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Still Active!

A Guidebook for the Organizations of the Civil Society
Interested in Hosting Senior Volunteers

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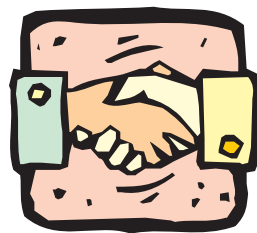
Foreword and acknowledgements

This booklet is aimed at all those organizations of the civil society which are curious about hosting a senior volunteer as a resource for their projects. It comes out from the experience of several senior volunteers and several NGOs, associations, local governments and other public and private structures that in the past years hosted international senior volunteers in their projects offering them the chance to get familiar with a new environment, different points of view and new lifestyles. Thanks to EU supported initiatives all focusing on international senior volunteers exchanges, more than 300 volunteers and many organizations have been experiencing this kind of adventure since the year 2001. Volunteers thus offered thousands of hours of voluntary service from 50 to 80 years old.

Without their assessments, judgments and sometimes mistakes, this publication – of which we are very proud of – would not exist.

So the first big “thanks!” is for all the European volunteers and the organizations that hosted them.

A special acknowledgement to Mrs Karin Stiehr (ISIS – Frankfurt) who is the author of chapter 4 and related tool of this guidebook and whose capacity of analysis gave an invaluable contribution to the construction of the hypothesis of a permanent programme for senior volunteers, and to the Insurance Department of Service Civil International. Thanks also to the Alliance of the European Voluntary Service Organisations for giving us access to some of their educational materials and in particular to its President, Mr Aleksander Kurushev who is the author of the appendix describing with his original point of view, some specific features on potential senior volunteers coming from the former Soviet Union countries. Thanks finally to Mr Gerhard Teissl and all our friends of Eurag who patiently have been following us for years and started many good practices such as those outlined by some of the enclosed tools.



Apart from the precious individual contributions, this booklet is mainly the result of several discussions and actions undertaken by the whole partnership whose commitment to the project was always even higher than requested. We registered that all organizations involved really enjoyed running this project and greatly contributed. Obviously this booklet does not represent the work of a single organization.

This project and the related materials were developed thanks to the contribution of the European Commission – Socrates-Grundtvig programme and to the Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generation and Consumer protection.

1. Introduction to a possible European Senior Volunteer Programme

1.1 The Background

In recent years Europe experienced a dramatic change in demographic trends and an important ageing of its population. People are living longer throughout Europe as a result of improved public health provision, medical progress, improved diet and housing. The expectation of a longer life caused a deep change in lifestyles and needs of seniors. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights recognizes these changes stating that "the European Union acknowledges and respect the right of seniors to have an independent and respectable life and to take part to social and cultural life" (art. 25).

In Europe, the majority of seniors lives in better conditions than in the past but due to ageing the risk of social exclusion remains. The creation of a European society active at all ages needs a strategy that allows seniors to take part in social life also after their exit from the labour market. Seniors represent a richness not throughly enhanced in terms of experiences and acquired skills: specific actions at European level devoted to seniors, can develop schemes of social inclusion and active participation in order to change seniors from passive beneficiaries of social protection to active citizens in the construction of Europe.

1.2 A strategy to enhance active citizenship

The great success of the European Youth programme and more specifically of its Action 2 "European Voluntary Service" showed how international voluntary service may represent an extraordinary experience of non-formal learning for young people.



Thus, International voluntary service can make an important contribution to the promotion of active citizenship among seniors thanks to its social and cultural features of participation and solidarity.

Seniors should be considered as potential volunteers in all the EU member countries. In fact they have always been the backbone of traditional civic participations, running churches, voluntary organizations, charitable fund-raising activities etc. Getting extra life from extra years implies the idea of active citizenship also after retirement. Older persons have a capacity and an appetite for being active which tends to be insufficiently recognized. Engaging in mentally stimulating activities is important for the development and preservation of capacities in later life. Such possibilities need to be greatly expanded. Preparing for longer, more active and better lives, and seizing opportunities for active contributions after retirement are important ways to secure a maximum

degree of self-reliance and self-determination in old age, while maximizing human resources currently greatly underused, when not wasted, in our societies. Indeed, seniors are already very active in non-governmental organizations. Involving a larger number of fit seniors in voluntary work might turn out to be a major tool in active ageing strategies.

1.3 Past projects – what has already been done

In 2001 two mobility pilot projects in favour of older persons were supported by the European Commission. They were both based on the principles of transnational voluntary service, active citizenship, intercultural education and cross-generation dialogue. We believe that the work of the past years should be continued and enhanced and as a partnership we somehow feel committed in keeping on this work especially in view of the good results obtained in terms of involving people, organisations of the civil society and local governments.

In the year 2001 one of the two projects was granted under SOCRATES – GRUNDTVIG 1. The project named “Mobility 55” included, a survey on the attitude toward performing voluntary service activities by over 55 years-old citizens and a test phase during which 30 older volunteers from 5 different countries performed a period of 1 to 2 months voluntary service in community based projects abroad.



During the test phase and its evaluation, we realized that these kinds of activities are highly appreciated both by the volunteers and by the hosting organizations. Volunteers felt themselves needed, useful and active and learned from the intercultural environment. At the same time hosting organizations not only benefited from their voluntary work but often, they started a mutual learning process. But we also raised up a high interest among several local governments that saw these initiatives of exchange happen in the area they manage.

Again in the year 2001, as a evidence of the interest created, an other pilot project by the DG Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission. This project was called “European Exchange Programme of Older Volunteers”, it involved 8 European countries and managed to move 137 volunteers between 50 and 80 years old.

That's how we arrived to this project that has been running since 2003, named “Still Active!” again supported by the Socrates Programme – Action Grundtvig 1, that is engaged in drafting training modules for potential older volunteers who would like to take part to projects abroad, and for community based hosting organizations of civil society interested in having volunteers from abroad involved in their activities

on a short term basis.

In the year 2004, a new project has been approved for funding by the European Commission (DG Employment and Social Affairs) named "Teaming up!". It forecasts the exchange of 150 volunteers among 6 EU countries that in groups of 5 volunteers will perform voluntary service abroad for a period of three weeks. The project is based on bilateral partnerships between local governments who are also co-funders of the project.

