

Volunteering

! a way to environmental education !



**“Handbook on volunteering
in environmental education”**

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I. Prologue

“Sincere help is always an expression of compassion. It generates self-confidence, based on which you are able to act clearly and forthrightly. Thanks to that you gain the trust of other people and their friendship. And friendship will make you really happy.” Dalai Lama’s answer when asked what people gain when helping other people. A note taken by Jiri Sazel, on Thursday, 27th July 2012 in Leh, Ladakh, Jammua Kashmir, North India.

This manual is intended for the representatives of organizations working with youth and volunteers, especially in the field of environmental protection. Its aim is to point out some important aspects of environmental volunteering recorded by European volunteer organizations, especially from the former Eastern bloc, as a result of their work experience. We do not present a complex overview of the topic, but our experiences.

The reader has in front of him/her the result of a one-week training course called “Volunteering: A Way to Environmental Education” (Autumn 2011, the Czech Republic) and a following half-year collaboration with partner NGOs from seven countries throughout the world.



2. Benefits of volunteering

We can perceive the benefits of volunteering from different angles. Be it from the point of view of the recipient of the volunteer activity, this can be either the very organization in which the volunteer operates, or more precisely its clients (for example, in organizations working with children and young people) or another organization, institutions (hospitals, asylums, but also administrations of protected natural areas). Secondly, from the point of view of the community, when volunteering contributes to the development of mutual relationships and often stimulates other activity in the people. Next, also from the point of view of the volunteer himself or herself and his/her personal growth thanks to that particular activity. Then a separate category is the benefit of volunteering from an economic point of view, given what the volunteers bring to government or local administrations by their free labor.

PERCEPTION AND RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTEERING

It is necessary to say that even if, in general, in the Czech Republic volunteer activities are viewed positively, these activities are not always appreciated to the full extent by the public. A negative picture of volunteering is based particularly on experience from the time of socialism, which discredited it; and nowadays it is reinforced especially by insufficient informing and understanding of the importance of volunteering on the part of society. This is probably multiplied by the fact that not much space is being given to volunteering in the media and it's not being sufficiently recognized by the political representatives of the state or local governments.

It's different with the countries where the tradition of volunteer activities wasn't violently interrupted by forced brigade work during the period of socialism.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION VOLUNTEERING

Its particular social contribution should be viewed in the following levels:

1. Direct care of nature and the environment

Including eco-education and further educational activities. This especially means providing care for protected or important locations, the protection or rescue of many endangered animals, be it amphibians, birds or wild beasts. It also means improving our environment, be it planting greenery, picking up litter, taking care of the springs, maintaining the educational paths, supporting the organic farming and many other activities.

2. Forming a society responsible for its environment

Volunteer activities have a good influence on creating a good attitude about a place, nature and values of a healthy environment; this is on the level of the individual volunteer, as well as whole groups of friends or local communities.

Volunteer activities stimulate, in a good sense, both the volunteers themselves and the local community. They strongly encourage administrators of protected areas, local clubs, organic farmers, foresters using an alternative approach, but also professional nature conservationists and representatives of the local administration to be active and persistent in the protection of nature and the environment, .

3. Personal development, informal education and self-fulfillment of the volunteers

There are a wide range of benefits from volunteer activities for the volunteer him/herself– be it as a way of spending free time, education and the development of the skills connected with the accomplishment of a certain activity, getting to know new places and friends.



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...By the way, meeting new, similarly-oriented people, self-fulfillment and active spending of free time are probably the main motivations for the volunteers themselves.

It's important to also include into the list work with children and youth in ecological education – preparing and conducting educational programs, camps and events. Thanks to volunteer help, many public education campaigns and events are led - celebrations of Earth Day, organic markets or educational events

Volunteer guard duty, research programs, monitorings, guide services, etc. also contribute to environmental protection.



Economical effects of volunteering

Analysis of the financing of volunteer activities in environmental protection supported by public resources and financial support of volunteer activities in favour of society and the state, made by the Analytic Center, Ltd. in 2011, analyzes several programmes of specific NGOs and shows the rate of return on their investment from the side of the state or other donors; in other words, it estimates the savings that the volunteer work produces. For example, in projects involving the direct protection of nature, the investment (of state and foundations) returned in the value of volunteer work was four times; in projects for monitoring environmental protection it was 2 times; in environmental education it was 5.5 times and in the area of free time education it was 8.5 times. The whole analysis can be found on website: <http://www.dobrovolnik.cz/oblasti-dovrovolnictvi/dobrovolnictvi-v-ekologii/vyzkumy-a-analzy/>

A REFLECTION ON THE SOCIAL VALUE AND SUPPORT OF VOLUNTEERING IN THE AREA OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.

The year 2011 was proclaimed by the European Commission as The European Year of Volunteering in support of active citizenship. The aims of that European year were, apart from others:

- ☛ make an effort that the good conditions for volunteering created in the EU solve the present obstacles to volunteer activities ,
- ☛ to enable the organizers of volunteer activities to improve,
- ☛ to praise and respect volunteer activities and increase the awareness of the value and importance of volunteering.

Many activities are being undertaken, several analyses were made and research was conducted connected with the above-stated aims in a variety of thematic areas of volunteering outside and within the frame of that year. In the Czech Republic (but similarly also in other countries) these cover thematic areas from international volunteering, emergency situation volunteering, community volunteering, volunteering in social services, health care, culture, sports, up to volunteering with children and/or young people and volunteering in environmental protection.

SEVERAL FACTS CONCERNING THE SITUATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Volunteers are still very much connected only to the NGOs for which they work. Steadily, even here, (and probably also in other countries of the former Eastern bloc) volunteering is moving closer to a certain individualization of volunteer activity.

The support and evaluation of volunteer activities in the area of environmental protection in the Czech Republic is, unfortunately, influenced by several aspects.



