



Community Guide

for volunteering

IRELAND





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Introduction

TCNs¹ lose their social capital when they immigrate and settle down in a new country where the language and culture are quite different from their own. Volunteering helps TCNs to develop their social and human capital, and acquire other manifold benefits.

Social capital includes the skills and knowledge we gather in formal and informal learning.

TCNs hold relatively less social capital and often face difficulties in transferring their skills into the labour market of the host country².

Volunteering helps to build social capital by enabling TCNs to informally learn new skills and also to get acquainted with the work culture of the host country.

Social capital, built through meaningful interactions between people, facilitates the learning and use of these skills and knowledge. Social capital, therefore, promotes active and sustainable learning.

The networks, trust and shared values of social capital bring to life our human values, skills, expertise and knowledge. Social capital results from effective communication.

¹ Any person who is not a citizen of the European Union within the meaning of Art. 20(1) of TFEU and who is not a person enjoying the European Union right to free movement, as defined in Art. 2(5) of the Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code)

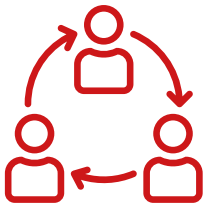
² Bassilio, L., Bauer, T. (2010). Transferability of Human Capital and Immigrant Assimilation: An Analysis for Germany. Discussion Paper No. 4716

Social capital provides the social infrastructure support for our lives in a web of elastic networks related to home, work, learning, leisure and public life. Social capital constructs the meaning around the visible picture we present to the world. It tells the world who we are and what we are like¹.

Volunteering and civic engagement, participation in social life and associations between and for migrants play a crucial role in the integration of immigrants in the host country because these are exercises of citizenship².

There seems to be not enough evidence pointing at the importance of volunteers building up their skills and competences through volunteer placements. This is an important step towards sustainable employment.

Personal development involves the strengthening of skills which are considered essential such as communication, organisational and team-working skills, and many other so-called soft skills, many of which are not developed through formal education.



The guide has a community-based approach as we believe that we can build a society in which people can benefit from mutual exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences. Volunteering, in this case, offers an opportunity to take part in local civil society, to work and socialise with local people from a wide range of backgrounds, to learn about the systems and culture of the host community, to put existing skills into good use and to learn new skills that may facilitate their active participation in the labour market.

¹ Falk, I. (2000). Human Capital and Social Capital: What's the difference? Adult Learning Commentary, (28) <https://ala.asn.au/public/commentaries/Falk1810.pdf>

² Marelli, P. (2017). Solidarietà e impegno civico. Quando fare volontariato è un esercizio di cittadinanza. Vdossier, (2). <https://www.csvlombardia.it/milano/post/solidarieta-e-impegno-civico-quando-fare-volontariato-e-un-esercizio-di-cittadinanza/>

Target group and content

Those working in organisations focused on research, recruitment, training, support and evaluation of volunteers and for potential volunteers that want to engage in the volunteer experience.

The guide is divided into three sections:

1. Volunteering

The first section is focused on the volunteers: in this section, most of the challenges and goals awaiting the volunteer are listed, explanations of the different types of existing volunteering activities and volunteer opportunities for TCNs are provided. In addition, the first part offers practical information about voluntary work, working hours and some tips about how to carry out a volunteer role.

2. Organisations

The second section is more focused on the NGOs and associations willing to host volunteers. A list of things the organisation needs to consider before hosting TCNs as a volunteer during his/her staying and once the volunteer experience is over is provided.

The concept of Diversity Management is explained: it is focused on how to manage diversity, in order to avoid misunderstandings and foster communication and engagement ensuring an inclusive environment.

3. Communication

Finally, the guide includes a section for communication with examples for good and effective communication and solutions to challenges that may arise.



1. VOLUNTEERING

Why volunteer?

