

EURO VOLUNTEERING

A guide for Young People who want to have a volunteering experience abroad



WHAT WILL YOU FIND IN THIS BROCHURE?

ATTRIBUTIONS

Published by Eurodesk Brussels Link.

Editors:

Audrey Frith
Yurema Pallarés Pla
Grazia Cannarsa

Designer:

Mónica Delmes

Copyright Eurodesk 2022.

10.5281/zenodo.6759097

1	About the publication	4
2	About Eurodesk	4
3	Defining your volunteering experience	5
4	Get to know your purpose and motivation	11
	▪ Discover other people's experiences	13
	▪ Clarify what you want	13
5	Types of volunteering	16
	▪ Short-term	16
	▪ Long-term	17
	▪ Online volunteering	18
	▪ EU volunteering initiatives	19
	» European Solidarity Corps.....	20
	» EU Aid Volunteers.....	21
	» Other types of opportunities	24
6	Sketch your plan: clear but not too tight!	24
7	Start applying	26
	▪ Motivation letter for a volunteering experience	27

1

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Each year thousands of young people decide to volunteer for a cause close to their heart. Environment, social justice, gender equality, education or animal welfare are just some of the topics in which you can get involved and make a positive impact in society.

The motivation to engage in volunteering activities can have as many different sources as there are ways to get involved. In this publication you will learn about volunteering, explore your own reasons to get involved and most importantly you will discover tons of opportunities to start your own experience and make the most out of it!



2

ABOUT EURODESK

Eurodesk is a European youth information network created in 1990. As a support organisation to Erasmus+, we make information on learning mobility comprehensive and accessible to young people and those who work with them.

With a network of 39 Eurodesk Centres connected to over 1600 local information providers in 37 European countries, Eurodesk raises awareness on European opportunities and encourages young people to become active citizens.



Photo: Cottonbro

3

DEFINING

YOUR VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE



Photo: Julia M Cameron

Volunteering can take many forms and is understood differently depending on the country, society and cultural traditions. Some reasons are historical (in some countries citizens were forced in the past to undertake "voluntary" activities), cultural (some societies are really keen on helping each other and it is difficult to draw the line on where the voluntary activity begins) or related to the unpaid nature of the activity (if volunteers should or shouldn't be reimbursed for the costs incurred while volunteering).

But in general we can agree that volunteering implies any voluntary activity, formal or informal, undertaken under **volunteers' free will and not seeking financial gain**. Volunteering activities usually **address human, social or environmental needs and concerns** and can take place in support of a non-profit organisation or community-based initiative.



Did you know that 34% of European youth stated in 2019 that they had engaged in organised volunteering activities within the past 12 months? Over a third of young people in Ireland (42%), Denmark (39%) and the Netherlands (38%) have done a volunteering activity. Women are also more likely to take part in volunteering activities than men.

Source:
Flash Eurobarometer 478





Volunteering has become a priority of the European Union in the last decades. More and more opportunities to volunteer are now available, including with financial support. Therefore, options to devote your time to a noble cause have expanded: from easier access to modes of transport that can take you to the other side of the world to funding opportunities helping you devote full-time during your volunteering experience or online opportunities - there are plenty of options for you to leave a positive mark in the world!

Do you know that? One billion people globally are active volunteers, and around one in three young people report that they are volunteering – nearly 600 million youth worldwide!

VOLUNTEERING AND SDGS

In 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a set of **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** ³ to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. And, indeed, in **Goal 17**, volunteer groups - just like those you can join! - are clearly identified as a **key actor**.

HOW CAN YOU AS A VOLUNTEER HELP MAKE PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE SDGS?

- raising awareness and mobilising people delivering technical expertise in thematic areas
- modelling behaviours and attitudes, helping to build a truly transformational agenda
- enhancing knowledge and willingness to contribute to SDGs locally
- developing skills across different goal areas
- collecting data, assessing SDG progress and making the most of local expertise



Photo: Polina Zimmerman

Did you know that there is a European Charter on the rights and responsibilities of volunteers?

The Charter brings together the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and the rights of volunteer-providers so as to ensure access to volunteering and active citizenship opportunities are rights not privileges.



VOLUNTEERING AND YOUNG PEOPLE - WHAT'S THE LINK?

Getting involved in volunteering activities is an excellent way for you to explore for the first time civic engagement, become an active citizen and develop skills that may eventually be part of your profession in the future - you never know what experience may unlock your potential talents!

Plus, volunteering is recognised as a great way for you to cultivate your critical spirit and learn to set priorities engaging in social causes close to your beliefs and values. Additional perks are the friends you may encounter who are interested in the same topic creating strong bonds and long-lasting friendships!

If you want to explore more about the connections of youth and volunteering, check this out!



