



To be read

 --> Best practices Guidebook for Training Providers

 --> Best practices Guidebook for Host Organisations

 --> Best practices Guidebook for Volunteers



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European Open-Source
Humanitarian Aid Volunteers

EU Aid Volunteers Pilot Project

BEST PRACTICES GUIDEBOOK FOR SENDING ORGANISATIONS



FOREWORD

Why are we developing these Best practices guidebooks?

DG ECHO is in the process of setting up an EU AID volunteer corps, with the objective of engaging 10,000 volunteers from 2015-20. DG ECHO relies on the experience of a series of pilot projects - lessons learnt, standards and recommendations - to facilitate the setting up of this EU Aid volunteer corps.

France Volontaires, together with eight European NGOs (ECCB/Diakonie, FOCSIV, ACRA, Sloga, PIPA, SCD, HOT, Groupe URD), set up and carried out one of these pilot projects.

The EUROSHA volunteering pilot project developed an innovative volunteering framework in which volunteers (European and African) were deployed in teams in order to bring together local and international actors and carry out humanitarian information management activities.

As a result, the project produced some guidebooks to send, train, host volunteers.

- These Best practices Guidebooks are one of the deliverables produced for ECHO within the EUROSHA volunteering pilot project.
- From the consortium and volunteers side, producing these Guidebooks is a means of capitalising on the pilot project experience.

Who is it for?

- DG ECHO
- Consortium members
- Volunteers
- Organisations wishing to send, train and host EU Aid Volunteers in the future

How was it developed?

It was developed through a participative approach from selecting, training, technical and hosting organisations as well as volunteers, this document resulted from pilot project experience and lessons learnt.

Coordinating organisation and the Groupe URD, as expert, developed a template by project phase and to be completed by working groups: selection, training, hosting, and volunteering. Information was then analysed and compiled by a group of EUROSHA volunteers and finalised by consortium members.

How to use it?

These Guidebooks are comprised by various chapters which are related to the different phases of a volunteering deployment. According to the role you play or wish to play within EU Aid Volunteer, you must refer to a chapter or another one. However it is recommended to read through the whole document in order to know about the various processes and tips.

Tips & advice:

- It is essential to organise a debriefing session for volunteers. So that they can share about their experience, analyse it and prepare themselves to come back.
- It is advisable to devise a system or tools so that the volunteers can coordinate and communicate with each other about post-deployment activities.
- Try to work as a team with the volunteers in the planning of the post-deployment activities
- Record lessons learnt and share experience (capitalisation).

“Once the volunteers returned to the Czech Republic, we organised about 50 activities, including presentations, and workshops about their work in the field or about volunteering in general. We also organised some exhibitions.”

Jana Škubalová, Volunteer Selector, ECCB/DIAKONIA



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2

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To do list

| Who | What | When |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Sending organisation | Define post-deployment activities with consortium members (ToRs: objectives,, who for, what, when, who, where) | Month 1 |
| Sending organisation | Set up post-deployment activities | During deployment |
| Sending organisation | Plan activities with volunteers | Month return -2 |
| Sending organisation | Debriefing session | Week return -1 or Month +1 (after deployment) |
| Sending organisation | Organise post-deployment (visibility actions) | Week +2 (after deployment) |

A debriefing session should be over minimum 2 to 5 days and cover the following topics: general analysis, evaluation of the mission (activities), analysis of intercultural experience, how to use this experience.

Selecting, preparing and following up a group of volunteers for deployment within EU Aid volunteering programme

Principle 1

Sending organisation must have human resources skilled and available to select, prepare and follow up volunteers.

Principle 2

Selection and follow up activities must ensure that volunteers have interpersonal and physical skills to carry on humanitarian field mission.

Principle 3

Sending organisation must work together with host organisation (and technical experts) all over volunteers' mission (define profiles, roles and responsibilities, security and safety processes).

These principles are from the experience of EU Aid Volunteer, pilot project « EU, Local and Online volunteers : key actors for inclusive humanitarian information sharing in crisis preparedness »

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1. Introduction

This Mini Guide is aimed at organisations who are interested in selecting, preparing and following up a group of EU Aid volunteers for deployment.

Although some of the content in this guide is valid for the preparation and delivery of all types of volunteer sending, it specifically focuses on selecting, preparing and following up volunteers who (i) are newcomers to the humanitarian sector but who may have some volunteering experience in their home country, and (ii) are about to be deployed to a third country.

