



“Volunteering: way for the future”







Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
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Training course

“Volunteering: way for the future”

Project was organized by Society ERFOLG from Latvia and 3 partner organizations „Georgian Youth for Europe” from Georgia, Fundacja Sempre a Frente from Poland and ProAtlântico - Associação Juvenil from Portugal with the financial support of ERASMUS+ programme

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Project summary

The training course „**Volunteering: way for the future**” was implemented in Daugavpils city from 21.11.2015 to 30.11.2015. In the project participated youth and adults, whose work is connected with the youth field – youth workers, specialists on youth affairs, mentors, support persons, youth leaders from **Latvia (society ERFOLG), Georgia (organisation „Georgian Youth for Europe”), Poland (organisation „Fundacja Sempre a Frente”) and Portugal (organisation „ProAtlântico - Associação Juvenil”)**.

In the project activities were involved 16 participants. The project was implemented with the financial support of the programme Erasmus+. The project activities were led by Stanislavs Babins, who has a rich experience in the organisation and coordination of international projects.

The main topic of the project was the development and popularisation of the voluntary service on the local and European level.

The aim of the project was to popularize the movement of voluntary service in European countries, to improve the quality of voluntary service and to raise the capacity of youth workers. During the Project the participants studied the voluntary service from different points of view – **mentor** (some participants of the Project worked or are currently working as mentors. They acquainted the participants with the importance of the mentoring in the management of voluntary service), **volunteer** (there was organised a meeting with the EVS volunteers from Austria, Armenia and Spain), **local government worker** (There were organised meetings with the representative of the city council and the representative of the Youth department – **Pēteris Dzalbe** and **Gunita Vanaga**, the project manager of Daugavpils Mark Rothko Art Centre – **Viktorija Kozlovska**).

They shared their experience on voluntary service in Daugavpils city council), **NGOs representative** (the chairperson of the society ERFOLG **Olga Jesse**). There was organised also the intercultural evening during the project, where every participant had the possibility to get acquainted with the cultured and traditions of the participants. Furthermore, there were organised also different creative tasks, games, excursions, presentations, discussions on the voluntary service topic. All activities of the project were based on the methods of non-formal education.

The project contributed to the development of the participants' competences and personal growth, they got new skills and abilities, got acquainted with the new methods in work with volunteers, which can be used in work with volunteers in their countries. There was made a partnership with the organisations from Latvia, Georgia, Portugal and Poland.

In the project were used different methods of non-formal education, which helped to involve the participants into the project activities more actively, as well as to communicate and cooperate with each other.

***ACQUAINTANCE ACTIVITIES**

“Names circle”: Each participant tells his name, where he is from and some information about him. The participants get to know each other, remember the participants’ names, their interests and hobbies during this activity.

“Spell a word”: Each participant puts on his hand scotch and notes on it the number of letters in his name, later he searches for the participants with the similar letters in their names, in case if the participant found the other participant with the similar letter in his name, the participants write down a similar letter of their names on the scotch of each other.

“Walk&Talk”: Each participant gets the colourful paper circle (different colours for each country), draws a clock. Every hour participants make a date with someone from participants. On the way to dinner is called an exact hour, participants find their date participants and talk about given topic. After some time another time and topic are called. Topics: 1) “I woke up this morning and...”, 2) first impressions about Latvia; my passions; 3) three things that make me happy and three things that can make me angry fastlyete;

“Feelingspace”: participants walk through all the space in different speed while music is played trying to fill in all the free space and perform different tasks: greet with eyes, greet with shoulders, hug etc.

“Secret friend”: Rules of the game are introduced to the participants (you need to care about your secret friend, not revealing yourself until the end of the training) and are asked to make their mailbox.

“Changing names”; participants greet in pairs, telling their names and changing them. Game continues changing names. After the signal changing names continues, but, if you get your name, you sit down. The game is played until all the names are found or until there are nonexisting names or participants with the same name.

*ICE-BREAKING ACTIVITIES

“Name and motion”: participants call their names and show gestures/motions. Next participant repeats what was shown before and shows his. The next one repeats both previous ones etc. It is a great possibility to strengthen knowledge and do some exercises before the beginning of the day. In the last circle everyone repeats together and feels the energy of the group.

