



THE INCLUSIVE POTENTIAL IN PRACTICE

VOLUNTEERING TEAMS IN THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

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What makes group volunteering so special and inclusive?

Dear Reader,

First things first – Volunteering teams of the European solidarity corps are a wonderful format!

With this publication, we – Salto European Solidarity Corps – would like to present the variety of possibilities and showcase on concrete examples from practice of how inclusive potential is already being implemented by some organisations.

What makes group volunteering so special and inclusive?

This has a positive impact on the project results and allows all participants to have exciting experiences and reach maximum learning success. Additionally, it helps youth who would like to volunteer, but may feel overwhelmed if they do it alone, by reducing this barrier through team volunteering.

The availability of various volunteering opportunities and topics to work on in various contexts allows everyone to find something that is right for them. Examples could include implementing a holiday programme for children and adolescents, renovating a youth club, participating in nature conservation projects, or getting involved in non-profit organisations dedicated to sports or cultural events. Most projects share a common characteristic – their hands-on nature. Language becomes irrelevant, and the final outcome is something the group can be proud of. The impact on the local community is generally quite visible in most projects.

During the interviews led by the authors of this format, they noticed a spark in the eyes of the project managers during the discussion. These volunteer managers described the barriers they faced, but also how this format supported their goals and helped everyone grow, including organisations and volunteers.

We hope you will also be filled with enthusiasm and join us in exploring the vast understanding of inclusion and diversity within the European Solidarity Corps, through the Volunteering Teams format, with a view to promoting a fair and just society that benefits all.

With all this in mind: happy reading!

Barbara Eglitis

SALTO European Solidarity Corps

1. BASICS

WHAT IS A VOLUNTEERING TEAM?

In the Volunteering Teams, young people from all over Europe engage in non-profit projects within a group and support European social cohesion - concretely on the ground. The format is especially aimed at young people with fewer opportunities.

The European Solidarity Corps supports teams of volunteers: Groups of young people from different countries aged 18 to 30 working together on a community service project.

An organisation can apply and coordinate a Volunteering Team activity with or without partner organisation(s). Institutions that work with young people with less opportunities than their peers of the same age can also use this format to send 'their' young people to a Volunteering Team.

*10 – 40 international and local volunteers
from at least 2 countries
in the age of 18 – 30 y.*

Duration: 2 weeks – 2 months

*¼ of volunteers must be from a country other
than the country where the activity takes place.*



CUBIC ASSOCIATION...

...offers a great learning experience for young people who would otherwise have little chance to gain experience abroad and creates a diverse group for the Volunteering Teams.

...is part of a network of international partner organisations that work closely together: Rückenwind (Tail wind)

...ensures that volunteers are closely and professionally supervised by trained social workers who are employed for the duration of the project.

...embodies inclusion as an organisational mindset...

I will definitely do a Volunteering Team again, "because it really is a special opportunity for young people".

CAVE PARK GRABOVACA...

...involves the local community in the work of the Volunteering Teams in various ways and creates long-term connections and active exchange.

...sustainably strengthens the community and close local cooperation with the support of Volunteering Teams.

I will definitely do Volunteering Team again because: „Our community definitely needs it and our village comes alive in the summer when the volunteers are here“.

LIVING EXPERIENCES

GAIA...

...provides an opportunity for Kosovo youth to gain international and intercultural experience with Volunteering Teams. They meet not only foreign youth, but also volunteers from different population groups in Kosovo, who they probably would not meet in this way in everyday life.

...brings an international dimension to the village with the Volunteering Team.

...implements their project in a place where many young people have greater obstacles to participating in international projects.

I will definitely do Volunteering Team again, „because it's always refreshing to see people connecting and forgetting their own limits“.

SPOLEK HVOZD...

...organises Volunteering Team as a holistic concept for ecological construction and environmental education in rural areas.

...presents a concept that is easy to replicate with his team of volunteers.

...focuses on environmental education.

I will definitely do Volunteering Team again, "because I want to stay in the countryside, I want to shape this place and the volunteers keep it 'alive'".

VILLA...

...is living diversity and inclusion. People with and without disabilities design an accessible community garden and gather a great deal of passion and commitment.

What makes the project so 'living inclusive'? On the one hand, the garden itself, as different teams of volunteers create it with the least possible obstacles. And on the other hand, the garden is used all year round as a community garden, where people with and without disabilities can garden together and learn from and with each other in a relaxed atmosphere.

"We definitely do Volunteering Team again! The planning for the next summer has already started".

RIENCES



"Volunteering Team is not a stand-alone event, but a part of a wide, aiming the goal of lived inclusion and diversity".

JUGENDAKADEMIE WALBERBERG...

...thanks to its hands-on approach, it provides particularly limited access to international encounters. Volunteers (even without fluent foreign language knowledge or previous mobility experience) can create something very concrete together. They participate in practical activities and experience the feeling of success that comes from creating something with their own hands, meeting new people, and broadening their horizons.

By working in their own sustainable education centre, where local and regional food can be served and with their holistic approach, they get a high multiplier effect.

We have many long-term local partnerships.

LEIPZIG (GERMANY)

VILLA

The VILLA in Leipzig is a socio-cultural centre with various work areas: Children's and Youth club, café, Maker space, etc. Having various cooperation partners, the VILLA has been actively forming and shaping life in and around Leipzig for over 30 years now. One of the focuses of their work is international youth work, and Volunteering Teams are part of it.



Project framework

It is a garden project that has been continuously developed for years by inclusive and very diversified teams. Together with a local partner, 'gemeinsam-grün e.V.' (<https://www.gemeinsamgrün-leipzig.de/new/>), an accessible (and in the near future barrier-free) educational garden 'SALVIA' appeared. Since 2019, an inclusive, international team of volunteers has met here once a year, between late August and early September. On the one hand, this team of volunteers puts through their steps all that has been created in the garden so far, and on the other hand, implements a different new project in the garden each year, in collaboration with a local special school. This area was abandoned and neglected before it was turned into a garden. So, first of all, it had to be made usable for its current purpose. So far, cultivated areas have been created and the old bungalows have been renovated. What has appeared over the years: a tool and bungalow, a kitchen bungalow, various raised garden beds (some of them also wheelchair accessible), and a barrier-free composting toilet.

Long-term planning has become much easier through funding secured by the Lead-quality label. As a result, there is now a lot more time for the concrete preparation of the Volunteering Team and there is no need to wait (in limbo) for a firm commitment of funding.

Social impact

The VILLA Leipzig wants to further integrate European projects into local contexts. In the course of this project, a high level of visibility among local people was noted and a more active social mix is desired.

The garden Volunteering Team project described here is based in a district in Leipzig that is not originally marked

by great diversity. But the visibility of different volunteers taking part in the project, and the open dialogue benefits everyone – residents and volunteers. There are many informal opportunities to meet in everyday life for people who otherwise would likely never meet. This automatically leads to an expansion of one's wealth of experience.

This diversity of our society can be seen and experienced in this small microcosm – the garden. And those who are involved are made stronger by a sense of accomplishing something together. Everyone has different strengths and abilities to contribute. It is lived solidarity, tolerance and helpfulness.

All those involved continuously learn with each challenge and make the project better year after year. As VILLA emphasises, this would obviously not be possible without strong local cooperation partners.

Partner organisations

The VILLA has been cooperating with a local partner (gemeinsam-grün. e.V.) since 2019. It is gemeinsam-grün. e.V. that brings technical garden and landscape expertise and sets the practical framework of the project.

In addition to this local partner, VILLA has developed a wide network of international partner organisations over the years. These existing partnerships develop regularly and are part of additional training and network meetings.

The core project team usually consists of a full-time staff member of VILLA, two gemeinsam-grün. e.V. employees, two local team members (as group management), a school social worker and a special class teacher who cooperates during the respective year.

This diversity of our society can be seen and experienced in this small microcosm – the garden.

