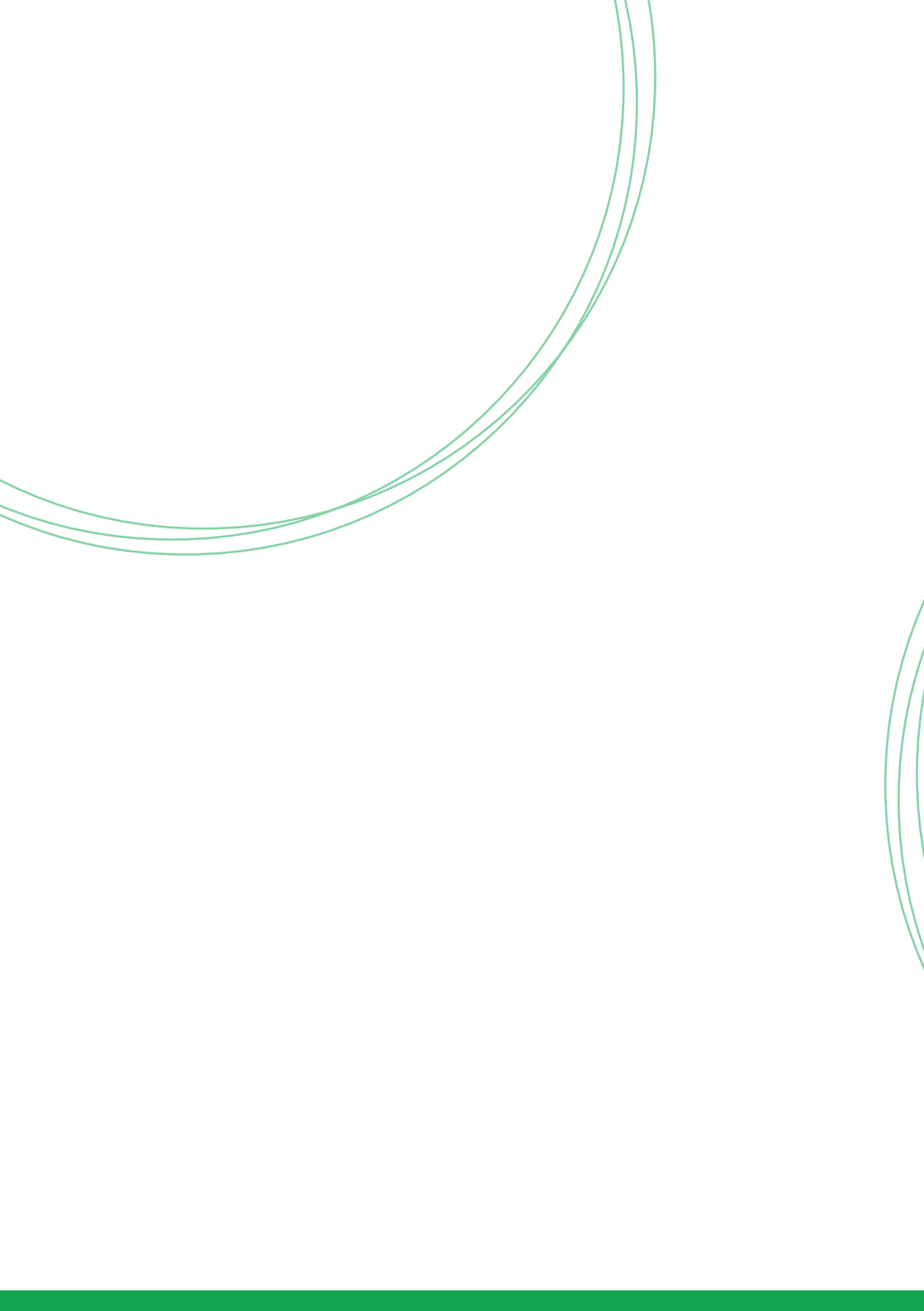
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INTRODUCTION



This publication is designed to give volunteer managers, volunteer centers managers, professionals and volunteers in non-profit organizations as well as other important stakeholders a guidance about what needs to be done to prepare supportive conditions for the involvement of young people with disabilities into volunteer activities. It was developed by the partnership of six organizations from three countries who had worked together for two years on the joint project CIVCIL – Competent in Volunteering, Competent in Life. The project partners have developed training of volunteer management, have involved 75 young people from vulnerable groups into volunteering, and have monitored benefits and competencies enhanced while volunteering.

In this material, we are providing advice on volunteer management of vulnerable youth and suitable environment and needed cooperation of all stakeholders. These guidelines are complemented with stories of young volunteers from vulnerable groups who have been involved in volunteer activities in the project and experience and recommendation of their volunteer managers including challenging and difficulties when involving young volunteers from vulnerable groups. To be put the content of this book into a nutshell, it is about guidance on why and how to make inclusive youth volunteering happen.

Alžbeta Frimmerová

PART I.

Inclusive volunteering in theory and practice

Alžbeta Frimmerová

Who is vulnerable youth?

There is no universal definition of the term vulnerable. For the purposes of this document and the project CIVCIL, vulnerable youth are defined as young people aged 15-30 who, through a combination of their circumstances, stage of development and various limitations, are at risk of not achieving active participation in their communities/society.

The group includes young people from minorities, young people experiencing mental health issues, various types of disabilities, homelessness, unemployment, those who has broken the law, but also those disengaged from family and school. It also includes young people experiencing chronic economic and social disadvantage, migrants or refugees, and youth with an intellectual disability, psychological challenges or learning difficulties.

What is inclusive volunteering?

To define inclusive volunteering, we must start with the definition of volunteering and the definition of inclusion.

Bearing in mind the whole spectrum of volunteering definitions, we would like to emphasize the essential characteristic of this activity: Volunteering is an activity based on a free will, implemented in the free time without financial gain for the common good. According to the Volunteering as a Tool for Inclusion Project (VTI project) inclusive volunteering is the participation of a person who has a disability or any other difficulty that is limiting his/her opportunities to get involved in mainstream volunteering. Inclusive volunteering is defined as volunteering opportunities that are available to all people regardless of age, culture, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, social status or disability (VTI Project, 2015).

Inclusive volunteering is making volunteering accessible for everyone.

Volunteer Canada points out that when people from vulnerable groups are involved as volunteers, it is often assumed that they want to be engaged in 'their' causes—for example, it might be taken for granted that a person with visual impairment would be likely

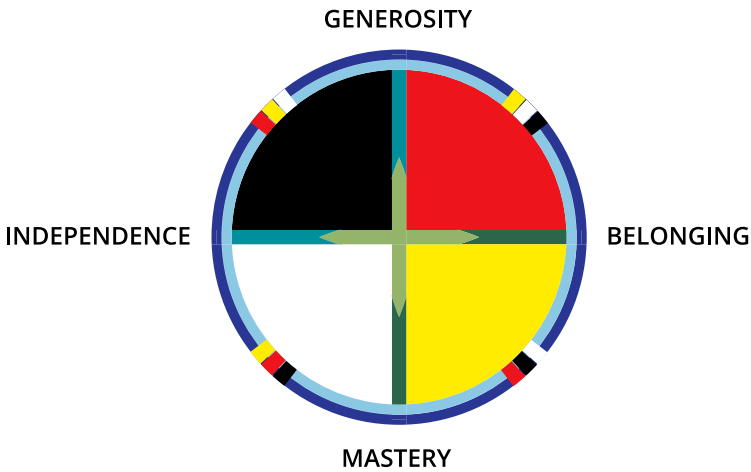
to volunteer with an organization serving the blind community. For some people, evidence suggests that they may be working on 'their' issues because they experience barriers to volunteering elsewhere. However, some people may prefer to work as volunteers outside of their community what leads into the desired inclusion. (Volunteer Canada, 2001)

Some volunteer organizations' professionals and volunteers see the vulnerable young people more as the recipients of their services rather than providers. They openly express the willingness to involve all people into volunteering, but in practice, they seldom work with vulnerable volunteers.

Benefits of inclusive volunteering for volunteers

Brendtro and Brokenleg (1990) while working with youth at risk have developed a model with elements necessary for social inclusion. For this type of work, they came with something called Circle of Courage. It is a model of work, where social inclusion is built on a balance of four key elements: Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity. A sense of belonging means a healthy and meaningful connection to other people, including immediate family, close friends but also people in the community. Mastery refers to the development of skills, creativity, and talents that enable full participation in society. Independence points to confidence, leadership, and healthy self-esteem. And generosity means the empowerment people experience when they feel as though they have something to contribute and give that is valuable to those around them.

This model points out that social exclusion/inclusion is not a permanent state, it can change over time. It suggests that volunteering can change the social exclusion into inclusion over time since it can help to enhance or to develop all essential elements – belonging (networking, connections, social interaction), mastery (talents, skills), confidence (self-esteem, self-confidence, pride) and generosity (empowerment).