It is based on the experience of the four organisations (namely France Volontaires, FOCSIV, Sloga, ECCB/Diakonia) involved in selecting 26 European and African volunteers for a DG ECHO pilot project for EU Aid Volunteer programme (2012-13).

Key contacts:

France Volontaires: contact@france-volontaires.org

FOCSIV: I.desmaele@focsiv.it

Sloga : dunja.segrt@sloga-platform.org

ECCB/Diakonie : skubalova.hrp@diakonie.cz



7. Accompany volunteers' return

Your organisation is now focusing on (i) the volunteers' return, (ii) recording lessons learnt and sharing experience (capitalisation), and (iii) project evaluation.

■ Volunteers are back ... and now?

- How are you planning to communicate about the volunteers' post-deployment activities?
- What have you prepared for the volunteers on their return from the field?
- Are you planning a return seminar for the volunteers in order to debrief and analyse their experiences, both as a group and individually?



Tips & advice:

- Always try to bear in mind the communication plans that have been drawn up for the project.
- Design a series of clear tools and methods for monitoring the volunteers' progress and wellbeing.
- It is worthwhile assessing on a regular basis whether you as a project partner have sufficient information about the project.



2. Prepare you organisation to send volunteers

Your organisation is interested in sending volunteers for the EU Aid volunteering programme. Before your organisation decides to take on this responsibility, here are a few questions that you need to consider. It will help you to take this decision, including whether your mandate allows you to do so, whether you have the appropriate and necessary resources to recruit this type of volunteer, whether you can meet the necessary standards and whether you can respond to a given need in this context.

In this section, you will find information that will help you decide whether or not your organisation is ready to send volunteers for the EU Aid volunteering programme.

■ Do you have the right experience?

- Do you believe that your organisation has the right experience in the humanitarian sector in order to support and monitor the volunteers in the field?
- Would the involvement of EU Aid Volunteers represent real added value for your organisation?
- If you feel that your experience is rather limited, what are you prepared to do in order to ensure the efficient management of volunteers during their deployment in the field?
- Do you have a thorough enough understanding about the status of volunteers?
- What experience does your organisation have in involving volunteers in your projects?
- Do you have a local support network? Do you work with local partners?
- Do you have up-to-date knowledge about destination restrictions for European volunteers? e.g. volunteers with French volunteer contracts are currently prohibited from entering Nigeria under French law even during their vacation (2013)



Tips & advice:

- Take time to look back at and review your previous experience in working with volunteers
- If you have not worked with volunteers in previous projects, ask yourself why you want to do it now
- Be aware of the difficulties involved in coordinating a field mission
- Ask yourself if the context you are working in is secure enough to involve volunteers in the field

"Stress the importance of giving appropriate time to the recruitment and the selection. When the project is made by a partnership of different NGOs/subjects, it is crucial to give wide space (and time) to the sharing of the profile researched, the meaning of the terms to use in the selection process, in order to be sure to have a clear understanding of topics and of the "philosophy" of the project, far from cultural misperceptions."

Lucia De Smaele, Responsabile Servizio Civile, FOCSIV

■ Be ready to select the right people for this kind of project

- During the application and interview process how are you going to assess whether the candidates fully understand the volunteering aspect?
- Do you have enough information about the deployment context to enable the volunteer candidates to fully assess and understand the deployment conditions?
- Have you included in the application form a section where candidates should express what motivates them to be an EU Aid Volunteer?

Tips & advice:

- Try to give as much information as possible to the volunteer candidates about their deployment as this will help them to determine their preferences
- Always ask what motivates the candidates to apply for this type of programme. Volunteering is an important value that should be shared.

"We usually test work under pressure, stress tolerance, problem solving, work in a team, relational skills."

Lucia De Smaele, Responsabile Servizio Civile, FOCSIV

6. Follow up volunteers during deployment

Your organisation is now monitoring the volunteers during their deployment.

■ Clarifying the roles

What is my role and what are my responsibilities during the deployment phase?

- Define your role together with host organisation in the field. Who is responsible for monitoring volunteers? Which aspects should be covered by the host organisation and which aspects should be covered by the sending organisation?
- How often will you be in contact with the volunteers? How often are you responsible for reviewing their progress? How are you going to coordinate your communication and/or reviews with the volunteers and with the host organisation?

| Who | What | When |
|---|--|--|
| Sending organisation with host organisation | Follow up plan | Month 4 |
| Deployment | | |
| Sending organisation | Communication by email with volunteers | Month 1: weekly Month 2, 3 ...: monthly Month -1 termination: weekly |
| Volunteers | Reports to sending organisation | Monthly |
| Sending organisation | Individual interviews (by skype) with volunteers | Mid-term mission |
| Sending organisation | Communication with host organisation | Monthly |

Social coverage

In order to be in a position to carry out the voluntary service in good conditions and not to take a risk, all volunteer should have a social coverage for:

- Sickness Risks, Maternity, Daily allowances, Work accidents, Travel accidents, Invalidity, Death, Professional sickness and Old age,
- Complementary health insurance,
- Mondial Assistance regarding the incurred risks in case of sanitary repatriation,
- Personal liability

➤ Some voluntary programs will put the condition for a certain social coverage or be partly includes in a public health system. For other voluntary services a private social coverage should be taken.