Apart from those already mentioned concerning volunteering in general, in the Czech Republic there is an especially negative perception of ecological organizations held by a segment of the society as well as by the media and political representatives. Volunteers – nature protectors – are then associated with this negative picture of Non-governmental Non-profit Organizations. Another problem is that many times even the value of the environmental protection itself is doubted („It slows the growth of the economy“, „We can't allow it now.“,...), that also lessens the respect for volunteer activities in a particular area. Again, this view is widespread, especially in the countries of the former Eastern bloc.

Another widespread problematic view is the one that perceives the volunteers as „litter collectors“ or „cleaners of nature“. It is, to a large extent, humiliating for volunteering and limits the benefits of volunteering in the broader social context and also in its own development.

These views which prevail according to the present situation in each country also reflect the level of support, both moral and financial – which is often very low.

We get a more positive picture when we look at specific places or regions, and look at a specific project. Because of the tangible benefits for the local people and the quality of their lives, the projects gain respect and show how to, step by step, raise the prestige of volunteer environmental protection, and maybe even generate more support from the state and local governments.

After all, present day volunteers who are protecting the environment in the Czech Republic, and in many other countries, keep traditions which have lasted for dozens of years. Let's show the world what volunteers can do!



3. How to lead volunteers?

Organizer's competencies (applies to coordinators, leaders and others as well):

- ☛ mathematical, technical and managerial
- ☛ social and civic
- ☛ communication in the mother tongue and a foreign language

PLANNING

The story begins at a desk. Based on the needs (his/hers, the organization's or society's), a coordinator sets the goals of the work with the volunteer – what he/she is going to learn and how, what his/her work will bring to the coordinator, organization or society. What does the coordinator need to do for that?

- ☛ to plan the volunteer's work – appoint a tutor, assign co-workers, determine the required tools, establish a timeline for accomplishing the volunteer's work and identify the required outcomes,
- ☛ it's better to plan less work and to focus on good preparation and fulfilling the work.



ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP

In the second stage the volunteer, chosen according to required criteria, meets the coordinator. The early moments of their first interaction determine a large part of their future cooperation - the manner of their communication and cooperation resulting from their rapport evolves.

There are always two aspects of communication – emotional and factual. Before we get to the content we classify a communication partner into categories: friend (trust and cooperation) – enemy (distrust, watchfulness and attack mode)

- ☛ the coordinator greets the volunteer in an intentionally friendly manner (verbally, by body language, by the setting of the furniture in the room, colours, etc.

The coordinator and volunteer plan an activity. The coordinator informs the volunteer about the approximate level of difficulty of the work and what knowledge and skills are demanded. He introduces the volunteer to the working environment and to his/her co-workers. A volunteer has free choice to accept a challenge or not. He needs to get complete and detailed information and to have the chance of trying the work before accepting or refusing the responsibility.

- ☛ One of the important tasks of the coordinator is supplying ongoing comprehensible and complete information. It's also important to regularly check mutual understanding and to accept and give feedback as a regulatory mechanism.
- ☛ We need to train the volunteer appropriately for a particular job
- ☛ The coordinator delegates meaningful tasks with a manageable timeframe to the volunteer and supplies a system for monitoring task fulfillment, along with a system of rewards and reprimands. He demands a responsible approach.

IMPLEMENTATION

During the preparation, implementation and evaluation of volunteer activities the coordinator faces a whole series of situations, sometimes even challenges or problems which he/she has to deal with. It's important:

- ☛ to take decisions keeping in mind the overall goals of the activities (e.g. training volunteers, meaningfulness of the work for the local area/society),
- ☛ to solve problems appropriately and effectively – for example, avoid personal disagreements with local officials, release appropriate information, manage the structure and time of communication and negotiation, etc.,
- ☛ maintain ethical principles – do not cheat, do not bribe, and so on.

EVALUATION

The final step of the undertaking is the evaluation of what has been done and learnt. In order to allow the volunteer to become fully aware of the process and his/her skills and knowledge to become anchored within him/herself, it's good to talk to him/her – let the volunteer reflect on what he/she has put into it and also gained educationally. The next time he/she will be better in that work and will get through the critical moments differently.

- ☛ the coordinator knows the appropriate methods of evaluation and uses them
- ☛ the coordinator can find something to praise in the work of each volunteer and thank him/her for it



MAINTAINING CONTACT, FOLLOW UP, REPETITION

Short-term volunteer activities are optimally a part of the long-term plans and activities of an organization or group. The effect of short-term volunteering can be increased by informing the volunteer about the state of the area and other connected activities in the months or even years after the completion of a certain volunteer activity. It's also possible to invite people repeatedly for volunteer activities, and also slowly incorporate them into the organizational team.

- ☛ the coordinator keeps a roster of previous volunteers, updates them regularly and keeps them actively involved
- ☛ there is a system of coordinator recruitment from the volunteer

volunteer's responsibility

Why is a volunteer responsible for fulfilling his/her tasks?

- ✓ Because he/she agreed, he/she accepted the responsibility based on his/her free will. A lot has been done in order to enable a volunteer's work to happen – preparation of the work in the area, local community and administration permission, preparation of the tools and purchase of materials, provision of an educational or other types of programs, and so on.
- ✓ His/her work is not useless; it's important and beneficial.
- ✓ Because volunteering is a tool of self-development (self)regulation of behaviour, habits – and education – learning new things, training, acquiring experience

What is the volunteer not responsible for?

- ✓ For inappropriate assignment of work (too much work, insufficient competencies of the volunteer etc.)
- ✓ For unforeseen negative consequences, for damage of the tools, and so on.
- ✓ The volunteer doesn't carry any legal responsibility

4. How to motivate volunteers, colleagues and yourself

„Listen and let yourself get enthused! ... they could sense, that in the darkness...lies the whole world, they didn't know anything about it yet, though their desire for it was even greater.“ Miloslav Nevrlý, Karpatské hry.