(Brendtro, Larry K., Martin Brokenleg, and Steve Van Bockern, 1990 in Brenda J. Simpson & Associates, 2011)


Many studies have shown that volunteers may gain physical, mental and emotional health benefits from volunteering. Brenda J. Simpson & Associates (2011) have concluded various studies and identified following benefits of volunteering to individuals:

- Skills/experience
- Opportunity to share expertise
- Physical Health
- Psychological/emotional health
- A sense of purpose/meaning
- Sense of belonging
- Increased social networks
- Reduced loneliness/isolation
- Structure/direction
- Enjoyment/fun
- Support
- Pride/self-respect
- Confidence
- Empowerment
- Resiliency
- Leadership skills & opportunities
- Perspective/increased awareness
- New career opportunities
- Opportunity to express generosity
- Opportunity for continuous
- Learning

The following list from VTI project and Brozmanova Gregorova (2014) includes the benefits that are common for different vulnerable groups. It shows that benefits of vulnerable volunteers are the same but might be even more appreciated than by non-vulnerable volunteers:

- Experience of communication and life outside their usual circles, try something new and have fun/overview of more options outside
- Access to new social networks and new opportunities
- Increase of self-confidence and self-esteem
- Opportunity to gain new skills, knowledge, and experience and enhance existing skills, to get a work experience
- Opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities
- Opportunity to combat discrimination and show that they can be respected members of a team – to get their voice heard
- Opportunity to become a positive example and inspiration for others
- Reduction of loneliness and exclusion
- Creation of better employment perspectives
- Giving something back” through volunteering enhances individual well-being
- Opportunity to challenge their attitudes to their disability
- Opportunity for personal development and change of the life/life direction
- Self-fulfilment
- Change of attitudes towards various things and target groups
- Change of attitudes towards volunteering and non-profit organizations

(VTI Project, 2015, Brozmanová Gregorová, 2014)



The Institute for Volunteering Research has published a study about the effects of volunteering on social exclusion. The report demonstrates that “by providing people with skills, knowledge and personal development, volunteering helps people to help themselves. On a more personal level, volunteering provides a vital source of social interaction for many people, reducing their sense of isolation, which has been identified as an important element in social exclusion for some people (see for example Morris, 2000). Volunteering is also a source of pride and dignity, enabling people to make a meaningful contribution to a community from which they may previously have been excluded. At the same time, by taking part in volunteering, people can overturn widespread misconceptions about “socially excluded” groups. They can challenge the assumption that members of such groups are only ever at the receiving end of volunteering. In this way, volunteering can help to overcome the prejudices that perpetuate social exclusion. Volunteering can also increase social capital by enabling people to work together in communities. We are not suggesting, however, that if mainstream organizations do succeed in involving more volunteers from the groups we studied, this will bring about social inclusion all by itself. That is too ambitious a claim. Indeed, we feel that governments (as well as practitioners and researchers) sometimes need to be realistic about what volunteering can achieve. We do not want to see it set up to fail. Volunteering is only one part of a wider set of policies, programs and forms of civic engagement that need to function together to tackle social exclusion. At the same time, however, we do believe that volunteering has a particularly significant contribution to make”(Institute for Volunteering Research, 2004).

Kearney confirms this by pointing out that, “for people facing social exclusion in other aspects of their lives; volunteering offers particular benefits including access to social networks, opportunities for empowerment, opportunities to learn and develop skills, improved physical and mental well-being and the chance to experience the satisfaction of making a contribution. Volunteering can also provide a crucial way for people who have been voiceless to reshape the way

in which they have been perceived by others". So, the benefits of volunteering to the individual is especially relevant to volunteers from vulnerable populations. (Kearney, 2003)

Brenda J. Simpson & Associates also provide a conclusion on benefits from volunteering to youth when studying more resources. Authors like Hamilton and Fenzel (1988), Tossutti (2003), Karafantis and Levy (2004), and Brewis et al. (2010) have all specifically studied the effects of volunteering by young people on youth. They have found that volunteering can be a major stepping stone into full civic participation as an adult. Also, youth gain valuable employment skills, references related to work and contacts/networks that help in transitioning into employment.

Beyond the career-related benefits of volunteering, volunteering amongst youth "can serve as a primary prevention tool, breaking the vicious cycle of prejudice and buffering volunteers against later negative outcomes such as delinquency..." (Brenda J. Simpson & Associates, 2011)

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) in the USA released research in 2013 about the connection between volunteering and employment. They have found out that:

- Volunteers have a 27 percent higher likelihood of finding a job after being out of work than non-volunteers;

- Volunteers without a high school diploma have a 51 percent higher probability of finding employment;
- Volunteers living in rural areas have a 55 percent higher likelihood of finding a job.

CNCS also found that volunteering is associated with an increased probability of finding employment for all volunteers regardless of a person's gender, age, ethnicity, geographical area, or the job market conditions. (Spera et al., 2013).

According to CNCS, volunteering can help people find employment because:

- Volunteering increases an individual's networks and connections;
- Volunteering increases an individual's experience or useful education, skills, and training; and,
- Volunteering helps to create a positive impression in a competitive job market. (More details at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/ODEPCNSPolicyMemo.pdf>).

Competencies enhanced in volunteering

When we talk about competencies especially in link with the CIVCIL project, we have to start from RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 on the main competencies for lifelong learning, which is called European reference framework. The competencies are defined here as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Key competencies are those which all individuals need for personal fulfillment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.

The Reference Framework sets out eight key competencies:

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and basic competencies in science and technology
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn
- Social and civic competencies
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and
- Cultural awareness and expression

These key competencies were also the core principle for creating or adapting the online tools for validation of competencies in all project countries. For more information on online validation tools in Slovakia, Croatia and Romania see www.civcil.eu. In the CIVCIL project, 75 young volunteers in the age of 15 to 30 were engaged in volunteer activities for minimum 40 hours in three countries: Croatia, Slovakia, and Romania. Through online validation tools which were developed or adapted thanks to the CIVCIL project volunteers have all gone through the process of validation of skills enhanced in volunteering.

Analysis of their volunteer competencies profiles proves that volunteers have improved or gained the competencies – as illustrated in the table below.

Social and civic competencies	66 volunteers
Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship	60 volunteers
Communication in the mother tongue	45 volunteers
Learning to learn	44 volunteers
Digital competence	27 volunteers
Communication in foreign languages:	13 volunteers
Mathematical competence and basic competencies in science and technology	12 volunteers
Cultural awareness and expression:	5 volunteers

- By social and civic competencies 66 volunteers and their coordinators have reported they mainly developed competencies such as active listening, stress management, building self-confidence, teamwork, flexibility and adaptability, tolerance and respect.
- By sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, 60 volunteers claimed competencies such as project management, ability to work in a team, time management, active communication, pro-client approach, responsibility, decision making, adaptability and flexibility, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity.
- In the area of communication in the mother tongue, 45 volunteers proved they gained/developed competencies

such as the ability to communicate orally or in written with various people, ability to collect data and make analysis, ability to participate in discussions and ability to express themselves actively.

- By learning to learn 44 volunteers validated skills in learning new knowledge and skills while volunteering and then using these skills directly in practice when doing the volunteer activities.
- Digital competencies have been improved or gained by 27 volunteers which mean they have gained or improved the skills while using various technologies, PC programs or internet.
- Communication in foreign languages was improved in 13 cases – they have mostly reported translation, communication with beneficiaries, and cooperation on international events and projects, etc.
- Mathematical competence and basic competencies in science and technology were improved or gained by 12 volunteers. Some of them played logical games with the beneficiaries, some of them used specific equipment or proceed data using the scientific approach.
- Five volunteers proved competencies in cultural awareness and expressions by involving beneficiaries into cultural events/ lessons and reflecting cultural background.

There are some examples from other European projects which demonstrated the enhanced and developed competencies of vulnerable volunteers. As an example, there was the WOLWEM Project carried out in 2014 by partners from Slovakia, the UK, and the Czech Republic. The partners of this project were working with unemployed volunteers and proved that thanks to volunteering, the unemployed people have improved mainly the following competencies:

- The communication competencies: ability to participate in the discussion, to express opinions, then an active listening and presentation skills,
- In the field of sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, there were time management skills, leadership, adaptability to the working environment developed, project management and creativity as well as decision making, solving issues and problems and conflicts and cooperation with other people on solving issues,
- In the area of social and personal competencies, the ability

to work in a team, self-confidence and self-respect, self-reflection, and human resources management, but also ability to work in the stressful and challenging situations,

- Digital competencies – ability to work with computer and the internet were also developed by most of the unemployed volunteers.
- In the most cases, volunteers developed those competencies they expressed they wanted to develop before they have started to volunteer. It is proof that volunteer experience met the expectations and needs of these volunteers. (Brozmanová Gregorová, 2014)

Both these projects have proved the enhancement of skills through volunteering, which is a huge benefit for vulnerable volunteers, however, unfortunately, they haven't shown the recognition of these competencies by employers or other stakeholders. That is why, in the chapter focused on the supportive environment for inclusive volunteering, we are going to describe what to do to show these benefits to various stakeholders and make them recognize them.

Barriers for volunteering

Despite the enormous benefits of volunteering of vulnerable youth and competencies they might enhance while volunteering, there can be many obstacles on the sides of volunteer organizations and potential volunteers for inclusive volunteering.

The Institute for Volunteering Research explains this in their report on volunteering and social exclusion, saying: "Several barriers prevent people from volunteering in formal, organizational, settings. These barriers are both psychological and practical. They affect people's willingness and ability to volunteer at different points in time: some operate when an individual first thinks (or doesn't think) about volunteering, others operate when they attempt to take their first steps into volunteering, and yet others operate after they have become involved." (The Institute on Volunteering Research, 2004).

Brenda J. Simpson & Associates (2011) have concluded various studies and so identified following barriers for volunteering


of vulnerable people:

- Lack of Time
- Inflexible Schedules
- Lack of child care
- Lack of transportation
- Accessibility issues
- Lack money to cover expenses
- Lack of Self-Confidence
- Unaware or unsure of personal abilities/talents and what one must offer, feel they have nothing to give
- Lack of Opportunity
- Unaware of opportunities
- Previous bad experience
- Complicated application processes,
- Misalignment of expectation
- Concerns about risk/liability
- Exclusion of Marginalized Groups
- Stereotypes, discrimination, prejudice

Membership of the VTI project identified similar barriers on the side of volunteers:

- Lack of awareness of what volunteering is
- Lack of knowledge about available volunteer positions (they often do not know they can volunteer and if they do, they do not know where to start)
- Feeling they would not be welcomed in an organization as volunteers because of lack of self-esteem and confidence
- Previous negative experience of trying to become a volunteer or employee
- Image of volunteering as an activity for certain groups of people only, or based on a traditional 'helper and helped' model, whereby 'able' people are helping people with disabilities
- Fear of being asked to do too much
- Fear of prejudice
- Very formal recruitment process perceived almost like a job application process
- Slow or no follow-up from the organization
- Physical barriers and no access to volunteer places

(VTI Project, 2015)



As Brenda J. Simpson & Associates show some vulnerable communities have different perceptions of volunteering. They found out that several authors have discovered that many vulnerable or marginalized groups are not participating in formal volunteering, but they might be volunteering informally in their communities.

(Brenda J. Simpson & Associates, 2011)

To overcome barriers towards formal volunteering, on next pages, you will find information about how to be inclusive in volunteer management.