- **Opening new horizons:** contributing to the local community and improving your skills.
- **Volunteering allows you to acquire new skills:** you will have the chance to learn new skills and to understand what you are good at: who you are, what you want and what you are capable of. Whether it's a new **language**, a new **job** or a new **skill**, the skills you will acquire will be helpful for your personal and professional life.
- **Volunteering as a job opportunity:** volunteering can be a great opportunity for work and study. Establishing new or strengthening current professional connections can allow you to widen your professional networks. While you help others, you can enhance your career.
- **Volunteering is being part of a community:** When you help others, you're not alone. You are part of a community; being part of a community of people means, first of all, finding your social identity.

Do you want to volunteer?

Here you can find some helpful information and useful steps in order to know *"How to find the right opportunity for you!"*

Identifying your purpose



A certain affinity between the volunteer and the “spirit” of the association that proposes a volunteer programme is crucial, in terms of values, working styles and aims. Without this affinity of interests and values, it is not easy to achieve good results for both the organization and the volunteer. First step: think of your skills - both personal and professional skills - before starting your volunteering experience!



What kind of volunteer work are you looking for?

You can choose among different opportunities, depending on your preferences: ecological, artistic, archaeological, social, emergency response & disaster relief, human rights, sport and recreation, vulnerable groups, tourism, nature and animals, education, health, children and young people, the elderly, translation, administration, etc.



What amount of time to dedicate for volunteering?

Most volunteering programs require volunteers to stay on a certain amount of time to ensure a positive impact on projects. General conditions such as working hours, coverage of expenses and duration of projects vary in these cases from the responsible organisation.



Who do you want to volunteer with?

You can work with people (elderly, adults or children) or in your town (such as activities of urban regeneration, working with animals, cultural exchange, etc).



Where to look for volunteer opportunities



Word of mouth

Exchange of information among people who already have carried out voluntary experiences



Social media

Using social media platforms (e.g. Facebook groups dedicated for volunteers) to find the right opportunity for you



Centres / organisations

If you have already identified the right centre or organisation in which you want to carry out your voluntary experience, you can join them in order to receive updates regarding new opportunities for volunteering. Moreover, thanks to them, volunteers can be updated on all the opportunities other organisations can offer.

Where can you do volunteer work?

- Activelink provides different volunteering opportunities in the third sector (NGOs, civil society and charity sector). The website is constantly updated with the latest opportunities:
<https://www.activelink.ie/community-exchange/volunteering>
- Red Cross offers opportunities on different programmes. The Irish Red Cross is heavily involved in Migration in the Irish context, therefore people with migrant background could be considered an asset:
<https://www.redcross.ie/volunteeringinyourcommunity/>
- Volunteer Ireland is a national platform for volunteer opportunities and support body for all local Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services in Ireland. You can select the sector you want to work in and find a role that best suits your interests:
<http://www.volunteer.ie/volunteers/find-a-volunteer-role/>
- Dublin City Volunteer for finding volunteer opportunities only in Dublin:
<https://volunteerdublincity.ie>
- SPIRASI - Befriending Programme: Spirasi (Spiritans Asylum Services Initiative) is the national centre for the rehabilitation of victims of torture in Ireland: <https://spirasi.ie/what-we-do/befriending-programme/>

How to act when you volunteer?

It's important for the volunteer to know some tips before starting his/her volunteering in order to have a positive experience:



Communication

Before arriving, talk to your host organisation and ask questions about working hours and what your accommodation will be. Be clear about any expectations you have and be transparent and honest from the start. It is important to ask for relevant policies (for example safeguarding or policies regarding data protection) and regulations of the organization. While you're volunteering, it's also very important to talk about any problems that may arise or anything you're unhappy with. Keep in touch with the coordinator regularly.



Commitment

Paying attention to your work schedule, being on time and completing your assigned tasks in the most productive way possible. Being proactive during your work is fundamental. Each organization has its own rules that every volunteer must follow: do only what you agreed. Stick to an agreement about the time because people and the organization will count on you. Treat everyone respectfully and correctly, regardless of their situation and position.