Accompanying activities & mentoring

Volunteers taking part in the Volunteering Team meet in Leipzig for 15 days. The first week focuses on getting to know each other and developing the team. In week two, the team works in the garden with the cooperating special school class (8-10 students). The young people are accompanied by a school social worker and a teacher, plus two team members of VILLA (who are also part of the team) and the gemeinsam grün e.V. employees.



At the end of the first week, the international volunteers visit the cooperating special school and get to know the school and especially the class they will spend the second week with. They have breakfast together at the school and have the opportunity to get to know the school students a bit better in their familiar environment. This helps to significantly reduce the psychological barrier for the students and makes it much easier for them to work together in the garden in the 2nd week.

On one of the two weekends, a summer party is held, where all those involved and many people from the neighbourhood get together. Guided tours through the garden are offered on this occasion (partly offered by the volunteers themselves).

The teams often come up with further activities, such as internships or participation in a long-term voluntary service abroad. Volunteers can also discover new talents and use this experience to shape their future (professional) life. It is great to have different formats connected and combined. As an institution, you can also apply for Erasmus+ funding for the participants (in addition to the described Volunteering Team) and combine various EU funding formats.

Various contact persons from the responsible national agencies are available for advice.

Selection of participants

The application for the Volunteering Teams is possible through the European Solidarity Corps portal. Some young people who apply are already supported by a corresponding sending organisation. If a volunteer does not have a sending organisation yet, VILLA provides direct support or helps in finding a sending organisation in the volunteer's country (using its large cooperation network). Having a sending organisation (as in the classic short or long-term voluntary services) is recommended but not mandatory for this format, due to the awarded quality-seal.

In addition to the ESC portal, VILLA also advertises the project through its own mailing list and networks.

During the preparation, the VILLA team ensures that not too many volunteers need interpretation into different languages, need assistance or have learning difficulties and possibly need translation into simple language, are involved in one project at the same time. Overall, the VILLA team places great importance on inclusiveness, but also ensures that all needs are met within the available resources.

Usually, one or two volunteers from one country will participate. In particular, if a volunteer needs more support, the VILLA team suggests that they join the Volunteering Team with a peer from their country. The fact that a young person can travel with another volunteer from their own country automatically lowers the inhibition threshold.

In 2022, 15 young people with and without disabilities, with or without migration experience (aged 19 to 25) from 10 different countries (Portugal, France, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Latvia, Romania, Ukraine and Germany) took part in the garden Volunteering Team project in VILLA. In recent years, volunteers from Greece, Slovenia, Russia, the Czech Republic and Iraq (with refugee background) have also participated, as well as a class from a school in Leipzig (with 15 students).

Preparation

VILLA and the supporting sending organisations prepare and accompany the volunteers individually. There is also a major digital preparatory meeting for all volunteers and support staff members. In addition, individual consulting happens constantly. The greater the specific needs of a volunteer, the more intensively they are clarified prior to the beginning of the project. VILLA also supports volunteers with difficulties registering on the ESC portal or entering the final reports.

Accommodation and meals

Volunteers are accommodated in nearby accessible holiday accommodations with self-catering. All food expenses are covered, the volunteers prepare their own meals.

Everyone meets in the garden for lunch. There are rotating cooking teams (consisting of volunteers and students of the participating local school) who cook for everyone.

In order to be mobile on their own, volunteers have bicycles if they can ride a bike. If that is not possible for physical or other reasons, volunteers use the bus or train, or a rickshaw is hired, driven by other volunteers. This is lived solidarity.

Early communication, including from support organisations in the sending countries, is very important. VILLA also prepared a detailed info kit that lists, among other things, what volunteers can expect, what the accommodation looks like, and what work clothes they should bring with them, so that everyone is well prepared when they arrive.



Mastering challenges and crisis

As a preventive measure, all possible requirements and needs will be discussed in advance: in a personal conversation, via e-mail, with the volunteers or with the sending organisation.

The quality that can be guaranteed here is mainly possible when many people have abilities for appropriate coordination. Event preparation is very intensive, and can only be ensured by full-time staff members.

Safety at work is always a challenge. Therefore, corresponding briefings and written materials in several languages were prepared. They are sent in advance and discussed again on the first day of the project.

Above all, awareness raising is always thrilling. Each volunteer is asked to pay attention to their own needs, as well as the needs of others, and to keep the group's wishes in mind.

Invisible needs are also challenging. For example, volunteers who have been victims of bullying in the past, or who had or still have eating disorders. How nice it is, when volunteers, after some time of self-discovery and encouraged by the group experience, find their place and their self-esteem grows. In general, creating good framework conditions contributes to creating a good learning environment. This includes suitable accommodation, right activities in the garden, use of language mediators (people who have a good sense of communication and keep an eye on the communication flow), and special attention to group dynamics. All this creates an overall safe and trusting environment.

Finances

What was funded through the European Solidarity Corps (ESC)?

Travel costs (travelling to the project venue and back home) were reimbursed to the volunteers as real costs. Transport within the project was covered by organisational costs.

Volunteers are also paid pocket money per day (set by the programme) directly. The volunteers are free to spend the pocket money, which means it does not have to be spent for the project.

The lump sum for organisational support and management costs covered the costs for accommodation, meals and materials. In addition, there are the inclusion costs, which can be used to cover the costs for the participation of volunteers with disabilities and any additional costs incurred in that regard.



What is covered by the ESC-funding?

Funding for Volunteering Teams cannot (and should not) fully cover personnel costs. If the full-time position of the VILLA project coordinator has not been co-financed by other sources, it should certainly not have been fully covered. At the same time, this personnel deployment is necessary to achieve high-quality project implementation. If alternative funding sources are available for personnel costs, the lump sum and funding for project implementation will be sufficient.

Co-financing / further grants

In the case of VILLA, employees who are permanently employed by VILLA are financed through other fundings (e.g. municipal or state funding).

Furthermore, a lot of co-financing also takes place through material donations. For example, work equipment provided by gemeinsam-grün e.V., vegetables and fruits that can be grown in the garden and then used in meals for the volunteers, etc.

Close cooperation with the special school, covering the costs for the school's social worker and the teacher as support personnel also plays a major supporting role.

Exceptional costs

Exceptional costs can also be covered through the Volunteering Teams grant, if needed. In this case, for example, it can be the above-mentioned rickshaw rental for a participant with disability, translation services, or a stool for a volunteer of a smaller stature, needed to enable equal participation for everyone.



PERUŠIĆ (CROATIA)

CAVE PARK GRABOVACA

The Cave Park Grabovaca is a public facility in Perušić that protects numerous caves, mostly geomorphological natural monuments. Some caves are open to the public. The park offers guided tours, organises educational programmes in the field of nature and environmental protection and hosts international volunteers in various formats.



The Cave Park Grabovaca runs two Volunteering Teams projects per year. The organisation is also an ESC ambassador for integration and diversity in Croatia.

Project framework

In 2022, the Cave Park Grabovaca team carried out two consecutive Volunteering Teams projects with 20 people and a duration of 40 and 30 days. The projects included different elements:

- Training for international volunteers (and local young people) on biodiversity, nature conservation, climate change, education and practical skills development.
- Together with scientists from Croatian universities, volunteers dedicated themselves to one archaeological or restoration project, such as removing graffiti from the cave walls or exposing the original cave floor.
- Language school and summer school: in the morning, volunteers looked after children from the region (and beyond, because of the good reputation of the summer and language schools). International volunteers offered language courses in their native languages and carried out environmental education programmes suitable for children. The children's families and local population around the cave park were involved.
- Solidarity Days: through various campaigns, volunteers presented their work to visitors of the cave park, organised cleaning campaigns and intercultural events. The Cave Park Grabovaca also presented its role as ESC ambassador for integration and diversity.