Participants “Passports”: from the prepared A4 paper curve “passport” (Passport has three openings, every has its topic). While exchanging passports is shown a portrait of participants – every participant draws one detail (face contour, eyes, hair, ears etc.). Continuing exchanging with passports, participants fill in visually prepared frames in the format of an interview about country, place of work/studying, what the participant learnt lately, title of his/her organisation, its three main activities and projects. When passports are filled in, in pairs they introduce each other: the one who tells hides his hands behind the back, and his pair puts out his hands from behind of the teller and fills in his presentation with gestures.



“Movements + names game – I’m going to Daugavpils”:

activity which helps participants to concentrate and remember all the names. Everyone sits in a circle, one seat is free and one participant in the middle of the circle is trying to sit down to the free seat. The participant from the right side of the free seat sits down in it and tells: “I’m going to Daugavpils”, the next one from the right side sits down to the free seat and tells: “I’m going together”, the third one remains in his seat, hits with his hand the free place and calls a name of another participant, who needs to run to the free seat. If someone is slow with the activity/name, goes to the middle of the circle.

“Backpacks”: participants are told that they have lost their ability to speak during this activity. They can give, but cannot take or ask. Everyone gets an envelope with cut into pieces colourful papers. During the following 20 minutes they are trying to assemble puzzle – backpack with their name, glue it to an A4 paper and cut out its outside contour. Participants are practising collaboration. When the task is done, in a big circle everyone discusses what was experienced, making parallels with voluntary work.



Then the participants are asked to fill in parts of the backpack individually – what they can give or things, with which they don’t want to contact during the training. In small groups they share with what was written, discuss similarities and share it in a big circle.

*TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES

“Hold on chair”:

participants are in a circle; inside everyone has a chair in front of him/her. The task is, with the use of one hand, hold on chairs on two legs and perform one full circle so none of the chairs falls.

“Cutting rope”: Participants have to go from one corner of room to another without touching the rope, which is rotated in the middle of the room by the trainers. They should not skip any rotation, starting from the moment when the team starts to move.

“Drive away the tape”: team-building game that puts to work together and try out a common strategy in achieving the objective. Everyone in the circle holds the rope, the ends of which are connected and which passes through the paper adhesive tape.



Adhesive tape must be moved towards the top in a circle as soon as possible, without losing contact with the rope. After the first trial, participants are invited to cut their time result in half. Once this is achieved, it is quite challenging to cut the

new time result. If this challenge is accepted the result is achieved, the participants install the challenge themselves and try different strategies to complete it.

«**Molecules**»: with this method the participants of any quantity can be divided into groups. Participants walk around the room, in meanwhile feeling and trying to fill in the blank space. When the leader calls the number players as if they were molecules join together into specified numerical combination and continue to move within the group until another number is called. The game ends as soon as the participants are divided in groups with the required number.

*EVALUATION OF ACTIVITIES

"Harvesting". Participants are introduced to the method and sequence of activities:

- a) A brief look back upon yesterday's oral topics and activities (everybody in the big circle);
- b) «Free Writing»: Participants are invited to pick up their notebooks and they are given introductory sentence («Yesterday it was worth going to bed late because ...»), in the next five minutes, without stopping to write. After some five minutes they have some time to review and share the written, if someone wants.
- c) Lessons: Participants are asked to think about their yesterdays' learning experience, write it down to «Youthpass» notebook and share a lesson that would be worth for others.

« **The question of the day** » It is directly or indirectly connected with all the daytime activities. Participants are encouraged throughout the day to note their ideas and answer the question below. Question is written on the top of large Flip chart sheet, and in the bottom there is given an answer that is covered up with one more page.

*ENERGIZERS

«**Zoom game**», each participant receives an image, which is one part of the story. Not seeing other pictures and asking questions which can only be answered with «yes» or «no», they have to determine the sequence of images. This method requires participants to think outside the frame.



At the same time it is a great consolidation game for events where young people do not know each other as participants find out «similar» members - the owners of similar images and begin to form groups for example, city, ship, desert and so on.