Focus

Cultural diversity is what makes the world so special. While volunteering, remember that you are in a place with a different culture and that it needs to be treated with respect. When it comes to culture, there is no right or wrong, just differences. Live the experience: volunteering can be a great experience for sharing cultures, tradition, learning the language, developing new skills and meeting people from all over the world.

Experiences & examples of volunteering initiatives by TCNs in Ireland



MUSLIM SISTERS OF EIRE

Muslim Sisters of Eire is an independent organisation of mainly Muslim women living in Ireland. Muslim sisters of Eire was established in 2010. It is a voluntary organisation with the purpose of providing support to people in need across Ireland. Muslim Sisters of Eire provides a platform for integration and facilitates many projects ranging from community cohesion projects, conferences, poverty relief. Our largest and longest ongoing project is the feeding of the homeless outside the GPO every Friday. We accept volunteers from all walks of life and backgrounds.



IRISH SYRIAN COMMUNITY

The Irish Syrian Community is a social and cultural voluntary organisation representing the values of the Syrian community.



CULTUR

CULTUR is a community organisation that works with migrants, asylum seekers and refugees promoting equal rights & opportunities to develop an intercultural County Meath.



SARI

SARI is a voluntary organization promoting integration and social inclusion through sports activities.

Testimonials

What motivates me and keeps me going is the realisation that no matter how tough our lives get, there is somebody out there who is facing challenges way tougher than ours.



Wherever there is a human in need, there is an opportunity for kindness and to make a difference. MSOE gives me that chance to make a difference.



I feel lucky to have the opportunity to help others and I am delighted to be part of such a good team.



I volunteer with MSOE to remind myself to be grateful for the things we take for granted in our lives. Our necessities can be other people's luxuries.





2. ORGANISATION

Offering the opportunity to volunteer within an organisation/association can be crucial to help TCNs to feel part of a new reality, to gratify them on a personal level and give them the opportunity to help others, thus creating a “circle of solidarity” in which those who have been helped, in turn, will help others, while helping themselves.

This section has three different parts. Each of them connected to a certain moment of the volunteering experience: 1) before, 2) during, and 3) after. It offers advice which would support the responsible person in organisations.

Adopting volunteer management strategies is crucial to improve the quality of volunteer experiences, organisations social impact, and ensuring volunteers growth during placements. This makes it possible to:

- meet the aspirations of volunteers and the needs of the association;
- clearly identify the characteristics required of a volunteer for a certain task;
- understand the motivations behind the choice of volunteers and how to best support them in case of disappointment;
- promote the involvement of volunteers in the organisation and a sense of responsibility;
- improve the overall work of the organization!

In fact, in order to create the most positive experience for a volunteer, a designated person within the organisation should be responsible for the volunteer’s journey. This includes support during the orientation process, overseeing the volunteers’ tasks and helping the volunteer to overcome any problems or challenges they face.

The mentor will be a point of reference for the volunteer. S/he is responsible for providing him/her personal support. S/he should be: a good listener, reliable, attentive, understanding, etc.

Before

Needs assessment:

- identify previous skills and knowledge required for the role
- identify volunteer abilities and accomplishments
- define goals and objectives which specify what a volunteer will know or be able to do as a result of a learning activity
- develop a timetable
- prepare materials
- pre-volunteering logistics: location, transportation

N.B. ensure that there is a designated person who accompanies volunteers on his/her path if they wish to discuss issues relating to the volunteering experiences.

During

Welcome

During volunteering, the organisation should offer volunteers the opportunity to exchange experiences with other volunteers.

Set Rules

It's important to set the rules at the beginning of the volunteering, to avoid misunderstandings between participants and the hosting organisation (e.g. working hours or respect for the location). Moreover, it is important to give volunteers clear and comprehensive role descriptions, regulations, policies in place and complaints mechanisms.

Mission and objective of the Organisation/Association

Clearly explain the mission and objectives of your organization to make volunteers aware of their tasks and roles.

