

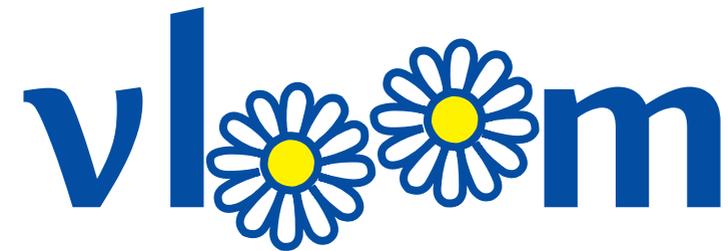
VOLUNTEERING BLOOMING IN EUROPE MANUAL

How to Bloom through Volunteering

VLOOM

Volunteering Blooming in Europe.

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How to bloom through volunteering
MANUAL

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I. INTRODUCTION

Vloom: Volunteering Blooming in Europe

This manual for new volunteers is a product of the Vloom project, funded by the Europe for Citizens Programme (Action 2.3) of the European Commission. The aim of this programme is to bring Europe closer to its citizens and to enable them to participate fully in the European construction. Through this programme, citizens have the opportunity to be involved in transnational exchanges and cooperation activities, contributing to developing a sense of belonging to common European ideals and encouraging the process of European integration¹.

Vloom aims to valorise the actions of volunteers in Europe and to collect their experiences and best practices in order to transfer their knowledge to new volunteers. 50 veteran volunteers came together in a workshop held in Palermo, Italy in November 2011, to create tools to help and encourage more people to volunteer. This handbook is full of their contributions. You can also find other resources they created, including a film, on the Vloom website:

<http://www.cesie.org/vloom/>

¹ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index_en.php

Who is this manual for?

This manual is a practical guide to volunteering for European citizens of all ages and backgrounds. It is aimed at people who are thinking about volunteering and want to know more. It was developed by European Voluntary Service volunteers working in CESIE, based on the contributions of experienced volunteers who took part in the Vloom workshop. This manual will be presented in a seminar for new volunteers in May 2012 hosted by CESIE in Palermo, Italy.

Anyone can volunteer – there are no limits regarding age, gender, ethnicity, disability etc. However, the veteran volunteers identified attitudes of tolerance, open mindedness, patience and selflessness as being fundamental to effective and rewarding volunteering.

We hope our experiences encourage you to consider volunteering opportunities, and that you find our advice useful along the way!

What is volunteering?

Volunteering can be defined as giving your time and skills freely – that is, by your own choice - in order to benefit other people or the environment. Volunteers are not paid for their work. Volunteering takes many different forms and can take place in a formal structure, for example in a charity or NGO, or it can be an informal activity you undertake in your community.

More than 100 million Europeans are engaged in voluntary activities, benefitting society and providing significant value to the economy².

Volunteering is increasingly being seen as an expression of solidarity, active participation and citizenship³.

2 http://community.cev.be/download/123/406/Fact_sheet_DG_ECFIN_economic-value.pdf

3 http://community.cev.be/download/123/406/Fact_sheet_DG_ECFIN_economic-value.pdf

II. WHY VOLUNTEER?

Many different motivations to volunteer have been identified by the experienced volunteers who took part in the Vloom workshop. It was widely agreed that though the prime motivation for volunteering was to help others, once you start volunteering you realise the positive effects it can have on your own life, and this can motivate you even further!

GET OUT WHAT YOU PUT IN

“Giving means receiving. People often say that what you give is what you receive back. So, by making other people’s lives better, you make your own life better.”

EXPRESS YOURSELF

“Be creative and feel free to show who you are!”

SERVE YOUR PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

“Make the difference, no matter how small you think it is. It’s your chance to feel grateful and satisfied for giving something back to society. Fight inequality by acting.”

RAISE YOUR SELF ESTEEM

“Contributing in any way you can, helps in seeing your hidden talents and can make you feel capable and useful.”

☀ SOCIALISE

“Meet new friends, be part of a team and embrace diversity. Open your mind to the world, share and exchange thoughts and experiences. Volunteering can also be fun, so don’t just act, act together!”

☀ GAIN NEW KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

“Don’t miss the opportunity to learn! Gain understanding on volunteering, obtain new skills and build on your previous knowledge.”

☀ ENHANCE YOUR CAREER PROSPECTS

“Gain work experience or even discover new possibilities and career options.”

☀ WIDEN YOUR PERSPECTIVE OF LIFE

“Volunteering can be a life changing experience. It is a challenge to overcome and an inspiration for anyone involved.”

☀ AS A MIGRANT

“You can learn more about the culture and people of your new home, make local contacts, practice language skills.”

☀ MEET DIFFERENT PLACES AND CULTURES

“If you decide to volunteer abroad you will have the opportunity to interact with different people and meet new customs, traditions and places. There is a whole world waiting for you to explore!”

☀ ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

“Volunteering is your chance to really participate in your community, learn more about the issues affecting other people and make a difference.”

III. HOW TO GET STARTED

Hopefully by now you are convinced that volunteering is right for you and you are raring to go! But how do you get started? How do you find a project or organisation to volunteer with?

The first thing you should do is have a good think about what kind of volunteering would best suit you and your lifestyle. Maybe you could jot down some ideas and answers to the following questions:

What is needed? What help can I give?