1.4 The educational features: intercultural and intergenerational learning

Volunteering abroad, including its preparatory and follow-up stages, represents a full non-formal educational experience. A wide literature has been published on voluntary service in cultural contexts, different from their native one and the intercultural impact on participants, but it almost exclusively deals with young people. Based on the pilot projects carried out so far, we believe that such an exposure would be very useful: also for senior citizens because they can contribute, with their life experience, to socially useful initiatives and they are recognized as fully active and still be able to perform actions in favour of others. The intercultural learning experience is a two-way process: not only the volunteer gets included into another culture, but also the hosts learn from the volunteers different points of view, different ways to perform activities and directly deal with another mentality beyond prejudices and stereotypes.



The best experiences have seen senior and young volunteers working together and sharing daily life from the work to the meals and sometimes the same accommodation. Specific research would be needed in order to map the learning flows but it is clear that the process of mutual enrichment is there and it works well destroying prejudices and stereotypes that people have towards those of a different generation and those coming from a different country.

1.5 Seniors as volunteers

Summing up the previous projects more than 300 volunteers between 50 and 80 years old have been involved in short term activities of international voluntary service. For most of these people the experience did not represent an end in itself: as the volunteers belonged to some organization the period abroad was a good chance to start new contacts and for developing co-operations with associations of other countries. Some of the volunteers continued to volunteer for short periods in other countries after the end of the projects, others decided to go back to study a foreign language: for all of them it was a stimulus to learn more and to be actively involved with organizations of civil society at home. Volunteers went to the projects with the only idea to contribute to the social work of some organizations but frequently returned realizing that they got (in terms of learning for example) at least as much as they gave. Finally

we report it as a curiosity that, from our previous experiences, we registered more than 70% of interest from senior women in such a programme and less from men. We will carry out some further research to establish why this is so.

1.6 Where the whole thing is coming from: a bit of history

You might be curious now to know where this kind of proposal is coming from. Indeed it has quite old roots. We have to go back to the end of World War I. We have to pay our attention to a small village called Verdun at the border between France and Germany. Something totally amazing and incredible happened there: a group of international volunteers organized by a Swiss Conscientious Objector named Pierre Ceresole went to this village to help in the reconstruction of some destroyed houses. The group of international volunteers included also some German volunteers. Can you believe it? French and German were fighting each other, and now they were working together for a common goal. This was so incredible that the French authorities became suspicious, rumors were started that they probably were spies, so after 6 weeks the experience was stopped. But the idea of international voluntary service that witness solidarity and helps people from different nationalities, background and lifestyle to get closer working on a common goal, lived on. This is as well the foundation year of the organization "Service Civil International", mother and root of many similar national organizations and worldwide networks.



2 The actors on stage: the triangle model

A Senior volunteer program as conceived so far usually sees 3 main actors: a project is actually the result of their partnership and co-operation.

These actors are

- 1) A Hosting Organisation mainly working at local level
- 2) A Sending Organisation working both at local and international level
- 3) The Senior Volunteer(s)
- 4) (optional) Local Governments

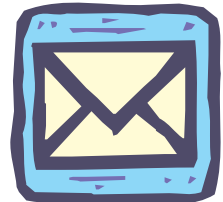
It is important to make each role clear and share these roles properly. The roles range from Program planning to financial resources. Local Governments may substitute or work alongside with hosting and/or sending organisations.

2.1 Hosting organization (National Host organization):

"Hosting Organization" is any organization or institution runs social activities on a permanent or at least on a long term project basis. Several institutions and organizations of the civil society have already been involved in including senior volunteers in their daily activities: these range from care centers for people with disabilities to associations for the protection of the environment, from orphanages to cultural centers, from associations that give assistance to older people in need, to hospitals and many other different institutions working with persons of all ages.

WHAT IT IS EXPECTED FROM A HOSTING ORGANISATION

- ✓ Confirmation about the acceptance to the sending organization and volunteer
- ✓ Send sufficient and clear information to sending organization and volunteer
- ✓ Arranging the programme including practicalities such as meals and accommodation
- ✓ Transportation from the meeting point to the project side (desirable).
- ✓ Welcoming and first orientation for volunteers: introduce the volunteer to the project and to all the members, volunteers and staff of the hosting organization
- ✓ Introduce the local culture, customs, laws, traditions, belief and norms to the volunteers
- ✓ Identification of a tutor or a contact person for the volunteer
- ✓ Coordinating daily work for the volunteers
- ✓ Providing transportation during the project
- ✓ Evaluation report (including middle) with the volunteer and the sending organization.
- ✓ Organizing extra activities (optional) or give information about the possibilities in the area



- ✓ Ensuring and facilitating the Communication flow between the foreign senior volunteers and the local volunteers
- ✓ Providing health care for volunteers.

2.2 Sending organization

A "sending organisation" works as placement agency of senior volunteers in the range of all the possible projects offered by hosting organisations in different countries. In theory volunteers could go and find the projects by themselves without any intermediary, but our experience showed us that a sending organisation is a guarantee for both the volunteers and the hosting organisation in another country.

WHAT IT IS EXPECTED FROM A SENDING ORGANISATION

- ✓ Recruit and prepare the volunteers
- ✓ Look for information on the host country and organisation and share it with the volunteers
- ✓ Select the volunteers and place them according to their skills and interests in the most suitable project
- ✓ Introduce past volunteers to new volunteers
- ✓ Make pooling of past volunteers and ask them to help with new volunteers in the same project
- ✓ Evaluate the project
- ✓ Take care of the volunteer during and after the project, ensuring contacts with the hosting organization while a volunteer is in the project.
- ✓ Be responsible of sent volunteers
- ✓ Visa support (if needed)
- ✓ Provide information about arrival date and time to the hosting project
- ✓ Provide emergency contact persons for family of volunteers



2.3 International Senior volunteers

And we arrive at the third part of the triangle: the volunteer. In this context we identify a senior volunteer as being at least 50 years old and interested to work for a defined period abroad on a social project. You can possibly host or send senior volunteers on an individual or a group basis. Apparently a group can be more tiring, but experiences showed that seniors abroad in a group tend to support each other very carefully and to find common solutions to problems. Even for the language it can be an advantage because it is easier to find in a group someone speaking some of the language spoken also by the responsible of the hosting organizations. Whereas indi-

viduals alone in a project may feel isolated and their need to share their experience might be unsatisfied. This must be clear: if you need or look for permanent staff in your organization, you'd better forget to substitute them with international senior volunteers. They stay for short periods and they request a lot of your attention, but most of all they are not there as cheap labour-force. But they represent an important resource in terms of intercultural and intergenerational learning and human support that your organization may need. We do not want to underestimate the practical work that they can perform to help you which is great, we just underline that they can't and won't substitute any paid staff.