Social impact

„We don't just feel the growth within participants, we feel it all around“

Partnerorganisation

„When we work with partners, they need to be human first of all“

For the first project in 2015, Grabovaca Cave Park contacted the Croatian National Agency for assistance in finding partner organisations. They got the contacts of one French organisation. Now, Cave Park Grabovaca cooperates with many different organisations in Georgia, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Ukraine and other countries. Nowadays, for example, the coordinator can find contacts for new partnerships in the European training calendar.

Most recently, he attended a seminar in Greece on the topic of 'Sustainability in Micro-Communities' and found exchange and network opportunities with organisations working on similar topics. The Cave Park Grabovaca signs a partnership agreement with every partner organisation (with exact description of cooperation field and tasks distribution). According to the programme, these agreements are not mandatory but have proved very useful in cooperation with international partners.

„Having good partners is a good thing because you don't have to be expert in all fields if you have partners that are!“

3.2 CAVE PARK GRABOVACA | PERUŠIĆ (CROATIA)

„Having good partners is a good thing because you don't have to be expert in all fields if you have partners that are!”

„Through the project we try to make an experience possible which participants never had before and we finance this: go to the cinema in the city nearby, make trips in the area, etc.”

Accompanying activities & mentoring

The partner organisations organise at least three online preparatory meetings. The cave park team places great importance on this. In addition, volunteers receive a detailed information package.

During a volunteering team project, two mentors from the group were involved – male and female – who can be contacted by the volunteers at any time and who, together, reflect on what has been learned through individual

and group discussions. Before taking on this task, they attended training for mentors. Also, at the local level, a number of local buddies were participated in free time activities with volunteers and helped international volunteers integrate into village life. Most of the buddies are former summer school participants.

Participants

In order to find volunteers, the Cave Park Grabovaca publishes its call for applications on the European Solidarity Corps portal and receives numerous applications.

„We became popular in volunteering teams world”.

Applicants receive a questionnaire that asks them, in a careful and mindful way, if they need additional support (since many do not mention their special needs in their application). The group is put together based on these questionnaires. About half of the group participants face geographic, social, economic or health barriers. Creating a group is a conscious decision made by the Cave Park Grabovaca, aiming for more diversity and inclusion.

Our experience has shown that many volunteers with fewer opportunities return in the following year.

„When we created the group, they immediately helped others in the group not just in the project but with inclusion, with everything.”





Finances

The budget is sufficient for the setting up of Volunteering Teams. The funding is used to pay the expenses and fees of mentors and academic staff. However, coordination and planning are possible through institutional state funding for the coordinator position.

Accommodation and meals

The volunteers were accommodated in shared dormitories, in three houses. They organise and fully take care of themselves.

Mastering challenges and crisis

In the first sessions of the Volunteering Teams, Cave Park Grabovaca entrusted the partner organisations to prepare the volunteers, without any prior arrangements. However, they often noticed that the partner organisations had all the information but did not pass it on to the volunteers. Therefore, the volunteers were often not prepared or not satisfied because they had different expectations. This is why we have made more arrangements and consulted with partner organisations, which is now also indicated in the partnership agreements.



CUBIC ASSOCIATION

INNSBRUCK (AUSTRIA)

The CUBIC Association – ‘culture and education in context’ (from the German Kultur und Bildung im Context) – is a non-profit association that implements non-formal educational projects, funded by various programmes. Through their work, the CUBIC team aims at facilitating and improving the social participation of young people and young adults. The offers are specifically aimed at disadvantaged young people. The association carries out 12 to 15 projects a year, with one or two Volunteering Teams. CUBIC is a member of the Rückenwind international network.



Project framework

In 2019, the Volunteering Teams project 'Sustainable Entertainment' and 'Radlkino Tirol' ('cinema on wheels') took place. Ten participants from Finland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal and Austria spent four weeks together near Innsbruck. In the first part of the project, the participants learned how to repair bicycles and built a bicycle cinema together – an outdoor cinema, operated solely by muscle power using four bicycles. In the second part of the project, participants produced fruit and vegetable snacks. The ingredients, which could not be bought in supermarkets, were provided by local farms. The third part consisted of building 'stations' in various communities in the region to organise cinema sessions and to provide snacks for visitors.

Highlights

CUBIC has been a member of the Rückenwind international network for many years. Through this well-established network, various partner organisations can work together, in a spirit of trust, enabling young people with various social, psychological and financial disadvantages to travel abroad and to gain experiences there. Groups are very diverse in the Volunteering Team projects. This requires professional support with a lot of experience. Therefore, three trained social workers are employed by CUBIC for the project period and support relatively small groups of about ten volunteers. In addition to the practical activities – repairing bicycles and processing food – volunteers learned from each other through their shared experiences. And they received recognition and appreciation from the communities during the public movie sessions.

Social impact

The 'Sustainable Entertainment'/'Radlkino Tirol' project promoted cultural life in rural areas – free of charge for the locals. During the cinema sessions, local residents and international volunteers had the opportunity to meet. "People do here something for us, they can do it!" This recognition of the communities showed volunteers a new level of efficiency and self-confidence.

In addition, new collaborations and networks have been established with players other than youth, for example with farmers who donated fruit for snacks.

Partner organisations

"It is important that our partners do the preparatory work, choose the participants well and prepare them".

"Due to a long cooperation, there is a lot of trust in our network and also the same approach how to deal with crises".

3.3 CUBIC ASSOCIATION | INNSBRUCK (AUSTRIA)



Accompanying activities/mentoring

All volunteers are prepared individually by the partner organisations. In some cases, on-site coordinators can accompany volunteers in the first days of the project.

At the beginning of the Volunteering Team project, a two-day training upon arrival takes place. This allows volunteers to catch up and openly discuss their learning goals and how to deal with one another. During the project, the group was supervised by three trained social workers. There are also other instructors for professional support. And two more staff members coordinated the project in the back office.

Participants

All volunteers were selected by the partner institutions in a special selection process. It was a diverse group that included volunteers with disadvantaged financial background, difficult access to international activities, mental and health impairments and disabilities (such as autism).

Accommodation & meals

The volunteers were accommodated in two apartments in one house. Food and cooking was provided by volunteers, accompanied by their mentors and supporters. The experience was the subject of intense reflection and was seen as one of the learning outcomes.



Mastering challenges and crisis

Due to the long cooperation in the Rückenwind network, there is a lot of trust and a comparable approach in managing crises. The team reacted to difficulties with college advice.

There has been virtually no serious crisis so far, but there are always small crises like travel logistics – if there is a problem with the train/bus, or when participants have different paces and rhythms.

Finances

The project was successfully implemented through project funding. However, the association contributed with personnel costs for preparation and coordination.

Due to the higher inclusion costs, CUBIC did not apply for the inclusion costs via the fixed lump sum for reinforced mentorship, but rather applied for *exceptional inclusion costs*. This provides the ability to charge up to 100% for additional inclusion expenses, resulting in a higher funding overall. Three social workers were hired for the project period. This was possible with the *exceptional costs* and an additional funding from the Austrian Chamber of Labour.



„The team consists of trained social workers – the expertise is there and is important to us!“

BORNHEIM (GERMANY)

JUGENDAKADEMIE WALBERBERG

Jugendakademie Walberberg has been involved in extracurricular youth education work for 60 years. Its own seminar programme focuses on themes such as political education, sustainable development, social learning and diversity-sensitive and religious education. Jugendakademie Walberberg is a training centre that considers itself a place of religious and social diversity. A particular concern is to strengthen young people from all walks of life and to provide them with opportunities for participation.



Project framework

This was already the third time that Jugendakademie Walberberg hosted a motivated team of volunteers from Bulgaria, France, Italy and Germany. Eighteen young people from four countries and their five supporters gathered for two weeks to work on the topic of sustainability and environmental protection.

Volunteers experienced 'lived sustainability' through practical workshops, intensive reflection rounds, excursions and trips to the surrounding area. With a lot of dedication and fun some activities on the topic of 'sustainability' happened: a herb spiral was created, seating furniture and old decorations upcycled and an outside wall repainted.