*How much time do I have free for volunteering?
How much time do I really want to commit?*

Do I want to volunteer in my own community, or abroad?

*What do I want to do? What am I passionate about?
Do I want to work with people, animals, the environment?
Do I prefer to do manual work or paperwork?*

*Why do I want to volunteer?
Do my ideas for volunteer projects match my priorities?*

*Do I want to volunteer on a short or long term basis?
What can I realistically commit myself to?*

*Do I want in depth work that will require a lot of training, or do I just want to get stuck into something more simple?
Do I want to gain some kind of qualification?*

Do I want to work in a team or would I prefer to work as an individual?

*Do I feel confident that I will be able to handle the emotional strain?
Will I get too emotionally involved?*

Do I have the right skills or personal qualities for the role?

Once you have had a good think about these questions, you should hopefully have a better idea of what you can offer and what you want to get out of volunteering, and you can begin to look for the right opportunity for you.

Where to look

Where you start to look for volunteering opportunities will depend on what kind of volunteering you would like to undertake. If you want to work locally, you can start contacting organisations you are interested in directly. Many cities will also have a specialist volunteer centre whose job it is to help you find a suitable placement. It can be really useful to go through one of these organisations as they will already have a lot of local contacts and can help you find the best options for your needs.

If you are interested in volunteering abroad, you will have to do a bit more research to find out your options. There are many organisations offering this kind of experience, but you should be aware that some of them operate as a business and will charge you for their services.

There are a number of programmes funded by the European Union which offer exciting opportunities to volunteer on a European or even global

level. The best way to get involved is to contact a local NGO working on European projects to see if they have any opportunities coming up or contacts.

There is also a range of programmes funded by the UN or national bodies which provide opportunities for volunteering at home or abroad.

You can find further details about volunteer opportunities abroad in chapter 7.

Applying

Many organisations will have ongoing recruitment, accepting applications all year round, whereas others will have specific roles which they advertise as they come up or may recruit in batches, for example twice a year. Sometimes an organisation might not advertise voluntary posts at all and the onus is on you to contact them if you are interested in their work.

They may ask you to fill in an application form, provide a CV and covering letter or simply drop in for a chat. **However the recruitment process works, remember that you should take it seriously.** Many volunteering opportunities can be competitive and organisations need to make sure they recruit suitable volunteers. Fill in applications as fully as possible, and present them well – if it is handwritten try to write as clearly as possible and make sure the spelling and grammar is correct to give a good impression of you.

Many organisations will conduct interviews before they invite you to volunteer with them. Don't worry, these are usually informal and are simply an opportunity for you to meet each other and have a chat about your expectations. However, even if an interview is described as 'informal', you should still behave professionally: arrive on time, present yourself well wearing suitable clothes, be polite, and be prepared to answer and ask questions. Remember also that this is

your chance to interview them and make sure it is the right organisation for you before you commit to anything! **If there is no interview, it is still a good idea to organise a meeting with the organisation before you start.**

During the interview or meeting you should find out as much as possible about the organisation and the role, and what will be expected of you.

Here are some ideas about what to ask :

What does the organisation do?

You should already have some idea of this, but you can ask more detailed questions about their work and current projects to demonstrate your interest.

What will your role be ?

*What time commitment do they ask of you;
how many hours a week and for how long?*

Whether you will get expenses for travel, meals, and other costs related to your role. How are these paid?

*Whether you will receive an induction and training, and how much.
Will you get any certificate or qualifications?*

Who will supervise you, and who will you work with?

*Whether volunteering might affect any current claim
to state benefits you have.*

Do you need insurance? Do they provide it?

Will they carry out any background checks or require references?

*If you will be going abroad, who is responsible for organising travel and accommodation? Who will support you while you are there?
Do you need vaccines or a visa etc? Will you get language lessons?*

*Whether you feel the organisation is a good match for your skills, interests
and social needs – are they friendly? Do they give you “good vibes”?*

Volunteer Agreement

If you are successful and happy with the project and organisation, it is a good idea to sign a volunteer agreement before you start, that sets out the rules and your rights. Many organisations already have these in place, but if they don't you could suggest using the following sample (taken from the Volunteering England website). **Volunteer agreements are not legal contracts, they merely set out what is expected of you and the organisation during your volunteering activity and can be helpful to refer to if you have any problems or disagreements in future.**

Sample Volunteer Agreement ⁴

Volunteers are an important and valued part of [organisation name]. We hope that you enjoy volunteering with us and feel a full part of our team.

This agreement tells you what you can expect from us, and what we hope from you. We aim to be flexible, so please let us know if you would like to make any changes and we will do our best to accommodate them.

I, [name of volunteer], agree to do my best:

To work reliably to the best of my ability, and to give as much warning as possible whenever I cannot work when expected

To follow [organisation name]'s rules and procedures, including health and safety, equal opportunities and confidentiality.

We, [organisation name], will do our best:

To introduce you to how the organisation works and your role in it and to provide any training you need. The initial training agreed is [].

To provide regular meetings with a main point of contact so that you can tell us if you are happy with how your tasks are organised and get feedback from us. Your manager's/supervisor's name is [].