Being precise about the role and task

It is important to offer all volunteers the same training opportunities as paid staff, especially where both operate in the same environment or carry out similar activities.

After

EVALUATION



After volunteering, a feedback round with the leader of the organization and the volunteer should be organized in order to exchange views and personal impressions on the experience of the whole process.

FOLLOW-UP

(next steps)



Individual coaching in order to define future planning with the volunteer. At the end of the experience it would be better to have a moment in which volunteers and the organisation staff share their experiences, thoughts and information in order to find good job opportunities or to plan the future of volunteers.

CERTIFICATION



After the experience of volunteering, the leader of the organization should issue a certification attesting that the volunteering experience was successfully concluded.

Barriers to volunteering

Lack of participation of TCNs in voluntary work may result from the following factors:

- Being involved in voluntary work usually requires great effort, both in time and money. Some TCNs are simply not in the position, economically or socially (e.g. difficulties in arranging childcare) to become active in voluntary work
- Some TCNs are not able to participate in volunteering activities of their hosting country, that may lead to cultural misunderstandings and racism
- TCNs can, like local volunteers, have prejudices about working with people from different cultures and have difficulties in overcoming barriers
- In some countries TCNs are not allowed to volunteer, or lack insurance. In other countries, references are needed in order to become a volunteer. TCNs with a limited social network cannot always come up with the needed references
- Lack of consideration and sometimes belief - by officials, voluntary organizations and agencies that promote volunteering - that TCNs could be potential volunteers¹
- TCNs are sometimes not aware of the possibilities to do voluntary work, because they lack information on the national activities
- TCNs often lack information on the way in which volunteer associations work (i.e. selection procedures, working hours, education possibilities and responsibilities) and may therefore be hesitant to participate in it
- Lack of effort from NGO's to make their recruitment processes more inclusive and diverse ensuring opportunities for TCNs
- Migrant organizations, local and national government, volunteer-involving organizations and organizations that promote volunteerism should make every effort to increase the demand for and supply of volunteering opportunities for TCNs to promote the social and economic inclusion of TCNs

¹ Münz, 2006; Schugurensky, 2005; Wilson & Lewis, 2006

Diversity management

Managing diversity can enable an organization to achieve unexpected efficiency and goals, simply thanks to some daily attention and actions. Diversity is a very broad concept and also very delicate to deal with. Each individual has a different perception of things and a different view of the world. In human relations there is no universal approach, because all human beings have different attitudes and behaviours.

Why diversity matters?



Diversity fuels innovation and creativity, improving all problem-solving processes, making new ideas emerge more quickly

Diversity reduces conflicts between groups and improving collaboration at the workplace. Moreover, working together helps also to reduce stereotypes and prejudices for people from different cultures

The aim of Diversity Management is to give every worker the opportunity to bring out potential and skills that reflect the gender, the race, the nationality; managing cultural diversity¹ is the heart of Diversity Management. A worker/volunteer is free to express herself/himself at workplace will have a different conception of the work and the environment, being more efficient and more productive.

An important step in the process of introducing diversity in an organisation, is changing its working culture. The process of diversity management should promote all team members to perform their work maintaining their cultural values.

The aim of this process should therefore not be to assimilate different cultures into a dominant one, but to create a dominant diverse culture.

¹ UNESCO (2001, November). Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID%3D13179%26URL_DO%3DDO_TOPIC%26URL_SECTION%3D201.html

Checklist

1.

Introduce a policy statement making explicit your commitment to diverse human resources and how you intend to improve the representation of TCNs at all levels.

2.

Emphasise the benefits of diverse human resources and encourage everyone to be committed to make it work.

3.

Be critical towards traditional practices and procedures. Stay open for diversity and new opportunities.

4.

Communicate with staff and volunteers, enable an exchange of good practice within the organisation, give TCNs themselves an opportunity to contribute.



5.

Provide training in working in a multi-cultural setting to the staff at all levels, including the board level.

6.

Promote TCNs to managerial positions and provide them with access to personal support.

7.