QUOTES



“Volunteering fosters creativity, draws strength from our passions and connects us to those who need us most. Volunteerism is a global phenomenon that transcends boundaries, religions and cultural divides. Volunteers embody the fundamental values of commitment, inclusiveness, civic engagement and a sense of solidarity.”

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, International Volunteer Day 5 December 2015



VOLUNTEERING AND THE EUROPEAN YOUTH GOALS



The EU also places volunteering at the core of the European Youth Goals. **Goal #7** "Quality of employment for all", calls for recognising the skills acquired during a volunteer experience while **goal #10** "Sustainable Green Europe", calls for supporting and strengthening opportunities for young people to volunteer in the environmental sector.



Discover more about the Youth Goals here:



Photo: Monstera



Photo: Zen Chung



"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."

Elizabeth Andrew, first woman organiser of the Labour Party in Wales

Did you know that the 5th of December is marked as International Volunteer Day?

It is a worldwide occasion to celebrate the engagement of volunteers and encourage others to become volunteers.



WHAT IS "VOLUNTOURISM"?

You guessed it right! The term voluntourism, which emerged in the 90's, comes from merging "volunteering" and "tourism" and it refers to mixing practices and activities from the volunteer and tourism sector, respectively.

It is so the case when:

- The person is visiting a foreign country and, whilst being there, decides to engage in a volunteering experience; or
- When the person pays an agency (sometimes a considerable amount) for a "ready-made" volunteering abroad package.

Voluntourism practices often receive criticism questioning whether the impact is **meaningful to the local community**, whether **progress** is achieved over time and the commercialisation of an experience which should be **based on solidarity**. In particular, you should pay attention to opportunities involving



EU YOUTH STRATEGY

The EU Youth Strategy is entitled "Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy" (2019-2027). The EU outlines that volunteering abroad is a way to increase youth participation in civic life ("engaging"), a form of mobility that brings European citizens closer to each other ("connecting"), and raises young people's skills ("empowering").

Young people are at the core of a consultation process called Youth Dialogue, managed between the Presidency of the Council of Member States, the European Commission and the European Youth Forum, where you can get involved in shaping the policies that directly affect you through continuous cooperation among youth representatives and decision-makers.

work with children which could prove not so helpful, you can find more food for thought on volunteering with children from ChildSafe:



MOBILITY OF YOUNG VOLUNTEERS ACROSS THE EU

The EU has been promoting volunteering for over two decades. In 2008, for example, it adopted the **Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU** **7** which was revised in 2022 in the context of the European Year of Youth.

The Recommendation aims to facilitate transnational youth volunteering under the European Solidarity Corps or other schemes at national level. It recognises the key contribution of volunteering for the development of young people's skills and competences and its role in positively overcoming societal challenges.



How can you know if the opportunity you are keen on engaging is a "voluntourism" practice?

Check out **this toolkit by the European Volunteer Center** **8** to clear your doubts out.

This toolkit helps you assess whether the opportunity you envision for volunteering abroad is the right fit for you and the quality of it for you.



4

GET TO KNOW

YOUR PURPOSE AND MOTIVATION



Once you make the decision to become a volunteer whether in your hometown or abroad, online or in person, it is time to reflect on what motivates you and why you want to engage in volunteering in that specific activity. There are no wrong or right answers, but this will help you get to know yourself better too.

It will also boost your confidence that your contribution matters and can have a great impact!



"As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands — one for helping yourself, the other for helping others."

— Audrey Hepburn



→ DID YOU KNOW THAT VOLUNTEERING IS GOOD FOR YOU?



Photo: Juan Mendez

The Study on the impact of transnational volunteering through the European Voluntary Service (now integrated under the European Solidarity Corps) shows measurable impact on the volunteers' learning and competence development and employability with a specific focus on the role of young people with fewer opportunities.

Some questions that could prompt your reflections could be...

- Why is this topic important to me?
- How does this project/organisation align with my values?
- What do I expect from this experience?
- What skills can I use best to help in this project?
- How does this project help the cause and create a positive impact?
- How much time and energy can I realistically commit to this project?

As important as getting to know yourself and your motivation is... getting to know your host organisation! Other than checking their official website, take a look at their social channels and don't hesitate to reach out to its staff or former volunteers to get a more personal version of their experience and views on the work the organisation does. Doing a thorough research of the organisation you will be volunteering will give you the confidence to know that is the good opportunity for you.

While you go through this stage you can check this article on the EYP on "How to choose a good volunteering opportunity".