«**Paper airplanes**»: every participant creates 5 paper airplanes on which they write 5 values of volunteering. Paralelly they discusses how easy or difficult it was to figure out 5 values. Then each of them chooses two minor values, name them first and fly without explaining them. Then, each of participants comments on their feelings. Then they fly 2 more values, identifying them, but without explaining. Providing comments on their feelings. Then 11 universal voluntary principles are laid on the floor, participants place their last paper planes with a value on it on the principle, which corresponds the most to their understanding of volunteering essence. As first there are to be discussed the empty "aerodromes". Then they discuss "visited aerodromes" and its relation to the specific value of the paper plane.



«**Mirror + questions**»: groups of four do specific actions: the one shows movements, the opposite reflects them. One of the bystanders, asks the mathematical questions, to one who which reflects the movements, the other asks personal questions. Consequently, one of the participants is forced to focus on three different actions. After a minute or two they change tasks untill all the members have been in all roles.



“Chair Challenge”:

participants divided into three groups, each has its own purpose: 1) to arrange all the chairs in a circle, 2) to rotate all the chairs upside down, 3) take care that none of the chairs touch the ground. Task is known only by members of the group. Groups are given time to discuss their strategy. All tied up their eyes enter the room with chairs, from this moment to the end of the game no one should speak. Task is given a specific time to be completed. When the time comes to an end, everyone must set in. At this point it is notified that it IS possible to accomplish the task satisfying desires of the whole group.



*BRAINSTORMING

“Values and Needs”: the participants with the help of visual methods are acquainted with the A.Maslow’s pyramid of needs and R. Barrett’s “The Seven Levels Model of human consciousness”, which can be used to understand the motivation of volunteers and the needs of organisation for volunteers.

“Piece of cake”: There was prepared the circle of competences with the tasks in different colours. Each participant gets a white circle – cake, which should be decorated with different colourful pieces of paper, which can be gotten by doing the tasks in the similar



colours. At this time the participants perform the particular tasks chosen by them. When time is over they discuss their feelings during the performance of tasks, the choice of particular tasks, why didn't they choose the other tasks, what disturbed them, what helped by the performance of tasks. The participants are called to imagine and see wider picture – how it can help, for example in work with youth in organisation. Clarify which colours have particular competences. Why exactly these competences?

“Brainstorm: Support system of voluntary service”: the participants name the possible ways to support the voluntary service.

*INTERCULTURAL EVENING



“Cultural sculptures”: Each team has to make a sculpture in 2 minutes, which presents activity/action related to the culture of each participant. The other participants guess.

“Tables”: Nearby each state table is standing one volunteer, who tells every interested person about traditional food and drinks while other participants are travelling from one table to other.

*CONSOLIDATION ACTIVITIES

„Follow me”: one young person stands in the middle, the arms sideways. Two other young people stand with their faces opposite the hands of the first person and follow the hands movements, not losing original distance. “The third” young people join them after some time following the hands movements of “the second” young people. New “sections” join them after some time.



“Faithful walk”: The participants are divided into pairs; one is mentor, the other - volunteer. The mentor leads the volunteer around with the tight eyes. Mentor has to show one thing connected with Latvia and in cooperation with the volunteer they decide on challenge, which should be done by volunteer. Later they change the roles and the mentor is led with the tight eyes.



Partners' feedbacks

You can find the partners' feedbacks below. They give their point of view on the problems, development of voluntary service and their opinion on the project "Volunteering: way for the future", as well as share their experience on working methods which they use in their work with the local and international volunteers.

"ERFOLG" (Latvia)



The society ERFOLG actively involves the volunteers in its activities. In the society are working young volunteers who carry out the activities in the society. They organise the cultural events, disseminate information on activities, help to implement the projects, organise the children schools and creative workshops, try to gain experience in writing the projects, work as mentors, work with social networks and homepage of society. They are involved also into the organisation of the events and activities on city level.

The society has reach experience as hosting and sending EVS organisation within the programmes „Youth in action" and „ERASMUS+”.

The society sended 5 volunteers to Germany, Iceland, Tenerife – Spain, Poland and hosted 13 volunteers from Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Georgia, France, Austria, Spain and Armenia from year 2011 to 2016.

In work with volunteers are used methods of non-formal education. ERFOLG offers different trainings for young people in Latvia and abroad, professional development seminars and language courses to motivate them. ERFOLG actively uses social networks for the popularisation of activities and events of society, presents the activities of the society during the city events, organises the presentations on voluntary service and mentoring possibilities in Daugavpils educational establishments to involve new volunteers into the work of organisation.