Since its inception, Jugendakademie Walberberg has focused on youth inclusion. Some of the volunteering team participants have learning disabilities, financial insecurity, physical and/or psychological disabilities, family issues or a history of migration, and some - refugee background. Therefore, the main focus is placed on young people who are not traditionally involved in such projects or who have little or no mobility experience. For these young people it is often the first time they come together with other international volunteers in such a context.

Social impact

The project is characterised by strong local visibility. Jugendakademie Walberberg is so well interconnected on a regional and national level that it has a corresponding visibility among the public. Long-time partnerships connect Jugendakademie Walberberg with schools and non-school partners, for example the Catholic Youth Agency in Bonn, or the GFO-Klostergarten (monastery garden) in Merten, who were also part of the voluntary

service group. Jugendakademie Walberberg can thus be well described as a beacon and a pioneer of inclusive project work.

Partner organisations funding

As part of the 'Europe for All' network, Jugendakademie Walberberg has been working together with potential partners and volunteers for years. Contact with the target group, on the one hand, and a common understanding of education, on the other, are decisive for the successful implementation of the project with partner organisations. The latter in particular makes it possible to work together in a trusting, solution-oriented manner, even in difficult situations. Jugendakademie Walberberg has built up a solid network of partners over the years and knows each local partner organisation personally. There is almost always an intensive phase of getting to know one another at staff member meetings before common projects are launched. The aim is to build a long year of cooperation, with common criteria and standards clearly defined and established.

In particular, the seminars with a focus on 'Diversity & Inclusion', organised by the SALTO Resource Centres, are perfect for meeting potential partners and for exchanging ideas on possible joint activities. For example, last spring, one of Jugendakademie Walberberg's trainers led a similar seminar in Budapest, where the presentation on the work of the Jugendakademie Walberberg was streamed online during the seminar. After that, Jugendakademie Walberberg was contacted by a Hungarian organisation which took part in the training. The result of this initial contact was the participation in a new meeting of experts in order to plan the next cooperation partnership, combined with the suggestion of future projects.

Since its inception, Jugendakademie Walberberg has focused on youth inclusion.

3.4 JUGENDAKADEMIE WALBERBERG | BORNHEIM (GERMANY)



Accompanying activities & mentoring

Jugendakademie Walberberg and its partner organisations always meet at the start of each project with all the people involved for a joint planning meeting. Even if a possible cooperation has not yet been finalised, meetings are usually held as part of the Erasmus+ KA1 specialised mobility for youth workers, to discuss in the first place the pedagogical attitude and the possible goals of the meeting. And then develop further steps on how the project framework can look like and how the process could be.

As a rule, the project management and support persons of the partner organisations take part in these meetings.

In particular, the pedagogical attitude and the management of potential conflict situations are discussed intensively, and a basis for common action is developed. During the implementation of the Volunteering Team, the team (the 5 support persons and the project managers) meets daily to closely monitor the project and the volunteers and keep in touch with each other.

Selection of participants

Some young people were already in contact with partner organisations as part of other activities. Others were here for the first time. German volunteers come from rural areas and apply directly through the Jugendakademie Walberberg. In the sending countries, the application

goes through the relevant partner organisations, who know the young people and provide intensive support during the preparatory phase.

Preparation

Project preparation takes place in the respective partner countries through face-to-face meetings or, in one case, an online meeting. However, as each group is accompanied by a support person from its country, the shared journey and the time spent there are marked by an intensive support for young people.

Accommodation and meals

The Walberberg youth academy has its own seminary house, where young people and their companions were accommodated and had their meals. The focus here is also typical for the project: local and sustainable.



Mastering challenges and crisis

No matter the quality and intensity of the preparation, unexpected situations can happen to the group on site. Being well informed ahead of time helps, of course, but does not solve every conflict. However, intensive preparation and the ability to clearly express one's intentions and expectations help to mitigate possible surprises.

Experience has also shown that intensive and ongoing cooperation with partner organisations makes things easier. Any difficulties can be discussed and clarified directly in regular team meetings (especially during the events).

Finances

The majority of the project is funded by the European Solidarity Corps. In particular, travel to the venue and back home, as well as board and accommodation for volunteers and intensive educational support are covered. As part of the European Solidarity Corps, enhanced mentoring has been used and applied for youth with fewer opportunities and other special costs for additional support.

However, additional co-funding is needed for intensive educational support, accommodation, meals, and the preparatory meeting.



BOZEVCE (KOSOVO)

GAIA

GAIA is a non-governmental organisation that has been organising various international work camps, training courses and voluntary services in rural Kosovo since 2010. GAIA aims at ensuring that the projects implemented are socially and environmentally friendly and open to everyone. This principle is becoming increasingly important, especially for young people in Kosovo, for whom GAIA wants to create meeting places in multi-ethnic and conflict-affected Kosovo.



GAIA is part of Service Civil International – a network organisation for peace services. In addition to many other projects, GAIA has implemented three Volunteering Teams so far.

Project framework

The three-week project 'Welcome Abroad' took place in July and August 2021. 13 volunteers built a community kitchen using the straw bale technique and clay plaster. The focus was on practical joint work and at the same time on learning about natural and eco-friendly building.

Highlights

The binational group included volunteers from France and Kosovo. Travelling abroad is complicated and full of obstacles for young people from Kosovo. However, thanks to the Volunteering Team project, they were able to gain intercultural experience in their own country. „A mix of cultures within Kosovo“.

Kosovo is marked by ethnic tensions among different demographic groups. In the project, volunteers from different communities met (Serbs, Albanians, Roma...). Most volunteers do not have such meeting places in their daily lives. Mutual perspectives are strongly influenced by prejudice.

„It was really interesting to see the evolution of those participants from beginning to the end - eye opening I would say“

Social impact

GAIA is gradually trying to build trust and connection with community members. In each project, an international group of volunteers supports local neighbours in various activities, such as fruit harvesting. The village where the volunteering teams project took place is an endangered village. 30 years ago, there were 800 residents, today there are only 40. It is strange to the local people that a group of young Western Europeans come to rural Kosovo to do volunteer work. For decades, they watched young people from their community leave the countryside and go to Western Europe to make money and live in the city.

Partner organisations

In this project, GAIA collaborated with a partner organisation in Marseille. The contact was established through other projects that had already been implemented as part of the Solidarity Corps. The special feature of the project, as with all institutions in neighbouring EU regions, is that organisations in Kosovo cannot submit applications. Therefore, the French partner organisation submitted the application to the French National Agency and the project was implemented by GAIA in Kosovo.

Accompanying activities & mentoring

The partner organisation was in charge of the preparation of the French volunteers. GAIA held a joint online meeting with all volunteers beforehand. During the first few days, they got to know each other and were introduced to the project. Emphasis is placed on the introduction of safety measures at work: on-site behaviour, introduction to basic tools, etc.

“Mud made them connected and closer“.



Participants

13 volunteers responded to an open call for applications. Some were specifically contacted by partner organisations. It was not clear beforehand whether and what volunteers with special needs they would have. A volunteer from France was physically disabled and the team had to respond spontaneously and with flexibility to the situation.

„It was a useful experience to see how a person with physical disabilities can be involved, because we do believe that in natural building everyone can be included - men, woman, people from different backgrounds, different educational background can work together in something like this.“

Accommodation and meals

Volunteers were accommodated in a large shared dormitory and also shared a kitchen where they could cook as a group. Catering was coordinated by the team and the volunteers help by cooking vegetarian and, when possible, regional food.

Mastering challenges and crisis

Due to travel restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was only shortly before the project began that it was determined if the project would in fact take place. As a result, organisations had to find volunteers within three weeks.

I was also difficult to accommodate a volunteer with a physical disability, because the team was not prepared for that. Several personal meetings were held with this volunteer to discuss his needs.