DISCOVER OTHER PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES AND CLARIFY WHAT YOU WANT

Whereas your own experience will be unique, reading the stories or watching the testimonies of those who have already devoted time to volunteering may give you different perspectives on how to approach it and what to expect. It may also help you find meaningful connections with other volunteers. Here are some tips:

- If you know personally someone who has volunteered, don't be shy and ask them to share their experiences
- Browse your usual social media channels using key hashtags such as **#volunteer**, **#volunteering** **#europeansolidaritycorps**
- Don't forget exploring stories from young people:

European youth portal

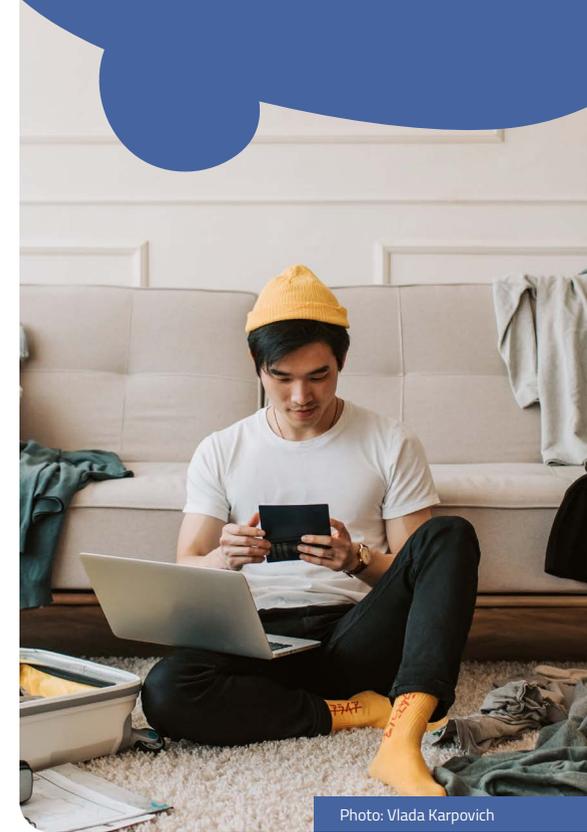


Photo: Vlada Karpovich



Discover how Fausta found her true vocation during her European Solidarity Corps experience:



What skills do you think Milan got to develop the most during his volunteering experience?



*If you see it underlined, click on it! (you'll find a link)

QUIZ ON VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMMES

After your self-reflection exercise and other people's testimonies you are likely to have a more realistic picture of what you may find when you become a volunteer.



Volunteering - do you know what it is all about?

- A** It rings a bell, but I have never been a volunteer.
- B** Yes, I already have experience working as a volunteer in my country.
- C** Sure, I have already participated in a voluntary project abroad.

How long can you go abroad for?

- A** I am available only during the summer holidays.
- B** I can dedicate 1-3 months.
- C** I am planning to take a year or two out.

When do you want to go?

- A** Now, but I am still under 18.
- B** When I turn 18.
- C** During my studies or just after.

Voluntary work is not remunerated and you might even have to pay part of the costs. How do you feel about that?

- A** That's tough. But maybe my parents could help me out...
- B** I can buy my insurance, find some cash for a ticket but that's about it...
- C** I will be able to collect some money and look for sources of financial support.

You can choose to volunteer in a cool country, but... will you be able to communicate with the locals?

- A** My English is a bit wavy – if I can't say it, I will show it. I will manage!
- B** I can communicate in English, but I would happily improve or learn another foreign language.
- C** I am already learning two foreign languages, I would also be happy to learn another one.

Do you prefer spending time on your own or working as part of a team/group?

- A** I want to work as a part of the group. There's safety in numbers.
- B** I can work independently or as a part of the team. I am fairly adaptable.
- C** I would be comfortable being responsible for part of the project and coordinating other people's work.

Volunteering abroad means working. It is not a form of an all-inclusive holiday. Do you think you can manage?

- A** I don't know but I am willing to find out.
- B** I can work full time as a volunteer, up to 6 hours a day.
- C** I totally want to get involved. I am interested in projects for experienced volunteers.

If you have more A answers | Everything to gain!

You can try out short-term volunteering experiences like workcamps, short-term projects under the European Solidarity Corps, volunteering in festivals or local volunteering!

It can also fit you volunteering in teams so you have the support from other peers who are involved in volunteering at the same time. Alternatively, you can engage with online volunteering if that works best for your circumstances.

These could be options for you to explore what benefits volunteering brings to you and what contributions you can make through solidarity.