➤ For non-European volunteers the situation may be very different as they may not be recognized by the European country volunteer legal status. In that case local volunteers must be under the contract of a local organisation and take a local insurance.

Volunteer visa

According to the country of mission, the sending organisation or the host organisation must take a visa for the volunteers. It must be done 2 months before departure at the country consulate. You might consider that a visa is often to be renewed several times over the field mission (for instance every 3 months in Kenya).



■ What kind of capacity does your organisation need to recruit EU Aid volunteers?

Does your organisation have the capacity to monitor working conditions in the field to ensure that they are appropriate and will allow the volunteers to do their work properly?

Capacities needed to be checked:

- Financial
- Advertising
- Human resources available
- Selecting specific profiles
- Skills needed (in recruiting volunteers)
- Ensure follow-up in the field
- Networking
- Ensure follow-up when they return



3. Prepare for volunteers' selection

Your organisation has been selected by DG ECHO to select, prepare and follow up a group of EU Aid volunteers and you have approximately four months to recruit them.

■ Consider the human resources element

- Can your organisation ensure that at least two people will be present for all the interviews with the preselected candidates?
- Are you able to engage a sufficient number of staff for this project in order to avoid significant organisational delays?

Tips & advice:

- Take into account technical aspects and ensure that a member of staff with a solid technical profile is involved in the selection process.
- Plan more time than you think necessary to ensure that organisational delays do not compromise the project

"At least two Human Resource experts were involved in selection process (but it depends on the number of volunteers and the type of profiles required)."

Lucia De Smaele, Responsabile Servizio Civile, FOCSIV

■ Prepare the tools needed for the selection

- Do you have enough information about the future role of volunteers in the field?
Do you have any typical job descriptions?
- Do you know where to look for candidates who may be interested in applying to a volunteering programme?
- Have you coordinated the design and content of your call for applications with other organisations involved in recruiting EU Aid volunteers?

open to all youngsters between 16 and 25 years with European nationality. Motivations and attitudes are more important than qualifications and the duration of the voluntary service is between 6 and 12 month. Allowance and social coverage are paid by the French state.

⇒ The institute which is responsible to manage all the aspects of the civic service is the agency of civic service. The sending organisations have to fulfil criteria and to get an agreement by the agency to send volunteers. And all the voluntary positions of civic service have to be approved by the agency before sending a volunteer. These procedures are another guarantee for quality criteria for the volunteers.

The volunteer contract

As formal volunteering is a distinct status between paid work and informal volunteering the volunteers have rights and duties. It is recommended to **establish a contract** in order to set the following elements:

Name of the sending organisation and representative
Name of the hosting organisation and representative
Name of the volunteer

The following elements should be included in the contract :

- Subject : framework and title of the volunteer position
- Term of the agreement : duration
- Conditions for carrying out the assignment:
 - Localisation, town, country
 - Weekly working hours
 - Name of the tutor
 - Conditions of annual leave
 - Respect to security issues, general guidelines, confidentiality
 - Guidelines in respect of medical care/vaccination
 - Risk of the mission
 - Legal registration in the host country
 - Repatriation in case of political trouble or natural disaster
- Training : possibility to formalise the pre-departure, on-arrival, and return training
- Compensation and other advantages: monthly allowance, accommodation, food, return ticket,...
- Social coverage and insurance of the volunteer and its parties in interest : details about the social coverage, health care, personal liability, and the limits of the insurance
- Agreement termination: conditions and procedures how to interrupt the voluntary mission before the initial ending

Number of original copies
Signatures of each party

5. Prepare volunteers

Your organisation is about to prepare the selected group for their pre-deployment training.

■ Ready to go?

- Do you have at your disposal all the information regarding the logistic for the pre-deployment training and for the deployment? (travel, location, date, accommodation, contacts, cost, contracts, refund procedures, etc.)
- Have you communicated all the relevant information to the volunteers?