To respect your skills, dignity and individual wishes and to do our best to meet them.

To reimburse your travel and meal costs up to our current maximum.*

To consult with you and keep you informed of possible changes.

To insure you against injury you suffer or cause due to negligence.*

To provide a safe workplace.*

To apply our equal opportunities policy.

To apply our complaints procedure if there is any problem.

*More details on these issues are provided in the volunteer handbook.

Note: this agreement is in honour only and is not intended to be a legally binding contract of employment.

IV. YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Volunteering can be fun and enjoyable, but it is still something to be taken seriously. Often the organisation you are volunteering with will have a lot of work to do with little funds. It may cost a lot for them to train you and they may be relying on you in order to deliver an effective service. **You should approach your role with a responsible attitude and respect the agreement you have made with the organisation.**

Of course, your responsibilities will vary from role to role depending on the organisation and your tasks, and you should be aware of these before you start. Whatever your specific responsibilities may be, remember that as a volunteer you should act responsibly to ensure the work of the project is not undermined, and to get the most out of your volunteering experience.

Generally as a volunteer you are under no legal obligation to the organisation, and you can leave at any time.

Here are some general guidelines identified by experienced volunteers to keep in mind:

- ☀ *Always communicate fully, be friendly, act without prejudice and with good manners and behavior.*
- ☀ *Be committed to the project, and the overall aims of the organisation.*
- ☀ *Respect rules regarding issues of equal opportunities, confidentiality and data protection or rules to protect vulnerable people if relevant. If you do not, the reputation of the organisation could be at stake, and you could cause problems for their clients or beneficiaries.*
- ☀ *Demonstrate commitment – attend training, meetings, and shifts as agreed.*
- ☀ *Seek continuous improvement by solving problems and finding solutions. Speak up if you are not sure about some tasks and need help.*
- ☀ *Be a team player and participate fully. Be willing to learn new things and reflect on your contributions.*
- ☀ *Work under your supervisor's direction and respect their decisions.*
- ☀ *Act professionally – turn up on time, dress appropriately, be polite, inform your organisation if you cannot attend due to sickness etc. Honour the terms of your agreement – these things are especially important if you want to ask for a reference for future jobs!*
- ☀ *If you are having second thoughts or encountering problems with your volunteer role, you should speak up. Often the organisation will be able to come to some compromise with you or help solve the problem, but they are only able to do this if you are open, honest and direct with them about how you feel.*
- ☀ *If you need or want to end your volunteering role – let the organisation know! Don't just stop turning up!*
- ☀ *Taking on a voluntary role can be an excellent means of personal development as you will have to demonstrate responsibility, reliability and commitment. Keep in mind that volunteering is not just a form of vacation, trip or opportunity for you to visit an exotic country; it is not an occasional hobby or opportunity to build your own business; but if you follow these guidelines it can be many times more rewarding.*

V. YOUR RIGHTS

Although taking on a voluntary role requires responsibility, remember you also have certain rights. Currently there is no common law across Europe protecting the rights of volunteers, however the “rights-based approach” to volunteering is gaining ground; the European Youth Forum has published a Draft European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers⁵, which emphasises rights to personal development and support for volunteers. However this is not implemented in law. **Each country has its own laws relating to the status and rights of volunteers, so you should check these out if you ever feel that you have not been treated properly as a volunteer. More information can be found here:**

http://www.cev.be/67-legal_status_of_volunteers_country_reports-EN.html

Below are some examples of volunteer rights which we have divided into basic rights which apply to everyone, and enhanced rights which are usually granted by the organisation you volunteer with. This handbook isn't intended to give legal advice and you should not rely on it if you have a complaint, rather, it is here to provide you with information and examples so that you are informed about these types of issues before you begin volunteering.

⁵ http://www.europolitics.info/pdf/gratuit_en/299434-en.pdf

Basic rights:

- ⚙️ *To be respected and not abused: you should be treated with respect, work under good conditions and have your work recognised.*
- ⚙️ *To be informed of the organisation's aim and objectives.*
- ⚙️ *Not to be discriminated against or bullied.*
- ⚙️ *To speak freely and express your opinions.*
- ⚙️ *To be provided with a safe work environment: your health and integrity should never be threatened.*
- ⚙️ *To say 'no': you can withdraw from the activity at any time.*
- ⚙️ *Enhanced "rights" that you will often have – refer to volunteer agreements, organisation's policy and handbook:*
- ⚙️ *To be covered by the organisation's insurance in case anything goes wrong.*
- ⚙️ *To receive training. In case you are going abroad you may be entitled to language courses.*
- ⚙️ *It may be agreed that you are entitled to expenses for things like travel, food, any costs you incur.*
- ⚙️ *To be consulted before any changes are made to your role or working pattern.*

What to do if things go wrong

Sometimes things won't go according to plan; maybe your expectations aren't being met, some mistakes have been made, or you feel communication is poor. In these situations it helps first to look at yourself. Try to reflect on whether you are at fault in some way and how you could rectify this. Consider your own attitude and see if being more active or positive makes a difference.

Having first looked at yourself, if you are unhappy about something in your organisation or the way you are being treated as a volunteer, you can and should speak up!

