



VAI

GUIDE FOR MIGRANT

VOLUNTEERS

Introduction to Volunteerism and
how to find a suitable volunteering opportunity



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Hellenic Red Cross



Leibniz Universität Hannover



Institut für Ethik der Demokratie



Cidis Onlus

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GUIDE FOR MIGRANT **VOLUNTEERS**

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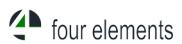
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The **VAI - Volunteering among immigrants** project points out that immigrant volunteering can be both an instrument for and an indicator of integration. Many states of the European Union have already recognized the potential of volunteering as instrument for integration and as a consequence, have endeavored to introduce measures to promote immigrant volunteering. Migration, integration and volunteering are subject to considerable public and political debate in the European Union. VAI project aims at combining those factors and promoting new arrangements of volunteering among immigrants, negotiated by removing obstacles and by building on facilitators of societal integration. It also aims at strengthening networks and exchange of knowledge in the field of migrant volunteering, especially on a transnational European level.

This document was originally produced as Deliverable no. 2.2 of the second work package **Capacity Building in the host community**. The most important outcome of this activity is to enhance participation of migrants in voluntary groups. During this part of the project an *Orientation Manual for Volunteers*, a *Guide for Immigrant Volunteers* and a *Guide for Training immigrants in voluntary work* are created.

Partner Organizations:



Overview

Overview	4
Introduction	7
Part 1: Introduction to Volunteerism	9
What is volunteering and why volunteer?	10
Motivations and Benefits	11
Areas and Organizations you can volunteer	13
Where can you start looking for a voluntary activity?	14
Part 2: Before and After Recruitment	15
How to find the right opportunity for you	16
Explore your interests and availability	16
Look for a volunteer opportunity	17
Learn more about the opportunity and the organization	18
Before and After Recruitment	19
Steps before and after Recruitment	19
Application Form	20
Interview	20
Acceptance or rejection note	20
Volunteer Induction Pack or Handbook	21
Training and Mentoring	22

Support and Supervision	23
Recognition	23
What should you keep in mind while volunteering?	24
Conclusions	27
Annex	29
Volunteer stories of immigrants' experiences	29
Meet Hameed	29
Meet ZuT_M	31
Meet FrG_F	31
Meet MoS_M	32
Meet Arif	32
Meet Bakary	33
Meet Mrunmayee	34
List of organizations where you can volunteer	36
Greece	36
Italy	36
Germany	37
Austria	37
Bibliography	38

Introduction

Volunteers are people from all backgrounds and ages. Immigrants of diverse countries and backgrounds consist a significant number of volunteers in the European Union, as immigration has become the main factor in the demographic growth in Europe and as positive net migration is at record level in most of the countries.

The positive effects of volunteering, as a form of active participation, to achieve integration have been highlighted by a great number of studies conducted by European civil society organizations and academia. The final report of the INVOLVE project on the integration of third-country nationals through volunteering, states that *“volunteering...is an essential component of what the European Commission called the Common Basic Principles of Integration”* and that volunteering contributes to integration by fostering exchange between migrants and the host community, recognizing immigrants contribution to the host society, developing employability of migrants through acquiring learning skills, helping immigrants to gain knowledge of the host society's language and history whereas share knowledge of their own culture and country. (European Commission 2010: 2)

Formal volunteering refers to activities organized through some sort of organization, be it a small community group consisting entirely of volunteers or major volunteer-involved organizations.

Immigrants might be long-term residents of a community but they may feel on the margins of such, for a number of reasons. Consequently, they often seek ways to connect with the wider community and to access skills and pathways to employment. The result of this process is a culturally diverse and more equal society.

Migrants can bring potentially useful knowledge of specific cultures, improving organizational and staff cultural competence. Therefore, it increases awareness of different cultures within the organization and society at large, helping to eradicate negative stereotypes. Moreover, they bring new language skills in the organization, enhancing communication with clients from culturally diverse backgrounds. They bring new perspectives to the organization such as the increased awareness of the way of life, beliefs and values of different values and new varied life experiences. Migrants' involvement contributes

to a more culturally inclusive volunteer program. (IOM: 22-23) One of the main barriers, that immigrant have to deal with, is the lack of access to and information about volunteering opportunities. Little knowledge of the host community language, cultural misunderstandings and racism are the most common ones. Studies also show that one of the main factors that explains the limited participation of immigrants is their lack of knowledge about formal volunteering and its benefits: restricted social networks, absence of people who already volunteer and who can act as intermediary, lack of education and skills needed for volunteer replacements, lack of consideration

that voluntary organizations that migrants could be potential volunteers. (Kansalaisareena 2017:19) Volunteering can contribute to the better integration of migrants who are third-country nationals and the better integration of the societies of which they are part. For this reason, the primary audience for this publication are the volunteer immigrants and the potential/future ones.