„But for us, we realised that we can not host people with physical disabilities because of our infrastructure.“

In order to address the various needs in advance, it is important to describe the project infrastructure honestly and accurately, so that potential volunteers can decide for themselves whether the environment is suitable and accessible to them.

The coordination team also learned a lot about themselves during the project. It was difficult to take on different roles, responsibilities, meet the needs of volunteers and ourselves.

Issues and difficulties were discussed together as a team. The team consisted of two coordinators in charge of technical contribution and group support. A local specialist was mainly responsible for supervising the cons



struction site and another person was responsible for the group's reflection and learning process. Another person worked in administration and in the kitchen. There were daily team check and, depending on the condition, many informal one-on-one meetings for early conflict resolution.

„70 % about the volunteering teams is preparation, knowing what are you going to do, be really comfortable with the things you want to implement, be ahead of challenges not to have them to long.“

Another challenge for many projects is dealing with alcohol. Here, it is important to set out clear rules and agreements and talk openly to volunteers about the potential consequences of non-compliance. Because alcohol abuse endangers not only the safety and health in hands-on activities, but also the learning experience of individuals and the group as a whole.

Finances

The budget funded by the Solidarity Corps was sufficient for the project. While it is not yet known at the planning stage that volunteers require inclusion support, it is still possible to apply once the project has started.

I would repeat a Volunteering Team...

“because it is always so refreshing to see people mixing up and forgetting their own boundaries“.



SPOLEK HVOZD

MERBOLTICE (CZECH REPUBLIC)

The Spolek Hvozď organisation is a small rural NGO based in northern Bohemia, Czech Republic. The region's history is marked by emigration and immigration. The relationship between the people living there and the land itself is not very strong. As a result, social and societal coexistence has many challenges. Spolek Hvozď would like to respond to this by cultivating the land with permaculture and renovating the homes in an ecological and sustainable way. All in pursuit of local self-sufficiency. The six (partially honorary) staff members have been working towards this goal since 2000.



Project framework

Since 2019, Spolek Hvozď has hosted one to two Volunteering Teams per year. Each project has a different ecological-agricultural or construction focus, such as a garden project with a focus on permaculture or a project where a water-treatment plant has been built.

Highlights

In addition to the ecological-agricultural projects, Spolek Hvozď implemented a Volunteering Team in which an alcohol-free festival was organised. Alcohol consumption is a normal part of everyday life, especially in rural areas. Spolek Hvozď staff members wanted to address this and, together with international volunteers, organised a family-friendly festival – without alcohol.

Social impact

As one of the Volunteering Teams project activities, the group visits a local farm on a daily basis to learn and help.

“The farmers can see that a big group has big impact and can make a good job for local farmers”.

The alcohol-free festival, which was organised and carried out by the team of volunteers, was also aimed at the local population.

Partner organisations

Spolek Hvozď does not have a permanent partnership with any particular organisation. Depending on volunteer selection, the team collaborates with various already known or new organisations. This gives them the opportunity to learn about many different organisations and access to a large network so that volunteers from different countries can participate in their projects.

Accompanying activities & mentoring

The preparation is carried out differently by each partner organisation. However, the Spolek Hvozď team also reaches out to each volunteer personally. In online meetings, volunteers and the support team get to know each other, exchange information and ask questions.

Spolek Hvozď farms their land with permaculture and renovates their houses ecologically and sustainably, all with the aim of local self-sufficiency.



3.6 SPOLEK HVOZD | MERBOLTICE (CZECH REPUBLIC)

Participants

About ten young people always take part in Spolek Hvozď's Volunteering Teams projects. Most of them are students interested in permaculture or green building. Volunteers often come from Spain, Italy and France. The application is open through the European Solidarity Corps portal and interested parties can apply directly through it.

According to the observations made by the organisers of the Volunteering Teams, an increasing number of young people are applying in countries where the youth unemployment is high. In these contexts, young peo-



ple are probably looking for bridges and new training opportunities in order to develop new perspectives. It becomes clear that social and political crises in Europe affect both long-term voluntary services and shorter Volunteering Teams projects.

Accommodation and meals

Volunteers are accommodated in a dormitory in a house, in a tepee in the garden or in tents. Meals are prepared using local, organic and vegetarian ingredients whenever possible. Many ingredients come from local farms. The Spolek Hvozď team takes care of the catering with the help of the volunteers.

All this is part of a holistic learning experience. The environment, the attitude of the Spolek Hvozď team, the activities within the Volunteering Teams project are closely linked to the accommodation and meals of the participants. It is all about local self-sufficiency.



Mastering challenges and crisis

Fortunately, no major crises occurred during the Volunteering Teams projects carried out by Spolek Hvozď. Dealing with pandemic regulations was a challenge. Not eating meat is also a challenging experience for many volunteers. The team responded by reflecting on this experience within the group. Communication is very important to avoid conflict. A morning round is held every day to gather feedback.

Finances

Most of the budget is spent on project implementation and local organic food. Financially, it was tight, but sufficient.

Sometimes there is additional co-funding from other sources or an extra sponsoring of building materials. However, Spolek Hvozď describes that it is more difficult for a small organisation to finance personnel costs, e.g. through national fundings. Therefore, employees and supporters currently receive an expense allowance for the implementation of the project.

