



How to work with volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds

Proposal for EDYN Annual Council Meeting 2020

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Matthew 25; 35-36).

The work of EDYN members is based upon a Christian view of humanity. Human beings are seen in relationship with others as a social being and as a free person who takes responsibility for themselves and others. A human being is unique in God's creation: "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139; 14); self-determination, tolerance and respect are central values in our work; we would like that all people serving in our organizations and placements - both workers and volunteers - to share these common values.

In addition, international institutions, first of all the United Nations (UN), claim that social inclusion is a process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of their background, so that they can achieve their full potential in life. See, e.g., the point 10.2 of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030: "By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status".

Therefore, no young person should be excluded from the opportunity to conduct a long-term volunteer service because of their cultural background, his/her different abilities, his/her disabilities or chronic diseases, economic condition, etc. The volunteering programs provide the chance to gain experience, to grow up, to face and often overcome the personal limits. This opportunity must be offered to every young person even though the background of the candidates looks particularly difficult. EDYN is committed to promote long-term volunteering service to young people with fewer opportunities, to support them during the volunteering experiences despite the additional efforts it may take.

To be inclusive of young people from a variety of backgrounds, some cautions and precautions are necessary. It takes intention to preserve the placements, to serve the beneficiaries of the services, and to empower the volunteers themselves.



First of all: who are the volunteers with “fewer opportunities”? The guidelines for the Erasmus + projects identifies the young people with fewer opportunities as people that might face the following – non exhaustive – obstacles (see, e.g., for an quite exhaustive list, the European Solidarity Corps Guide 2020 at https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/european-solidarity-corps-guide_2020_en.pdf): disability, educational difficulties, economic obstacles, cultural differences, health problems, social obstacles, geographical obstacles. At the same time, the realities of the different countries (and sometimes of regions within these countries) is too diverse to have a specific definition (e.g. a 'poor' person in Scandinavia might be considered 'rich' in Eastern Europe, a gay person in Cologne probably faces less discrimination than in a small countryside village in the Balkans, etc.). A useful guideline in the SALTO website can help to understand “Who are we talking about?”

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/archive/archive-resources/inclusiongroups/inclusionoffenders/InclusionOffendersWho/>.

Second point: the Erasmus+/ESC programs provide additional financial support for the young people with fewer opportunities. We have also to consider that the funds provided for the 2021-2027 programs will be probably doubled respect to those for the previous plan, and this will involve also the “fewer opportunities” (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20190218IPR26760/new-erasmus-more-opportunities-for-disadvantaged-youth>).

Moreover, the health emergency due to Covid-19 has led to a further widespread increase in NEETs and young people with fewer opportunities in many countries; efforts and strategies for the inclusion of these young people should also be geared towards ensuring access to the new digital media to which part of the non-formal education activities provided by international voluntary programmes have been transferred.

For these reasons we would like to suggest some indications to EDYN members; in particular, indicators for those that, as sending or hosting organizations, want to develop projects involving young people with fewer opportunities.

Direction for EDYN member

- A. Consider a percentage of volunteers with fewer opportunities in our project, where it is possible and where there are favorable conditions.
- B. Specific questions in the application form for "identification" of possible candidates with fewer opportunities: the questions should be put in a "positive way".
- C. Specific interview questions for "identification" of possible candidates with fewer opportunities.
- D. Consider to write Erasmus projects inserting people with fewer opportunities (more funds).
- E. Consider to write projects with short term volunteering (see also point T): the new guidelines for ESC projects allow you to volunteer in total for 2 (short term) + 12 (long term) months instead of 2 +10 months.
- F. Consider to write volunteering team projects in which, in addition to the dimension of short (also very short) term volunteering, there is also the dimension of the large number of volunteers and team building that facilitate a more protected and shared dimension of the volunteering (see also point T).
- G. Including in EDYN membership reports the number of volunteers with fewer opportunities.
- H. Including in EDYN communication (website, articles, social networks, etc.) stories of success to encourage inclusion.
- I. Share, within the EDYN network, the good practices and the projects already written including volunteers with fewer opportunities.
- J. Overview of placements in the network available for people with fewer opportunities.

Recommendations for hosting

- K. Psycho-social support for volunteers, if needed.
- L. Transparent communication with future placements.
- M. More frequent support (meeting and practically for the volunteers).
- N. Special mentorship for social inclusion.
- O. The use of support methods and tools to carry out the interviews if they are difficult due to various problems (linguistic, connection, relational): e.g. questions to be answered in writing, chat interviews, etc.

Recommendations for sending

- P. Support to write applications, to collect documents and translate them.
- Q. Support during the interviews.
- R. Provide as much as possible information for hosting (together with volunteers).
- S. Pre-language course in English.
- T. Have opportunities to volunteer some time before the service in the home country before ESC.
- U. Maintain constant communication with the hosting organization.



TIME FOR GOD



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