Whether this is your first go at volunteering or you are seeking a new role, this guide will help you get the most from this experience. You can find ideas about how to look for a volunteer role that suits you and will help you work out how to start and sort through the options available.

- **PART 1** clarifies the meaning of volunteering, examines the reasons most immigrants volunteer, explains their motivations and the social impact they can create. A list of volunteering-involved organizations with special focus on immigrants is proposed and also a variety of activities that can be conducted in volunteering programs.
- **PART 2** This part is dedicated to orient you in case you are looking for volunteering opportunities. It introduces into the recruitment process and explains details of what it is usually offered and expected in a volunteering program. Last but not least it gives a series of tips in order to enjoy and benefit the most from the volunteer opportunity.
- After the **CONCLUSIONS** stories of volunteering experiences of immigrants and refugees are shared in the first **ANNEXES** in order to familiarize potential volunteers with personal volunteer experiences. In the second Annex, a list of volunteer-involved organizations and their contact details in Greece, Italy, Germany and Austria are offered.

Part 1: Introduction to Volunteerism

In this first part, we will explore a general concept of volunteering, as in many European countries the definition varies and it is not understood in the same way everywhere in the world. We will see why it can be beneficial for you to volunteer and what motivations usually lie behind this altruistic act. We will also provide information about the types of the organization with which you can volunteer and the activities you can perform.

What is volunteering and why volunteer?

Volunteering creates stronger ties between people and communities and it can include any activity that:

” involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives.“ (NCVO)

The Volonteuropé Impact Group has also defined volunteering as “all forms of voluntary activity in any location, whether formal or informal, full-time or part-time, occurring regularly or sporadically.” (Volonteuropé 2018: 8)

In a number of surveys, it has been found that immigrants’ volunteer involvement reinforced their ability to act as members of the community and contributed to their social integration. Active participation has also led to

improvement of language skills and network. Interactions and relationships fostered during volunteering has developed the feeling of being included and of personal satisfaction.

Moreover, it has contributed to the employability of the immigrants and it enabled them to understand the national system, the culture and history and learn to live more independently. (ICMC Europe 2015)

Motivations and Benefits

The most common motivations for immigrant volunteers include:

MAIN MOTIVATIONS FOR IMMIGRANT VOLUNTEERS

- Contribute to the local community that has welcomed you and improve social role in the host society
- Support your community of origin o Gain valuable training and experience which can enrich job skills to seek employment
- Develop new interests
- Improve language and communication skills
- Meet new people and make new friends
- Get involved and find out more about an area of work you are considering a career
- Be an active citizen and make a difference

Source: University of Calabria, Leibniz University Hannover, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki & Hellenic Red Cross 2018

The experiences gained through volunteering generally helps in the development of social and economic skills, enrich experience and develop links that smoothen integration. The impact extends from less isolation and increased social interrelationships awareness, to knowledge of the local language and greater autonomy and self-activation relations. Valorisation of professional skills and acquisition of new ones is another benefit whereas

it boosts appreciation and self-value. Specifically, the national survey in Italy found out that migrants volunteers have benefitted in the following areas: Cultural exchange and social connections (86.2%); Language skills (72.3%), Sense of belonging/interest towards events that occur in the host society (69.6%). Other features were: Acquisition of professional skill (52.2%); Valorization of professional skills (43.8%) and Contacts for future

employment (38.7%) considered as important as but less than the previous ones. The survey among immigrant volunteers in Germany showed similar results: **languages, knowledge of culture, appreciation, self-value,**

contacts and new networks were mentioned by the participants as the benefits of being a volunteer.

One example is the case of a Syrian who migrated to Germany as a refugee in 2015:

” It helped me a lot to be part of the network. Our director has a big network. When my time of the voluntary year came to its end, he recommended me – as he knew that I have the education in mechanical engineering - to some companies that he stays in contact with.“

„And one company invited me, and gave me a contract – I think a Syrian refugee can't get better opportunities without having any contacts.“

An immigrant living in Cosenza, Italy for over than 10 years explains her experience as a volunteer whereas she underlines the fact that there are stereotypes concerning migrants offering volunteer help: “Being voluntary is fun: every time I tried to get closer, I remember asking me „do you need something?”. As if I were the only one who needed it. There is this idea that the migrant ‘He always needs something’, it is a dominant idea. They asked me: “do we make a food bank?”. In my opinion this is a

rather frozen image, everyone thinks that the migrant is hungry. There are many other ways to collaborate; during my journey I managed to prove it. I always had to repeat ‘No, I do not need a food bank, I’m here because I work with children and if you need my help, I’m there’.» (University of Calabria, Leibniz University Hanover, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki & Hellenic Red Cross 2018)