Tips & advice:

- Ensure that the logistics for the pre-deployment phase are organised as efficiently as possible, as this is the best way to reassure the volunteers and make them feel comfortable about deployment
- Remember that you are responsible for the volunteers in the field and it is therefore advisable to double-check that all the necessary security procedures are in place

■ Volunteer status and contract

All around the world many different forms of volunteering exist. There are formal and informal possibilities of volunteering. According to the sending countries of the volunteer some special status for volunteering in Southern Countries might exist which are officially recognized by the sending country and set by a law. In that case it will be a formal volunteering with a legal status distinct from paid work. In general the **volunteer statuses** are created in order to **provide people the opportunity to express their personal commitment through unpaid and full-time voluntary activities in a foreign country**. It seeks to develop solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance among people.

We highly recommend sending volunteers through official recognized volunteering status.

➞ For instance in France the French government created a legal status, the Civic service which is described by the law of 10th of March 2010 and came into force on 13th of May 2010. It aims to promote social consciousness and offers youngsters the possibility to commit themselves to projects of common good in a non-profit organisation. Missions of civic service are

- Have you coordinated the publication of the call for applications with other organisations involved in recruiting EU Aid volunteers (i.e. harmonise calendar for publication, which platforms, etc.)?
- Do you have the right tools to facilitate the selection process?
- Have you taken the necessary steps to ensure that the various selection tools have been shared and harmonised amongst all members of the selection commission (given the European nature of this programme)?

Tools needed for recruitment:

- Selection plan
- Terms of reference
- Job description
- Application form
- Guidelines for the interview
- Sample of questions for the interview
- Selection grid

Tips & advice:

- The more tools you draw up before the selection process starts, the easier the selection process will be
- It is only by drawing up the right tools before the selection process commences that you can guarantee a certain degree of objectivity
- When considering planning and timetabling of activities, try to take relevant national holidays, where possible
- Always take into account the agenda of your target group (i.e. the type of volunteer you are trying to select) as this can significantly influence the availability and quality of candidate volunteers

"In our Consortium, the selection team prepared terms of reference (providing a project presentation and volunteer profile description – skills required), an application form and a selection grid."
Jana Škubalová, Volunteer Selector, ECCB/DIAKONIA

"What is important is to have the right information in order to define the profile of the candidate volunteers. You can find this information by asking other project partner organisations, in Europe or in the field. Working with partners ensures that the right information is shared."
Lucia De Smaele, Responsabile Servizio Civile, FOCSIV

4. Select volunteers

Your organisation is about to select a group of EU Aid volunteers.

■ Organising the selection process

- Is the call for applications being published on the right platforms in order to target the most appropriate candidates?
- Have you taken into account the importance of harmonising selection methods if there is more than one selection team within your project?
- Have you taken into account the fact that at least part of the interview needs to be conducted in the language of the deployment destination?

Tips & advice:

- If you want to target the best candidates, try to remain flexible and find solutions for any potential problems that candidates may have with the selection timeframe.
- It may be worthwhile to involve a human resources specialist in the selection process, or someone with a certain degree of impartiality to work alongside the project coordinators.
- Asking the right questions is the best way to make your role as the selector easier.
- 1 day selection would enable to have individual interview as well collective ones to test applicants as team player, intercultural skills, etc.
- Test language skills.
- The selection of African volunteers must not be relying on European criteria, in particular when it deals with technical skills.

"We organised a timetable for the interviews and then we created an online timetable (doodle) and the candidates could select the interview time that suited them best."

Jana Škubalová, Volunteer Selector, ECCB/DIAKONIA

| Who | What | When |
|-----------------|---|---------|
| Selection group | Define which profiles of volunteers you want to target | Month 1 |
| Selection group | Define and share the various selection criteria regarding the needs | Month 1 |
| Selection group | Define a selection plan (CV shortlist, interviews, language tests, assessments..) | Month 1 |
| Selection group | Define channels to publish call for applicants | Month 1 |
| Selection group | Write the job advertisement and the application form | Month 1 |
| You | Advertise the volunteer application | Month 1 |
| You | Collect applications | Month 1 |
| You | Shortlist candidates and share the profiles with selection group | Month 2 |
| Selection group | Select the volunteers | Month 2 |
| Selection group | Draw up teams of selected volunteers per deployment country | Month 2 |
| You | Communicate selection outcome to candidates and collect confirmations | Month 2 |
| You | Share confirmations from candidate volunteers and, if necessary | Month 2 |
| You | Collect formal acceptance from candidate volunteers and administrative documents | Month 3 |