There are two types of volunteering: long- and short-term. We recommend placing even a short-term engagement of a volunteer within the context of long-term connections – for example, a rally of weekend events in one area, involving a similar group of people repeatedly, etc. The demands to understanding volunteering and the motivation of a volunteer grow with the length of involvement. We also act differently when dealing with a group of volunteers as compared to an individual's volunteer service.

NEEDS



The engine for the majority of people's activities is the satisfaction of some need. Here we state the simple hierarchy of people's needs developed by American psychologist A.H. Maslow in the 1950's.

Maslow's pyramid of needs, the lower level needs create the basis for the higher level ones (with exceptions).

A wave of love motivation

A research made in the first decade of our century by Hnutí Brontosaurus (Czech Republic) showed, that the strongest motivation for people to take part in volunteer nature activities is the hope of finding a life partner.

What about you? What is your first motivation? ☺

When building a daily program let's not forget that people are not machines. If the lowest levels of the pyramid are taken care of (sufficient sleep, enough to eat, warmth, being well treated, atmosphere of trust, etc.) it's easier to reach the goals of the higher levels.

IDENTIFYING THE MOTIVATION

One often hides a lot of things, even from oneself (subconsciously). When asking about motivation we also need to read body language and facial expression. We work with information from resumés, motivation letters or different application forms.

When seeking for clues about their motivation we can help ourselves by asking applicants to complete sentences such as: I like... I need... I look for... I would love to...

Hand in hand with that goes paying attention to the fears of the volunteer and defining anticipated difficulties and also the positive attributes that he is aware of that he can bring to the process.

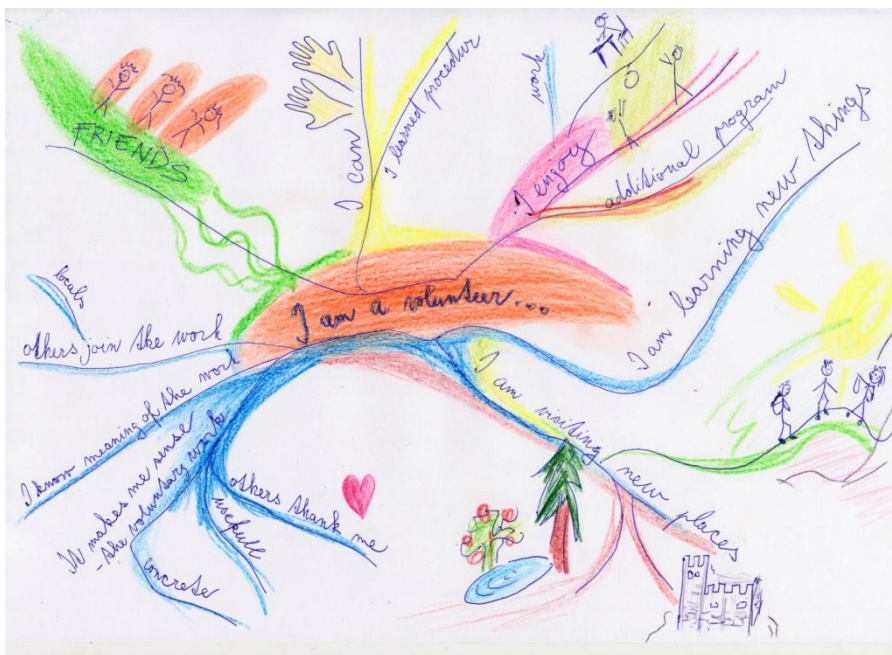
Czech and Slovak experience

In years 2010 and 2011 KERIC (SK) run several workshops in environmental and global education in Czech and Slovak high schools. Objectives of the workshops was to motivate students to think about environmental themes and connections among world, e.g. clothes and food trade. Part of the whole project was three-day long meeting of Czech and Slovak students called „Ecological games without borders“. Students competed in educational themes in different games. Personal meeting bring high benefit for them.

KERIC attained not just educational targets and increasing of awarness in environmental themes, but also build up motivation of schools to international cooperation and motivation of students to volunteer in KERIC!

A mind map can help us to understand motivation. To create the mind map you need a piece of A4 paper, some pencils and a set of coloured pencils. In the middle of the paper you write: “I am a volunteer and I’m motivated by...”, or “I am a volunteer and I expect...”, or “I am a coordinator and my role brings me...”. From those words you can associate and branch out words, sentences, pictures, and/or symbols (see the picture). The motivation for each volunteer can be different.

We can also offer reimbursement of the travel costs, meals, accommodation, insurance, etc.



Mind map “I am a volunteer...”.

SUMMARY

- ☛ **NOT JUST WORK.** During group volunteer events, additional organized programmes are of equal importance to volunteers as the work itself. Take into consideration ahead of time the length and the rhythm of the tasks, add breaks at appropriate intervals, periodically insert short fun activities and games and think about a balanced experiential and educational program.
- ☛ **FULFILLMENT OF EXPECTATIONS.** In order to meet the volunteer's expectations, we have to know him/her. It's important to listen to him/her, inquire about his/her expectations (but also worries and obstacles) and inform him/her about the possibilities of their fulfillment. If the expectations cannot be met, it's necessary for the volunteer to either change them or to look for their fulfillment elsewhere.
- ☛ **ENTHUSIASM IS CONTAGIOUS.**
It begins with me and only then can it be transferred to the volunteers. If the coordinator is committed to a certain volunteer area he can inspire the volunteers. Working together proves to be effective (for example, in cases of short-term occasions like planting trees). When the coordinator is not willing or is annoyed, the work can't go well.



Do we need to know volunteer's motivation?