The society often organises different kinds of events, which are attended by the large number of city inhabitants. The local volunteers – young people are involved into the organisation of those activities. Such kind of activity is family event „ZooMaifest“, which is organised in May every year and is visited by great number of inhabitants and guests of Daugavpils city.

The volunteers organise relay races, contests, coordinate creative workshops, help the people, play with children, disseminate information on the activities of city and society during the event. They organise also hobby clubs for children, creative workshops for youth and adults, activities for seniors, prepare attractive presentations for the city inhabitants, organise contests, participate in the implementation of projects, organise discussion clubs, holiday celebrations for the local inhabitants and help to provide social services.

EDGARS KUCINS

In the evening of 23rd of November, when project participants arrived, I didn't expect that at the end of the project we will say goodbye to each other like to an old friends. I've been thru a number of projects, but I have never seen such a good team of participants and trainers. Praiseworthy was the work of trainer Stanislavs Babins. He astonished participants with unseen methods of teambuilding and his good nature, good humor and peacefulness during his professional work.

Worth mentioning is Linda's contribution to the project with "free writing" technique which I liked much. Another impressive activity was the "Chair game", which was combination of funny, active, helpless, chaos, lack of understanding feelings that in one second turned in to successful team work.

The volunteering topic brought me a lot of information about the history of volunteering and the huge amount of possibilities that are available nowadays. Despite some doubts, this symbiosis between volunteers and organizations of different types is very helpful to both sides. And experience that you can get becoming a volunteer is priceless.

I'm really glad that I end up in this training course and met all those great people and gained a lot of information and experience. I hope to meet those people again, even if I have to walk 500 miles.

"Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they are priceless."

„Georgian Youth for Europe“ (Georgia)



References of your organisation experience in the field of volunteering



«Georgian Youth for Europe» (GYE) was founded in 2006 by the leaders of the Kvemo Kartli Organization of Scout Movement. Majority of social workers and other employees of the organization have

passed at least 1 year of volunteering in different European countries, specializing in different directions. Currently the organization is hosting 7 European volunteers from 7 different countries. Besides voluntary services, with the support of the European Commission GYE organize various youth exchange programs in Georgia and beyond. The organization is actively involved in various contents of non-formal education programs and projects (out-door and adventure education, environment, rural development, healthy lifestyle etc). During the last 6 year GYE have organized out-door camps for young people in different parts of Georgia and Europe. Mainly all local activities is supported by local volunteers and youth leaders.

Methods and activities that you usually use in work with local and international volunteers

For work with volunteers we used to have our «step by step» programme. What does it mean? Firstly volunteers gaining an insight into GYE activities, working methods, internal procedures, rules and regulations. Bearing in mind volunteers previous experiences, interests, strengths and potentials, we are inviting them to take over responsibility for special tasks and for realisation of own activities. In all activities there is always an implementation «traineeship» – there is an appointed leader who is fully responsible for running the activity. This person explaining to the volunteer his/her responsibility and provides training or any kind of help, if needed.

Suggestions about the involvement of volunteers in your activities

In the work with local volunteers we have benefit system – they have priority and no participation fee of taking part in any local or international projects. You need to keep motivate them that active participation in community life gives them life and work experience, and working in some activities together with our EVS volunteers giving them intercultural learning skills what might be useful in doing their own EVS after that.

Regarding EVS – we believe that it is a tool that can help to foster integral development and emancipation of young people – it allows to make the personal and professional enrichment of the volunteers (local and EVS) possible, in general, and, specifically, in relation to youth promotion.

SALOME GVELESIANI

"In the training course were gathered participants who had an experience to work with local and international volunteers. However through this training course we went in more deep discussions as it were how to support volunteer, what is a role of a mentor or how to be a good mentor, how to choose correct volunteers and how to solve problems, which can appear during the local or international volunteering. We shared good practices and found out more ways to support volunteers and be more active in this field."

"Volunteering is one of the best ways for people and especially for youth to be more open minded, more tolerance, more flexible. It gives more possibilities easier find a job. I can say thousand reasons why volunteering is good, but most important is that, it makes you feel happy and happy people makes world better. I totally agree and believe volunteering can be a really way for future, BUT for better future."