WHAT IT IS EXPECTED FROM VOLUNTEERS

- ✓ Keep motivated during the exchange programme
- ✓ Follow all the agreements set out at the pre-departure stage
- ✓ Respect the local culture
- ✓ Be responsible for their own belongings and themselves
- ✓ Keep and respect the different roles
- ✓ Be involved in the local community
- ✓ Write the final reports
- ✓ Help new volunteers in returning to home country
- ✓ Take actively part in the evaluation with local host project
- ✓ Self manage their own free time

2.4 Local Governments

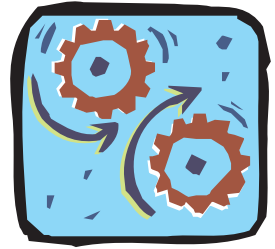
The results of the projects carried out so far were of great interest to local and regional governments, as they are the bodies primarily concerned about the ageing of their populations and responsible for local social policies. They start to see older people as a resource and not only as a burden, a group of the population needing care. We think it could be wise to involve local and regional governments in different countries willing to implement this programme and to help in setting up a permanent programme of senior volunteers' exchange at European level. We already started with the idea of fostering bilateral partnerships among local and regional governments; the older volunteers themselves can be supportive for governments who are interested in setting up such bilateral relations.

They can work as hosting or sending organization or both, as in general they work in networks with ngos active at the grass-root level in the social field.

3 Organising the exchange

3.1 Co-ordination between hosting and sending organisation

As in the main international voluntary service programmes such as the European Voluntary Service for young people launched by the European Commission, or the Medium and Long Term Volunteering programme held by the main International Voluntary Service Organisations, we have seen that a volunteer is basically recruited, prepared and sent by a Sending Organisation and received, fed and cared by a Hosting Organisation. As it can be easily imagined, for the benefit of a volunteer and the whole project a high degree of co-ordination between these two bodies is needed. In fact there is quite a lot of work to do before the volunteers arrive on a project, by both parts as we will see below. A continuous communication flow between hosting and sending must be performed. In the projects that we ran so far, it was established a centralized European co-ordination that was responsible for collating all the hosting projects and circulating them to the sending organisations. This facilitates a lot the whole process but of course introduces a new actor: the co-ordinating organisation. In theory it is not necessary but of course it helps a lot. One way to avoid this new actor could be the draft of bilateral (or tri or multilateral) agreements among organisations in different countries that share the same goal of realising senior exchanges. If we should start from the beginning we would research interesting organisations to deal with, visit them or anyway get better acquainted and then agree the exchange of senior volunteers.



3.2 Sending side Recruiting volunteers: professional and linguistic skills

The recruitment of volunteers in our scheme is a task of the sending organisation as defined above. In many cases the volunteers themselves look in their countries for an organisation that can help them to find a suitable project abroad. Should you be an organisation with good and established contacts in other countries, you may think to propose yourself as sending organisation, draft agreements and gather information on projects abroad to propose to your volunteers. Of course if you are an organisation working with volunteers, it may be interesting for you to send them volunteering to another country in order to widen their horizons and give them the chance to learn and do something new, stimulating and rewarding.

In our understanding and setting of the whole programme, one of the main features of these projects was that every volunteer should have been able to perform any project in order to give the chance to all to access this intercultural experience abroad. Many

volunteers came to us with the idea of "helping" in the co-operation projects like those carried out in the South of the world. These projects require qualified volunteers with specific skills: of course they are fundamental and deserve all of our respect and admiration but it is not what we want to propose. The focus of our proposal is an educational one, it is based on the exchange and on the mutual intercultural learning among people coming from different backgrounds, either national, cultural or social. This is why we talk about "recruitment" more than "selection". In fact from this perspective, in principle, everyone is suitable to perform a period of voluntary service abroad, regardless of their skills, because every person will surely have something to learn and to teach at the same time. We don't want to argue that the previous experiences are not important, but on the contrary that every skill will turn to be useful, not only those related to the practical work to be performed in the project.

Language is one of the factors that exclude most of the volunteers. Indeed we should



be honest on this: a volunteer in a foreign country who does not speak a word of the hosting country language nor some English or other of the most known languages run the serious risk to feel isolated in a project. In this case they should not be sent alone, but at least with some mate who can translate for them. Or they could be encouraged to learn at least the basics of the language of the hosting countries: this may be sufficient but the volunteers should assess whether they have enough extra-verbal communication skills – such as body language for example. At the same time it must be

said that even if volunteers can speak the 20 languages of the European Union, but they don't like to talk (better to communicate) to other people, again they should assess whether this is an experience they really want to do. In this sense the pre-departure training that we propose also aims at addressing these doubts a volunteer may have. Our proposal is quite specific so it is understandable that not everybody will like it. We just need to make things clear both for organisations and volunteers.

3.3 Sending side: preparing the volunteers

One of the main responsibilities of the sending organisation is the pre-departure preparation of the volunteers. The training tool kit will give an idea of some possible template for preparing the volunteers; here we would like to underline the reasons why we believe it is important. What we suggest is a one or two days long seminar, gathering all the volunteers who are leaving soon even if in different projects. We already said and we will insist later that not everybody may like the proposal of this experience, so it is important to clarify a few things:

1. Volunteers are not useful in the sense of solving situations that otherwise would collapse without them. Plenty of local volunteers can do it in the same way avoiding long trips and with an easier management. But they are important because they represent a

different culture, come from a different background and with a different lifestyle.

2. What they are doing is basically an educational experience: they are learners and teachers at the same time. In many cases they will be in contact with young people and maybe working with them, but they will surely have to interact in different ways of working and different kind of people that probably they have never met before. In this sense they should leave with an open mind and being responsive to everything they see and to all persons they meet.

3. As a consequence, volunteers do not have to necessarily be involved in projects enhancing their technical skills. Of course these skills can be appreciated in a project, but if an organisation need an engineer or a doctor, they will find them locally. A volunteer who can "do nothing" but of course ready and willing to learn – if such a person exists – would be eligible for this programme as well.