Usually an organisation will have a structure in place to deal with grievances or complaints which you should follow. This will usually start with an informal discussion with your manager or supervisor, which is usually all it takes to resolve the problem. If you are still not satisfied, the next step is usually to write a formal letter of complaint to a senior manager, followed by a letter to the board of directors or management committee if it is still not resolved.

Try to remain calm and friendly. Try to make your complaint as specific as possible, giving examples. This will make it easier to be resolved.

Remember!

**You should never be subjected to discrimination, bullying or harassment.
Do not accept it!**

VI. OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Whatever difficulties you might face, they are not unique although obviously important to you. A lot of people will have experienced similar challenges and this chapter details some of the problems our experienced volunteers faced and how to overcome them.

There are three main areas that might bring challenges, these include: people and relationships, your volunteering work and the physical environment you experience.

Preparation and planning are key to managing many of these issues.

People, relationships and you

Lack of appreciation

Do not be disappointed if the people you are helping fail to show their appreciation. Measure your success in other ways. Be happy with little achievements.

Sometimes be prepared not to be understood by those closest to you, they may think you are wasting your time or not understand why you are making such a commitment for little obvious reward. **Try and explain to family and friends why you are doing this and talk about your motivation and about what you actually get from the voluntary experience.** Your enthusiasm may encourage them to volunteer!

Voluntary organisations do not always show their appreciation. Do not be afraid to ask for feedback, if feedback is absent.

You and your ability to manage ups and downs

You are a unique person and therefore your reaction to the challenges of volunteering will be personal to you. This experience will teach you more about yourself. As a new experience it may make you feel uncomfortable, this is normal. **Make sure you are prepared if you can and talk to people for advice and help.** Be tenacious, do not give up; life is full of ups and downs, these may be exaggerated in the voluntary experience



Missing home and special occasions, such as family birthdays, (If you volunteer abroad)

Do not worry if you feel home sick this is a natural feeling. Arrange to contact your family on a regular basis if you can; Skype is a cheap and easy way to stay in touch. Distract yourself by keeping yourself busy at work and in your free time. Talk to your supervisor or mentor about how you are feeling.

Forming new relationships (If you volunteer abroad)

You may be in a situation where you do not know anyone; this is particularly difficult if you are shy. Take every opportunity to join in any induction activities offered, remember others are or have been in the same boat. Your daily routine will bring you in contact with other people and you will get to know others. Be patient and be yourself.

Be mindful that you may be working or living with people who have different values, cultures and beliefs. Do not expect to change these and be tolerant of them. Keep your own values but remember others may behave differently, learn what you can about them and do not take the different behaviours personally.

Be cautious if you consider entering into a sexual relationship. Look after your health and your heart.

Note:

Further information about volunteering abroad can be found in chapter 7.

Processes

Lack of time

In our busy lives, it is sometimes difficult to make time for volunteering. Make time, by planning your day by allotting time periods to the tasks needed, but only as far as you feel comfortable – don't be pressured into giving more of your time than you are willing. **Be firm with yourself and with others, your time is valuable.** By working out beforehand how to manage tasks efficiently, you can save a lot of time.

Lack of information

Try and get as much information about the volunteering project as you can. If you are not given the information, do not hesitate to ask. It is important to have as much information as you can, it will help you prepare and work more efficiently.

Lack of training

Do not perform tasks that you do not feel able to perform as this could be dangerous. Always ask for help and training in these situations or if this is not available, try and think of other ways of doing the job. Be assertive and ask for training because both you and those you are helping will benefit. At the same time do not be afraid to test yourself in new things. Try to learn new skills.

Managing volunteering/project difficulties

By the very nature of volunteering, you will come across many problems and challenges to overcome. It is important to determine what the difficulties are and why they exist if you can. Are the goals clear and do you have a detailed plan about how you are going to get there? Is there a problem with communication? If you find a problem refer it to a supervisor unless you can resolve it yourself easily. Look at the skills in your team and consider who can help. You should never be alone in resolving difficulties. Anyone involved can contribute to the solution.

Lack of integration with the organisation

Lack of integration can manifest itself in a number of ways, most commonly a lack of communication. This could be due to a different language or a different way of using language. Think creatively how to resolve this. Consider using a third party if available to help resolve the difficulties. Make an effort to get to know the people you are working with, you will be able to support each other and feel fully involved in the project.

Maintaining personal boundaries

Normally as a volunteer you should be treated as well if not better than a worker. If you feel this is not happening, discuss this with your supervisor. If it is not possible to talk to someone **you always have the option of saying 'no'.** It is important that you look after yourself as well as others; this should include getting enough rest, working reasonable hours and being respected for who you are.

Environment

Problems with safety

It is important that you keep yourself safe in the volunteering situation. Be vigilant. Be aware of your environment. Do not operate alone in any potentially dangerous situation but if you have to, make sure someone knows where you are. Take any opportunity offered regarding safety and first aid training. If an accident does occur, be prepared.

Make sure you know the telephone number for the emergency services if applicable. Remember do not touch blood or body fluids directly if you can help it.

Preventing infections

Volunteering may bring an increase in infection risks, depending on the activity. This can be effectively managed personally by washing your hands regularly, wearing gloves if in contact with blood and by having the immunisations recommended for the country and/or people with whom you are working.