Volunteering is also an essential part of making sure that your communities are stable and secure as local community groups often lack resources or communities are often catered for by mainstream provision. (Grove-White 2010: 18)

Areas and organizations you can volunteer

People report volunteering in a number of different places and there is usually no limit as long as it is something that makes you fulfil a purpose. The most frequent type of organizations where immigrants volunteer are the non-profit organizations, NGOs, civil-society

organizations, charitable and religious organizations too. Many community groups and charities, and the services they provide, are highly dependent on the involvement of people who willingly give their time for free. You can also find a variety of volunteering opportunities in:

- Migrant and/or refugee community-based organizations
- Reception projects and basic services and assistance to other immigrants who are often illegal
- Local groups
- Other voluntary sector organizations
- Faith institutions/religious associations
- Trade Unions
- Research institutes / Training centres
- International humanitarian organizations
- Youth centres

Source: *ibid*; Kansalaisareena: 34); Grove-White:16-17

Where can you start looking for a voluntary activity?

You can get involved in a huge variety of activities. Many of the activities are people-oriented, often involving direct support to the community. Many organizations try to mobilize immigrants to be a volunteer in any kind of civic engagement or for the purpose of integrating

other immigrants. (National Report Germany) Volunteering roles are both formal (that is to a formal organization) and informal ((that is, volunteering carried out individually outside of an organizational context), including:

VOLUNTEERING ROLES FOR IMMIGRANTS

- Literacy and language courses, handling of documents and translation
- Provide Information about protection of rights of and campaigns on the promotion of rights
- Mediation services/Assistance and protection of vulnerable groups (minors, people at risk of trafficking, refugees and asylum seekers)
- Legal and fiscal support
- Political engagement in political parties
- Assistance and orientation to self-employment and or subordinate employment
- Organize intercultural workshops, awareness-raising, entertainment and intercultural mediation
- Tutoring and mentoring
- Elderly or people with disabilities
- Environmental issues
- Sports
- Cultural activities
- Communication

Source: ibid; University of Calabria,
Leibniz University Hanover, Aristotle
University of Thessaloniki & Hellenic Red Cross

Part 2: Before and after recruitment

The second part describes how you can look for volunteer opportunities and with what criteria to choose among the ones you are mostly interested. We also analyse the recruitment process that organizations usually apply for volunteers and what volunteer programs usually include. We offer, in addition, some tips on how to be a good volunteer underlying the importance of intercultural communication.

How to find the right opportunity for you

To look for the right opportunity and choose the most suitable for you, it is important to firstly explore your interests and availability, know where

to look for a volunteering opportunity and learn the most information possible about the position and the organization in order to decide.

Explore your interests and availability

Volunteer opportunities offered by organizations can vary in many ways. They can be full-time or part-time, short-term or long-term, once or twice a week or even in weekend

days. They can require a minimum of qualifications or they may involve a particular range of skills. The following questions will help you focus on what you would like to do:

WHAT DO YOU CARE ABOUT?

WHAT TYPE OF VOLUNTEER WORK ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? SKILL-BASED OR MORE PRACTICAL?

HOW MANY HOURS AND WHAT PERIOD OF TIME CAN YOU DEDICATE TO VOLUNTEERING?

WHAT TIMES OF THE DAY OR WHICH DAYS IN THE WEEK ARE YOU AVAILABLE?

DO YOU PREFER TO WORK WITH PEOPLE OR ON YOUR OWN?

IS THE TRANSPORTATION TO THE WORKPLACE CONVENIENT FOR YOU?

Source: ibid; IOM: 57-59

Look for a volunteer opportunity

After answering these questions for yourself, the next step is to start looking! The most common source of information about volunteering opportunities today is social connections or informal and formal networks. You maybe know already someone who has volunteered in an organization which is fascinating

for you too. Ask them how you can volunteer. If you are interested in a particular organization and you cannot find relevant information, send them an email and let them know of your desire of volunteering with them. Here are some ideas on how and where to look for volunteering opportunities:

WHERE SHOULD I LOOK FOR VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES?