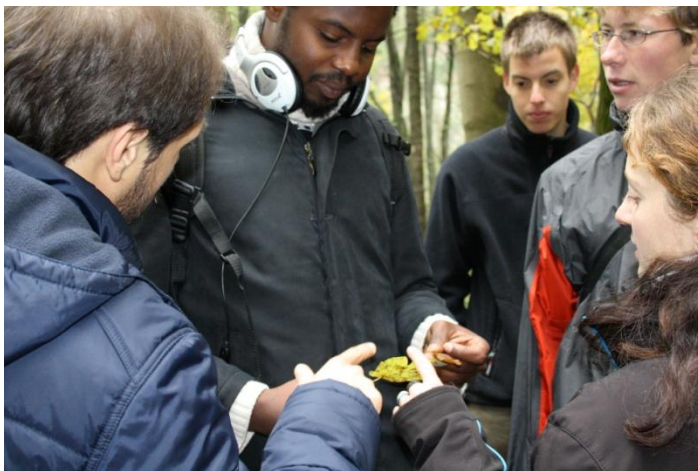
YES, because....

- ✓ we can let him use it
- ✓ we can reinforce it
- ✓ we can prevent the disappointment caused by unsatisfied expectations

NO, because....

- ✓ the volunteer doesn't trust us enough to reveal the real motives
- ✓ he/she may not be aware of it him/herself

- ☛ **AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE.** Nothing probably discourages one more than when one sees that his/her effort is not being accepted (by a local community, by others) or is inefficient (badly organized work that has to be redone soon thereafter, unexplained delays and waiting during the working process). That's why we need to plan work well and to inform volunteers about its importance thoroughly. The relationship with the locals will be dealt with later.



Field trip in Moravian Carst PLA.

5. Implementation of volunteering into on-going work of the organization

- ☛ How to incorporate volunteering into the operations of the organization?
- ☛ Volunteers need time and care
- ☛ Volunteering is beneficial to everyone concerned

A functional volunteer program is a part of the short- and long-term strategic plans of an organization. We have to consider input and output – on the one hand, volunteering brings advantages and disadvantages to the organization. (work that is done, publicity, etc.). On the other hand, it sucks away resources (personnel time, material, etc.). For projects to be successful and worthwhile for all the partners, it's necessary from the beginning to realistically set and regularly monitor:

- ☛ gains to the organization
- ☛ unavoidable costs
- ☛ volunteer project teams and their members' competency – volunteer coordinators, project administrator, PR, staff, and others.

Everything begins at the time of planning. Support from the side of the organization's leadership is very important for both the volunteer and the coordinator – be it in the form of discussions about the volunteer project and its possibilities, or praise of success or regular monitoring of results. When this happens, they both feel involved and the results usually improve.

“When there is gain, there must be loss.”

Lucie Jurikova asked the participants in a training session to name the losses that they had experienced as a result of volunteering. Here are the answers:

“bad habits, fear, stereotypes, intolerance, weight, self-centered egotism, prejudice, a tendency to discriminate, ignorance, lack of sensitiveness...”

Volunteering requires attention and care. What it brings – in terms of mutual, informal learning, sharing of stories, selfless help – is more than just the sum of what is put into it. If this is not so, something in the process is wrong.

ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS AND AWARENESS IN AN ORGANIZATION

Volunteering is a labor relationship which is comparable to the organization's relationship with its staff. The employees need to be informed about their new colleagues-volunteers and about their role. It will help mutual and appropriate distribution of volunteer forces.

A volunteer needs support. A coordinator takes care of him and, for specific tasks it may also be some employee or representative of the local community, local administration, and so on. The volunteer needs to be sure of who to turn to and with what questions; and the employee needs to be ready to support the volunteer.

- ☞ We inform the volunteers about the importance and progression of volunteering,
- ☞ We involve the employees in the volunteers' projects,
- ☞ We prepare the welcoming meeting where they get acquainted.



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RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF A VOLUNTEER

It is important to state the rights and obligations. A volunteer has the right to turn for help to certain employees who are delegated to lead the volunteer in a set of tasks. The volunteer is not a source of cheap labor who is to cover unwanted tasks. In our view, volunteering is education; even simple tasks (copying of contracts and their filing, raking, searching for contacts, etc.) have their educational and developmental meaning – they develop skills and knowledge, they inform about procedures.

The volunteer, on the other hand, has accepted certain tasks and it is a question of honor that he fulfill them. If there is repeated failure in task completion or some other failure, it's necessary to change the work plan of the volunteer so that it corresponds more with his current abilities and consider whether his/her continued participation is still tolerable for the organization. If not, the coordinator tries to direct him/her to another, more suitable, organization and to part with him.

Youth and Environment Europe

It is a federation of app. 50 youth and environmental organisations. The organisation has longtime experience with volunteering.

YEE volunteers approach environmental issues from three different sides: First, the work in the international network of environmental organisations; second, the work at the ecological farm at Toulcuv Dvur, where volunteers have physical contact with protecting nature and taking care of the animals; and third is their own environmental project.

Volunteers can choose what they want to focus on, according to their personal interests, and work on their own ideas on the protection of nature.

VOLUNTEERING AND PROFESSIONALISM

Can organizations that work with volunteers be professional? Definitely YES! Why? Because these terms neither exclude each other nor impact each other. On the contrary – a professional approach, even in organizing volunteer activities, makes administering the procedures and reaching the goals easier. Examples of the importance of professionalism are:



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- the work of the volunteers can be specialized – e.g. clearing forests of protected trees in protected areas, tracing wild beasts of prey. For this work one needs to be trained by a specialist. A specialist himself can support the organization – by helping with contracts, giving advice about confrontations, discussing different topics, etc.
- well-performed work backed by a responsible, organized approach increases the attractiveness of a non-profit organization and emphasizes the priorities and the importance of the teams that we deal with. It also simplifies the inclusion of volunteering into the functioning of the organization. If the information flows as needed, the work of volunteers is planned appropriately; if there is supervision and evaluation, the flow and the work results improve.
- Non-professionalism can easily lead to failure, a deficiency in the work of the volunteer, to the demotivation of an individual and the spreading of a bad reputation of the organization. When the volunteer assesses his/her work as useless, badly supported, etc., his/her opinion of the organizer and issues being addressed (e.g. environmental protection) quickly lowers. It's not very likely that we will get such persons with negative volunteer experiences for further work.