Language barrier

In a volunteering situation, you may be working with people whose first language is not the same as yours. **Try and learn some basic words as your efforts will be appreciated and your work will be easier.** Use other ways to communicate such as gestures and body language but be mindful that this might be misinterpreted. Use a translation service if available. Ask for training if you can.

New places

New places and communities may well have different systems (lack of public resources, e.g. transport, electricity). Be prepared for this and work out how you can adapt for this. Get information from other people who have already experienced these differences and gain knowledge from them regarding how they overcame the difficulties.

Financial difficulties

You may encounter financial difficulties either personally or within the volunteering project. Get help and advice on how to manage your own money. Remember volunteering should not usually put you out of pocket, i.e. your expenses should be paid if this is what you agreed. You will however need to be sensible and budget carefully. If you are away, get to know the currency, prices and local trading habits so that you know how to manage the money.

Not all volunteering work needs financial resources. Think creatively in how the project can be managed cost efficiently.

Lobby for better funding if it is appropriate but it may not be needed. Volunteers' time can be far more valuable.

Overcoming challenges as a volunteer is a great way to develop life skills and confidence to deal with everyday situations in other areas of life. Experienced volunteers identified their experience as full of ups and downs but as a positive one overall.

VII. Volunteering Abroad

If the idea of volunteering abroad appeals to you, there are lots of opportunities out there. It is important that you think carefully before committing to living abroad. Many volunteers find that volunteering locally beforehand helps them prepare and know what to expect as a volunteer.

So what's the difference?

Volunteering abroad requires a very deep commitment. You will be leaving your home, friends and family behind to help people in another part of the world. You should carefully consider the effect of your absence on your studies or work and family life before you commit to anything.

Volunteering abroad is a totally immersive experience, as even during your free time you will still have to deal with the different culture. Surviving normal day to day activities can be draining when you don't know the language or culture.

Whereas volunteering locally can be sustained over a long term basis and fit in with your lifestyle, volunteering abroad is likely to be relatively short term and intensive, as you will probably be working full time on the project.

This is a chance to learn about a specific issue you are really interested in. Volunteering abroad is an opportunity for an adventure and personal challenge, but it should not be viewed simply as a holiday or chance to travel. You will be working hard!

Try to identify why it is you want to volunteer abroad, as having a clear priority in mind can help when things get tough. Beware of your attitude, particularly if you will be in a developing country – remember no matter your expertise and experience, you always have more to learn.



Opportunities

Programmes Funded through EU

EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE:

For young people aged 18-30

No experience required

Living allowance and insurance included

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/european-voluntary-service_en.htm

GRUNDTVIG SENIOR VOLUNTEERING:

Anyone aged 50 and over

Short term projects of 3 – 8 weeks

Travel and subsistence costs covered

http://ec.europa.eu/education/grundtvig/senior_en.htm

Other Programmes

UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS :

Experienced professionals over 25

Some language requirements

Living allowance and insurance included.

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

VOLUNTARY SERVICE OVERSEAS:

Experienced professionals

Fundraising requirement

Living allowance and insurance included

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

Private companies:

Many private companies also offer volunteering placements abroad, but may charge for their services.

Practical

As well as all the basics you should consider with any volunteering project, projects abroad naturally have extra issues to consider. Depending on the country you are going to, you may need to consider the following:

- ☀ **MONEY** – Will you need to open a bank account while you are there? Will you have enough to support yourself? Check the cost of living before you go. Do they use a different currency? How will you access your money at home in an emergency? You could warn your bank that you will be going away.
- ☀ **YOUR CAREER** – How will going abroad affect your current job or career plans? Do you need to do anything in particular while you are abroad to enhance your CV? Will you have to give up your current job?
- ☀ **HEALTH** - Do you need to get vaccines before you go? Do you need to take any medicines with you? Do you have to register with a doctor when you arrive? Do you need health insurance?
- ☀ **LEGAL** - Do you need a visa? Do you need to register with the local authorities when you arrive? Is your passport valid for the date you plan to return?
- ☀ **ACCOMMODATION** – Do you have a place to stay when you arrive? Who will look after your house while you are away?
- ☀ **LANGUAGE** – Can you speak the local language? Are lessons available?
- ☀ **CULTURE** – Are there any aspects of the culture you need to be aware of e.g. attitudes to women, LGBT, married or unmarried, how you are expected to dress etc. Are you prepared to deal with culture shock?
- ☀ **PROJECT** – Is the project something you feel passionate enough about to work on full time in difficult circumstances?

Integration

The biggest challenge identified by volunteers abroad is undoubtedly navigating another culture. Beyond the obvious things like language, food and arts and music, there are other aspects to culture that are not so visible on the surface. Take a look at the “iceberg of culture” diagram opposite – **you can see that culture goes much deeper than we first realise**, and awareness and understanding of this can help you comprehend why attitudes and ways of working can be so different to your own.

Take the example of one volunteer who was working with the community in rural Altiplano in Bolivia.