These features may make this programme uninteresting for some people and we believe it is important to make them clear before departure, so if volunteers misunderstood the whole experience they have their chance to withdraw or maybe simply changing their mind: they could say, they will try but at least they have the awareness of what the whole thing is all about. The hosting organisation will be highly grateful to you, if you could manage to prepare your volunteers in such way.

We understand that at this point you might be a bit puzzled. To clarify the whole thing, let's just go back to the history of this kind of international voluntary service (chapter 1.6). It is obvious that there was no need of the Germans to reconstruct the destroyed houses: the French could have done it by themselves, but can you image the value of this act of solidarity? It was also important because it was something concrete, not just official speeches of compassion but people that went there and got their hands dirty. We believe that such between people exchanges are still important for the construction of a more civil and liveable world.

Concerning the contents of the training we invite you to have a look at the training scheme drafted out of this project.

3.4 Hosting side. Arranging the hospitality: food, accommodation, local transport

The arrangement of suitable conditions for the reception of volunteers is the task of the hosting organisations. We will go through different arrangements and solutions to host senior volunteers: they all work well providing that the following is ensured. The best thing would be providing them with a single room with private bathroom. It is understandable that this is not always possible. Also a twin room could do, providing that it is occupied by two friends. We discourage any arrangement in a dormitory or in a multi-bed room. Believe it or not, the bed is generally a serious concern for the volunteer: if



you think that one third of their service will be spent in it, it is more easy to understand why, to say nothing about backbone aches that more easily affect all of us at a certain age. Among the others, we have also experimented with the following accommodation facilities.

Home stay

This represents a very good opportunity for volunteers to know about local life, culture and customs also for host family to exchange. Also, it is good because volunteers do not need to worry about their food everyday and focus on other elements of the programme. Of course the relationship between host family and volunteers is very important and should be monitored by representatives of the hosting organisations.

A room with independent facilities

A room with facilities where the volunteer is working (like school dormitory, a room of orphanage, etc) is also a good solution. This is ideal for better communication with host organization and they do not need to worry about transportation. On the other hand, the time of volunteers tend to be repetitive and they need to have time for refreshing sometimes.

Vacant house or apartment

Living alone and independently is a good way. Volunteers can have private time. On the other hand the volunteer tends to be isolated from local community.

Hostel, Bed & Breakfast

If you can afford it, this would be a solution that would make the most of the volunteers very happy. It may encourage the feeling that they are on holidays. Of course there is nothing

wrong in being on holidays, but the risk is that the volunteers are perceived by the local community as special tourists and the volunteers may feel the same way towards the hosting environment. If the project forecast a good integration between volunteers and local community, it might not represent a problem at all, again it is a matter of monitoring how this relationship develops.

Food

As anybody else, volunteers have this fix idea to eat three times per day. The host organization needs to provide these meals. In case of home stay, the hosting family takes care of the meals. Or, if it is not possible to share meals in the project, an amount of money should be made available for the volunteers to arrange the meals by themselves. Please remember to ask (via the sending organisation) if volunteers have special diet requirements and ensure beforehand that these can be met, otherwise it is important to inform the volunteers about it. Most of the volunteers (like all of us) have their own eating habits, so it is important that the sending organisation advise the volunteers to be flexible about the food warning them that this is also a part of the



intercultural learning process of the experience. You do not need to provide alcohol or caviar or other personal luxuries.

Insurance

Insurance is an essential requirement in order to protect both the volunteer and the project. If something serious happens to a volunteer, for example permanent disability, the volunteer must be properly insured. The project, the volunteer, or even the receiving organization, can get into extreme financial problems if volunteers are not covered by an insurance policy.

The sending organisation should take care of the insurance of the volunteers. Several commercial companies ensure travellers for everything happening during their trips excluding any accident related to a work situation and this could be a solution, providing not to mention that someone is "volunteering" in another country. The problem resides in the fact that volunteers do not have a recognised status, they are somewhere in between a tourist and a worker without properly belonging to any of the two categories. Another possibility could be to apply to the insurance scheme run by other international voluntary service organisations. As an example we quote one of the most important of these organisations: Service Civil International. They move more than 10.000 volunteers each year from one country to another and they have a collective contract with a major insurance company that ensure all their volunteers to which also other organisations can apply upon request. You could apply to this one or enquire with other international voluntary service organisations on the solutions that they adopted and what are the conditions to access them. But you can also enquire at local level if insurance companies are willing to ensure your volunteers abroad and under which conditions. Remember that in all EU countries, citizens have the rights to access health assistance as in their own country. So before volunteers leave they have to go to their local authorities and get the European Health Insurance Card (ex E-111 form) that certificate that in their native country they have this right.

3.5 Arranging the work programme

It is important to draft a proposal with the description of the tasks that the volunteers will perform. The proposal could include all the possible actions that a volunteer could perform within the hosting organisation and then it could be agreed with the volunteers themselves before their departure. We recommend that volunteers will have different things to do and can experience different activities in your organisation. The length of the service may vary from

project to project, but on average volunteers should work for about 20-24 hours per week and possibly with two days off. Please remember that in no case will volunteers substitute for paid staff of your organisation. It generally turns to be useful to have a flexible day by day calendar. As an example we enclose here a daily calendar of a past



project (Tool number 1). This calendar is again in the perspective of the proposal and can be changed with the agreement of the two parties. We recommend that the volunteers and the hosting organisation start some contacts before the project begins.

3.6 Information to the volunteers

Even in a age of computers and electronic devices of all sorts, nothing is more appealing that some information on paper that you can read over and over. We enclose here as an example a template of information sheet that was handed to volunteers (Tool Number 2). For the volunteers this is a reference point that would probably guide them also through the project, and for the organisation the compilation of this information sheet may represent a sort of final check-list. Please note that if you are not able to compile such an info sheet, you probably need to work on your project a bit more.

3.7 Volunteer induction



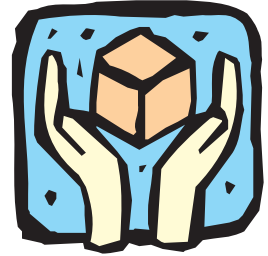
Finally and hopefully, volunteers join your project. The first days are the most critical and the most of important for a successful outcome of the project. Volunteers come with many expectations and fears which probably you also have as well. If they were well prepared they will have a clearer idea of what to expect but still an area of uncertainty will always be there (in our opinion this represents the good thing about the whole experience). A warm welcome is very important. We recommend you to meet your volunteers possibly at the airport or at the train station. If they could be met and welcomed by more

than one person even better: on the first day a social dinner could be a good way to start your common project, possibly together with as many as the people involved in the project and those they will meet in the course of the project. A sort of briefing meeting should be organized on the first or second day (depending on the time of arrival and how tired volunteers are). During this meeting, the proposal of programme should be introduced as well as all the responsible persons to whom they can refer. Some information on paper will be again very welcome: we enclose here a paper that we used in one of the old projects as an example of a good and appreciated introductory paper to the project (Tool number 3).