- Word of mouth: current volunteers, people who use the service, friends and relatives, staff etc.
- Advertisement of volunteer opportunities in local ethnic community newsletters
- Migrant Resource Centres
- Migrant-Support Organisations
- Migrant Community (based on religious/ethnic networks)
- Digital platforms: SmartVolunteer, All for Good, VolunteerMatch, Catchafire, iVolunteer, DonorsChoose, Idealist.org, UN Volunteers, DoSomething, Volunteers.gov, UniversalGiving, HelpStay, DoSomething, Indeedcom
- Using Social media
- Volunteer Centres

Asylum seekers when coming for screening interviews are usually referred by the staff of reception centers, whereas refugees and other

immigrants get information about volunteering opportunities through their websites, social media and their networks. (ibid; Berhanu: 25)

Learn more about the opportunity and the organization

When looking for a volunteer opportunity, try to see whether you can obtain answers to the questions below, either based on the role description posted or the organization's website and social media. If not, don't hesitate to ask questions during the interview.

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Is there a job description that mentions clearly the volunteers role and responsibilities?

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

Check out whether the organization has a letter of commitment or volunteer agreement. Does it promote non-discrimination values and equal opportunities for everyone?

REIMBURSE EXPENSES:

Although genuine voluntary work should not affect entitlement, it is not always the case. Ask if the organization will cover basic expenses such as travel to and from the place of volunteering, meals or special equipment for the volunteering activity.

ORIENTATION AND DIVERSITY TRAINING

Is this a welcoming organization? It should provide volunteer orientation and diversity / multicultural training. Check out whether the organization mentions cultural inclusive values and a non-discrimination statement into their policies and procedures.

SUPERVISION: Who do I go for direction, help and support? Make sure the program is run by a Volunteer Coordinator or Supervisor.

RECOGNITION

Has the organization established a procedure to recognize volunteers' contribution and value?

EVALUATION: Are there any self-assessment tools during the volunteering or evaluation sessions to share your feedback or your ideas for improvement?

TRIAL PERIOD: Is there a trial / probationary period? A trial period for long-duration volunteer positions helps the organization to find out what type of person you are and if you are suitable for the position.

Before and After Recruitment

It is important to know the steps of the recruitment process that organizations follow when choosing the person that suits the position. In many occasions, this process depends on the type and size of

the organization, the number of volunteers it receives, the quality and length of the program and many other reasons. The most common steps are presented on the table and explained right after.

Steps before and after Recruitment

1. VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

2. VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW

3. ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION NOTE

**4. DELIVERY OF VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK AND
VOLUNTEER INDUCTION**

5. TRAINING AND MONITORING

**6. SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION DURING THE
PROGRAM**

7. RECOGNITION

Application Form

Potential volunteers are usually asked to fill out an online application form with basic information, time availability and motivations for their show of interest. **Try to make a first**

good impression by taking time to explain your motivations and underline your language skills that may be rare and useful to the organization!

Interview

It is usually informal and a two-way process. It is your opportunity to ask any questions or doubts you may have regarding the role description, aims of the organization, the support you will receive and finally decide whether or not you would like to volunteer with this particular organization. The interviewer usually wants to know more about your motivations,

your skills and experience and your expectations from the program. Get prepared to answer this kind of questions! They may ask you for references or a DBS check, although it is not very common. In the end of the interview, they will let you know when to expect an answer about their decision.

Acceptance or rejection note

You will probably receive a call or email that you are chosen or not for the volunteer position. If you don't have any news from their part, you can send an email or call to ask them whether you are accepted. In case of rejection, don't be disappointed! Ask

the reasons for that and reflect on the feedback you received in order to get better in the next interview. If you are accepted, it is your turn to take the final decision, taking into consideration all the aspects that matter to you.

Volunteer Induction Pack or Handbook

it is usually given or sent to the volunteer after being accepted for the volunteer position. Depending on the type, size and policy of the volunteer program it can include all or some of the items and information below:

WELCOME LETTER OR EMAIL from the CEO or Executive Director It is usually brief and can highlight some of the key aspects of the organization.

DETAILS OF THE ORGANIZATION The organization mentions few or more details about the work environment, structure of the organization etc.

MISSION STATEMENT Most organizations have a short policy as a statement of intent that also demonstrates the commitment of the organization to the volunteer program and the organization's cultural inclusive policies and equal treatment of volunteers. It can be found on the organization's website or as part the handbook delivered to volunteers before starting.

ORGANIZATION'S STRUCTURE It is very useful when it is provided. It can have the form of an organizational chart or it may explain hierarchy and roles of employees.

SITE MAP, CONTACT DETAILS AND HOURS OF OPERATION It is important for the organization to include a site map of the building. Giving a personal tour is also ideal to familiarize you with the place. Providing you with some contact details in case of an emergency and details about the working hours is important too.