6. Cooperation with the Local Community

It is characteristic for a human being that he takes care of his own. His own circle of relatives, close friends and acquaintances, of what happens politically in areas which are of concern to him, and of the frosty sidewalk in front of his house. It's a similar situation with ideas; I act according to what I identify with (what I come up with). Let's keep in mind these findings from sociology, psychology and biology when taking care of a certain location. Cooperation with the owners and local people is unavoidable for pursuing the project's goals and supports the meaningfulness of the events or activities.

Let's reflect on the motivation for a human being regarding the care of the environment:

- ☞ I care about what is mine,
- ☞ I act with the knowledge that I can, am able and have skills: and then I actively create my future,
- ☞ I know my needs and the needs of my region and I act so that I can satisfy them.

In order to get local people to accept an idea, it must either arise from them or we need to inspire them. We need to show simple ways of how to act in favor of the environment - offer the people volunteer work as a form of getting involved, financial or material support, etc. Successful volunteer work is immensely motivating for the further civic life of people as they can see it's possible to reach established goals. The public needs to be regularly informed in order to orient itself in what is happening around it and in order to be able to decide in favor of supporting our goals. Knowledge of the

local culture, history and present needs is the precondition for implementation of sustainable changes.

We will show a complex example of volunteer care for water resources in cooperation with local citizens in the example of the NGO project “Hnutí Brontosaurus Jeseníky” entitled „**Journey to the Roots**“. The second example from a **north Indian school in the village of Mulbekh** demonstrates a consideration of the activity of the local people in defining and fulfilling the needs.

Journey to the Roots

Jeseníky Spa bears the legacy of the natural healer and predecessor of hydrotherapy, Vincez Priessnitz. Before the Second World War, the area was inhabited by many citizens of German nationality. After 1945, when the Germans were forced to leave, a large number of buildings, farmhouses, spas and recreational facilities became dilapidated. The remaining citizens and the newly settled ones didn't continue taking care of many of the springs, chapels and other small architectural landscape features in the area.

“Journey to the Roots” was born as a youth initiative, “*At the very beginning there were only a few of us.*” says Tomas Hradil, the director of the NGO. They rediscovered the riches of the Jeseníky area – springs and small and large structures that had previously been damaged or become derelict. They decided to dust off the forgotten pride of the region. In 2001 they repaired the first spring. A whole line of other springs followed.



A spring “Meklenburský pramen” in 2002.

The re-opening of each of them culminated in a celebration as a public event. This act of a celebration is a prime example of keeping the public informed.

In order to make it happen, they needed to get permission from the owners of the various plots of land and structures, from the officials of CHKO Jeseníky, as it is a protected area, and also the local municipality. The work was organized by the NGO “HB Jeseníky” with the support of many volunteers and with the help of craftsmen (stonecutters and so on) and other specialists. The number of people who were aware of this initiative and supported it grew. Apart from word of mouth, this was thanks to public presentations, led by both amateurs and professionals, regarding the aims and importance of the project.



Volunteers are renovating a spring “Meklenburský pramen”.

The aim of the project continued to develop - after repairing several springs there arose an idea to link them to an educational path dedicated to “Vincenz Priessnitz” and, by doing so, to support attendance and also awareness of the past and present times of the region. HB Jesineky volunteers have marked the trail in some sections, they have built wooden walkways at some places, and educational boards have also been installed. More than 1,000 people were present at the festival celebrating the opening of the Vincenz Priessnitz path. Public lectures continue to be offered.



Educational board about “Vincenz Priessnitz” path.

In order to guarantee the further care of the springs – regular cleaning of reservoirs and pipes and intermittent repair of commemorative tablets - they initiated a network of voluntary custodians from the public. Contracts were signed between the owners of the springs and the local citizens in which the citizens promised to take care of the springs for a specific period of time. The transfer of the springs was signified by a public ceremony, a small feast.

What was the effect of the project “Journey to the Roots” on the area and the local people?

- ☛ it supported the civic activity of the local people,
- ☛ it increased the activity in the region from the point of view of tourism,
- ☛ it contributed to sustaining the heritage of the region.



Together for a school in the Himalayas.

“Far away in the Indian Himalayas there lies a village, Mulbekh. The local people want their children to get an education, so they are running their own school. It is in the beginning of its existence and we help both financially and with professional assistance. The goal is to establish a modest school using the principles of sustainable development that will provide the children with a quality-based education and an affinity toward their own culture.”

(Taken from www.brontosaurivhimalajich.cz.)



Lessons of geography – game, 2010, Ladakh, North India.

We can trace the beginning of this cooperation to the year 2007, when a group of volunteers from the Czech Republic established contact with the village school in Mulbekh for the first time. Since that time the organizers of volunteer camps in the north Indian region of Ladakh have been in close contact with the leaders of the school

and they continue to discuss their mutual needs and possibilities of cooperation. That's how the project of the school hostel and long-term volunteering was born.

The building of the school hostel will allow children from a wider area, who at present only have access to an education of lower quality, to study there.

Specialists in education, management, and solar construction come for several months to co-create the study plans and development plans of the school, to consult on the progress of the work, etc.

"We stress that we will donate only a portion of the money and labor for an initiative. The largest portion has to be contributed by the local community. We offer professional consultation to the leadership of the school, but the implementation itself is in their hands. We provide the resources for purchasing equipment, but a majority of the materials and finances are collected from small donors among the citizens of the villages." said Jiri Sazel, the project coordinator.

"I expected to be taken aback by the place – and I was. I expected to see a different way of life – and I did. I expected I would be teaching – but I was mainly learning." comments on her stay in north Indian Ladakh by volunteer Veronika Teryngerova.



Children from monasterial school in a field trip, 2011, Ladakh, North India.

7. International Volunteer for the Environment

This text is inspired (and partly taken from L. Juříková.) by Lucie Juříková and Oxfam – an international confederation, a part of a global movement for change to build a future free from the injustice of poverty.