Offer proper working conditions and equal advantages to all employees and volunteers.

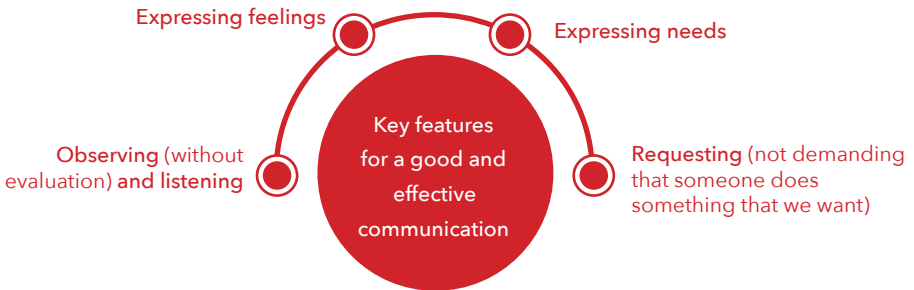
8.

Migrant organizations, local and national government, volunteer-involving organizations and organizations that promote volunteerism should make every effort to increase the demand for and supply of volunteering opportunities for TCNs to promote the social and economic inclusion of TCNs.

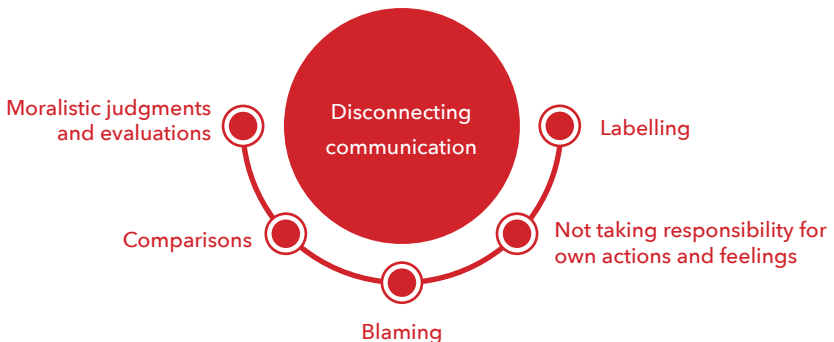


3. COMMUNICATION

Communication between the volunteer and the hosting organisation is crucial: it is important to establish a safe and accepting environment in which a person can open and express himself/herself honestly. When two different cultures meet, it may happen that there are misunderstandings.



On the other hand, disconnecting communication, from which the conflicts can arise is characterised by:



It is important to keep some points in mind when communication with people from different backgrounds. In many cases, language codes can differ greatly between language and cultures making communication more challenging.

During the voluntary experience other challenges can arise, regarding for instance the recognition of the institutional role of the operator or the expression of real expectations of volunteers. Regarding the recognition of the institutional role of the operator, especially if female operator, this issue is often linked to people's cultural background, but usually it can be resolved with time and with the consolidation of trust and mutual knowledge. Regarding the expression of real expectations, motivations, doubts: expressing clearly the purpose of the activities is crucial. Example: taking part in a training course can be experienced in different ways by trainers and students; for the trainers the aim is to train people for a future job; for participants it could mean that, after the learning part, trainers should take action to find a job vacancy. TCNs often experience fears and feelings of inadequacy and are reluctant to make their real expectations, availability and interests explicit.



Operators must be able to convey their respect for the culture and religion without making people feel inferior or judged. The trust is crucial: without it, people will be reluctant to share their true feelings. The role of the mediator is very important: the primary purpose of mediation is to foster contacts, exchanges and interactions between different cultures, while respecting diversity.



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Sudwind
(Austria)



PATRIR
(Romania)



Development Perspectives - DP
(Ireland)



CPS - Center for Peace Studies
(Croatia)



RCT ZAGREB

Rehabilitation centre for
stress and trauma - RCT
(Croatia)



Slovene Philanthropy - SP
(Slovenia)



cesie
the world is only one creature

CESIE
(Italy)