OATH OF CONFIDENTIALITY & LETTER OF COMMITMENT

or Volunteer Agreement. It aims to establish the seriousness on both sides, as well as it recognizes that there are rights and responsibilities for both sides. Ask to sign a letter of commitment and keep a copy of it.

COMMUNICATIONS It is important to be clarified in the handbook the way the team members communicate whether it's an application, forum, email or a frequent newsletter to keep up people to speed. Furthermore, there are organizations which hold a weekly meeting which is obligatory for everyone.

VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT The code of conduct refers to behavioural principles or standards developed by the project staff that community volunteers are expected to uphold while rendering services. Make sure that it is based on humanitarian principles, equality and respect for diversity.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY You should be aware of the policy and practical safety issues: workplace safety and security, injuries while volunteering, emergency evacuation procedures. There should be a mention of the health insurance offered too.

Training and Mentoring

An efficient training must be aligned with the organization's mission and enable you to do your tasks more efficiently and effectively. Much volunteer orientation and training take place online whereas other programs teach volunteers 'on-the-job'. Mentoring is considered a highly effective training strategy. Training

a new volunteer by pairing her/him with an experienced high functioning volunteer or a mentor volunteer who will provide friendly support to the new volunteer is a technique used a lot in the case of immigrant volunteers. Therefore, the new volunteer is matched with a fellow volunteer who shares experience,

wisdom and skills and can pass on their legacy to the new recruit.

Be sure that the organization provides a volunteer orientation that will overcome any language and intercultural barriers and be based on face-to-face communication to deal with oral misunderstandings. Organizations should provide cross-cultural awareness or diversity training

to staff, both paid and volunteer.

Diversity training is a course of instruction aimed at building the participants' cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills in order to benefit an organization by protecting against civil rights violations, by increasing the inclusion of different identity groups, and by promoting better teamwork.

Support and Supervision

” It is important to always feel you have support to perform to the best of your abilities.“

Some organizations hold group induction and self-assessment sessions in which old and new volunteers exchange ideas, evaluate their progress, discuss ways to improve. Supervision provides an opportunity to assess the training

needs and ascertain whether you receive adequate support. There can be formal supervision sessions with your Volunteer Supervisor. Don't hesitate to share your concerns and doubts. This is also a valuable feedback for the organization.

Recognition

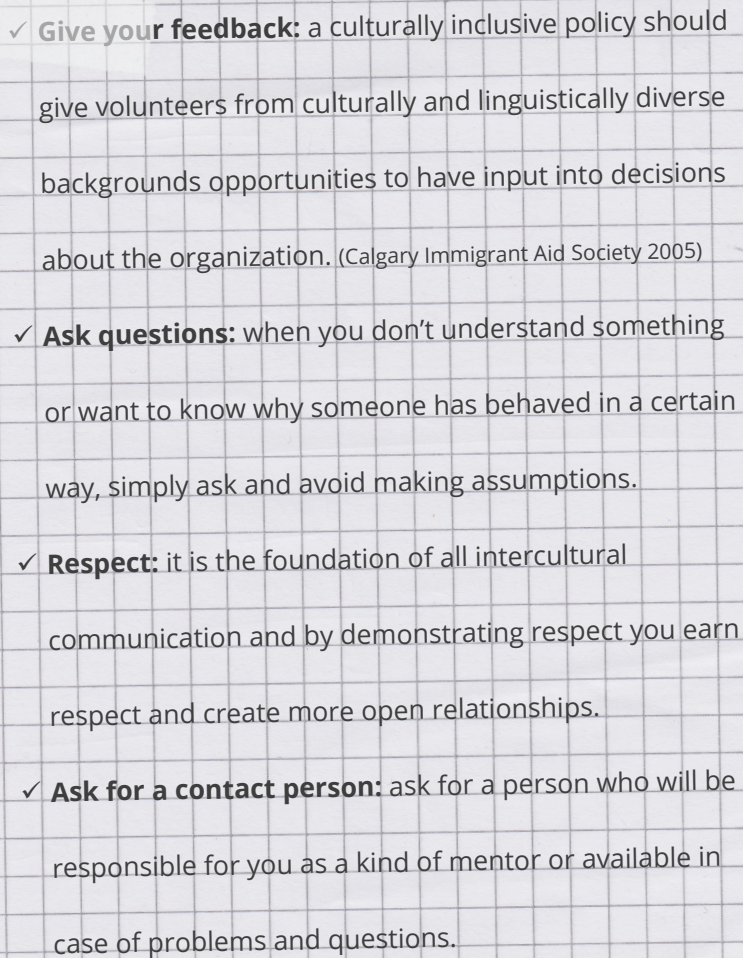
Organizations often show their gratitude to volunteers by involving them in the decision-making, by celebrating an achievement or after

successful completion of volunteer program, by giving an award, organizing a dedicated event, giving a certificate or a reference letter.