In the process of informal education – an intensive development of the competencies of young people and those who work with teenagers often takes place. Through informal and formal education we prepare young people to take on responsibility for themselves and the society.

Competences consist of:

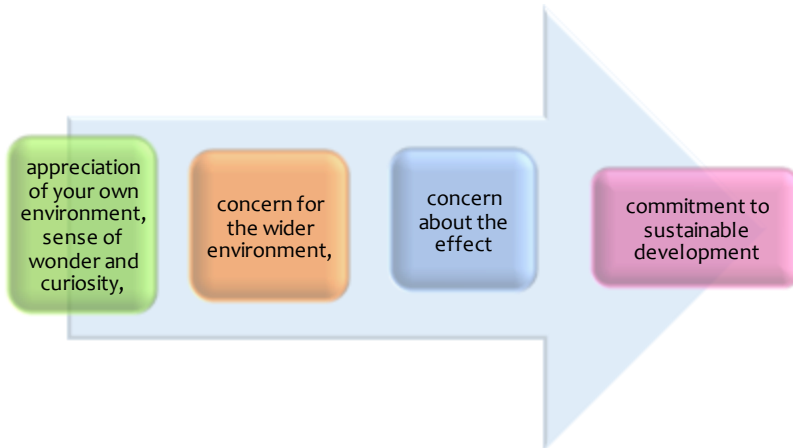
- ☛ values / attitudes (what a person consider as important and valuable),
- ☛ knowledge (what a person knows, understands and is able to apply in different situations) and
- ☛ skills (what a person can do).

Let's think about how we can attract a volunteer. Let's look at what possible values, knowledge, skills and motivations resulting from them volunteers interested in environmental protection on a European or global level can have.

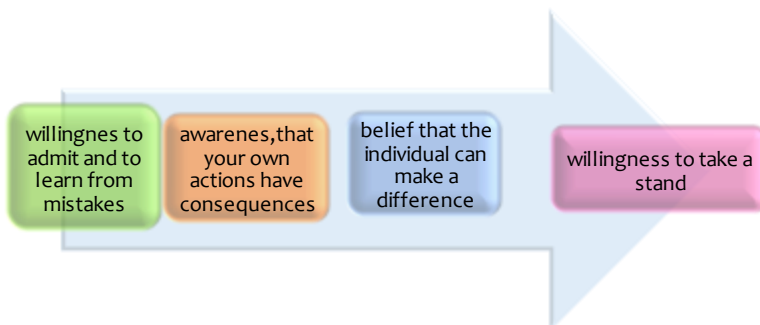


VALUES / ATTITUDES

Concern for the environment and its development:

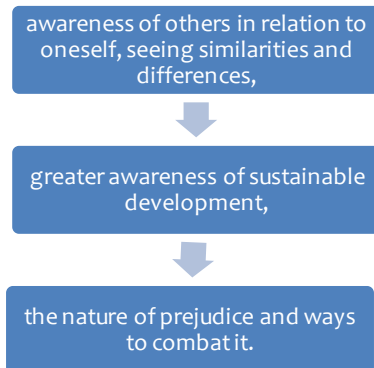


A belief that people can make difference:



KNOWLEDGE

Diversity:

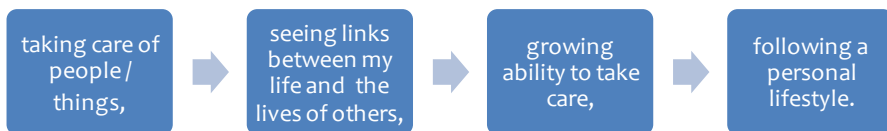


Social justice and equity. Globalization and interdependence. Sustainable development.

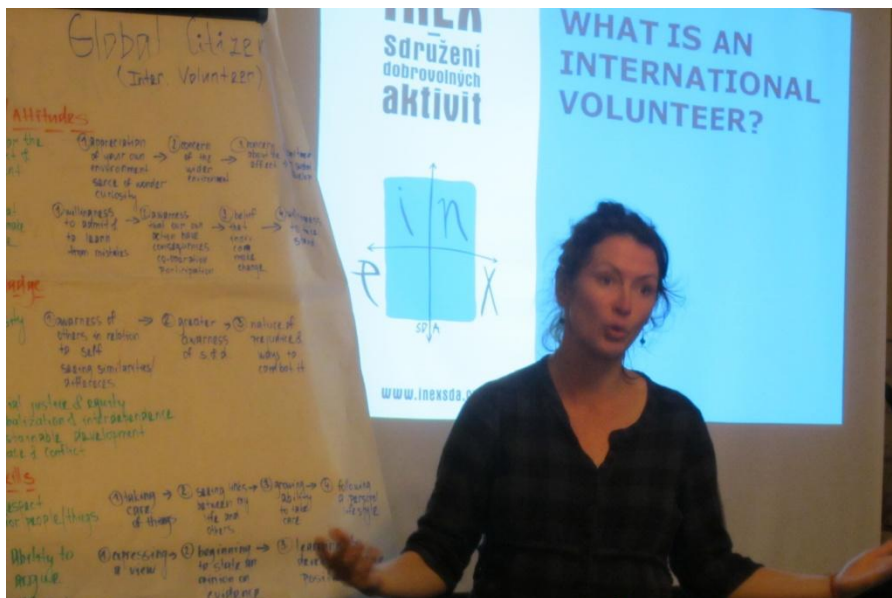
Peace and conflict.

SKILLS

Respect for people / things:



Ability to argue effectively:



Lucie Juřková is presenting international volunteering, October 2011, EVC Svycarna, Czech Rep.

8. How to communicate with the public?

Public relations are an important function in the management of an NGO (a group, a project, etc.). It is a way of communicating with the public, of interpreting information; it creates the image of the NGO in the media. It is an overture to a target group or to a specific segment of the public, but also an on-going way of informing supporters, members and otherwise involved people and the wider public. Both appropriately timed presentations of an event and the on-going release of relevant information play their roles here.