NANA NIKABADZE

"Actually, for me this training held by Erasmus plus was first, before this I have never participated any kind of training courses. I had experience about volunteering in my home country and also in abroad. I can say that difference is enormous being local and international volunteer. I did my EVS in Latvia and I knew how local volunteers doing, because time to time we co-operated together."

About this training courses, I can honestly say that it gave me a huge experience, they were 4 difference countries and all of them had variety background, experience working with different field and it was great opportunity for me, we shared your experience, exchanged our views how your country work with volunteers and what they are doing in general. We had opportunity to observe other Countries, which kind methods they are using and how it's work. During these days we visited several local institution and NGO which work with volunteers. I would like that in my home country situation that we have currently will be change soon, definition about volunteer will be understand correct and they will be more youngsters and not only, People who wish to contribute to do good, it will help the country's development and the development of volunteerism as well.

Every single moment during this TC was amazing, Our trainer were well prepared, topic and workshops were connecting with Volunteerism and I got lot of knowledge. No waste of time at all, I am really appreciate this new skills which I gained during this training courses. We wrote our song about volunteering and we had several team building games, City games, National evening, free evening, this helped us to work together and getting to know each other. Result of this training courses for me is that now I have new friends from 3 other Countries, my competencies is grow up about volunteerism and I had chance to return back to Latvia after My EVS.

LIENE METREVELI

I have been working with volunteers during last 10 years. This field is not new to me. Enough experience is gained during past years. But I agree what as well trainers mentioned during this TC - it's always important to refresh your knowledge, try to learn and discover something new so that your work development keep going and you don't stay on the same place. I will never have feeling that I know all. This TC gave to me lot of new methods, information what I will be able to use in my daily work with EVS and local volunteers. Program of the project was really great and interesting! I loved that we were small group. Relationship went easier with each other and group dynamic was great! And I hope that contacts what we establish during those 10 days will bring new projects in EVS or other Erasmus Plus actions. I would be happy to come back to Daugavpils again. Very nice city and people!

ALEKS METREVELI

Firstly I would like to say lots of thanks for the partnership, project was really successful and informative. Since 2006, I am involved in EC Youth in Action and Erasmus+ projects and before the project started I was wondering if I could learn something new toward the volunteering topic. Hopefully, my expectations came true, trainers provided interesting program, which gave me possibility to learn new tools and methodologies, which can be used in future projects. It was interesting to learn EVS life in Latvia, particularly in Daugavpils city. Project participants also were really active and enjoyed to work with them...honestly I can say that it was, one of the best project which ever I participated. Thank you again for everything!

“Fundacja Sempre a Frente” (Poland)



Experience of Sempre a Frente Foundation within involving local volunteers

From the very beginning of setting up organization, we have put the main emphasis on creating the space for volunteering. Therefore we've created the Center of youth Information and Development, where we set up groups which could volunteer by helping the children from poor families, organizing open workshops for local youth and making social events.

After a while, we developed thanks to the power of volunteering. The activities which were prepared for children answered a need of local community and now we have a Day Center for children from poor families, where volunteers can help regularly in particular activities. We are also giving a space for creativity and encourage young volunteers to implement their own ideas of workshops for children.

For local volunteering we have also prepared a program for EVS mentors and Academy of Local Animator, where young have possibility to attend certain workshops to gain useful experience in the field of social and cultural animator. During the year the group uses the knowledge in practice by making events or actions for local community.

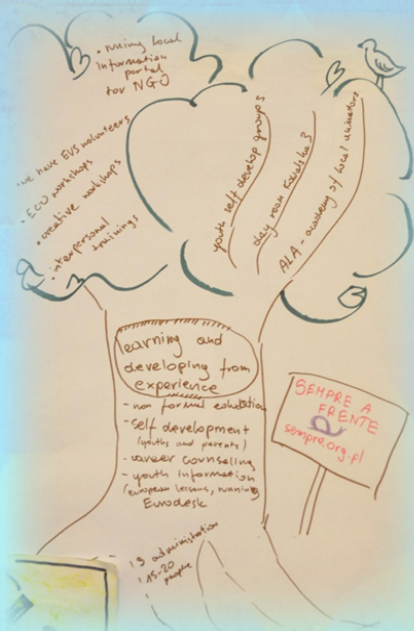
Experience of Sempre a Frente Foundation within involving foreign volunteers

Sempre a Frente Foundation is active in EVS Program since 2013. We are host and coordinating organization. We are hosting every year two EVS volunteers, who are welcome to work in Day House for children and as volunteering ambassadors in schools.