What should you keep in mind while volunteering?

Although volunteering is not a paid job it comes with a moral obligation as there are still people relying on you, so keep in mind these tips in order to give the best impression and get the most out of this experience.

- ✓ **Be punctual:** it is important to arrive on time and remain committed to the schedule you have agreed to.
- ✓ **Be professional:** share your skills and background where possible, as it will enrich the knowledge shared. Respect confidentiality and organizational rules.
- ✓ **Be willing to learn:** be ready to know new things through training and when you are unsure, don't be afraid to ask you supervisor questions. (Volunteers Benevoles Canada 2012)
- ✓ **Be patient:** working in an intercultural environment can be frustrating and things may not get done when expected. Patience with yourself and others helps address how to avoid similar incidents in the future.

- 
- ✓ **Give your feedback:** a culturally inclusive policy should give volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds opportunities to have input into decisions about the organization. (Calgary Immigrant Aid Society 2005)
 - ✓ **Ask questions:** when you don't understand something or want to know why someone has behaved in a certain way, simply ask and avoid making assumptions.
 - ✓ **Respect:** it is the foundation of all intercultural communication and by demonstrating respect you earn respect and create more open relationships.
 - ✓ **Ask for a contact person:** ask for a person who will be responsible for you as a kind of mentor or available in case of problems and questions.

✓ **The written word:** your mother tongue is probably not the local language and you may read more proficiently than you speak. It is a good idea to ask for written details.

✓ **Self-reflect:** take time to reflect on your own communication and see where you can improve it. (ibid; IOM: 43-45)

✓ **Find the right balance between overburdening or insufficiently challenging yourself:** it is especially important to find the right level of challenge in a volunteering task.

Conclusions

This guide can be a very useful tool for volunteer immigrants, as it clarifies misunderstandings about the meaning of volunteering and it provides a step-by-step information on how to look for a volunteer opportunity.

Notwithstanding, there are few conditions that can limit the number of volunteer opportunities offered to immigrants and their engagement.

First, to acquire full access to the sources of information, it requires that immigrants have already developed a network of friends or are familiar with social media platforms.

Otherwise, they can be excluded from volunteering opportunities because of the lack of the information or the insufficient advertisement of volunteer programs by the organizations.

Moreover, there are many volunteer opportunities that although they are open to immigrants, they are not prepared adequately to receive them in their volunteer programs. One of the reasons is that organizations have not included cultural inclusive values in their policies and procedures or they have not implemented diversity training to their employees and volunteers, resulting to cultural ignorance, racism and prejudices. To overcome language and intercultural barriers, the organization should redesign their programs to receive immigrants in the workplace. Promoting diversity by recruiting immigrant volunteers, leads to understanding of cultural sensitivities and can contribute to the true integration of new members in the society. Bringing together different segments of a population can help build strong relationships and understanding.

” Promoting diversity by recruiting immigrant volunteers, leads to understanding of cultural sensitivities and can contribute to the true integration of new members in the society. Bringing together different segments of a population can help build strong relationships and understanding. “

Annex

Volunteer stories of immigrants' experiences

Meet Hameed from Afghanistan who is a volunteer at our Multifunctional Centre for refugees and migrants in Athens.



he was accommodated in Moria Reception camp together with other young, single men. **Hameed didn't know anyone but he started playing football, an activity organized by the Red Cross, and taking part in other Red Cross activities and soon after he himself became a Red Cross volunteer in the camp.**

He comes 3 times weekly to offer his help at the hotline of the Centre, where refugees can get help in their own language, for instance to get an appointment with a doctor, the municipality or the asylum service. This can otherwise seem like a jungle for a refugee in a foreign country and with no knowledge of the local language.

Hameed came to Greece on the Island of Lesbos in September 2016, where

When he moved to Athens in December last year after obtaining asylum in Greece, it was natural for him to continue as a volunteer for the Red Cross this time in the Multifunctional Centre.

"I received help from people in the Centre after I arrived in Athens", Hameed is saying. "right now, they are helping me to sort out my asylum

papers. So, I would also like to help other people. Because I am a refugee myself, I understand how difficult it can be, for an elderly person especially, to find their way around Athens or take the bus to a place they have never been before. In the

hotline, I help collecting information from the people who call. I fill the information into the database so that the social workers can help them arrange an appointment or what it is that they need."