Resources

- Alžbeta Brozmanová Gregorová: Analýza prínosov dobrovoľníctva pre nezamestnaných v rámci projektu VOLWEM. Platforma dobrovoľníckych center a organizácií, Univerzita Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici. Banská Bystrica: 2014.
- Kearney, James: Volunteering: Social Glue for Community Cohesion? Voluntary Action. Vol. 6, No. 1: 2003
- Anne Miller, Brenda J. Simpson, Josh Lieben: Understanding The Role of Volunteering In Creating Social Inclusion. Report Prepared For SouthWest Communities Resource Centre: 2011.
- Institute for Volunteering Research: Volunteering for All? Exploring the Link Between Volunteering and Social Exclusion. London: 2004.
- Inclusive Volunteering. Recommendations for Volunteer Coordinators on How to Develop a More Inclusive Volunteer Programme. Volunteering as a Tool for Inclusion project: 2015.
- Volunteer Connections: Creating an accessible and inclusive environment. Volunteer Canada, ISBN 0-9688866-8-x: 2001.
- <http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/ODEPCNSPolicyMemo.pdf>.
- <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962 & from=EN>

Experiences and recommendations from the CIVCIL project

In the CIVCIL (Competent in Volunteering Competent in Life) Project, carried out from March 2015 till February 2017, 75 young volunteers from the age of 15 to 30 with various disabilities or disadvantages were involved into volunteering in different organizations. The actual involvement into volunteering was scheduled and happened from October 2015 till November 2017. Most of the volunteers were long term and regular volunteers, some of them were involved only in short-term activities. They were volunteering for minimum 40 up to maximum 250 hours. The average number of hours a volunteer was involved in volunteer

activities during the project run was 100 hours. These 75 young volunteers were young people from different vulnerable groups in Slovakia, Romania, and Croatia. The list of disadvantages they are facing is identified in the table below. In some cases, there were more difficulties related to one volunteer – e.g. young people with disabilities often also suffered unemployment.

Type of disadvantage	Number of young volunteers in the project
Unemployed people	21
People living in economically/socially weak conditions	14
Individuals with any disability	12
Orphans living in foster homes	7
Semi orphans	6
People with medical issues:	5
Individuals with intellectual disabilities	4
Young people under 18 living without parents who live abroad	4
Migrants/asylum seekers	2

Young volunteers in project CIVCIL were involved in various types of volunteer activities. Most of them volunteered in social and health care – in hospitals and the social organizations with children and people with special needs, day care centers for seniors. They were organizing or assisting with activities for beneficiaries there, many of them were leading or assisting with workshops for kids and youth or volunteered in the volunteer centers and various NGOs where they helped with administrative work. Few of them were working in fundraising and organization of cultural/public events or assisting with manual work. Most volunteers were in the direct contact with beneficiaries.

At the end of the project, we have asked all involved volunteers to fill up our questionnaires which were focused on their motivations towards volunteering but also challenges and successes as well as recommendations for other young people from vulnerable groups. In the end, we have studied 75 replies from all three countries and bring a short analysis from the project implementation. Before reading the analysis, we must emphasize these young people have a lot of differences:

- different age (there were people in the age of 15 – 30 involved);
- different types of challenges depending on the period of life they are currently in (high schools/university students facing different issues than graduates);
- various kinds of disadvantages;
- different volunteer activities implemented in various environments and cultures as well.

However, this small study provides us with details on benefits of volunteering for young people, gives us advice on volunteer management issues coming directly from people from vulnerable groups, and bring perspective on difficulties of young vulnerable volunteers.

Motivation of disadvantaged young people for volunteering

Young people in the project identified five most common reason for their volunteer involvement. Almost half of them (36) said they want to help other people which some volunteers confirmed with expressions of seeing and feeling the impact of their volunteer action on someone else's life. Second most identified motivator for young people from vulnerable groups (22 volunteers) was their interest in the cause, beneficiaries or organization activities, and mission. They volunteered because they either know the organizations (they used to be beneficiaries) or they have an interest in the field and activities organizations provide with. The third most important reason for volunteering was getting new skills and competencies for their studies and future career. They see they can use these skills later within the labor market. Such a motivation was identified by 20 volunteers. Ten volunteers confirmed that social interactions were reasons why they started to volunteer. They wanted to meet new people, make friends or get to know someone in the similar situation. Eight volunteers expressed they wanted to feel useful – here we feel the need to emphasize that most the graduates from vulnerable youth were unemployed. Six volunteers were invited or inspired for volunteering by other people – most frequently by their friends and peers in school. One volunteer openly wrote she wanted to be involved in the community and seen as a part of it – that is something we have identified as an expression of a desire for a volunteer inclusion. In general, most the young volunteers from vulnerable groups identified the same motivations for volunteering that are common for all volunteers – helping others, interest in the topic, and/or getting new skills and social contacts.

Reasons for volunteering	
Helping other people	36
The cause, organization's activities and mission	22
Learning new skills, getting competencies	20
Social interactions	10
Being useful	8
Being inspired or invited by others	6
Other uncategorized reasons	10

To illustrate these statements, you can find some quotes from the volunteers below:

"My girlfriend and I are long-term unemployed. My girlfriend was already volunteering in the organization. I wanted to be useful."

"Last two years I did my school practice in an NGO, so I have learned a lot about the administration, reporting, and finances. I wanted to improve my knowledge and volunteer continuously to gain competencies and to share my experience with a foster family to young children in the same situation."

"I liked that this organization focuses on youngsters."

"My primary motivation was to be socially engaged in community life, help people in need as much as I can and move things forward. I also wanted to meet new interesting people and gain some new experiences."

"I am looking for a job already for a long time without any success. I like to make pictures; I like people. I would like to improve in that. That is why I came with an idea to find an organization that is working with people where I could offer my skills as a photographer. It helps me to improve in photography, and at the same time I can be among people, and I can get some practice I lack."

"There was a workshop on volunteering held at our school, and it seemed to be very simple to donate one hour of my time a week to somebody or something useful. My decision was quick because more students decided to do the same."

"I liked the organization – their mission and activities. However, I was also motivated by the fact that my sister was volunteering for this organization and I wanted to show others that also people with health issues can be useful."

Benefits of volunteering


After 75 vulnerable volunteers had gained their volunteering experience, we have asked them what they liked about volunteering. Thirty-three of them confirmed that what they liked about volunteering were the interactions with others – either staff, other volunteers or beneficiaries. For 27 of them being able to help and have an impact on lives of other people have been the something what they appreciated a lot. Feeling useful as one of the best feelings proclaimed seven volunteers. Eighteen volunteers said they liked the skills gained and learning experience volunteering brought to their lives. Seventeen volunteers declared the interest in activities or beneficiaries – activities they were doing were important for them. As you can see, more volunteers identified combinations of more things which they have enjoyed while volunteering. In some categories, there are differences between proclaimed motivations and real outcomes, e.g. interactions were the most identified benefits of volunteering.

What did you like about volunteering?

Interactions	33
Possibility to help others/see impact	27
Gaining skills/learning experience	18
Doing activities, they like and are good in it, self-realization	17
Feeling useful	7
Other	6

Difficulties and Challenges of Volunteering

Most of the young volunteers from vulnerable groups did not mention any problems in connection to their disadvantage or disability. In around half of the questionnaires, we could see that they even did not realize they were part of a particular project or they are from some vulnerable group. Most of the difficulties young people identified were communications and situation issues with beneficiaries. To be more specific, they stated they were not always sure about the way they should talk to people in stressful situations, how to handle some difficult situations and how to deal with attitudes and behaviors of beneficiaries of the organization they were volunteering for. Twenty-five young teenage volunteers from Romania were volunteering in the same place, in the hospital where they have supported small kids. For half of them, it was hard to communicate with children in such a situation – they stated they have seen them sad, crying, depressed and often felt helpless. On the other hand, they also said that thanks to these situations, they have improved or gained the communication skills. Some of them stated that they could handle such situations thanks to the support from the coordinator, mentor or other staff. Volunteers who were



students or employed reported that they encountered difficulties with time management. Six Romanian students also said they experienced the lack of materials – e.g. toys for kids.

Only five from all volunteers identified communication problems with coordinator/staff. One volunteer said there was high demand from the side of coordinator, but it was all solved and explained later. Only two volunteers with disabilities stated that they had some issues with their mobility and barriers, but they have been helped by staff, volunteers, and/or their relatives.

One volunteer identified a concern with regular activities and early mornings and one was complaining about other volunteers not fulfilling their duties.

In general, we can say that only a few out of 75 volunteers identified problems regarding their disadvantages. Most of the volunteers mentioned difficulties which are typical for all volunteers volunteering in demanding environments or situations.

Key messages and stories from vulnerable volunteers to vulnerable youth

After the project, we asked young vulnerable volunteers to provide other young people from vulnerable groups with recommendations towards volunteering as well as their testimonies. We have chosen some of the inspirations:

"You should not worry about trying something new. Even though I have a disability, it does not mean I cannot help others."

"Maybe it looks like you can't do it and seems hard, but trust me, it's great, and I would suggest everyone start volunteer immediately right after you start with your college."

"I would recommend all the long-term unemployed friends to volunteer. It will make you feel useful, and you will gain new skills and knowledge."

"Volunteering gives you a lot of benefits. It encourages your initiative, opening new horizons and changing the way you were thinking. It helps a person to be more flexible in different situations and gives you an opportunity to gain different experiences in different fields."

"Volunteering gives you an opportunity to change people's lives, including your own. It provides you with the satisfaction of playing a role in someone else's life, helping people who may not be able to help themselves. Volunteering is a way of giving back to your community while developing essential social skills, and gaining valuable work experience all at the same time. But how can I get a job if all they want is experience, you ask? That's where volunteering comes in. If you're looking for work, volunteering is a good way to gain experience and references for your future life."

"I have seen this opportunity opened for me only because I am studying in a large town - there are not many chances to do it in our small village. I also see that many people think can be solved only with money, only if we are rich. Even though our family is not well considering

the financial situation, I am glad I had a chance to help through volunteering.”

“I would like to thank all who helped me to make my dream come true – to become a volunteer and help. They have shown me that nothing is impossible and all barriers, whether physical or those inside of us, can be overcome. In such a way, also I can give to others – to those I am helping with my activity – that nothing is impossible and everything can be dealt with.”