4 Evaluation

The European exchange of older volunteers has not yet established formal structures as in the case of younger volunteers. Joining this new proposal means to get involved in an experiment with many chances for organisational benefits but also including certain risks. Therefore the evaluation of exchange projects for senior volunteers is highly recommended. Difficulties which arose from this new experience – for NGOs as well as for senior volunteers – were not too serious, and senior volunteers are, according to our experience, most capable in dealing with them and most generous in forgiving host organisations if they happened.

However, serious problems may arise if the person or department, responsible for introducing the exchange, does not take heed of its outcomes and initiate the necessary changes for future activities. An evaluation demonstrates that everything will be done to avoid the same problems, and it also offers all persons involved the opportunity to comment on everything which worked out right from the very beginning.



Evaluations measure the conceptual goals and objectives against their realised outcomes. In the context of the exchange of senior volunteers, these can be global objectives such as:

- intercultural and/or intergenerational learning,
- trans-national knowledge transfer,
- fostering of contact and cooperation networks between NGOs or local authorities.

In order to reach these objectives, at operational level a sound basis must be set up including:

- placement offers which suit the interests and capabilities of senior volunteers,
- adequate working conditions,
- offers for accommodation respecting the needs of senior volunteers,
- regulations about the provision of food,
- insurances against health, accident and third-party-liability risks.

In some respect the quality of the small steps leading to the aspired overall goals need a special attention. The devil is in the details.

The selection of the adequate evaluation method depends on the individual context. In case of longer project duration, the "formative evaluation" approach can be recom-

mended. The project design is divided into individual working steps that are consecutively evaluated. In this way problems are detected at a very early phase. It can then be decided whether measures are taken to solve the problems or – if they are due to conceptual errors – the overall design is revised. In applying the formative evaluation approach, a cooperation with specialists is useful. They can either monitor the working process themselves or can develop, together with the staff concerned, materials for self-evaluation which can be applied without external support.

A "summative evaluation" is done in retrospect and useful for a short-term exchange. With only a few volunteers and staff members involved, an evaluation can simply consist in discussing all relevant points in a structured way with all persons involved and taking their recommendations for improvement seriously. The different parties – older volunteers, paid staff, local government representatives etc. – should get the opportunity to discuss the outcomes of the project in separate groups. The same outcome can be assessed in a positive and in a negative way, depending on an individual perspective or a particular function. To learn about these different attitudes may be helpful to avoid future collisions. And if there is an unanimous view that serious problems arose between volunteers and paid staff, there is a better chance for their investigation, if the parties can talk openly without reservations due to being polite.

In case of a larger number of volunteers and other persons involved, the personal discussions can be replaced by written questionnaires, again specifically designed for the different groups of actors. The questionnaires must not only reflect all important themes and issues but also be very clear in their wording. If it is done without external support, it should be thoroughly checked as regards potential misunderstandings. A balance must be found between preset answers and the opportunity for open answers. A final box for personal comments should always be included in order to allow for remarks on issues which are important but have been forgotten by the evaluator. Written inquiries are a good way to collect larger numbers of assessments but cannot compensate for in-depths reflections by personal discussions that should always complement the questionnaires.

Examples of written questionnaires can be found in the tools section (tool number 4).

Tools

Tool N° 1 An example of a day by day programme to propose to volunteers



PROGRAMME SCHEDULE FOR VOLUNTEERS

Project in Roma (Italy) From 8th May to 29th May

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITIES
8 MAY	-	ARRIVALS
9 May	9,30 a.m	Welcome Meeting at the Municipality Guided tour in town
10 May	3 hours	Volunteers in front of schools (Un amico per la città)
11 May	3 hours	Volunteers in front of schools (Un amico per la città) Party in the afternoon in the Residence
12 May	3 hours	Volunteers in front of schools (Un amico per la città)
13 May	3 hours	Volunteers in front of schools (Un amico per la città)
14 May		Free Time
15 May		Free Time
16 may		Meeting at the House of Voluntary Service
17 May	About 4 h.	Volunteers will work in Museum "Chiostro del Bramante"
18 May	About 4 h.	Volunteers will work in Museum "Chiostro del Bramante"
19 May	About 4 h.	Volunteers will work in Museum "Chiostro del Bramante"
20 May	About 4 h.	Volunteers will work in Museum "Chiostro del Bramante"
21 May	-	Volunteer will be guardians at the public park (Villa Ada)
22 May	-	Free time
23 May	About 4 h.	Meeting House of Voluntary Service Mid Term Evaluation
24 May	About 4 h.	Volunteers work as Solidarity Ponies helping old people in their houses
25 May	About 4 h.	Volunteers work as Solidarity Ponies helping old people in their houses
26 may	About 4 h.	Volunteers work as Solidarity Ponies helping old people in their houses
27 May	About 4 h.	Volunteers work as Solidarity Ponies helping old people in their houses
28 may	-	FINAL EVALUATION AND FAREWELL PARTY
29 May	-	Departures

Tool n° 2 Example of Information Sheet to be handed to volunteers upon their arrival



IMASTU KOOLKODU (IMASTU RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL), ESTONIA

- 2 places

- Date of exchange: 1st -21st August

1. COMMUNICATION DATA

Organisation:	Imastu Residential School
Address:	Imastu küla 45105 Tapa sjk
Telephone:	+372 Fax: +
E-Mail:	imastu@.....ee
Website:	
Contact person :	K. O.
Position :	Director's substitute
Telephone:	+372.....
E-Mail:	imastu@ee
Foreign language knowledge of the contact person:	English

2. PROFILE AND CONTEXT OF THE WORK

Imastu Residential School, established in 1948, caters for around 110 children, who are mentally and/or physically handicapped or suffer from genetic deceases. The youngsters of Imastu are aged 5 to 18 and there are also young adults aged 18 – 32. Most of them are orphans.