Any communication is based on two pillars:

- ☛ awareness of the value of what you present (quality of the progress, the importance of the topic, but also the organization or even oneself),
- ☛ level of the development of presentational and corresponding skills (creation of promotional materials, publishing of press releases, articles, advertisements).

Being convinced of the quality of what I offer is essential. That is because we unwillingly reveal our opinion non-verbally (miming, body posture, when creating a poster, for example, by the colours we choose, photos, the placement of a logo, etc) and verbally (choice of positive/negative words or examples, etc.).

That's why we suggest clarifying whether our volunteer activity has significance and what its value is before we present our intentions and pursuits to the public. It helps when we formulate our aims or goals positively, avoiding defining ourselves negatively.

AIMING AT A TARGET GROUP

A choice of a target group is trendy nowadays in public relations. An untargeted presentation doesn't prove itself effective. An untargeted presentation steps backwards because it is not very effective. We need to know who we want to reach. Volunteers? Donors? Do we want to persuade the citizens of a village to support the construction of a new water filtration plant? Do we address local politicians and processors of garbage in a campaign to make the collection sites of biological waste accessible? Businessmen, transporters, producers...?

- ☛ We need to make clear for ourselves who we need to address.

Communication is a two-way transfer of information. It's important also to listen to the needs of the other side and to communicate with a regard for them. In order to get them interested we must consider the needs of the target group (for example, the cleaning of a river may come under the title of helping nature, the same as the cultivation of the surroundings of the village, or addiction prevention, when the young people work in a group and they accept the values of thoughtfulness and a healthy lifestyle). We also appropriately choose the formulations, separate words, and the type of media (newspaper, radio, Internet, posters in trams, public discussions, petitions, etc.) we use.

- ☛ We are aware of the target group.
- ☛ We choose the appropriate transmitters of the message.

FORMULATIONS

Current European society is flooded with information. To a large extent we are numbed by stimuli since daily we are exposed to a huge amount of information. That's why we choose a message that is understandable and easy to remember. The first moment of an announcement is the most important one – either a reader (listener, etc.) immediately



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turns his attention away or he gives us a chance. We can address the mind and all the senses – using colours, tones, smells or touch, etc.

- ☛ We communicate clearly, briefly and comprehensively the main information (who, when, where, what, how and why) all the time, having in mind the most important goal,
- ☛ We use a catchy slogan that is right to the point,
- ☛ One picture can express more than thousands of words.



***“You never know, how others understand what you tell them...”,
field trip in Moravian Carst, Czech Rep, October 2011.***

By spreading information we let the world know about our values and turn its attention to, from our point of view, burning issues. Information is gold, but of a somewhat different character than money – the greater the number of people who acknowledge it, the higher its value. So we have a lot to give away.

9. Conclusion and thanks

We dealt with volunteering from the point of view of an individual (motivation, needs, etc.), we pointed out the importance of preparation of the organization as a whole for accepting volunteers, and we looked back at the picture of volunteering as presented by the media. We consider authentic examples of good experience to be the most valuable. These persuade us about the meaningfulness of volunteer activity, as it is a means of learning and a way of getting to know and changing the world.

Let's not forget that:

- ☛ in the beginning of everything there are relationships,
- ☛ interpersonal contact is governed by rules that are always set up in a certain way (consciously or unconsciously) and we can take an active role in influencing them,
- ☛ everyone perceives reality from his/her own point of view, so it is important to pass on information clearly and in all its complexity!



Experiential methods.

We thank all the attendants of the training course, the lecturers and our partner organizations.

Participants: Milan Andjelkovic, Admilson Cabral, Ibrahim Celik, Anahit Chkhroyan, Eliška Folvarčňá, Martin Hnyk, Ivka Hrušková, Katarina Jovanovic, Anastasia Kouki, Alžběta Mrekajová, Naira Nikoghosyan, Susana Riberio, Magdaléna Rutarová, Ioanna Skondra, Kyriakos Stephanopoulos, Milan Ratkovic, Selahattin Utku Unlu, Tomáš Zaplatílek.

Trainers: Tomáš Bláha, Tomáš Hradil, Lucie Juříková, Petr Kouřil, Jana Kučerová, Solene Mouton, Kristýna Pešáková, Jiří Sázal, Lilit Simonyan, Michal Šimoník, Dalimil Toman, Hana Válková, Gosia Zubowicz

Facilitators and other volunteers: Jaroslav Bílý, Jiří Čevela, Diego Díaz Abad, Linda Fidrmucová, Ela Klementová, Zuzana Kudličková, Dan Petrucha, Vladimíra Regerová, Dalibor Stach, Kristina Studená



10. Presentation of the training course

The international training course “Volunteering: a way to environmental education” took place from the 23rd to 30th of September 2011 in the Ecological leisure time centre Švýčárna, situated in the Josefov Valley near Křtiny stream in PLA Moravský kras (South Moravia Region, Czech Republic), which is one of the most important karst areas in Central Europe.

The course was developed by Brontosaurus Movement (Czech Republic), involved 20 lecturers and organizers and welcomed 21 participants (youth leaders, volunteer leaders and executive members of youth organizations), who belonged to 7 non-profit organizations from different European Union, candidates and Eastern Europe and Caucasus region countries:

- ☛ Stepanavan Youth Centre (Armenia)
- ☛ Brontosaurus Movement (Czech Republic)
- ☛ System and G (Greece)
- ☛ DESINCOOP – Desenvolvimento Económico, Social e Cultural, CRL (Portugal)
- ☛ Young Researches of Serbia -Voluntary Service of Serbia (Serbia)
- ☛ Keric (Slovakia)
- ☛ Mersin Youth Works Resource Centre (Turkey)

The course aimed to:

- ☛ Lead the participants to a personal, socio-educational and professional development – develop competences, knowledge, skills and attitudes related



to work with youth and with volunteers for environment (higher quality practice);