“At the beginning, my responsibilities in volunteering seemed too difficult for me. However, the training and supervisions helped me not only to be a better volunteer but meant a lot also for my life as such. The story of a boy I was helping with homework made me take off the rose-colored glasses through which I was looking at the world. My life is not an easy one, but I have learned there are people whose life is much more complicated than mine.”

“As I moved from another city I wanted to make new friends and learn something new while I was searching for a job. My cousin recommended me volunteering. I assisted in an organization with administrative tasks and other activities. I have improved my computer skills and communication in English. And, what is the most important – I have met other people of my age with their experiences to share. My mentors were great and helpful. My self-esteem improved, I have learned how to present myself better to possible employers and make new contacts in the new community.

„Before this, I did not know any NGO. I like the concept and possibilities it gives to youngsters. Also, I had a chance to get acquainted with all projects and activities that are very useful and needed. The best thing about volunteering was meeting new people and work with them.”

“I started volunteering because my girlfriend is volunteering in this organization. At first, I didn't know what I wanted and how it could help me, but now that I became active volunteer I understand the importance of my decision. I managed to connect my passion for sports with my

wish to be useful. Since I had no job, I had plenty of time to volunteer. First, I started with presenting the real value of physical exercise among my peers. When I received their attention, friend and I began to manage fitness activities for them. In the end, we prepare special training programs for every person involved. It made us feel like we made a difference and volunteering became my new obsession. The most important thing is that everyone is satisfied with our guidance and it makes us eager to get even more successful.”

“During this period, I understood that helping other people is one of the best ways to give something back to thank the Universe for our existence. I saw many people in need there, and I realized that doing activities like singing with them or helping kids do their homework, distracting them for a while, and made them happy. It didn't require much effort, and I found out that making somebody's day brighter is not difficult at all. It was hard for me, in the beginning, to understand how I should help them and I took part in a volunteering course where I learned some modern methods, and I found out about some future possibilities in volunteering. This experience helped me in teaching practice which I do at a kindergarten because of thanks to volunteering; I can communicate better with children, and I can teach them a lot of things using attractive methods and materials.”

Experiences of Volunteer Coordinators

Seventy-five young volunteers involved in the project were coordinated by 20 volunteer coordinators. One coordinator was in Romania, eight in Slovakia and eleven in Croatia. Before the end of our project, we were asking them about challenges in volunteer management of vulnerable youth and the benefits of involving vulnerable groups for the organization where these volunteers were involved. We were asking them about their lessons learned and recommendations for volunteer coordinators to successfully manage young volunteers from vulnerable groups.

Barriers/difficulties in volunteer management

In most cases, volunteer coordinators proclaimed they did not face any particular difficulties in volunteer management. Five volunteer organizations had to solve more logistic issues than usually. Three out of these five encounter problems with barriers and mobility issues. In Romania, another issue was identified as young volunteers living in rural areas in Romania had problems with the transportation – they experienced difficulties to return home after their volunteer involvement. Two volunteer coordinators managing youth with a physical disability said they encountered a problem with physical barriers related to wheelchair users. One organization was not ready at the beginning to provide a special software or computer for a volunteer with visual impairment.

Benefits for organizations

Volunteer coordinators also identified the benefits of involvement of young volunteers from vulnerable groups for the organizations.

Most of them said that involvement of volunteers had increased the quality of services organizations provide as well as the number of activities. This is, in fact, typical for all volunteers, not only for vulnerable ones. It was stated that they brought new ideas, energy, and changed the atmosphere in the organization or even improved the employee relationships and satisfaction. Organizations also benefited from the knowledge, skills, and experience with various vulnerable groups. To some extent they also perceived a more positive image as organizations working with volunteers from vulnerable groups.

Key benefits for volunteer organizations:	
New ideas, energy, fun, atmosphere, increase of employee satisfaction	8
Growth in number of activities:	6
Increase in quality of the services:	5
New skills/knowledge/experience with different groups of people	4
Positive perception of the organization	2

Lessons learned and recommendations

Volunteer coordinators from all three countries concluded their experience with vulnerable groups with their lessons learned from the work with vulnerable volunteers and suggestions for volunteer coordinators who might be willing to manage these volunteers as well. They came up with advice that can be divided into five categories:

We are all equal - we are on the way to inclusion.

The involvement of volunteers with disadvantages caused a change of attitudes of volunteers, beneficiaries, and employees of organizations to these groups of people. It confirmed that volunteering is one of the ways how to reach the social inclusion:

“Volunteering has developed deserved feeling of equality and importance in our beneficiaries. It also improved the image of themselves and others.”

“We have learned that they can contribute to the organization to the same extent as other members. We have noticed they become more open for cooperation and accepted by others.”

"When the tasks and abilities are evident from the beginning, disadvantaged volunteers as the rest of our volunteers, their work is efficient and appreciated in the same way."

"Just give them some time to get to know you and your organization and treat them with respect like all the other volunteers."

"We recommend all the other volunteer coordinators not to make any differences between volunteers whether they are disadvantaged or not – also a person with a disability can have a great performance if he/she sees sense in what he/she is doing."

Patience, support, suitable activities, and proper communication – these are the bases of the good cooperation.

Patience, respect, empathy, tolerance, enough time, appropriate environment and communication – these are the conditions disadvantaged young people need from volunteer coordinators for satisfactory performance of volunteer tasks.

"All you need is to be patient. And if you give them enough space and time and support they require, they can perform great".


"If you provide them with the healthy and stable environment, good mentors with a lot of patience and a lot of practical examples they will learn and improve beyond expected."

"We learned to be patient and to give the opportunity to everyone to develop its potential."

"It is necessary to be patient and sometimes repeatedly explain the task or your request related to volunteering activity. You need to communicate with them as with an equal partner."

"They require empathy, patience, and bear in mind that sometimes you need to repeat even the necessary information."

"Talking about unemployed young people, they do not have any working habits, and there is a need to adapt volunteer activities to this fact."



"If we give them enough time, these volunteers become a benefit for the organization, they can identify with it, and that can be mutually beneficial."

Young volunteers from vulnerable groups need to be appreciated.

Our appreciation conditions the growth of young people – they need to feel important and needed. Crucial is also the length of their volunteering experience. Feedback and acknowledgment are important for volunteer management in general, and it seems that it is even more important when you work with vulnerable young volunteers. The statements of volunteer coordinators only emphasized it:

"I could see how they grow and build trust in themselves if they are valued."

"They are unbelievably thankful for every acknowledgment, so we were focusing on it in our coordination."

"Make sure each volunteer is valued and is encouraged to perform for an extended period."

"Disadvantaged volunteers are usually more thankful for the volunteer opportunity. Make them feel accepted, and they will volunteer with joy and enthusiasm. It is important to take care of motivation of a volunteer, his/her belief about the value he/she creates for the others."

Young volunteers need to feel our trust and willingness to ask responsibility from them

A Clear distribution of tasks and responsibilities and the trust showed to volunteers leads to expected results. According to volunteer coordinators, this is valid also for young volunteers from disadvantaged groups:

"Giving confidence to volunteers is the most important thing."

"Disadvantage does not mean inability. Volunteers with difficulties usually show more enthusiasm to get involved into activities and to learn new things. They appreciate the opportunity for action more and are thankful and loyal. With such an attitude, they can perform for 100 %."

Key messages of volunteer coordinators involved into the CIVCIL Project only confirm what the theory, research, surveys, and experience of other volunteer coordinators, presented in the next chapter, say.

PART II.

Recommendations for Organizations – How to Work with Young Volunteers with Fewer Opportunities

Ioana Bere, Nicoleta Chis Racolta

Introduction

Volunteering represents a valuable tool, with proven benefits about social inclusion of young people representing vulnerable groups. When being well structured, volunteering provides opportunities for young people to find their way out of exclusion, by giving them the chance to take an active role and contribute to their communities.

Contributing to the social development of our communities in order to ensure that every individual, no matter what his background is, has rights, responsibilities and plays an active role, represents a desideratum that NGOs and other organizations that involve volunteers in their work can contribute to, by developing opportunities also addressed to youth representing vulnerable groups. Still doing so can be challenging for organizations both because of the lack of experience of the volunteer coordinators in dealing with this target group but also because volunteering is not very common within youth representing vulnerable groups.

Barriers and challenges of inclusive volunteering for organizations

Any organization willing to involve vulnerable volunteers into its activities should be aware that several obstacles and challenges can occur during such activity. Being aware of them and understanding ways in which these problems can be overcome is crucial before an organization decides to expand its opportunities towards vulnerable groups.

According to “Inclusive Volunteering – Recommendations for volunteer coordinators, on how to develop a more inclusive volunteer program”, most of the challenges that organizations are confronted with referring to:

- Lack of experience of working with a particular target group and consequently being fearful of involving them in volunteering
- Lack of specific tools and instruments and specialized equipment needed to work with vulnerable volunteers
- Lack of personalized procedures required in work with vulnerable volunteers
- Concern that the management of these volunteers would be more difficult and time-consuming

- Limited knowledge of which volunteer positions would be suitable for volunteers
- Limited physical access for volunteers with physical disabilities in the organizations' office
- Fear of taking up the challenge and not knowing what to do if issues arise
- Stereotypes and preconceptions that exist within the organization or society
- Lack of education among parents of vulnerable youth, which might limit their availability for volunteering activities

Overcoming all these challenges and barriers requires organizations being willing to invest time and energy in training their staff on managing volunteers coming from vulnerable groups while understanding that all this effort, when being done properly, is worth it.

Benefits of inclusive volunteering for organizations

Developing inclusive volunteering opportunities within the organization is not only about challenges and barriers for the organization, as explained in the publication "Can do volunteering – a guide to involving young disabled people as volunteers." The dedication and hard work invested in it most probably will pay off in ways that are sometimes hard to predict in the beginning. Still, there are some clear benefits of involving vulnerable volunteers:

- Broadening and diversifying the volunteer pool
- Developing new competencies among the staff, other volunteers and coordinator involved in the process
- Becoming more opened to volunteers from vulnerable groups
- Increasing the employees' and volunteers' motivation, due to an inclusive and open attitude promoted within the organization
- Expanding the variety of possible funding sources due to many program priorities that focus on inclusion
- Increasing the quality of the daily services by involving volunteers that have initially been beneficiaries and have a better understanding of the challenges faced by persons coming from vulnerable groups.