Imastu uses a model of family style living, where children of different age and with different disabilities live together in family groups, about 20 children in each, under supervision and with assistance of experienced staff. Three groups consist of mainly children, while two other groups have mainly young adults. Local personnel monitors their health and development, provides medical, psychological and psychiatric care, teaches them basic skills, runs leisure time activities such as games, handicrafts, sport, excursions, etc. depending on age and disabilities of children. There are about 60 people working directly with children. The total number of staff is 77.

Being a municipal institution Imastu relies on financial support of the municipality and the state as well as help of individuals and organizations and enthusiasm of the staff and volunteers. The host project has already welcomed a number of volunteers from abroad.

3. PLACEMENT AREA FOR THE SENIOR VOLUNTEER

■ Designation of the area of placement:

The tiny village Imastu located in Lääne-Virumaa County. The nearest town and railway station is Tapa (3 km). Tapa lies in northern Estonia, about 90 km southeast of Tallinn, at the junction of roads and railways. Due to this favourable location Tapa has started to develop into a centre of transit and trade of considerable national and international importance. The proximity of small forests, Lahemaa National Park and the Baltic Sea offer good opportunities for vacations for those who work and live here. The area of Tapa is about 16 km² and it has about 7,200 residents. The majority of workers are employed by the railroad. An industrial park on a former Soviet military base offers additional jobs to Tapa's residents.

There are 3 churches in Tapa: Russian Orthodox (since 1904), Methodist (1924), and Lutheran (<http://www.eelk.ee/tapa/>) (1932). There are 4 schools: Tapa Secondary School (founded 1919), Russian Secondary School (1945), Children's Music School (1957), and a reform school for Russian-speaking boys (1965).

The Tapa Town Library was reopened in 2001 in a newly renovated building with public Internet access. A new culture house and a retirement centre were opened in 1993. The Development Centre was established in 1994 as a municipal enterprise offering training and continuing education. In 1994 a museum opened its doors with a permanent exhibition on the history and contemporary life of Tapa. The largest performing groups in Tapa are the children's school choirs, a chamber choir, the mixed choir "Leetar," and a brass band. More information on www.tapa.ee, <http://visitestonia.com/>, <http://www.estonica.org/eng/otsing.html>

■ Activities of the exchanged senior volunteer:

Although there are about 60 people working directly with children in the shifts it is not enough to provide good attention and support for each child. Staff is overloaded with the routine tasks supporting the basic needs and often do not have enough time simply to play with kids, organise extra activities for them, develop new type of activities or maintain individual contact. Volunteers can easily fill this gap assisting the staff by giving their time and care to the young people of Imastu. Volunteers will be supporting the project personnel in looking after the children and running daily tasks such as:

- looking after the children and helping project staff in teaching them basic/ work skills
- playing with children
- arranging children's outings, e.g. culture visits, excursions, hikes, picnics, etc.
- offering activities for kids outside regular curricula (arts, handicraft, drawing, etc.)
- helping to feed children
- assisting personnel with any other required activities

An extra task of the volunteers could be to establish contacts with similar institutions

for mentally handicapped children in his/ her home country in order to have mutually beneficial co-operation/ exchange between institutions in future.

4. CONDITIONS OF PLACEMENT

■ Framework conditions:

- ✓ Team work
- ✓ Exchange of experiences with other volunteers
- ✓ Provision of a mid-day meal
- ✓ full board and lodging in the Institution; linguistic materials

Hosting organisations will receive a lump sum contribution of 100 euros per week per volunteer, unless differently arranged. They will provide food and lodgement to the volunteers and a tutor who could follow them.

■ Accommodation:

Volunteers will have own furnished separate rooms in Imastu Residential School. WC and washing facilities are in the common corridor and shared with the staff.

Volunteers will eat in the family group during working days. During days off the volunteers can eat in the canteen for the staff. If food in Imastu Residential School is found to be not sufficient then volunteers can buy extra food by themselves. The closest shops are in the town of Tapa, 3 km from Imastu. The possibility to make own food is provided - there is a little kitchen corner with fridge and microwave oven arranged for volunteers.

■ Dates and time schedules:

Number of weeks:	3
Minimum working hours per week:	25
Maximum working hours per week:	35
Preferred working days:	5 working days
Preferred working times:	negotiable

Tool N° 3 Orientation sheet to be given to volunteers
on their first day of service



■ **TIMETABLE**

Duration: 6 – 30 July 2004
Hosting Organisation: EURAG, Wielandgases 9, Graz
Contact: Gertraud Dayè , office@eurag-europe.org
Town: Graz
Country: Austria
Tel.: +43 316
Tutor: Gertraud Dayé, EURAG
Accommodation: CCN Apartment, strasse....., A-8010 Graz

■ **IMPORTANT CONTACTS:**

<u>ADDRESSES</u>	<u>PHONE</u>	<u>CONTACT PARTNER</u>
EURAG General Secretariat	Tel.....	Gertraud Dayé
Wielandgasse 9, 8010 Graz	Fax:	Gerhard Teissl
email: office@eurag-europe.org		Andrea Wolf
Accommodation:	tel..... (priv.0664 /.....)	Luise Grinschgl (CCN)
CCN (Cultural City Network)		
Wielandgasse 9, A-8010 Graz	tel.....	Luise Grinschgl
Seniors' Office		
Schmiedgasse 26/ I	tel.....	Dr. Ulla Herfort-Wörndle
Italian Conversation for Seniors:		
Leechgasse 64/II/14	tel.....	Frau Fellner

TIMETABLE – volunteer

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	06.07.	07.07.	08.07.	09.07.	10.07.
	Arrival 19,36 h	10 – 13 h: EURAG (introduction)	10 – 14 h: EURAG	10-14 h: EURAG	
12.07.	13.07.	14.07.	15.07.	16.07.	17.07.
10 – 13 h: EURAG 16,30 – 18 Italienisch für Senioren	10 – 14 h: EURAG	10 – 14 : EURAG	10-13 EURAG 15 – 17 h Italienisch für Senioren	10 – 14 EURAG	24.07.
19.07.	20.07.	21.07.	22.07.	23.07.	
10 – 13 h: EURAG/ 16,30 – 18 Italienisch für Senioren	10-14 EURAG	10 – 14 h EURAG	10 – 13 EURAG 15 – 17 Italienisch für Senioren	10 – 14 EURAG	
26.07.	27.07.	28.07.	29.07.	30.07.	
10-13 EURAG 16,30 – 18 Italienisch für Senioren	10-14 EURAG	10-14 EURAG	10 – 13 h EURAG 15 – 17 Italienisch für Senioren	Departure	

TASKS

Assisting in various office work

The volunteer will assist in various activities at the EURAG General Secretariat, e.g. translations, mailings, dissemination activities, archives, etc.