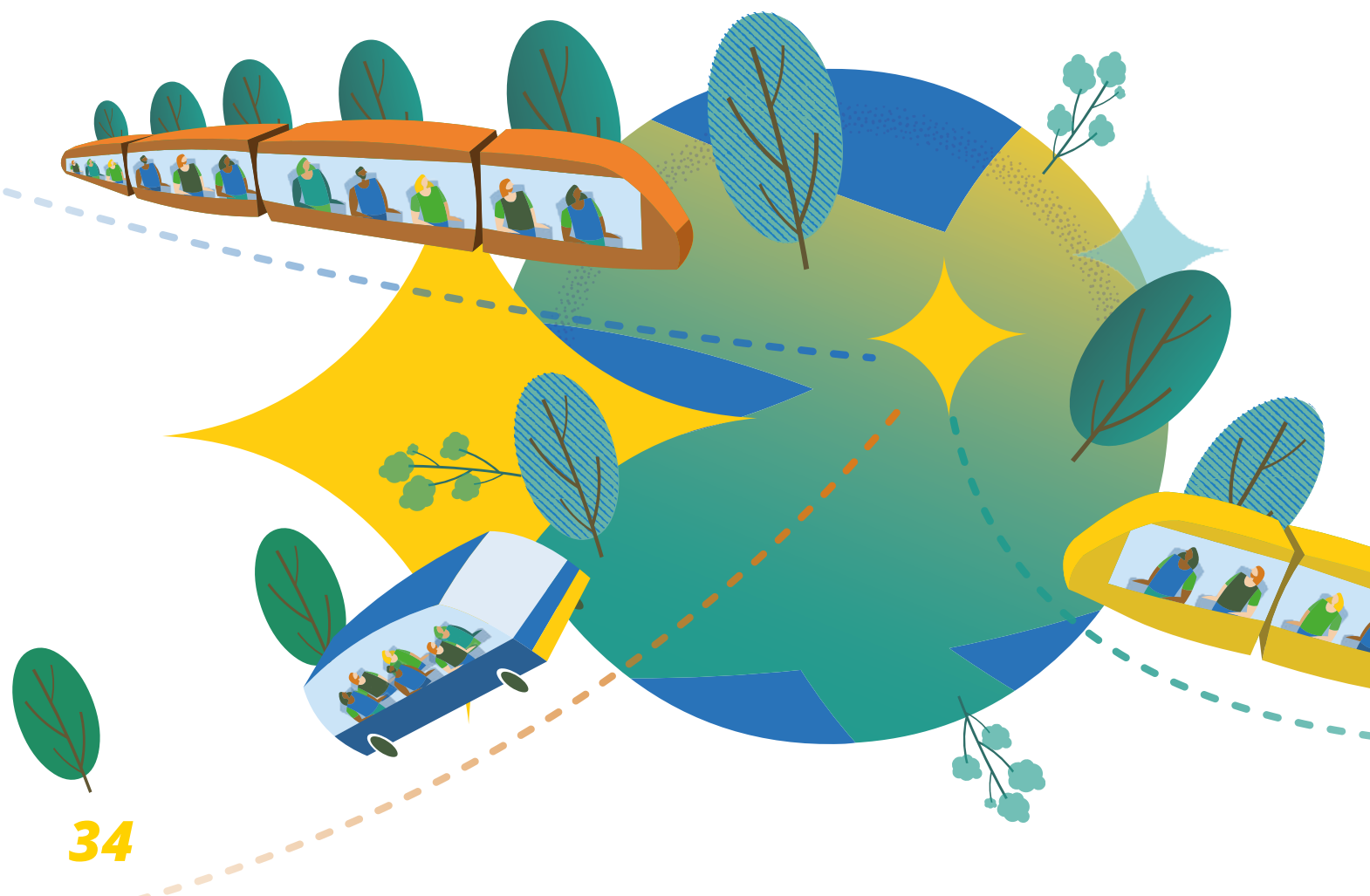


„Lunch table is the melting point“



SENDING YOUNG PEOPLE TO

VOLUNTEERING TEAMS



Helping young people gain international experience – not only as a host organisation – is exciting and important. The role of the supporting sending organisation is also essential to the success of a project.

From the perspective of the supporting (sending) organisation, having this experience can be a huge enrichment to the target group. Volunteering Team projects enable social participation and improve one's chances in working life. This offers young people the opportunity to redefine themselves in a new, completely different environment, and to have experiences that they may not have had in their familiar environment.

It strengthens self-efficacy and motivation to take the initiative, to get involved in projects and stay connected to one's own institution. It is a tool to develop perspectives and can definitely be seen as a starting format for a possible further participation in a long-term voluntary service. Young people bring not only experiences, motivation and new impetus „home“ with them, but also a piece of Europe.

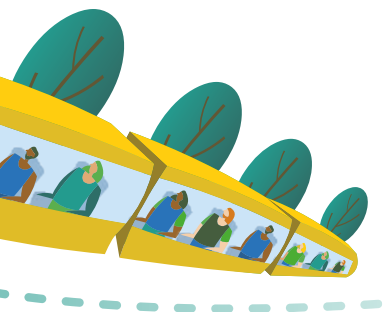
However, this enriching experience for young people should be well accompanied by the support (sending) organisation in the preparatory and follow-up phase.

It is a short format for volunteers (starting at 2 weeks) and the fact of being in a group helps to overcome the psychological barrier of being „alone“ in a new environment. The exchange with peers of the same age helps to overcome mental and real obstacles: „I never thought I could do that!“.

Support organisations can build stable long-term partnerships with other organisations through the training formats offered by National Agencies and SALTO. It is also possible to create specialised exchange programmes, financed by Erasmus+, as well as the joint development of various other formats. However, it is also possible to cooperate with different organisations on a short time basis and thus give your target group a variety of options in different countries.

Young people bring not only experiences, motivation and new impetus „home“ with them, but also a piece of Europe.

I never thought I could do that!



THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROGRAMME

HOW DOES IT WORK? BASICS AROUND FINANCES, APPLICATION, FUNDING...

Volunteering Teams are offered, applied for and carried out by one main project leading organisation. In contrast to individual voluntary services, it is sufficient for the implementation of a volunteering team activity that only the project-leading organisation has a valid quality label in the European Solidarity Corps. However, it is highly recommended as quality assurance, that the supporting organisations in the volunteer's country of residence involved, hold a Quality Label, especially when young people with fewer opportunities are participating in the project.

Projects can take place in different fields of action, such as supporting a summer kindergarten of a refugee accommodation, a reforestation project, a sports or a cultural event, or renovating a community centre. What is important is the added value to the local community. Groups may consist of a diverse mix of national volunteers and volunteers from across Europe and partner regions.

Grant request

Funding the Volunteering Teams through the European Solidarity Corps funds is possible with a co-funding, which does not cover the full cost. The budget application form is essentially reduced to the central key figures for the participation days in the various formats and for the implementation of the priority activities.

The following costs are funded

The exact amounts and lump sums can be found in the programme guidelines for each funding year. The following costs are supported for Volunteering Teams:

Funding for volunteers

Travel

Pocket money

Funding for the organisation

Management costs

E.g. planning, finances, coordination and communication between partners, administrative costs

Organisational support

Costs directly linked to implementing volunteer activities (e.g. preparation, monitoring and support of participants, validation of learning outcomes) and costs related to the subsistence of participants (e.g. accommodation, local travel).

Additional funding

Inclusion support

Contribution to costs incurred by organisations related to reinforced mentorship, i.e. preparing, implementing and monitoring tailor-made activities to support the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities.

Exceptional inclusion costs

If the costs exceed the inclusion support (lump sum), additional costs: for example costs for sign language interpretation, equipment suitable for blind people, additional language courses, social work support or personal assistance fees as well as other support services tailored to the specific needs of the volunteers can also

be applied for later during the project period (in case that individual need only becomes clear after the application has been submitted).

If at least 80% of the costs cannot be covered by the inclusion support, the costs actually incurred may be covered under exceptional costs. These costs must be reasonably justified and explained and must be approved by the National Granting Agency. When in doubt, we always recommend that you contact the National Agency as soon as possible.

Further exceptional costs

Fees and expenses associated with obtaining visas and residence permits, as well as costs related to vaccinations, medical certificates and verification requirements such as criminal record certificates. Costs associated with personal insurance for domestic activities.



Preparatory visits

Costs associated with carrying out the preparatory visit, including travel and living expenses.

A preparatory visit can be requested for projects involving young people with fewer opportunities. This way, the volunteer can visit the place where the project is taking place, together with the support organisation, get to know the team, see the project environment. Adjustments and changes may still be made when necessary. Many of the projects presented above recommend this option and consider it cost-effective for project implementation.

Funding rates vary depending on the country and project involved. All the details can be found in the **Programme handbook** of the respective application year.

Possible co-financing sources

- Coverage of actual accommodation costs (e.g., a local sports club provides accommodation);
- Food, shopping vouchers from local/municipality sponsors;
- Personnel costs for coordination covered by local or national funding sources;
- Foundations.

Inclusive potential of Volunteering Teams

The European Solidarity Corps particularly supports organisations and entities that wish to involve young people with fewer opportunities in projects. There is additional financial support for this, which is meant to help

lighten the burden and thus allow everyone to participate.

The shorter duration, the opportunity to be part of a group so that young people are encouraged to take on the adventure of volunteering, and the positive power of group dynamics create an ideal framework for organisations and volunteers to live inclusion.

Volunteering Teams are very often projects in which volunteers can get involved through manual activities (as described in the examples, for example repairing wheels, gardening, and renovating things) that often do not require many words. In addition, the European Solidarity Corps offers flexible adaptation to individual and group needs, the possibility of promoting preparatory visits and close support through intensive mentoring and support.

Volunteering Teams are also a means for a part of the group to take part in a project in their own region. (See examples of Gaia and VILLA).

What does “inclusion” stand for in the European Solidarity Corps? Who are the young people with fewer opportunities?

Participation in the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes may be difficult for people for various reasons. The European Commission has described and identified 8 obstacles for this.

1. Disability This includes all types of disabilities: physical disabilities, learning disabilities and sensory impairments.

2. Health problems This means any problem with physical or mental health, for example chronic diseases.

3. Education problems This includes all kind of problems existing with schools or trainings. For example, when young people drop out of school or when adults do not have a good education. It also includes people who are currently neither learning nor working. These are mostly obstacles that exist as a result of the education system.

4. Cultural differences These include issues arising from different cultures or languages. This can include, for example, people with refugee experience who flee to another country or who belong to a minority in their own country.