- Transferring organizational values promoted about social inclusion to real practice

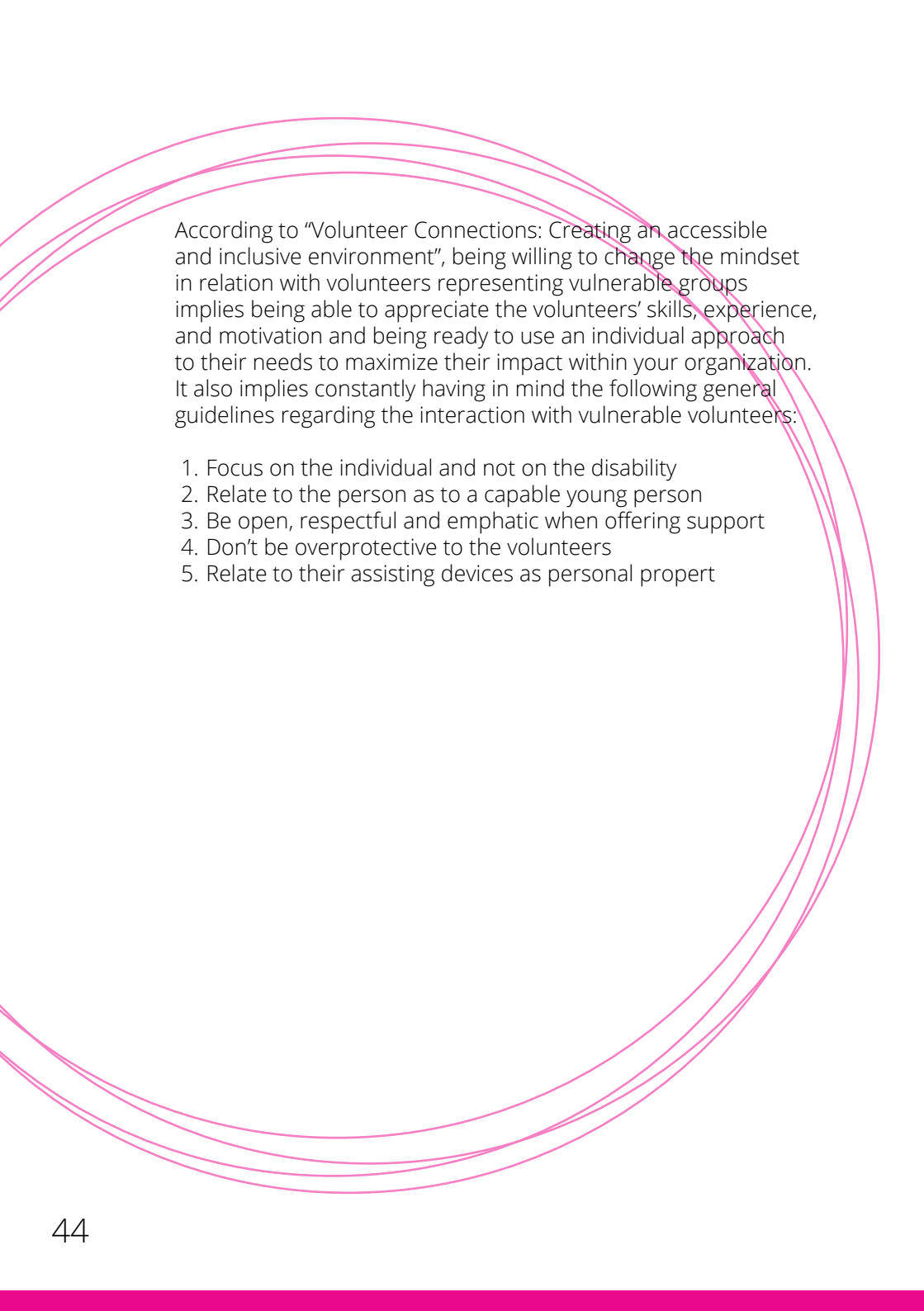
When is the organization/the coordinator ready to involve young volunteers from vulnerable groups?

Being willing to engage vulnerable volunteers in volunteering programs, requires some degree of knowledge related to both the challenges and benefits of such programs for the organization on the one hand and the volunteers and the local community on the contrary.

Having the needed knowledge and skills requires most of the time special training for the staff involved, but besides it, attitude is one of the most important aspects that needs to be supportive to inclusion, for the organization to be ready to host vulnerable volunteers as people with disabilities have repeatedly identified organizational climate and attitudes as key to effective participation.


Overcoming a set of stereotypical assumptions regarding characteristics of cooperation with youth representing vulnerable groups represents one of the most important steps that organizations should take to get ready to involve this target group in their volunteering programs. Among the most important aspects that organizations must have a better understanding on, before being willing to engage volunteers from vulnerable groups we mention:

- Understand that youth coming from vulnerable groups can contribute for real to the organizations' mission
- Overcome the broad stereotypes related to the belief that volunteers coming from vulnerable groups are only able to perform "light work."
- Overcome the concerns that volunteers with disability and health problems will not be reliable, just because of their health condition
- Accept the challenge related to providing more flexible working arrangements, ensure physical access and provide with needed equipment



According to “Volunteer Connections: Creating an accessible and inclusive environment”, being willing to change the mindset in relation with volunteers representing vulnerable groups implies being able to appreciate the volunteers’ skills, experience, and motivation and being ready to use an individual approach to their needs to maximize their impact within your organization. It also implies constantly having in mind the following general guidelines regarding the interaction with vulnerable volunteers:

1. Focus on the individual and not on the disability
2. Relate to the person as to a capable young person
3. Be open, respectful and emphatic when offering support
4. Don't be overprotective to the volunteers
5. Relate to their assisting devices as personal property



Role of volunteer organization/role of volunteer coordinator

Ensuring a successful volunteering experience for youth representing vulnerable groups involves a complex process that must be facilitated by the hosting organization/volunteer coordinator. His/her role refers to taking all the needed steps to ensure a professionally adapted volunteer management process, according to the specific requirements of the vulnerable target group addressed.

To do so, the organization/coordinator must be aware of the following responsibilities, according to each volunteer management step (Volunteer management in 9 steps model. Institutional development of organizations working with volunteers 2008-2009 project).

1. Preparing the organization for involving volunteers from diverse vulnerable groups

Analyze the assistance needs of the organization and the organization's beneficiaries

- Create questionnaires and needs assessment forms to determine the areas in which support is needed;
- Analyze the opportunity to involve volunteers belonging to vulnerable groups;
- Establish the number of vulnerable volunteers required in the volunteering program;
- Interview, contacts, discussions with the employees, the members of the Board of Directors, the volunteers, and the beneficiaries about the possibilities for involvement of vulnerable volunteers, etc.;
- Summarize the results of the needs analysis, presenting them in a concise format;
- Compare the results with others in similar volunteering programs but implemented in different circumstances.

Build a vision regarding the involvement of vulnerable volunteers in the organization's activities

- Develop a set of statements (also in written format) that illustrate the organization's philosophy about involving vulnerable volunteers in the implemented activities;
- Identify the fundamental values that guide and orient the volunteering program, for example, diversity, self-determination, mutual respect, confidentiality, etc.;
- Establish the types of activities through which the vision of the volunteering program will be achieved;
- Take into consideration the variety of ways in which a volunteer may participate in the organization's activities, including the independent implementation of the activities, technical assistance, attracting resources, etc.

Draft the volunteering program objectives and aims

- Using the information in the needs analyses, establish the volunteering program goals for the short and long term;
- Establish evaluation methods based on measurable efficiency criteria for the volunteers' activity;
- Evaluate if the objectives and aims are feasible for the vulnerable volunteers;
- Review the goals and objectives and integrates them in the organization's general policy;

Establish volunteer tasks

- Assign individual activities to the volunteers – don't forget to base it on the organization needs analysis, the vulnerable volunteers' needs, and capacity, and the program objectives;
- Collaborate with the team-mates in creating the job descriptions for vulnerable volunteers;
- Write job descriptions for the volunteers that will get involved;
- Periodically review the job descriptions together with the volunteers and those working directly with them, update them according to the needs.

Establish policies and procedures

- Review the organization's policies and procedures; consults with the administration regarding any rules and regulations concerning the volunteers and their activity;
- Make sure procedures for the involvement of volunteers belonging to vulnerable groups exist;
- Decide the volunteers' policies and procedures according to their particular activity;
- Maintain a manual or a process file for working with volunteers; that can be easily accessed;

Support the volunteers

- Defend the volunteers' point of view within the organization;
- Inform the organization's members about the individual needs of the volunteers, in case they exist;
- Make sure there is support for the vulnerable volunteers active in the organization;
- Take a stand regarding the issues of volunteers, both within the organization, as well as outside of it;
- Facilitate access to the needed spaces, furniture, equipment and resources that volunteers may require;

Manage material resources

- Determine the material needed and the necessary budget for the program implementation;
- Communicate and constantly discuss with the administrative-financial department;
- Define a methodology for reimbursement of volunteer expenses: what expenses will be reimbursed or any other financial procedures that may involve the volunteers;
- Analyze the financial needs specifically connected to the involvement of vulnerable volunteers in the activities; for example, additional support for them, mentoring for vulnerable volunteers, making certain areas accessible, adapting certain materials, tools, special aids, etc.;
- Establish the exact spaces in which volunteers will carry out their

activities;

- Develop fundraising activities for the volunteering programs;

Initiate new projects

- Take part in internal organizational programs for starting new projects and ensure the involvement of volunteers in these future projects;
- Gather ideas for new ways of involving vulnerable volunteers and for expanding existing programs;
- Propose and justify these thoughts;
- Initiate pilot projects to test the ideas;

Develop professional abilities

- Read books written by experts in the field of volunteering;
- Participate in conferences and workshops on volunteering-related topics;
- Seek to develop competencies of managing volunteers;
- Seek to develop competencies of working with vulnerable persons;
- Relate with other program directors who involve volunteers, to initiate an exchange of ideas;

2. Recruiting volunteers

Plan recruitment strategies

- Identify the needed type of volunteers and abilities for each activity;
- Draw a list of places where volunteers can be recruited, for each activity, according to its specifics;
- Ask for suggestions from colleagues, beneficiaries, friends, acquaintances;
- Make sure the recruitment strategy and its implementation are easy also for the vulnerable volunteers;