Place: EURAG General Secretariat, Wielandgasse 9, A-8010 Graz
(close to "Jakominiplatz")

Facultative: Italian Conversation meetings for Senior citizens from Graz

Twice a week (Monday and Thursday) :

Participation in Italian conversation meetings for senior citizens in Graz. These meetings are organised by the Graz Seniors' Office and are held at the private home of Ms Fellner, who organises the meetings.

For the seniors it will be highly enriching to have an Italian volunteer meeting them and having conversations on various topics.

The meetings take place every Mon. 4,30-6 p.m. (beginners) and Thurs. from 3 to 5 p.m.

Place: Ms Fellner, Leechgasse 64 / 14.

Public transport: tramway, line 1 (Direction: "Mariatrost", Station: Lenaugasse)

Tool N° 4 An Example of evaluation questionnaire to be submitted to volunteers



QUESTIONNAIRE FOR VOLUNTEERS

Please provide the information requested below or tick the relevant answer. Should there not be sufficient place for your answers, feel free to use an additional sheet of paper. We herewith ensure that the evaluation will comply with data protection acts both at European level and in Germany, where the domicile of the evaluator is located.

1. PERSONAL INFORMATION

NAME: MRS / MR _____

POSTAL ADDRESS.: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____ PROFESSION: _____

2. INFORMATION ON THE EXCHANGE LOCATION

TOWN /DISTRICT, COUNTRY: _____

3. CONTACT WITH THE EXCHANGE PARTNERS FROM THE OTHER COUNTRY

Were you satisfied with the contact you had with your exchange partners from the other country during the preparatory phase?

- Yes
- No, the contact was insufficient with the following disadvantages:

4. PREPARATORY SEMINAR

Please assess the contents and framework conditions of the preparatory seminar.

	VERY GOOD	GOOD	AVERAGE	BAD
Attractiveness of contents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use for the exchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Didactic design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other aspects to be mentioned:	_____			

5. LENGTH OF STAY

How many weeks did you stay at your exchange location? ____ weeks

In retrospect ...

- This was too short, ____ weeks would have been better.
- This was too long, ____ weeks would have been better.
- This was just right.

6. KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGES

Did you have to speak a foreign language during the exchange?

- No (*please continue with question 8*)
- Yes

Did you think you had sufficient language skills?

- Yes
- No, resulting in the following problems: _____

7. ACTIVITIES

What kind of voluntary work activities did you carry out during your exchange?

Did these activities fulfil your expectations and skills?

- Yes
- No, the activities were inappropriate because: _____

8. ACCOMMODATION

What was your accommodation like, how were you accommodated abroad?

- In a private house
- In a hostel (or equivalent) run by a charitable organisation
- In a hotel
- Other - please describe: _____

Were you satisfied with your accommodation?

- Yes, and I was especially satisfied with: _____
- No, I was not satisfied because: _____

9. CONTACT PERSON

Did you have a contact person during the exchange for questions or problems to be clarified?

- Yes
- No

10. OTHER FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS OF THE EXCHANGE

Were the financial conditions of the project appropriate?

- Yes
- No, the financial conditions were inappropriate because: _____

Was the insurance in the project appropriate?

- Yes
- No, the insurances were inappropriate because: _____

11. BENEFITS OF THE EXCHANGE

To which extent has the exchange, from your point of view, contributed to a new or better relation between your home town or district and the exchange location?

12. PARTICIPATION IN FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Would you participate in potential follow-up activities resulting from this project?

- Yes, without reservation
- Yes, but with the following reservations: _____
- No, because: _____

13. FURTHER COMMENTS

Should there be other – positive or negative – aspects to your evaluation of your participation in the exchange project which have not been considered here so far, please let us know:

Appendix Senior Volunteers from the former Soviet Union countries

The first experience involving senior people from former Soviet Union countries to the international voluntary service showed that they form a very special group, which has to be trained for the project differently than their partners coming from the western European Union countries.

Here we talk about volunteers born before 1950 and living in former republics of the Soviet Union, in particular Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania. What are the common features of this specific group?

Very little knowledge of foreign languages.

In former times Russian was the language of international communication in SU. Even though people studied English (or German or French) at school and universities, there was no chance to practice it. That is why the ability to speak foreign languages of older generation of former SU people is very weak.



Lack of experience of independent travel in Western Europe.

Living behind „Iron Curtain“ till the beginning of the 90-ies, people did not have the opportunity to travel in the West. It came later, however mainly with the tourist groups, where everything is arranged and one does not have to think about travel details, arrival/ meeting point, organizing free time, etc.

Very low incomes, especially pensions.

Generally speaking, pensioners receive about 30% of statistically an average monthly salary in the country, which in its turn constitutes about 40% of average salary in the „old“ EU countries. In absolute figures the current average pension in Estonia – for example – is around 160 Euro a month and it is the highest number among former SU countries. For traveling abroad pensioners have to use their savings (if any). Naturally it makes them very sensitive to prices, and general financial conditions of voluntary projects (travel costs reimbursement, board & lodging, pocket money, etc.) are often the decisive factor for joining the project. Due to lack of their own resources these volunteers often expect from their host placement substantial contribution for leisure time activities such as excursions, visits, sightseeing. These people are particularly interested to renew lessons they learnt about European countries a long time ago at school. This is a very important motivation for choosing any project abroad. Thus going to voluntary project in Italy, volunteers expect to see sights in Rome like Coliseum, Forum, Vatican or go to Venice without having real idea of how far it is from

their project and how much it can cost. In fact they sincerely expect that hosts will take them there to present proudly their own country. This is what they would do should they be receiving guests in their countries.

Traditionally people of former SU are very protective.

When receiving guests they often overdo it taking too much care, accompanying around, almost never leaving alone. It is very much cultural and natural, and that is why something like this is expected from the host placement on voluntary project. Therefore senior volunteers from former SU countries can hardly understand or accept when they are left alone to arrange own free time or cultural visits/ excursions. They easily take it as a sign of the host being unfriendly or impolite. Add here weak knowledge of language and the effect will escalate leading to quite difficult misunderstandings.