5. Social obstacles These are all obstacles that affect our coexistence in a society. Examples: a person has not learned to behave in society. A person has done something forbidden. A person is addicted to drugs or alcohol. A person comes from a family with bigger problems.

6. Financial problems Includes any financial issues, for example: a person who earns very little or has been unemployed for a long time. A person who lives

in poverty or has no home. A person who is in debt.

7. Discrimination Includes all issues related to discrimination: such as gender, age, culture, religion, opinion or a disability.

8. Geographic obstacles Means any issues that exist due to the place of residence. This applies to places that have no public transport or no good internet, for example.

To know more about inclusion in EU youth programmes, please check the diversity and inclusion strategy, to which all National Agencies are committed.



WHERE CAN I FIND MORE SUPPORT?



There are not only signposts and general information on how to start your own project with the international Volunteering Team format, but also many specific and useful tips. In this chapter, we have compiled a selection of websites that can give you useful information and tips for project implementation.

More about the European Solidarity Corps Programme

European Solidarity Corps Portal

https://youth.europa.eu/go-abroad/volunteering/opportunities_en

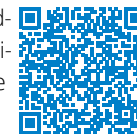
Here you will find the programme guide, all the open applications, the registration portal for all volunteers, the General Online Training (GOT) and much more information about the Solidarity Corps.



Application

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/app-forms/af-ui-opportunities/#/european-solidarity-corps>

Here you can find the latest online funding applications of the European Solidarity Corps, as well as the application for the quality label.



Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) of the European Solidarity Corps

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/mooc-esc>

This online course explores all opportunities for young people and organisations within the framework of the European Solidarity Corps, including examples of concrete projects.



Find your National Agency

https://youth.europa.eu/solidarity/organisations/contact-national-agencies_en

The first contact is always the National Agency of the European Solidarity Corps, which manages the funding and accompanies the projects. The staff will be happy to advise and support you with your project or answer your questions.



Inclusion und Diversity Strategy of the European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ Youth

www.salto-youth.net/inclusionstrategy

Here you can find more details on the inclusion and diversity strategy. Interesting for all those who first want to have an overview to better understand what it means for the European Solidarity Corps and where the focus lies.



Find a partner

OTLAS finding a partner

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/otlas-partner-finding>

With this Salto platform, it is very easy to make new (worldwide) contacts and find a missing partner organisation for a project.



SALTO - European training calendar

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/european-training-calendar>

Training courses, seminars, conferences related to EU youth programmes, also ideal for networking for further projects.



Volunteering 4 all - coordinated by SALTO Inclusion & Diversity

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/inclusion-training/volunteeringforall/>

Partnership-building format for institutions looking for like-minded inclusion partners in the voluntary sector.



TOSCA - Training and support for organisations active in the European Solidarity Corps

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/solidarity/training-support-community/tosca/>

Coordinated by SALTO European Solidarity Corps. The format to build your own capacity to do quality volunteering. It is aimed at organisations that have carried out at least one volunteer assignment.



6 WHERE CAN I FIND MORE SUPPORT?

Acknowledging non-formal learning



Youthpass

<https://www.youthpass.eu/en>

The Youthpass is a recognition tool, developed for the projects carried out in the European youth programmes, which can also be used as a support for Volunteering Teams. Through the Youthpass Certificate, being part of a Volunteering Teams can be recognised as an educational experience and a non-formal and informal learning period. It also offers an additional incentive to participants who are already thinking of their first or next (professional) steps. The format also provides an opportunity to reflect on one's own learning experiences.

More inspiration (project examples)



Project example "Let's Act" and "Sustainable Entertainment"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMo0l9gfdRo>

Great inspiring examples for anyone simply looking to see how Volunteering Teams work.



Project example VILLA Leipzig, Germany

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0lsFPu-WZ6Q&t=170s>



Project example CUBIC - "Cinema on wheels", Austria

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RTSdpV6saA>

Project example of GAIA, Kosovo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0lsFPuWZ6Q&t=170s>



Best Practice Publications by SALTO European Solidarity Corps

about solidarity, programme priorities and outstanding projects with great social impact can be found here:

<https://www.talkingsolidarity.eu/publications>



Participation Resource Pool

This collection of exciting youth participation projects is an inspiration for anyone planning, implementing or supporting projects within EU youth programmes.

<https://participationpool.eu/projects/?q=%7B%22sort%22%3A%22a%22%2C%22page%22%3A1%7D>



Publications about inclusion

Use Your Hands to Move Ahead 2.0

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/inclusionpublications/useyourhands/>



The publication of **SALTO Inclusion & Diversity** inspires you to implement your own Volunteering Team project and to use the inclusive potential of manual work. Available in English and Czech.

Inclusion A to Z

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/inclusionpublications/inclusionatoz/>



Here you will find a comprehensive compass for integrative international youth work. The best of all SALTO Inclusion & Diversity Handbooks in a single publication. Available in English, Spanish, Ukrainian and Russian.

Engage in Inclusion! A guide on disability-inclusive European youth projects



Helpful information on the most practical way to use EU youth programmes, including useful checklists for preparing and implementing them. Available in English, German, Icelandic.

Embracing Diversity

www.salto-youth.net/embracingdiversity/

And last but not least, the **Handbook for institutions – 10 steps towards inclusive international volunteering** (in German).

https://www.grenzenlos.or.at/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019_Handbuch_In-10-Schritten-zum-inklusiven-internationalen-Freiwilligeneinsatz.pdf



Funding programme Erasmus+ Youth

Some of the institutions featured in this brochure describe that they use Erasmus+ Youth funding to expand their volunteer networks, develop projects with partners and/or develop content with international partners. Erasmus+ Youth is part of the Erasmus+ Programme, for all young people in the field of non-formal and informal education and youth work.

In this context, we would like to highlight 2 lines of action:

Key action 1 [Mobility projects for youth workers](#)

These are projects in which the organisations themselves can apply for funding for training offers for youth workers, enabling exchange and contact between people working in the youth field.



Key action 2 [“Cooperation partnerships”](#)

support activities among organisations to foster quality improvement and capacity building in the youth and education sector. In the case of „small-scale partnerships“, the focus is mainly on „organisational learning and capacity building“, e.g. partnership building and peer learning. This key action can, for example, help institutions set up networks of Volunteering Team to enable high-quality inclusive assignments or to create support material.

GUIDELINES FOR PROJECT LEADING ORGANISATIONS



Of course, the variety of project implementations calls for each organisation to adopt procedures adapted to the specific nature of the activity and the environment in which it takes place. This guide serves as an aid and can assist in the planning and management of volunteer teams by providing a checklist. It explains the relevant steps between receiving the quality label and submitting the final report, although it does not pretend to be complete.



The project leading organisation needs a valid Quality Label to apply for funding (grant application). For more information, please contact your national agency. Once the Quality Label has been approved, your organisation will be visible on the European Youth Portal: https://youth.europa.eu/volunteering/organisations_de

Planning:

- ✓ First considerations: What tasks can be accomplished by a Volunteering Team in your organisation? When should the activity occur and how long should it last? To how many young people are you able to provide meaningful tasks and support? How can the organisational aspects be arranged (accommodation, meals...)?
- ✓ Submit a grant application to the national agency responsible for you (usually in February/October of each year, double check in the programme guide).

Preparation:

- ✓ Clarify the organisational aspects: where will volunteers be accommodated? How will meals be organised? Who will support them? How is arrival and departure organised?
- ✓ Finding volunteers
In general, Volunteering Teams should remain open to candidates with a wide variety of profiles. The focus of a funded Volunteering Team is on young people with fewer opportunities.

7 GUIDELINES FOR PROJECT LEADING ORGANISATIONS

Volunteers can be found in several ways:

- ✓ via partner organisations (highly recommended, especially for inclusive Volunteering Teams, for example Jugendakademie Walberberg, CUBIC);
- ✓ concrete projects can be described on the European Solidarity Corps portal, publicly visible on the website (s. Spolek Hvozď);
- ✓ via social networks.