Create materials needed for the recruitment

- Write attractive slogans, create the graphic design for posters, online advertisements, flyers, letters, leaflets, etc.;
- Work with an artist/graphic designer (volunteer or not) to create the materials' graphic design
- Write and send press releases
- Make sure the materials and messages are adapted to the capacity of the volunteers belonging to vulnerable groups;
- Make sure that aspects related to safety and protection of vulnerable volunteers are specified;

Direct the efforts during the recruitment process

- Maintain permanent contact with the potential sources for volunteer (for example schools, special schools, universities, different sections of a faculty, civic groups, associations, etc.);
- Ensure each of the public materials distributed by the organization mentions the opportunity to do volunteer work;
- Mobilize the volunteers for finding and approaching other potential volunteers;

3. Selecting volunteers

Get ready for new volunteers

- Draft application forms to be filled in by the volunteers – it should include key information about volunteers and specific needs of vulnerable volunteers;
- Inform the primary contact person (also receptionist – if needed) about the recruitment so that they can offer information to those asking for it;
- Prepare the general concept of the interview – make the interview guide;

Conduct the interviews

- Plan interviews with all potential volunteers;
- Receive and review application forms;
- Present the different activities offered by using their job descriptions and discuss the organization's expectations regarding the implementation of the activities, as well as the volunteers' expectations;

Selection

- Create a selection procedure;
- Create a process for the case in which the volunteer is sufficiently prepared for an activity (for example training, on-the-job training, trial period);
- Appoint suitable volunteers for implementation of various activities – take into consideration the capacity and needs of each person;
- Carry out multiple selection sessions;
- Make the final decision regarding the volunteers and establish the date for the start of their volunteering activity.

4. Volunteer orientation and training

Develop an orientation program for all volunteers, regardless of the activity they will be involved into

- Organize the agenda and an opening tour for volunteers to get more accustomed to the working environment;
- Prepare informative materials to be given to the volunteers;
- Plan and coordinate informative sessions, as needed;
- Adapt the organization's presentation materials to the needs of the vulnerable volunteers (for example, audio materials for volunteers with sight impairment, etc.);

Offer support to team-mates for working with volunteers

- Identify assistance needs of team-mates regarding their work with volunteers;
- Discuss with every colleague that shows reluctance in working with volunteers and tries to identify their reasons and understand the situation; offer counseling;
- Offer to the colleagues within the organization regular seminars on the volunteer management topic, concerning vulnerable volunteers but also regarding the results of the volunteering program;

Create the initial training plan

- Evaluate volunteers' training needs, including those of vulnerable volunteers;
- Work with the supervisors of volunteering activities to create a specific training related to the activity;
- Make sure that each volunteer benefits of training, if needed;
- Involve more experienced volunteers in assisting and guiding the newer ones;


Prepare useful documents for volunteer training

- Collect relevant information to be included in the manual;
- Review and adapt training manuals;
- Discuss potential contents with the old and new volunteers within the organization;
- Write the training manual!

5. Supervising volunteers

Direct supervision

- Organize regular meetings for volunteer management with the staff of the organization;
- Offer the volunteers a chance to take part in individual meetings;
- Establish/revise the timetable/schedule;
- Offer answers to different questions;
- Discuss/analyze volunteers' progress;
- Clarify and solve issues;
- Offer consultancy/expertise for efficient activity implementation;
- Offer feedback for positive situations (praises, etc.) or for negative ones;
- Offer emotional support;
- Signal errors;
- Maintain contact with the volunteers even outside working hours;
- Stay in contact with any other person directly involved in the volunteering program;
- Try to solve potential disputes between volunteers and employees, between old and new volunteers, or among volunteers themselves;
- Be a role-model for a professional behavior;
- Establish evaluation plans for the volunteers;
- Remain available for each volunteer or employee!



Indirect supervision

- Monitor the way in which vulnerable volunteers are involved and whether the volunteering is in agreement with their capacity and abilities;
- Make sure that supervisors are accessible for the volunteers and that they maintain contact with them according to the mutually agreed schedule;

Evaluate individual volunteers' performance

- Develop a regular evaluation plan for volunteers' progress, achievements, as well as for their weaker points;
- Train their team-mates to conduct periodic assessments in a constructive way with each of the volunteers they work with;
- Review all evaluation reports;
- Offer volunteers self-assessment tools.

6. Monitoring volunteers

Evidence

- Decide the needed data for project management, risk management, and volunteer activity management;
- Create tools for monitoring volunteer activity;
- Train volunteers to offer accurate and updated data;
- Calculate the value of volunteer work, in relationship with the official minimum wage;
- Use the data obtained in project planning and management process;

7. Motivating volunteers

Ensure volunteers' motivation and appreciation

- Promote a welcoming atmosphere within the organization
- Identify individual motivating factors of the volunteers and try to adapt the motivating strategy to them;
- Organize volunteer motivation events (parties, outside activities, picnics, etc.);
- Initiate motivational actions/activities for the volunteers (birthday cards, season cards, training opportunities, etc.);
- Suggest ways in which colleagues in the organization can show their daily appreciation towards the volunteers and the activities they perform;
- Establish a way in which volunteers can express misunderstandings and offer suggestions;
- Bring forward volunteering activities developed by vulnerable volunteers;
- Promote an efficient communication among all those involved in the volunteering;

8. Recognizing volunteers' merits

Coordinate recognition activities

- Plan formal recognition activities for all the volunteers, regardless of the activity they are involved in;
- Organize recognition activities for vulnerable volunteers, in this way offering involvement models for other persons in similar vulnerability situations;
- Identify volunteers who deserve special recognition;
- Draft recommendation letters for volunteers, when they request them;
- Involve official representatives of the organization into the recognition process;
- Make sure that a permanent informal appreciation of the volunteers exists;

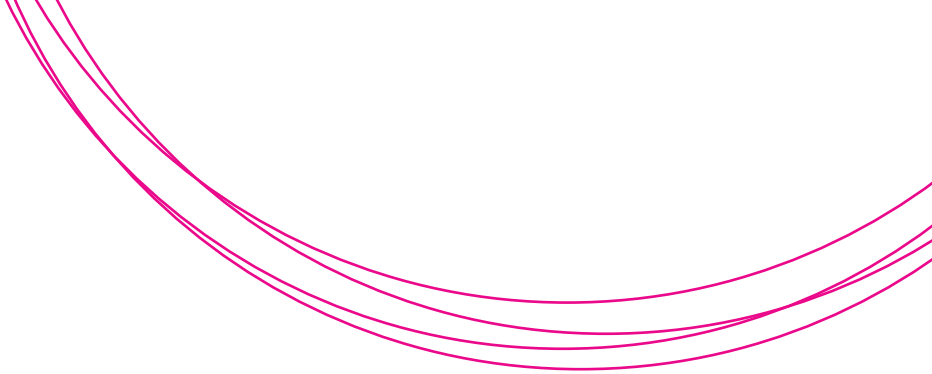
9. Evaluating the volunteers and the volunteering program

Coordinate regular program evaluations

- Establish a plan for program evaluation; form a team of evaluators;
- Ask all those involved in the volunteering program to collaborate;
- Analyze the data and make an action plan based on the evaluation;
- Regularly get informed about the progress of each program area;
- Carefully monitor pilot programs; review them whenever needed;

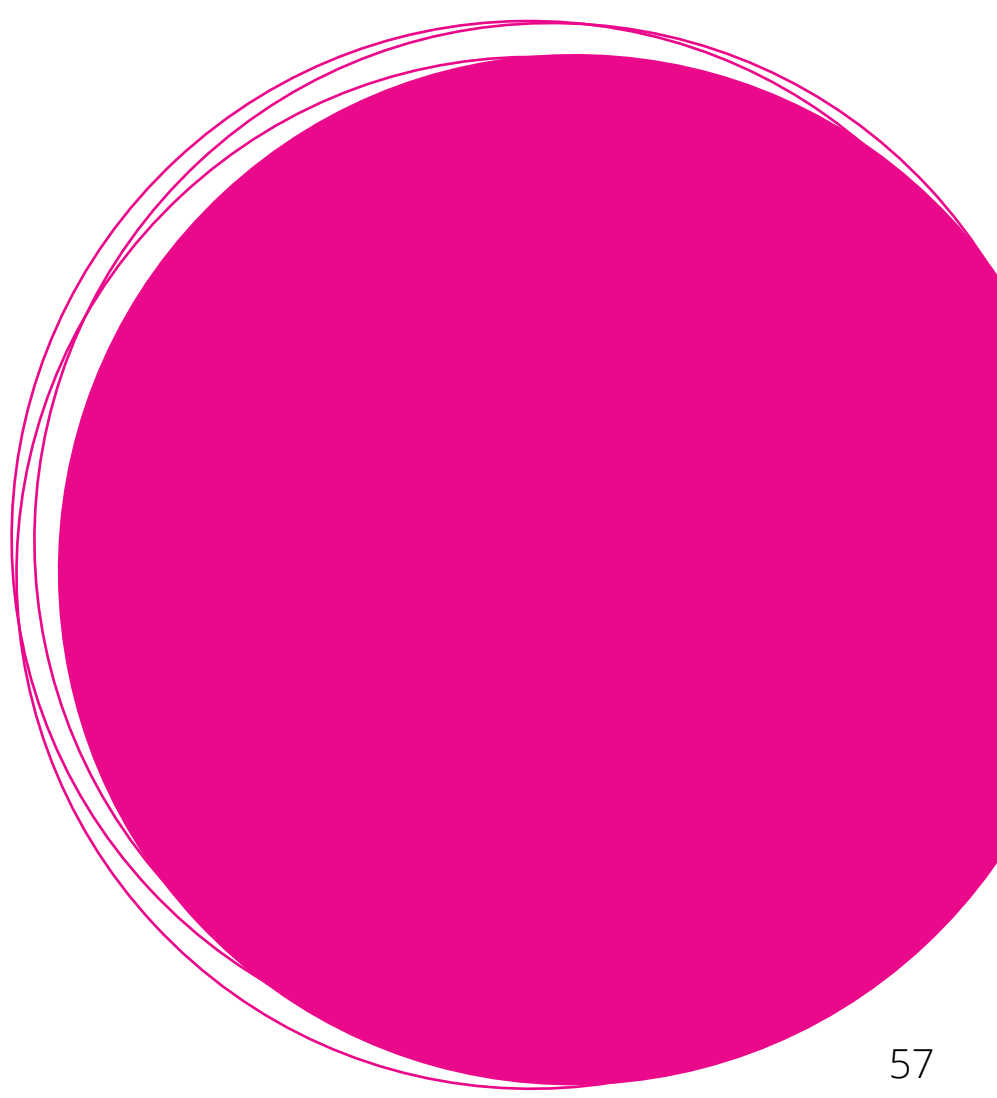
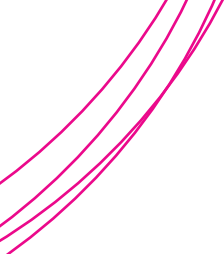
Evaluate volunteers

- Create tools for volunteer evaluation;
- Coordinate interviews for closure of the activity with all

- 
- volunteers who are leaving the organization, regardless of their reasons; asks for suggestions about the program;
- Offer the opportunity to discuss volunteers' ideas and proposals for a new volunteering program that will involve vulnerable volunteers as well as others.