- improve integrations of different forms of volunteering (legislative, safety, practical and other aspects);
- build a partnership for new international cooperation between organizations and youth (with the possibility of developing new projects together).



ii. List of participating organisations

STEPANAVAN YOUTH CENTRE

Contact Information

Charents st. 137

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Profile

The Stepanavan Youth Center (SYC) was established in October 2001 by active young people of Stepanavan, Armenia, with the aim of assisting in the development of their hometown and country. While focusing on local issues and challenges, they are actively working with international participants as well. Their main goals are: to support the exchange of experience, knowledge and skills between young people of Armenia and their peers around the world; to increase information accessibility, and to provide opportunities for cultural exchange. Currently, the programmes in which they are involved are: Leadership and Volunteering; Environmental Action; Social Development; Information Access; and Cultural Exchanges. SYC is a member of several international youth networks and it is actively cooperating with the local government, NGOs, as well as international youth organizations worldwide.

DESINCOOP - DESENVOLVIMENTO ECONÓMICO, SOCIAL E CULTURAL, CRL

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Website: www.desincoop.org



Profile

Desenvolvimento Económico, Social e Cultural (Desincoop) is a service provider cooperative formally created in May 2005 in the city of Guimarães, Portugal. Originally it was formed to address the needs of a set of experienced people, who due to age had some difficulties in retaining employment in the labour market. In its second phase, Desincoop started to promote programs for people who were trying to find their first job by providing information and advice. Its underlying philosophy is the total commitment of its members and collaborators to cooperative principles as well as to ethical and civil behaviour in the defence of sustainable development. Therefore, it provides services in economic, social and cultural areas. Nowadays, its main activities are: preparation of studies; development of projects and preparation of requests for financial aid; training and professional guidance; system conformity assessment; analysis and implementation of information systems; support for the creation and operation of proximity services and other cooperatives; civil, social or cultural interventions; and image consultancy.

KERIC

Contact Information

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Profile

Keric (Kysuce European Information Centre) is an organisation, which mainly works with children and young people aged 4-30 as well as with adults. Since 2002, through working with volunteers, they have gained great experience at the personal and professional level. The European Voluntary Service (EVS) has been a major influence in shaping the character of this organization and it has helped the people of the region to become more open-minded and tolerant toward foreigners. Its main activities include: international youth exchanges; exchanging volunteers (EVS programme); leisure-time activities for the community; creative workshops for children and youth; summer and winter camps for children; European workshops for pupils at primary schools; language courses; training courses for youth workers from Slovakia, Europe and the Mediterranean area; computer training for locals of the Kysuce region; and outdoor trips and team games.

SYSTEM AND GENERATION

Contact Information

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Website: www.systemandgeneration.eu



Profile

The members of System and Generation (S&G) are young active citizens. The activist core is a group of ex EVS volunteers with great experience in Youth in Action projects (international exchanges, seminars, workshops, EVS) and in the field of NGOs. The organization was founded to further educate young people from Greece, with priority given to those with fewer opportunities, and to attract other volunteers by giving them the chance to acquire new international experience, to discover other cultures and to participate in an exchange of experiences. This, they believe, is one of the most important and effective ways for personal development since it significantly broadens the horizons of young people and it opens up a wider view of themselves, the state and the future. S&G aims to involve its volunteers in the fields of active citizenship and environmental awareness by encouraging youth participation in related activities, as well as providing them with information about opportunities to participate in national and multicultural projects around Greece, Europe and the world. To achieve these objectives, S&G organizes and participates in various national and international events, seminars, camps, and youth exchanges. Their activities are mainly based on non-formal education methods.

YOUNG RESEARCHERS OF SERBIA - VOLUNTARY SERVICE OF SERBIA

Contact Information

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Profile

Young Researchers of Serbia (YRS) was founded in 1976 and its main aims are environmental protection, environmental education, youth exchange and work with young people, as well as the promotion of sustainable development, scientific creativity and volunteering. The range of activities is diverse, but they can be divided into four main categories: environmental protection (they organize activities in the field of nature protection and conservation through biodiversity protection programmes as well as sustainable development promotion); volunteer exchange (the Voluntary Service of Serbia was initiated in 1990 and conducts youth exchanges), international work camps (mostly environmental, but they also organize art and music festivals); international cooperation (YRS is a member, partner or co-founder of several international youth networks).

MERSIN YOUTH WORKS RESOURCE CENTRE

Contact Information

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Profile

The Mersin Youth Works Resource Centre is an association founded by non-formal education and youth trainers and youth workers to encourage local young people, who are between the ages of 16-30, to become involved in the social life of the community. Our association's target group is socially and economically disadvantaged young people and immigrant youngsters in Mersin. Our founding aim is to educate young people to become active citizens and to encourage them by means of media tools and international youth work to take part in social life .

As Mersin has one of the largest immigrant populations of any city in the southern part of Turkey, there are integration problems among the young people. Our working topics are youth policies, youth leisure time activities, photography, documentary and multimedia activities (short movies, web design, database, graphics, comics, etc.). We organise international youth exchanges, training courses and seminars via the European Union Youth In Action programme and under the framework of other national and international funds.



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BRONTOSAURUS MOVEMENT

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Profile

The Brontosaurus Movement is a Czech youth non-governmental organisation, with 30 branches all around the country. Its main aims are: nature protection and cultural heritage conservation (volunteers have conducted long-term fieldwork in more than 100 localities in the Czech Republic), informal experimental education (programmes that stimulate creativity, physical activity and the healthy personal development of young people), promotion of sustainable development (taking part in solving environmental problems and showing alternatives to the consumer lifestyle). Its activities include organizing typical “Brontosaurus events”, such as summer camps and spring/autumn weekends consisting of volunteer work in nature or on repairing cultural monuments and an experiential programme of games, workshops, happenings, art, etc. Furthermore, in the central office in Brno, they run several additional programmes related to environmental education and eco-counselling, as well as children clubs, and a free time centre for volunteers.