It is up to the Volunteering Teams organisers to determine the search process. However, the reality of the project environment must be communicated in a clear and comprehensible way (accommodation, working hours, tasks...). If necessary, possible challenges can be clarified in advance in a personal talk, so that volunteers can decide on their assignment based on expectations.

- ✓ Register the volunteers on the European Solidarity Corps portal and 'Matching'.
- ✓ Clarify individual needs such as nutrition, previous illnesses or special care (in contact with volunteers or partner organisations) and consider further preparation.
- ✓ Prepare an information package for volunteers with the most important information (working hours, accommodation, emergency contacts, address of the accommodation, how pocket money is paid, etc.)
- ✓ Sign agreements with volunteers and (possibly) with partner organisations to clarify rights and obligations.
- ✓ Preparing the volunteer (according to the European Solidarity Corps Programme Guide) – by yourself or by partner organisations. Close coordination with partner organisation is recommended.
- ✓ Possibly preparatory visit (on request).
- ✓ Find mentors for volunteers.
- ✓ Plan event exposure (invite local politicians, media, etc.).

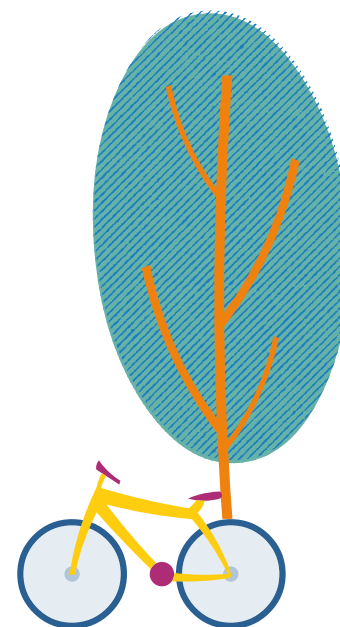


Implementing the activity:

- ✓ Determine technical guidance for volunteers in implementing activities and share relevant information about the volunteers.
- ✓ Ensure pedagogical support to the group and to individuals.
- ✓ Ensure that volunteers read the information provided in advance and can apply it on site (especially in the areas of accommodation, project work, leisure time).
- ✓ Explain what to do in case of an emergency, explain the roles of all those involved (who is responsible for what).
- ✓ Schedule meetings with mentors/other supporters (e.g. buddies, tutors).
- ✓ Support the learning process through Youthpass.
- ✓ Facilitate and promote local environment contacts.
- ✓ Provide visibility to Volunteering Teams, e.g. via social media.
- ✓ Joint project final event, such as a closing ceremony.
- ✓ Clarify formal matters such as departure, handing over of accommodation, etc.

Follow-Up:

- ✓ Issue the Youthpass.
- ✓ Evaluation and follow-up with volunteers – either individually or through partner organisations.
- ✓ Evaluation of your own institution and (if applicable) with partner organisations.
- ✓ Share project results, for example via your website or network.
- ✓ Inform volunteers that they will receive a link to the Volunteers Report via the beneficiary module at the end of the project, and that they will be required to fill it out.
- ✓ Create the final report in the Beneficiary Module.



CONCLUSION

The Volunteering Teams is a format funded by the European Solidarity Corps that allows young people to meet at international level. In particular, volunteers with fewer opportunities should be given the opportunity to gain international experience through the projects.



The practical examples show the great potential for inclusion and, above all, how Volunteering teams with different focuses and various target groups can be successfully implemented.

What unites all the staff members who worked on the above example is the high level of motivation and enthusiasm to work with young people. At this point, we would like to once again sum up the insights and conclusions that can be drawn from the expert interviews.

EXPERIENCE INCLUSION

The diversity of volunteer teams has been described to us all with shining eyes. Whether it was the disabled local volunteers who suddenly became the experts for the international volunteers on-site, or the role reversal that took place, or how daily life brought visibility and perceptibility through shared cooking and living, revealing previously undiscovered things.

As a result, unexpected treasures may be discovered in volunteer teams.

INCLUSION AS ATTITUDE

Planning and implementing inclusive volunteer team projects does not rely solely on an inclusion checklist. Inclusion calls for the right attitude and a willingness to learn together. Mistakes can happen, and that's okay. What's important is to learn from those mistakes and to grow as a team and as a group.

PREPARATION IS EVERYTHING

This is not a new finding, but it's always important to remember how important good preparation is. According to the GAIA colleagues, 70 % of managing Volunteering Teams is being well prepared. Especially when working with vulnerable target groups, where a trip abroad can be a new and possibly frightening experience, it is important that volunteers and the project team are well prepared.

EXPERTS IN THEIR OWN NEEDS

Volunteers often have a clear understanding of their own needs and the support needed on-site for a successful experience. Pre-planning visits, where volunteers actively participate with a representative of the support organisation in their home country, have proven highly beneficial in clarifying support measures and building trust. This makes it even more critical to ask the question:

“How do I describe (my) project so that potential volunteers can decide for themselves if the tasks are suitable and meet their needs?”.

TRUSTING COLLABORATION IN EQUAL PARTNERSHIPS

The practical examples presented highlight the various possibilities for cooperation with international partner organisations. The format of volunteer teams allows for both informal and close collaboration. However, for young people with fewer opportunities, establishing long-term and trusting cooperation between organisations is crucial. This enables targeted recruitment and selection of volunteers with disabilities, as well as specific preparation and professional support during the implementation phase. Personal meetings with colleagues from partner organisations are recommended for a preparatory visit.

“Everything is possible but not all at once!”

WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T WORK

The projects submitted are characterised by a high level of personal commitment. It is important to be mindful of one's own energy reserves and the facility environment, and to recognise and communicate possible limitations. We must ask ourselves the following questions:

How can we attract and effectively support a diverse group of volunteers to implement our project? What capacities and conditions do we have on-site, and which can be changed?

MIX OF LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

In terms of inclusion, there is a lot of promise from local participants. Some of the projects presented mentioned the successful integration of young people with refugee background, for whom another international experience was not feasible or reasonable. Even those who did not have the confidence to go abroad could gradually engage in longer cross-border activities.

FINDING ONE'S PLACE IN THE GROUP

In a larger group where everyone is initially new and unknown, young people have the opportunity to connect and find new companions. Many participants often carry labels due to difficult past experiences, but within the group, they can rediscover themselves and experience positive reinforcement. Many of these personal success stories were shared with us during the interviews.

LEARNING THROUGH PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Through concrete actions and collaborative creation, participants and organisations are constantly learning. The idea of trying new things in an unfamiliar setting and engaging in different formats broadens the horizons of those involved. It is also in line with the progression from local to international, from short-term to long-term assignments. Participants grow progressively through their experiences, focusing on their individual abilities.

We hope that you will feel well-prepared with all the information provided, and we look forward to welcoming you soon to the European Solidarity Corps.

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In memory of Leo Kaserer-Ligges, founder of CUBIC and the Rückenwind-network. The traces you have left in this publication and the European youth field will remain. Thank you for your inclusive spirit, your innovation and for the many lives you have changed.

SALTO European Solidarity Corps SALTO ESC supports National Agencies and organisations in the youth field and beyond with the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps programme. The mission is to explore the potential of solidarity as a core value in European societies and to promote the use of the European Solidarity Corps as a tool for understanding and living solidarity. SALTO ESC coordinates networking activities, training, seminars and events that will support the quality implementation of the programme and maximise its impact. By doing this, SALTO ESC contributes to building a European Solidarity Corps community of organisations. SALTO ESC is hosted by OeAD. The OeAD is the national agency for the implementation of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps in Austria. SALTO ESC is part of a European network of SALTO Resource Centres with the mission to improve the quality and impact of the EU youth programmes as well as to support and develop European youth work. Find us online at www.salto-youth.net, www.oead.at and www.salto-youth.net/solidarity

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