Volunteers are helping in the Day House, as well as implement their own mini projects.

They are supported by coordinators and mentors of the project, by receiving feedback on their work support in realization of their own mini projects and other initiatives, as well as by discussing and evaluating learning process.

We believe in learning by experiencing. Due to this fact we always use interactive methods while supporting local and international volunteers, by implementing particular workshops and activities. We usually give space to volunteers, when they want to implement their own initiative, by establishing budget and creating the space for brainstorming. Volunteers can always count on the help of mentor of coordinator; however we encourage them to be as much independent as possible.



We also noticed that working in the group is much more motivating for volunteers than implementing their ideas individually, therefore the animators work always as a group and EVS volunteers can count on other Sempre volunteers (local or EVS). We also noticed that giving volunteers some basis of the animation work, implementing several workshops bring more inspiration and courage to create. Moreover for local volunteers we make (at least!) 2-day integration connected with interpersonal workshops. On the meeting attend only people who will work together and trainers. Attendance on this kind of few- day meeting guarantees the integration and strong connection between participants.

The last but not least is the evaluation process, which helps to understand what person have learned by volunteering and how he or she can transfer gained experienced in the future. Another is to price volunteers by what they have done. The highest price is the satisfaction, that's why we are trying to give a view of work they have done or invite them for informal meeting with other volunteers, where they can share the great experience they gained.

References of the participants about this project and volunteering

1. Which information during the TC where most important for you?

- information about possibility of programme Erasmus+; how to go for EVS and how to be a good mentor for volunteer

- information about main problems of volunteers, and how we can avoid this problems. The next thing was how to create tasks and activities to help

volunteers gain new competences and how to support volunteers in their work. I've learned new teambuilding activities and others interesting methods. Also I've gained information about volunteering principles, about structure, aims etc. of Erasmus+ programme and how organizations from other countries work with volunteers.

- for me the most relevant information were about self - assessment and self - development, how through voluntary service we can change our lives and also society and environment. I got a lot important information about European Volunteering which for sure I will use in future.



2. How will you use gained information about volunteering in your activities in local community?

- Organize meeting about possibilities of Erasmus + Programme for polish students
- Received information will help to a better volunteer and be more aware of the needs of other volunteers, while working with them, also to focus on creating suitable tasks and keeping good and active atmosphere.
- Organize seminars and workshops about volunteering in High schools in my area and I will also continue my voluntary service in my city

3. How you can use gained experience during the volunteering in the labor market or in different areas in future life? Could you actually use them?

- Volunteer's experience I can to use everywhere. Volunteering teach us a lot of. We stay more open-minded, more practiced and our knowledge of foreign language is better.
- Experience gained through volunteering is very useful in labour market, especially soft skills, methods of working in group, knowledge received in creating events etc.
- Through volunteering you can acquired manual and practical skills which without doubts you can use in future work or in daily life but otherwise and for me more important thing you learn are civic and social competences, because they teach you how to be sensitive and open for others people needs.

KINGA LIWAK:

- It's difficult to write it in short words, but I'll try :)

As it was my first time participating in the training course abroad (also generally in European Programmes) it gave me a lot of new experience. The most important thing was meeting with different cultures in situations of daily routine. Being in this multicultural group also made impact on perceiving myself as a social unit. I gained new social competences and also developed myself in this field. During the course I improved English language a lot. Despite of this, what's more connected with the topic, I've learned new methods and activities of working in volunteering field. I found out how important is process of learning by doing and making learning more interactive. I recognized volunteers' typical problems and solutions how to help and motivate them. I've also gained some theoretical knowledge about volunteering in different countries and about structure and aims of Erasmus+ programme.

This training course was really important in my development. It was very intensive but full of relevant experiences. After this course I feel more motivated to work in volunteering field, and I want constantly improve my knowledge to increase quality of this work.

“Fundacja Sempre a Frente” (Poland)



About ProAtlântico

ProAtlântico – Associação Juvenil is a non-profit youth association, founded in 2001 and it carries out projects with children, youngsters and disabled people.