” I received help from people in the Centre after I arrived in Athens [...] So, I would also like to help other people. Because I am a refugee myself, I understand how difficult it can be, for an elderly person especially, to find their way around Athens or take the bus to a place they have never been before. “

Hameed also uses some of the services at the Multifunctional Centre, when he is not volunteering. He has e.g. just started an evening class to learn Greek. He also gets to know some of the other volunteers in the Centre that he sometimes meets in town to drink coffee and talk. He also plays football after he moved to Athens. He met some of the other

refugees with who he played with in Lesvos, and they have arranged to train twice a week and on Saturdays they sometimes organize friendly matches with local Greek teams.

The Red Cross Multifunctional Centre in Athens is funded by the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid.

Meet ZuT_M, a Togolese citizen living in Berlin who volunteered for a period of one year in a German Kindergarten within the framework of an exchange program for migrant volunteers in 2014.

His initial motivation when starting his voluntary work was to get in touch with the German culture and to learn the German language. He was also hoping, not only to successfully finish the voluntary social year, but also to

get the possibility to stay in Germany afterwards and to start a vocational training. Therefore, he wanted to understand the German structures, ways of working and work processes.

„ (...) I can proudly look back on that time and state that I achieved my goals. Additionally, I learned a not only a lot about Germany and Germans but also much on an interpersonal basis and I cleared up many stereotypes. I am sure that this is based on reciprocity.“

Meet FrG_F, who lives in Hanover. He is the founder of an encounter project with refugees in Hanover that is involved in different kinds of activities with mostly adult volunteers.

Using various kinds of activities FrG_F and her team try to shed light on the perceptions and perspectives of refugees living in Germany. In this way, both groups, refugees and the public, can meet each other, learn about each other and reduce possible prejudice. She highlighted in her interview that

refugees and migrants are often associated with a “victimhood” and that she wanted to contribute with her work to a change of that perception of the public:

“(...) by letting them tell their own story, instead of telling our presumption of their story.”

Meet MoS_M, living in Berlin. He is a Syrian citizen who migrated to Germany as a refugee in 2015.

He participated in a voluntary social for refugees, initiated by the German ministry, in order to support refugees with integration and the acquisition of language and work skills. In his social year, he worked for a youth club with a focus on schools' students from a Turkish/Arabic background.

After he successfully finished the voluntary social year, he found a work in his initial field of experience as an engineer in Berlin. He reported that he experienced a strong impact on the students he worked with during his social voluntary year:

” I was the first Muslim those children got to know who actually studied at a university. They were confused with me – I was Arabic but punctual (laughs), I was not violent, I did not have any stereotypes about Jews or women, I even got along very well with the leader of our organization who was actually Jewish himself. I think that had definitely an influence on those kids.“

Meet Arif a volunteer with migrant background in Innsbruck.

His ancestors migrated to Austria from Turkey 30 years ago in order to look for better job opportunities and he is the second generation who was born in Austria. Although his ancestors have been living in Austria for ages, he still deals with integration

problems because of some prejudices against his background.

When he was 15 years old, he decided to seek opportunities in civil society organizations in order to overcome integration obstacle. He started working in a local NGO working for adults



with low educational level and he continues to work in this NGO as a volunteer now (he currently works in a company and he gets involved in volunteering activities when he finds time for it). From the beginning of his ex-

perience as a volunteer, he has been taking part in different local projects in order to support the target group in his NGO. He says about the experience: **“It was exciting but also scaring for me at the beginning. However, it is a great experience to be a part of local society and having new contacts from Innsbruck and Tyrol region every day.”** Moreover, he stated that volunteering enabled him to acquire new skills and competences which he can benefit from in his professional career.

Meet Bakary from Mali who is a volunteer at Cidis Onlus in Perugia, Italy.

Arrived in Lampedusa in 2011, as an unaccompanied foreign minor, Bakary is now 24 and holds a long-term residence permit. He came to know Cidis' activity when he moved to Naples and started to volunteer helping migrants with their integration process, while learning Italian.

Once in Naples, Bakary carried out the basic functions of the cultural mediator, helping migrants for services and activities of translation and interpretation. During that period, he spent his spare time to help other migrants to



understand the new community. **His determination has added value to Cidis' activity in Naples, which soon became Bakary's 'second house'. In Bakary's own words, “a place where he made friends” and found a 'true family'.**

Bakary's involvement in Cidis' activity took many forms but his involvement in the human library of several antidiscrimination campaigns has confirmed the importance of dialogue in overcoming prejudices. Young and talented with a special easy-going attitude, a gift that made his communication with the public effective and unique, Bakary is an added value, for any organization

engaged in the promotion of migrant's rights and of a more inclusive society. Having been an unaccompanied minor himself, Bakary is very sensitive to the unaccompanied minors' issue and has volunteered as an ambassador in the "Never Alone" project targeting this particular and vulnerable category.