Resources

- „Can do volunteering“- A guide to involving young disabled people as volunteers;
- „Volunteer Connections“ – Creating an accessible and inclusive environment;
- „Eu Aid Volunteers - Minimum Standards in Volunteer Management for Host Organisations “;
- Inclusive Volunteering. Recommendations for Volunteer Coordinators on How to Develop a More Inclusive Volunteer Programme. Volunteering as a Tool for Inclusion Project: 2015.
- Volunteer management in 9 steps model. Institutional development of organizations working with volunteers 2008-2009 project.
- Quality standards for volunteer managers. Wake up call: Volunteer manager role project 2016.



PART III.

Supportive Environment for Inclusive Volunteering

Jelena Kamenko

Introduction

A supportive environment is one of the essential preconditions for the development of inclusive volunteering. It contributes to setting up and creating enabling attitudes, procedures, and commitment of various stakeholders relevant for the development of inclusive volunteering concept and thus sets best practices for experiences of socially excluded, especially youth.

What does supportive environment stand for? When we talk about inclusive volunteering, supportive environment understands essential elements relevant for the development of inclusive volunteering and best practices, such as enabling policies, social acceptance, providing education and empowerment, creating supportive infrastructure, the cooperation of key stakeholders, financial support for the programs, etc. All these preconditions need to be fulfilled to create a supportive environment for inclusive volunteering that will have a positive impact on those socially excluded who are participating in inclusive volunteering programs and on those who support them and provide these kinds of programs. (Kamenko, Kovacevic, Sehic Relic, 2016)

On the previous pages of this handbook, a lot is dedicated precisely to young volunteers who come from socially excluded groups, as well as to volunteer hosting organizations that develop inclusive volunteer programs. Therefore, in this section, we will put emphasis on the importance of cooperation of various stakeholders relevant for the development of the inclusive volunteering concept. We will also bring some recommendations for key stakeholders in developing inclusive volunteering, driven out from the experiences of well-developed countries and experiences from our countries (Croatia, Romania, and Slovakia) where this concept is quite new.

Importance of cooperation on inclusive volunteering

It is well known and proven that volunteering reduces social exclusion and alienation, and can empower socially excluded groups to give, and not only to receive. Volunteering has an extremely positive impact on individuals from socially excluded groups engaged as volunteers: it increases physical and psychological wellbeing, creates a wider social network, enhances career opportunities, gives back the self-respect and sense of ability in providing something valuable as the worthy member of the community.

Yet, Haski-Leventhal in her work (2009) states the general fact that persons from socially excluded groups are volunteering less in comparison with other volunteers. To make volunteering socially inclusive, volunteer organizations as well as governments, need to have proactive policy and practices. It is not enough to accept a person from socially excluded group to the organization as a volunteer, but individuals from all populations and all social circumstances should have equal opportunities to be involved in volunteering. Therefore, it is needed to proactively target the involvement of all segments of society, including youth, older persons and all other members of socially excluded groups belonging to minorities. Opportunities for volunteer activities to facilitate the participation of those groups that have little or no access to the benefits of engaging in volunteering need to be created. And this needs to be done for all types and forms of volunteering. (Haski-Leventhal, 2009) Except this, several levels of decision-makers (from European to the local ones, as well as grass-roots organizations) and other relevant stakeholders need to take part in creating enabling policies and sustainable infrastructure for the development of an inclusive volunteering concept.

To fully develop the concept of inclusive volunteering and utilize the potential of volunteering in reducing social exclusion and alienation, the cooperation on all levels is crucial. Everybody has limited time and intellectual resources, so cooperation can boost the efficiency as well as maximize the possibility of competence and success. Only by cooperating, we can allow

people and groups to work together to achieve a common goal or derive mutual benefits and to use all possible resources in an efficient manner to develop inclusive volunteering.

According to Haski-Leventhal (2009), inclusive volunteering is addressed by different actions. Before placing volunteers in volunteer hosting organizations, there are some preconditions that need to be done to create a supportive environment for inclusive volunteering:

- take actions and general measures to improve the context and status of inclusive volunteering on all levels;
- support facilitating organizations;
- encourage volunteering by socially excluded groups;
- enhance and expand the provision of suitable volunteer programs and positions for volunteers coming from socially excluded groups, especially youth;
- encourage volunteer organizations to recruit volunteers from socially excluded groups;
- promote collaboration between the governments, public and civil sectors.

Only structured support and approach of different stakeholders that work together and cooperate can create an enabling and supportive environment for inclusive volunteering.

Scheme of cooperation of different stakeholders

At the core of inclusion, there is recognition of the abilities, not the disabilities, of individuals. It requires an open and flexible approach. Governments, civil society organizations and the public sector are all capable of proactive targeting of excluded groups, together with other segments of society, to involve them in volunteering. But not only capable of targeting, but also in acting to support inclusive volunteering in different ways.

There is much that can be done. For example, governments (national, local, but also EU institutions) can include volunteering in policies dealing with inclusion and set up European, national or local frameworks (policies/strategies) for development

of volunteering in general but also referring to inclusive volunteering, the micro-policies of volunteering and the macro-policies for tackling social exclusion need to work in unison, etc.

Networks of individuals and organizations (advocacy and social service organizations, volunteer centers) or institutions (such as special schools, centers for social welfare or employment services) that are already involved in working with various socially excluded groups can promote volunteering among these groups and help in targeting, motivating but also in educating potential volunteers.

Previously mentioned types of organizations create a network



of partner organizations or stakeholders that can ensure a supportive environment for the development of inclusive volunteering. Their cooperation and support will guarantee more efficient, successful and structured approach to inclusive volunteering. Each of these organizations can do something to support the development of inclusive volunteering and has a significant role in this area. Therefore, in the next few pages, we'll give the overview of the functions of these stakeholders, as well as some recommendations on what can be done or improved to create a supportive environment for inclusive volunteering.

The role of various stakeholders in the involvement of vulnerable groups

1. Volunteer centers

Volunteer centers are civil society organizations that promote volunteering, enable development of volunteer activities on the local, regional and national level, provide education in the field of volunteering, match citizens interested in volunteering with volunteer hosting organizations, issue relevant literature and publications in the area of volunteering, conduct researches in the field of volunteering. Except this, many volunteer centers develop different areas of volunteering in their communities. One of these areas is also inclusive volunteering. (Volonterski centar Osijek, 2011)

As resource centers for volunteering in the communities, volunteer centers play an important role also in the development of a supportive environment for inclusive volunteering. Their role is visible in:

a) Advocating for inclusive volunteering concept

Volunteer centers are one of the first organizations that have recognized the potential of volunteering for social inclusion and thus advocated the concept of inclusive volunteering.

As organizations that create networks and synergies and work in partnerships with other organizations in the communities, volunteer centers have potential to reach the organizations representing socially excluded people and together with them advocate and ensure that volunteering is a right for all and that everyone has potential and ability to contribute to the community, according to its abilities.

In many countries, specifically volunteer centers, through advocacy, have encouraged decision makers to create enabling legal environment for the active participation of socially excluded people. Also, through its field experience, volunteer centers can provide decisions makers with the evidence of the benefits of inclusive volunteering.

b) Promoting inclusive volunteering concept

In some countries, the concept of inclusive volunteering is quite new. Many people, but also organizations don't understand what does it mean. Therefore, the role of volunteer centers is to promote this concept, to promote not only volunteering for socially excluded people but volunteering of socially excluded.

Socially excluded, especially youth may have many questions about volunteering and may also have some preconceived notions about what participation might entail. By promoting inclusive volunteering, the reasons why people participate, the benefits associated with volunteering, and the range of opportunities and choices available, socially excluded people can see what they can gain by volunteering and understand their options and choices.

As organizations that know very well the situation in the communities, volunteer centers can also collect and exchange good practice examples of inclusive volunteering and widely communicate to the broad public the importance of volunteering in the field of combating social exclusion..

c) Identifying potential volunteers and inclusive volunteer programs

Volunteer centers as organizations opened to all citizens interested in volunteering can also help in identifying potential volunteers from socially excluded groups that apply for volunteering, either through direct contact with volunteers

(interview when applying directly for volunteering) or through its databases that contain relevant information on volunteers.

Also, through info service of volunteer centers where volunteer hosting organizations use their volunteer programs and possibilities for volunteering, volunteer centers can identify suitable positions for socially excluded volunteers, as well as potential for development of inclusive volunteering programs.

d) Educating volunteers and volunteer hosting organizations

One of the core volunteer centers activities is the education of citizens interested in volunteering as well as education of volunteer coordinators and organizations on volunteer management. Many volunteer centers also provide teaching in the field of inclusive volunteering.

Volunteer centers can engage and educate socially excluded youth to gain insight, skills, and information that can be useful for them regarding their involvement in volunteer activities. Such education provides to each enough information for efficient and fruitful volunteer experience and empowers people who are socially excluded from participating in volunteering.

On the other side, volunteer centers can offer education to volunteer hosting organizations on setting up effective inclusive volunteer programs as well as specifics of working with socially excluded groups.

e) Matching volunteers from socially excluded groups with opportunities for volunteering

By gathering relevant information, supply and demand on inclusive volunteering, volunteer centers can be very helpful in matching interests and motivation of individuals for volunteering with possibilities for volunteering in the community.