*She was working hard to create activities for the young people, and when she organised a meeting, she was disappointed to find that people didn't bother showing up until a couple of hours later. She initially took this to mean they weren't interested in her project and thought it was rude to turn up so late. Later she realised that the community there understood a different concept of time. They didn't have clocks, and used the sun to discern the time. To them, turning up two hours later than expected was a normal thing to do and certainly not rude. **Once she realised this, she was able to adapt her expectations and ways of working** and no longer felt disrespected.*

Though it can be difficult, it is also a great privilege to be able to begin understanding another culture; you may eventually take on the positive aspects in your own life, or at least have a better understanding of your own culture and the reasons behind your attitudes and behavior.

Iceberg Theory of Culture



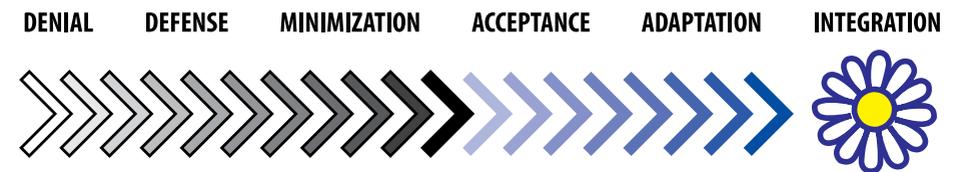
Just as nine-tenths of the iceberg is out of sight and below the water line, so is seven-eighths of culture out of conscious awareness. The out-of-awareness part of culture has been termed deep-culture.



The process of integration can take a long time, and you may not be fully integrated even by the time you have to leave. The Bennett scale⁶, or Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), is a useful explanation of the stages an individual goes through when faced with a new culture. We begin by seeing things from an “ethnocentric” point of view – always relating things back to our own culture, denying or minimising differences we encounter. Eventually we move towards acceptance, adaptation and finally integration. **This process can take a long time, and you might find yourself moving back and forth through the scale as you come across more challenges.**

DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY

experience of difference



Ethnocentric States

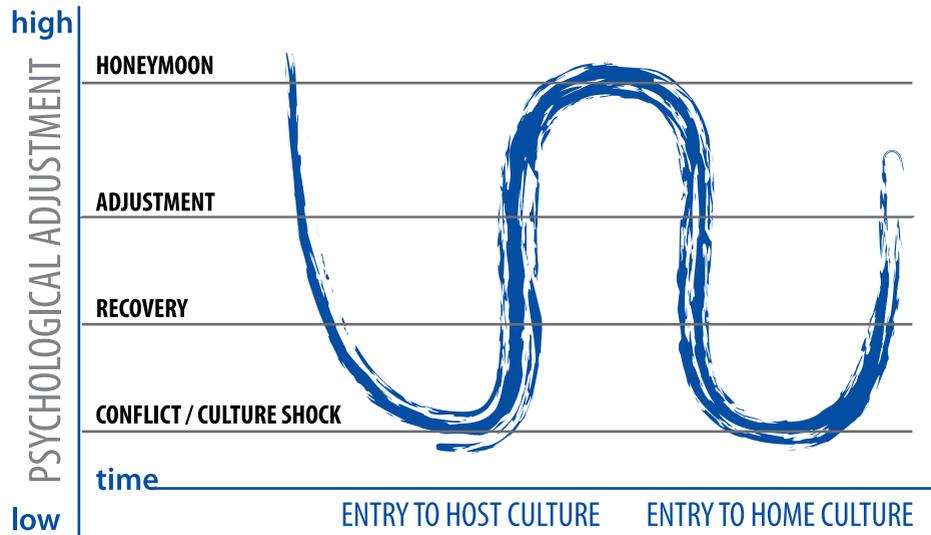
Ethnorelative States

© Milton Bennett

Culture Shock

A very common reaction to moving abroad is the experience of culture shock⁷. This can affect everyone, even the most seasoned travellers. It can manifest in a number of ways, including feelings of anxiety and disorientation, homesickness, irritability, withdrawal, boredom and physiological reactions. Most people who have moved abroad will experience this dip after an initial period of elation and for some it can last a long time, though most people find that they soon start to feel better.

6 http://www.idrinstitute.org/allegati/IDRI_t_Pubblicazioni/33/FILE_Documento_Sietar_Journal_No_8.pdf
 7 http://www.indeleibleinternational.com/index.php?pc=justArticle&ora=KO_73917



Top Tips

Advice from experienced volunteers on how to overcome low periods and culture shock:

- ☀ Get involved in some club or activity to make friends locally and feel part of the community.
- ☀ Go out and socialise rather than moping alone in your room every night.
- ☀ Keep a healthy lifestyle – exercising can help beat the blues, release frustration and maintain your self-esteem.
- ☀ Enjoy exploring – try everything once!
- ☀ Try to speak the local language even at a basic level – it will make life easier and you will feel more integrated.
- ☀ Keep in touch with friends and family back home through email or Skype.
- ☀ Try to keep an open mind about the things you experience and people you meet.
- ☀ Have patience with yourself during the lows; look after your mental and physical health