In Bakary's own words:

” (...) through volunteering I have achieved more than given away. I have learnt so much... language, friends, places, new experiences, more that i could ever wished for! “

Meet Mrunamyee from India, who volunteers with Cidis Onlus in Perugia, Italy

Mrunmayee came to Italy in 2016 to pursue her Master Degree to teach Italian as a foreign language.

She volunteers with Cidis Onlus as a cultural mediator, Italian teacher and a community mobilizer. "The role of a mediator" - she says - "is very challenging, it requires both professional skills as well as personal skills. A mediator works as a bridge between migrants and Italian different bodies, playing a fundamental role in the cur-

rent society".

Mrunamyee has worked in several places like hospitals, courts, schools etc. and helped people who have a scarce knowledge of Italian language and the rules and regulations of this country.

"The smile on the faces at the end of the mediation or lecture is what keeps me going" she says, underlining her motivation.

” The smile on the faces at the end of the mediation or lecture is what keeps me going” she says, underlining her motivation. “



She is also a community mobilizer and organizes several mobilization events to raise awareness among the immigrant community and help them resolve is-

sues related their stay in Italy. After finishing her degree, she plans to pursue her passion for teaching and mediation by concentrating on them on a full-time basis.

In Manu's own words **“Volunteering is can be so meaningful on a personal level and professional one. Life is very busy but we must find time for others in need!”**

List of organizations where you can volunteer

Greece

METADRASI

<https://metadrasi.org/>
email: info@metadrasi.org
tel: (+30) 214 100 8700

MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES (MSF)

<https://msf.gr/>
email: <https://msf.gr/contact-us>
tel: (+30) 210 5 200 500

HELLENIC RED CROSS (IFRC)

www.redcross.gr
email: informatics@redcross.gr
tel: (+30) 210 36 13 848

ELIX

<https://www.elix.org.gr>
email: elix@elix.org.gr
tel: (+30) 2103825506

PRAKSIS

<https://www.praksis.gr>
email: info@praksis.gr
tel: (+30) 210 520 5200

Italy

BAOBAB EXPERIENCE

<https://baobabexperience.org/>
email: baobabexperience@gmail.com

SPERANZA-HOPE FOR CHILDREN ONLUS

<http://www.speranza-hopeforchildren.org/>
email: volontarihope@gmail.com
tel: (+39) 0464 510025

MEDITERRANEAN HOPE

<https://www.mediterraneanhope.com/>
email: mh@fcei.it
tel: (+39) 06 4825 120

FONDAZIONE PROGETTO ARCA ONLUS

<https://www.progettoarca.org>
email: info@progettoarca.org
tel: (+39) 02.66.715.266

**MOVIMENTO COOPERAZIONE
INTERNAZIONALE (MO.C.I)**

<http://www.mocimondo.org/>

email: mocimondo@tin.it

tel: (+39) 0984-414713

Germany

CARITAS DEUTSCHLAND

<https://www.caritas.de>

email: info@caritas.de

**ARBEITSGEMEINSCHAFT MIGRANTIN-
NEN, MIGRANTEN UND FLÜCHTLIN-
GE IN NIEDERSACHSEN (AMFN E.V.)**

<http://www.amfn.de>

email: info@amfn.de

HAUS DER RELIGIONEN

<https://www.haus-der-religionen.de>

email: info@haus-der-religionen.de

MENTOR

<https://www.mentor-leselernhelfer.de/>

email: [mentor-leselernhelfer-hannover@
htp-tel.de](mailto:mentor-leselernhelfer-hannover@htp-tel.de)

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University of Calabria, Leibniz University Hanover, Verein Multikulturell, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki & Hellenic Red Cross (2018) "Volunteering Among Immigrants" National Reports Italy, Germany, Austria, Greece, European Commission

The **Guide for Immigrant Volunteers** provides orientation for people in search for their first volunteer opportunity as well as for a new role in the volunteer sector. It introduces into the meaning of volunteering itself, outlining the motives of and benefits for volunteers and the social impact that they can create. Furthermore it offers insights into the recruitment process of most organizations and gives a series of tips for finding the suitable volunteering opportunity and making the most of this experience. The guide includes personal stories of migrant volunteers in various countries and finally offers a list of volunteer-involved organizations and their contact details in Greece, Italy, Germany and Austria.



WEBSITE

www.vai-project.eu

MAIL

info@vai-project.eu

FACEBOOK | TWITTER | INSTAGRAM

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