Today, ProAtlântico has more than 10.000 members all over Portugal and gives special attention to needed people and to those with fewer opportunities, aiming to give them the chance to establish contact with

other cultures, in order to help them to find ways to deal with their own problems and to break the existing prejudices.

In 2003 we started to work in Youth Programme and since then we took part in more than 100 youth exchanges, we also took part in several training courses and seminars all around Europe.

Every year we promote in Portugal 1 or 2 youth exchanges for a group of 50 participants.

In 2015, we hope to be partners in several Youth in Action projects, giving in this way opportunity to Portuguese young people to enrich themselves and learn more about other's culture.

Volunteering with ProAtlântico

ProAtlântico works with local and international volunteers in different fields.

In the next pages we will provide information about some of them. We develop volunteering activities with different target groups and objectives, during all the year. We try to involve young people but not only. We have volunteers of different ages.

We work with EVS but also in partnership with Erasmus students associations.



Feedback from trainer Stanislavs Babins



Volunteering is very important part of democratic society and is essential in non-governmental sector. Quite often the enthusiasm of volunteering youngsters, their ideas as well as their time and energy is the most prominent force for realizing the plans of an organization and for gaining success.

Volunteering gets more and more promoted and recognized all around the world. Nevertheless, in order to achieve results more efficiently, a meaningful organizing of the volunteering process is crucial. Of course, the idea and aim are also important factors. It is important to not only assess if volunteering is the best tool for the given situation but also to be aware of the capacities and needs of the organization as well of the local community. And certainly one cannot forget about the needs, expectations and doubts and fears of the volunteering person. It is important to clarify the volunteer's vision of the project at the very beginning, and how it goes together with the idea of the organization as everyone involved has to aim for the same goal.

Organizing volunteer's work and thinking of long term motivation of volunteers, do not forget about safe environment and necessary tools needed for this work. It's like hygiene – basic hygiene will not make you healthy, but its absence will put you in a very high risk to get ill.

Safe working conditions and equipment will ensure that initial motivation of volunteers will not decrease in a long term perspective. But it is never enough just to ensure safe environment.



The support system is another important element. Not only already experienced volunteering organizations recognize its importance, but also youngsters that are still making the first steps in this field. This system can vary in different projects/environments/events but there are few factors that always require attention, for instance, being aware of the needs and capacities mentioned above, setting clear tasks and sharing the responsibilities, the role of the mentor (volunteer's support person) and others.

Establishing the support system is a task of every new organization if it is planning to work with volunteers. But it is important also for already experienced organizations to look through this system regularly, to make the necessary improvements, to refresh the working methods, to motivate not only the volunteers but also the staff and activists, because only working together will lead to successful results.

Another important element of a successful volunteering work is getting to know the environment. With a help of different practical events and games the volunteers have to explore the environment of the project as well as the community that will gain from the project. These kind of outdoor activities will not only assure a positive energy in the further work performance but it will also give greater understanding about the factors that affects the result. Meanwhile the local community can get to know the volunteer or at least get to know about her/him, therefore leaving room for a mutual cooperation.

During the realization of the project one cannot forget about regular checks – if all involved parties feel good, if the initial vision hasn't changed. Moreover, there should be a space for volunteer's initiative and ideas as it is an important condition of development. Of course, the main mission of the volunteer is to help, but chances to fulfil her/his own ideas could be a massive motivation to continue the work. Also, it could be a great benefit for the organization or the community if the support system for the volunteer is efficient enough.

It is worth mentioning the benefits of volunteering contract. On one hand it is a legal document that could be the first working contract ever for the volunteer. It also makes the volunteer and organization's responsibilities very clear for everyone involved.

And if in the end of the project there is an official acknowledgement of the volunteer, such as diploma or approval of the dedicated time and energy of the youngster, it can also be a great motivator. Even smaller acknowledgements, including verbal ones throughout the project can motivate and support the volunteer. What is more, a chance to participate in different trainings can be relevant factors.



There is no one universal recipe of dealing with volunteers, of attracting, motivating and supporting them that everyone could use in all the scenarios. Still, by listening to ex-volunteers and the youngsters that still would like to get involved in the nearest future, as well as to

experienced youth workers, a body of advices is established. And following these advices can ease and improve the work with volunteers and develop their competences, thus the results of the project are more fruitful and sustainable.

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