Finally, senior volunteers of former SU are not familiar with the concept of volunteering the way it is known in West Europe.

The reasons are historical. Normal volunteering did not exist in the Soviet Union. There was something planned and run by the authorities, where people were obliged to take part. Every spring thousands of people were leaving their working places at factories, plants and offices to take part in „voluntary“ action of cleaning up after winter public parks, recreational zones or territories of their own institutions. This spring event usually took place around 22.04, which is the birth date of Lenin – the founder of the Soviet State. Later, in September officers, students, school children and even soldiers were sent „voluntarily“ to collective farms to help picking the harvest. The period of work was from 1-2 days to 5-6 weeks (!) in case of university students. Without this help the harvest would be rotten in the fields as collective farmers did not have sufficient capacity to collect harvest themselves.

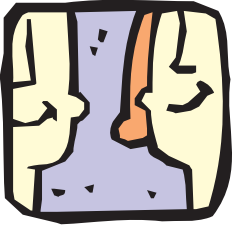
Later in autumn officers, scientists, students were forwarded „voluntarily“ to vegetable warehouse to help sorting out and loading potatoes, carrots, onions, etc.

Another form of „voluntary“ activities was to become members of „Voluntary People’s Regiment“ to patrol streets helping local police in their free time after the work.

All these forms were officially presented as an expression of free will and act of citizenship and volunteering. In reality it was all planned and organised by the authorities and people were forced in order to fulfill those plans.

Naturally these actions were very much result-oriented on a contrary with contemporary voluntary service, which is often an educational process rather than a way to achieve a concrete result. Clearly there was very little educational aspect (if any) in such „voluntary“ actions.

Having said that, we should not deny that people actually enjoyed some of the activities (one working day in spring in the park!) as it was fun, a demonstration of collectivism. It positively influenced the relations among staff, created a closer, more relaxed atmosphere, lead to good friendship. It was not volunteering in the sense we use it now, but it would not be possible to volunteer otherwise as the system would not allow a non-controlled initiative coming from grass-roots level.



Another form of volunteering existing in the former Soviet Union was the so called Students Brigades. It was arranged for students to go in summer to build towns, railways or to work on farms. This was very similar to workcamps of a large scale, and it was absolutely voluntary that young people decided to go there. The main difference with summer voluntary projects was they were not international and that they were well paid! So for students it was a way to earn good money during 1-2 summer months. Thousands of students participated in the work of Students Brigades every year. It was extremely popular! In fact after the collapse of Soviet Union in many countries these Brigades were transformed to the normal voluntary projects giving life to the modern international voluntary service organizations. Which was a natural development since this project was in reality the closest to traditional voluntary service.

Surely, cultural and historical context as described above, determines potential volunteers expectations towards voluntary project abroad. Mainly participants expect:

To do concentrated work which has a clear objective and the result can be measured;

To achieve the result set up by the hosts;

To work as long as needed and to do as much as requested in order to reach the goal;

The work is a primary goal of the whole project;

Leisure time and other activities are allowed after work is finished. But then hosts are responsible for its quality.

Being very much result oriented and willing to work hard, at the same time these volunteers expect certain level of hospitality from the hosts such as meeting upon arrival and pick up service, assistance for leisure time programme, organising excursions, sightseeing for them, having someone to translate from local language of English into Russian (still common language for the older generation), etc.

These are of course general features, there are exceptions like people with international travel experience, good knowledge of languages and even better understanding of the concept of voluntary service. However here we are talking about the majority of potential volunteers.

Thus when designing training schemes and educative materials for this population one must count on this specifically to make training effective. Perhaps separate research and a special project is needed to create such materials and elaborate in detail special training modules for this specific group of senior volunteers. Nevertheless after the first experience in the frame of „Still Active“ Project some general recommendations could be given here.

To spend more time on explanation of history, roots, philosophy of voluntary service; Special emphasis on voluntary service as a form of non-formal education and life-learning;

Detailed explanation of the practicalities of the host placements (work, board and lodging facilities, languages spoken, travel to the project, leisure time possibilities, etc.);

Some information about the country of destination is advisable, especially habits, traditions, people's mentality, taboos, etc.;

Useful hints for traveling alone is a vital element of preparation, a way to avoid stress and frustration;

Conflict management – often is a „terra incognita“ for older people from the former Soviet Union. Explanation of conflicts based on simple misunderstanding and cultural differences;

Intercultural learning as the aim of voluntary project. This area is as little known to older volunteers from the former SU as a previous one;

An intensive language course is very much advisable!

The above can be related to former Soviet Union countries, yet it can be extrapolated to the countries of the whole former Eastern Block, including East Germany!

It would be very interesting and even important to run a special project aimed at involving senior volunteers from Eastern Europe in to international voluntary service, testing and adapting existing training schemes for this specific target group. The natural aim of such project could be to help older population of these countries to get at long last a chance to enjoy voluntary service activities continuing their learning process, despite the age, and staying still active citizens of Larger Europe.

Lunaria

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www.lunaria.org

Lunaria is an association started in 1992 carrying out research, information, training and action on the social economy, immigration, globalisation, youth programmes and voluntary service.

Our activities include:

- campaigns, building coalitions of civil society groups for alternative priorities in public expenditure, expanding the third sector, North-South solidarity, integration of immigrants;
- research, with projects on public expenditure, employment and work in the social economy, ethical finance, immigrants, globalisation;
- communication and information, with the newsletter "Infoluna", the website and collaboration to newspapers and magazines;
- services, advising non profit organizations on law, fiscal and financial opportunities;
- training, with courses on the social economy, managing non profit organizations and understanding globalization;
- voluntary service, with activities for the European Voluntary Service;
- workcamps open to all and solidarity activities.
- programmes and projects for international senior volunteers

The purpose of our work is to bring together understanding and action; social rights and voluntary activities; the local and the global; civil society, the economy and politics.



COMMISSIONE EUROPEA
PROGRAMMA SOCRATES



COMUNE DI ROMA



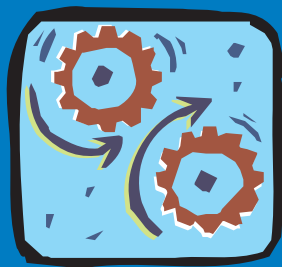
CEAS72



Davide Di Pietro

STILL ACTIVE!

A Guidebook for the Organizations of the Civil Society
Interested in Hosting Senior Volunteers



European Commission
Socrates Programme

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