Volunteer centers can help socially excluded youth identify their needs and preferences and select the option that works best for them. Once they have determined the organizational structure and time commitment that best matches the youth's preferences, they will be able to identify better an organization that meets their needs. After discussing benefits, opportunities, and barriers to be mindful of throughout the process, volunteer centers can begin to assist youth in finding and securing a match that meets their interests and goals.

f) Providing support to volunteers and organizations that involve volunteers from socially excluded groups

In general, volunteer centers should lay the foundation for a successful match by fostering trust and communication with the young person and by encouraging them to express their voice throughout the process of volunteering. Providing continuous support will additionally empower individuals who are socially excluded from participating in volunteering.

Besides, as organizations that provide consultations to volunteer hosting organizations, volunteer center can additionally support by advising and helping volunteer hosting organizations overcoming the challenges regarding inclusive volunteering. Support can also be provided through setting up and developing effective inclusive volunteer programs.

g) Providing support in identifying competencies acquired through volunteering

Volunteer centers play a significant role in recognizing and boosting the potential of volunteering to learn skills and competencies, but also to enhance employability. Thus, they can help and lead organizations and volunteers through the process of recognizing competencies acquired through volunteering with the purpose of creating certificates of skills that can improve volunteers' employability and their CVs.

2. Advocacy organizations and organizations active in social field

Advocacy organizations and organizations working in the social field mainly include organizations that are already active in working with various socially excluded groups, such as networks of individuals or organizations providing support or services and advocating for better rights of different socially excluded groups. But, also public institutions such as centers for social welfare and similar organizations where socially excluded people can perform their rights.

Such organizations play an important role mainly in encouraging socially excluded people to volunteer and thus opening new perspectives for social inclusion. These organizations can be engaged in following actions, according to suggestions by CEV (2010) and Volonterski centar Osijek (2011):

- a) boosting the contribution of volunteers to promote empowerment, social inclusion and volunteering of socially excluded groups;

- b) develop inclusive volunteer programs that give an opportunity to their beneficiaries to actively participate in volunteering and switch from the role of a recipient to the role of the volunteer;
- c) promote their examples of good practice and thus motivate others to engage volunteers from socially excluded groups or to motivate them for volunteering;
- d) strengthen the voice of the volunteers in the development of their communities;
- e) advocate a democratic approach that enables participation of the socially excluded groups in volunteering;
- f) engage in partnerships with other NGOs and volunteer centers to support programs that aim to combat social exclusion in communities.

3. Special schools/ schools for children and young people with special needs

Special schools for children and young people with special needs can have very significant role in encouraging socially excluded youth to volunteer. As organizations with educational purpose they can:

- a) advocate for inclusive volunteering concept;;
- b) promote volunteering as a valuable tool for social inclusion;
- c) incorporate volunteering into their school curriculum and thus present to youth the potential that volunteering has for social inclusion, as well as for acquiring competencies relevant for life and labor market;
- d) develop inclusive volunteer programs and involve socially excluded youth as volunteers from early stages;

- e) create a partnership with community-based organizations and direct socially excluded young people to volunteering in the community.

4. Employment services

Employment services as offices where people turn to when they ask for their job experiences can also be valuable resources and relevant stakeholders for development of inclusive volunteering (Volonterski centar Osijek, 2011). As they keep databases and evidence of different people applying for a job, including socially excluded groups, they could do the following:


- a) provide socially excluded groups with relevant information on volunteering as one of the ways and possibilities of acquiring competencies that can be helpful for easier and faster job seeking, but also could contribute later to better performance at work;
- b) set up info points with information on volunteering and contacts of relevant organizations that deal with inclusive volunteer programs;
- c) direct persons from socially excluded groups on volunteer centers and other relevant organizations developing inclusive volunteer programs;
- d) create a partnership with non-profit organizations to develop inclusive volunteer programs according to the needs of socially excluded and encourage socially excluded for volunteering;
- e) promote inclusive volunteering and acquiring competencies through volunteering to employers.

5. State/National and Local Governments and Governmental organizations

Depending on the level of centralization or organizational structure of the state, local/state governments, as well as governmental organizations are key stakeholders in ensuring a supportive environment for inclusive volunteering. They have the unique power to promote inclusive volunteering through legislation enhancing citizens' willingness to volunteer, to make volunteering more socially inclusive by supporting organizations that focus on this reciprocal relationship and to improve the accessibility of volunteer organizations to potential volunteers, especially for those who are socially excluded through provided support to these kinds of organizations.

Their role is visible in several areas, and further, we bring some recommendations that are incorporated into CEVs conference report, "Volunteering as a means of empowerment and social inclusion – A bridge between the European Years 2010 and 2011 (2010), on what could be done to support inclusive volunteering:

- a) undertake actions to improve the general status of inclusive volunteering:
 - adopt a national strategy for volunteering that contains measures and actions dedicated to the development of inclusive volunteering concept and supportive environment;
 - introduce acts on volunteering which acknowledge inclusive volunteering, encourage people to start volunteering, and details volunteer rights;
 - promote quality standards in volunteer programs, including their inclusiveness;
 - recognize inclusive volunteering in a public manner;
 - publicly award volunteers from socially excluded groups and inclusive volunteering programs;
 - conduct a public campaign in the mass media to thank volunteers and encourage others to join.



b) undertake measures to encourage and facilitate inclusive volunteering:

- establish a committee to suggest ways to promote volunteering, particularly among socially excluded groups;
- support development of adequate infrastructure for inclusive volunteering;
- provide information on volunteer opportunities to all, possibly by volunteer centers;
- provide financial and in-kind support to volunteer organizations, so they will be able to support their volunteers.

c) encourage volunteering by socially excluded groups:

- develop an awareness campaign which specifically targets socially excluded groups;
- use targeted financial assistance to non-profit organizations to recruit the socially excluded to volunteer.

d) encourage volunteer organizations to recruit volunteers from socially excluded groups:

- recognize and reward volunteer organizations that are socially inclusive;
- work with facilitating organizations to identify and address barriers to volunteering, particularly by socially disadvantaged
- allow people, particularly from socially excluded groups to volunteer in public service organizations.

6. European institutions

European institutions as key stakeholders can have a significant role in general in a promotion, policymaking processes that create a supportive and enabling environment for inclusive volunteering, but also, in giving recommendations to member countries to develop inclusive volunteering uniformly across the Europe. CEVs conference report, "Volunteering as a means of empowerment and social inclusion – A bridge between the European Years 2010 and 2011 (2010) as well as CEVs Manifesto for Volunteering in Europe (2008) suggest that their power and role can be visible in:

- a) Promotion and mainstreaming volunteering across all policy areas to meet the needs of socially excluded groups through:
 - Recognition of volunteering as an equal right for all – and not just an instrument;
 - Recognition and advocacy of the impact and importance of volunteering for social inclusion and empowerment of socially excluded groups;
 - Recognition and boosting the potential of inclusive volunteering to acquire skills and to enhance employability of socially excluded;
 - Development of awareness-raising programs on volunteering against social exclusion;

- b) Initiate enabling policy making process for inclusive volunteering on the European level through:
 - Active promotion of volunteer activities through EU policies and creating volunteer friendly policies that enable access for all volunteers, especially those coming from socially excluded groups;
 - Re-thinking social policies to facilitate inclusive volunteering;
 - Systematic involvement of volunteer organizations and their networks as partners in policymaking decisions in this area;
 - Providing an encouraging and enabling legal environment for the active participation of people experiencing social exclusion;
 - Development of an enabling framework for volunteering for all EU member states in collaboration with civil society;

- Further development of tools at the European level that acknowledges skills acquired through volunteering;
- Continuous implementations of EU programs that empower socially excluded through volunteering;
- Encouragement of national governments for development of national volunteering policies that involve inclusive volunteering as well (enabling legal environment, volunteering infrastructure, standardization of volunteer programs, etc.);
- Giving funds for European social fund and other relevant funds with the purpose of development of inclusive volunteering and combating social exclusion through volunteering;
- Exchanging experiences and best practices in the field of tackling social exclusion with other countries' governments.

c) Recognizing and supporting organizations that develop inclusive volunteering programs by:

- Giving a voice to organizations representing people experiencing social exclusion and actively listen to them;
- Acknowledging the need to support volunteer organizations to encourage volunteering by people experiencing social exclusion, and provide financial support in this aim;
- Providing support for effective volunteer programs and for the training of volunteers active in the field of combating social exclusion.

Resources

- Kamenko, J., Kovačević, M., Šehić Relić, L.: Volontiranje prilika za nove kompetencije – vodič kroz inkluzivno volontiranje za organizatore volontiranja, Volonterski centar Osijek, Osijek, 2016
- Inclusive volunteering - Recommendations for Volunteer Coordinators on How to Develop a More Inclusive Volunteer Programme (www.volunteer.ie)
- Haski-Leventhal, D.: Addressing social disadvantage through volunteering, The Centre for Social Impact, New South Wales, Australia, 2009
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- State of the World's Volunteering Report 2011, UN Volunteers, 2011.
- P.A.V.E. – Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe, EYV 2011 Alliance, 2011.
- Volontiranjem do svog mjesta u društvu, Volonterski centar Osijek, Osijek, 2011.

Information about Competent in Volunteering, Competent in Life (CIVCIL) Project

This publication is part of the international project CIVCIL run by partners in three European countries from March 2015 to February 2017.

Aims and activities of the project:

- to include young people from vulnerable groups in Croatia, Romania, and Slovakia to various volunteering activities and thus, integrate them into society,
- to recognize competencies and skills acquired through volunteering and to increase the employability of young people,
- to inform about tools for recognition and validation of skills and competencies gained through volunteering already existing within Europe.
- to train 36 volunteer coordinators in all partner countries who will be then prepared to coordinate young volunteers from vulnerable groups,
- to develop training materials and tailored training for volunteer managers/coordinators working with young people from vulnerable groups,
- to create a website www.civcil.eu providing information about already existing tools for recognition and validation of competences acquired through volunteering in Europe,
- to create or to improve the online tools for recognition and validation of competences gained through volunteering in partner countries.

More information available on www.civcil.eu.



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