Returning Home

Commonly, many volunteers find that the most difficult phase is their return home to “normality”, this can take people by surprise as they expect home to feel like home and may initially be excited about their return. This is sometimes known as “reverse culture shock”, and can invoke similar feelings of disorientation that you felt when you entered the new culture. Volunteering abroad can really change you as a person, but be aware that your family and friends back home will probably not have changed in the same way, and you might find they are not really as interested in your experiences as you thought they would or should be. **It can be hard to adjust back into your own culture** – everything can seem so dull and boring, and the things that you used to enjoy might bring no pleasure anymore, you may find yourself longing to go back and missing aspects of your new culture. This is a perfectly normal reaction, and is temporary. Eventually you will manage to incorporate the skills and attitudes you picked up abroad into your life back home. The best way to prepare for reverse culture shock is simply to be aware of it and expect some level of discomfort as you readapt to life in your own culture. **Have patience and be reassured it is a very common reaction.**

From the diary of a volunteer returning from abroad

First week... at home

Being at the airport is such a strange sensation, these well dressed people - who knows if some of them would understand an activity like mine, it would be really funny to see them in these clothes in my village in Pakistan :) ... well, not my village any more. I've to get used to the idea I'm from Bratislava!

Gosh, I can't wait to sleep in my own bed! Who knows what my mum did for dinner today? Hopefully a nice chicken soup and some pork, oh I haven't eaten pork for years!

The dinner was really amazing, I really love my family, I missed them so much. Even grandma was OK, and Dad It is so good to feel that they are proud of me. I'm really looking forward to seeing my friends tomorrow! It is such a good sensation to be finally at home!

What about my buddies back in Pakistan, who knows, what are they doing now? I would really like to see them now and especially Alejandro. I would really like to see him in the kitchen, doing the meals for all community :D Who knows if they are going to miss me, I mean. for real And what about the kids, are they OK?

Second week at home

Oh my goodness, I'm so stupid! I wanted to go home so badly and what now? I am all alone in this small room and even my loved ones are getting on my nerves.

I don't know what has happened to my friends, They are not so funny as they used to be, they all have changed so much while I wasn't here They became so boring, speaking about the same topics all around, clubbing, and doing more or less the same things. Surely we can be different and have the power to change things?

No, I have changed I went out to work on my project and give help to the locals, hoping to change them, but they have changed me. They have changed me a lot and I am so happy about it! I know it's going to be difficult but I don't want to be the same as before, to lead the life as before! I have received a lot and I feel like I can give a lot in return."

VIII. A FINAL WORD

A very important thing about starting volunteering is **to get as much information as possible** so that you can plan ahead and manage the issues you may encounter.

Volunteers should also have an open minded approach as they begin their work.

We want

everyone to have the opportunity of a fulfilling volunteering experience

and we hope that this manual will help you get the most out of it.

IX. USEFUL LINKS

Information about volunteering:

<http://www.cesie.org/vloom/>

<http://europa.eu/volunteering/>

<http://www.cev.be/>

<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/index.php>

Programmes:

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/european-voluntary-service_en.htm

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

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

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XI. PARTNERS



ITALY / **Centro Studi ed Iniziative Europeo** is a non-profit and independent European non-governmental organisation. CESIE works towards the promotion of cultural, educational, scientific and economic development at both local and international levels through the employment of innovative and participative tools and methodologies including the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach developed by Danilo Dolci;

Four Pillars of Education; Lateral Thinking; Learning by doing.

web: www.cesie.org mail: sve@cesie.org



BULGARIA / BGRF: **The Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation** works in the field of gender equality, prevention of domestic violence, reproductive rights and anti-discrimination by providing information, elaboration and production of researches, analyses and draft laws, conducting campaigns and lobbying for legislative changes, provision of training and consultations for professionals and working in wide networks in cooperation with other organisations, public institutions and experts.

web: www.bgrf.org mail: office@bgrf.org



CYPRUS / (ESFC) **The European social Forum of Cyprus'** main aim is the implementation of the EU law in Cyprus, as new member of the EU. It works in areas of youth, civilization and education, environment and agriculture development, and the social sector.

web: www.esfc.org.cy mail: chrysis@esfc.org.cy



ESTONIA / **Continuous Action** is an NGO which unites people interested in voluntary service, Lifelong Learning and equal opportunities. We cooperate with governmental, non-governmental, recreational, educational and cultural associations, societal organisations and movements, with other organisations, enterprises and clubs both in Estonia and abroad which are interested and promote the same actions and values as we do.

web: www.continuousaction.ee mail: info@continuousaction.ee



DENMARK / **Crossing Borders** is a non-profit NGO that provides impartial dialogue space and empowering skills training for youth, media actors and educators to participate actively in the present and future development of the society.

web: crossingborders.dk/ mail: garba@crossingborder.org



FRANCE / FLA: **France Latin Amerique** strives to promote the culture of the peoples of Latin America, in all their components, their differences, their hopes and innovative impulses. It is by sharing their struggles and successes in defending human rights and democracy, economic development and social progress, that we show them our solidarity.

web: Franceameriquelatine.org mail: gerardfenoy@gmail.com



FRANCE / **Eurocircle**: Founded in 1993 in Berlin, and a European NGO since 2006, EUROCIRCLE develops and implements transnational projects, particularly in the field of international youth mobility. These projects aim to promote the emergence of European citizenship, based on the values of tolerance, equality, peace, ecology, and solidarity.

web: www.ec-network.net/ mail: rm.eurocircle@gmail.com



HUNGARY / **KIKE**: the association, which has a membership of 60, is committed to contribute to the improvement of the cultural life of our settlement. We organise courses, seminars and conferences, and talent shows. We have a lot of experiences in the field of international projects. All members are volunteers.

web: http://wowcity.com/link_to.php?url=http://www.kike.hu/ mail: kike@kike.hu



LATVIJA

LATVIA / **Social Alternative Institute**: founded in 2004, the Institute aims to promote democracy and social change in society's socio-economic reforms through social and youth projects, focusing on integration and quality of life and environment of social groups at risk.

web: www.sainstitute.lv mail: ieva_sai@inbox.lv



LIETUVA

LITHUANIA / **Family Planning and Sexual Health Association** is the only non-governmental organisation that promotes sexual and reproductive health and rights in Lithuania. Its mission is to develop a positive public opinion about sexual and reproductive health, and influence public policy in this area.

web: www.tavogyvenimas.lt/index.php mail: jaunimas@tavogyvenimas.lt



MALTA

MALTA / **The Fondazzjoni Temi Zammit (FTZ)** is a Maltese not-for-profit foundation drawing key stakeholders together in a strategic partnership to boost regional development. It is a collaborative network implementing international, European and local projects of benefit to the whole community. It aims to create greater social cohesion and contribute to the moulding of tomorrow's knowledge-based society – "an inclusive society without frontiers to knowledge".

web: temi.ftz.org.mt/www mail: simontheuma@gmail.com



ROMÂNIA

ROMANIA / **Young Leaders**: The Association "Young Partners for Civil Society Development" was established in April 2004 and is one of the biggest youth organisations in Romania. The organisation mainly works on organising workshops, local initiatives, seminars, training courses, camps, volunteer actions and other activities for young people. One of YPCSD main aims is to promote and encourage intercultural cooperation among the young people from Romania and the other countries from Europe.

web: www.youngleaders.ro/en/index.html mail: iulianghinoiu@yahoo.com



ESPAÑA

SPAIN / **AIIJ**: A youth association started in 2003 to promote the integration and development of young people at different levels: training, employment, language training, cultural activities. Also to facilitate and encourage the active participation of young people both in local and European and international activities.

web: www.ongs-elconsul.org/internacionaljoven mail: ajinterjoven@hotmail.com



UNITED KINGDOM

UK / **MWC: The Muslim Women's Collective** seeks to empower Muslim and non-Muslim women and their families in Tower Hamlets by ensuring that they play an active role in improving the environmental, social, health and physical well being of their surrounding communities

web: www.muslimwomenscollective.org.uk mail: savita.ayling@towerhamlets.gov.uk



ESPAÑA

SPAIN / UPA: **The Permanent University of the University of Alicante** (UA) is a scientific, cultural and social development programme of the UA which aims to promote Science and Culture, as well as intergenerational relationships, in order to improve the quality of life of seniors (older adults) and encourage their participation, within their life context, as social 'dynamisers'.

web: [/www.ua.es/upua](http://www.ua.es/upua)

mail: upua.internacional@ua.es



SLOVENSKO

SLOVAKIA / **Progresit**: Progresit Civic Association has set itself the task to seek innovative ways to solve problems in different areas within European Union countries. Actively involved in developing projects using EU funds, it has established partnerships with several institutions in many European countries.

web: www.progresit.sk/index.html

mail: Klapica@progresit.sk



БЪЛГАРИЯ

BULGARIA / Nava: **National Alliance for Volunteer Action** was established in May 2000, as an organisation in public benefit. Its mission is to revitalise volunteer traditions throughout Bulgaria by encouraging citizen's involvement in community problem solving, as well as organising initiatives and campaigns promoting volunteer values.

web: <http://navabg.com/bg>



ΕΛΛΑΔΑ

GREECE / **The Institute of Entrepreneurship Development** aims to strengthen and promote entrepreneurial spirit and mindset to all countries and citizens, especially youth. Our vision is anthropocentric; one of our primary concerns is to provide assistance to citizens and disadvantaged groups to improve their place in society, promoting social inclusion and cohesion.

web: www.entre.gr/site-en

mail: info@entre.gr



ROMÂNIA

ROMANIA / Association "**Woman Millennium III**" is an organisation for women today, concerned about the quality of their lives and their families, home and community. It offers support to poor women and children; provides education and consulting services for groups of women in democracy and human rights, nutrition; supports personal self-esteem of women and provides development opportunities.

web: www.femeiamileniului3.ro

mail: afromanro@yahoo.com



POLSKA

POLAND / **Inncrea**: Organises training courses and events to promote creative and innovative abilities in education, private and public sectors. It aims to develop the aesthetic sensibility, emotional and creative thinking and intuition of children, young people and adults through intercultural communication.

web: inncrea.internetdsl.pl

mail: mf@kszia.internetdsl.pl



PORTUGAL / **Sonhos Para Sempre:** Is a cooperative society of social solidarity whose mission it is to promote the inclusion of social groups and individuals at risk and the human development of the community at local, regional and european levels, acting through proximity interventions for non formal and informaleducation, vocational training socio-cultural animation, entrepreneurship and sustainable tourism.

mail: silvino.rego@gmail.com



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