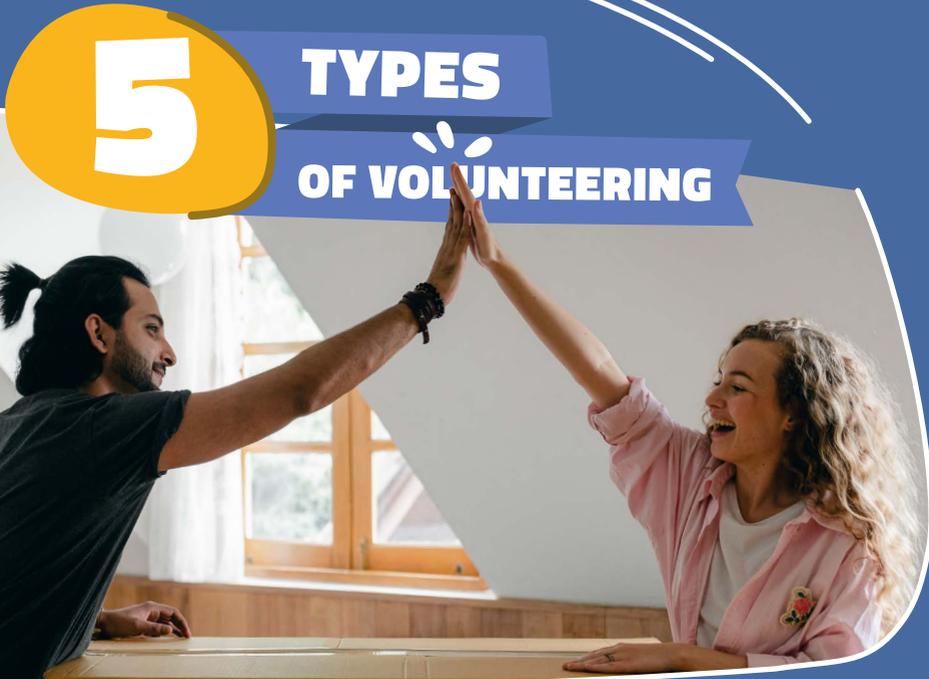
If you have more B answers | Yet another challenge!

Ready to take a step further? In that case look no further than the European Solidarity Corps where you will find opportunities to volunteer for a couple of months in European countries. There are several programmes and topics to volunteer from environmental conservation, to integration of people with disabilities or promotion of active citizenship.

If you have more C answers | Total commitment

It seems the decision to truly engage in your volunteering experience is taken, so you can explore programmes that require more time-involvement, further skills or knowledge of the foreign language. Some examples could be long-term volunteering under the European Solidarity Corps, EU Aid Volunteers (taking place all over the world) or UN Volunteers. This could also be the opportunity to become professionally involved in the humanitarian sector after your volunteering experience.

Remember that those results are just a source of inspiration, maybe programmes from the other categories will suit you better. Discover them in the following section!



5

TYPES OF VOLUNTEERING

SHORT-TERM VOLUNTEERING

Now that you know how volunteering is defined and how important it is, let's take a look at the various options to volunteer because there are many ways to contribute to a cause close to your heart and contribute to a better society.

This can be done in your neighbourhood, country, region or internationally - whether in person or online: if you are keen on volunteering, there is certainly one option that works for you!

Let's look at some of them: 



- **Service Civil International** ¹³ offers workcamps which are short-term voluntary projects bringing people from different countries, cultures and backgrounds to live and work together with local communities for a period of two to three weeks.

International workcamps ¹⁴ offers workcamps in Germany and over 50 other countries where volunteers have the chance to live and work with people from all over the world. They also have special family camp programmes for people under 18 and families with children.

IBG - Internationale Begegnung in Gemeinschaftsdiensten e.V. ¹⁵ has been organising workcamps since 1965 to promote international solidarity, friendship and understanding. During 2 to 3 weeks you will have the opportunity to get involved in a non-profit project and make a positive impact.

Youth Action for Peace ¹⁶ is an international peace movement which aims at promoting societies based on peace, justice, and self-determination. Their programmes raise awareness about the impact of discrimination, social exclusion, injustice, and violent conflicts and include long-term volunteering, work camps and training.

Solidarités Jeunes ¹⁷ is a movement promoting citizenship education to pave the way to the construction of peace. The principal way it uses to do so is volunteering with options for youngsters, adults and families with different durations in each case.

You can also think of short-term volunteering in your own town! Especially during the Christmas season, there are many associations, for example food banks, where you can volunteer for a short-term and still make a huge difference.

Similar to season-focused opportunities, there are also short-term **volunteering opportunities around certain events** such as the Olympics or the **European Youth Event (EYE)** ¹⁸. They bring together active citizens in different spheres and volunteers help to run the events smoothly and make sure they are a big success! Whereas these may seem more festive with higher chances of meeting new people, they are still valuable options to volunteer your time and take part in a relevant occasion where different cultures and nationalities come together.

LINKS:

Service Civil International



International workcamps



IBG - Internationale Begegnung in Gemeinschaftsdiensten e.V



Youth Action for Peace



Solidarités Jeunes





EUROPEAN YOUTH WEEK

The European Youth Week is a flagship campaign organised by the European Commission, with hundreds of events organised throughout the EU Member States. The goal is to promote youth opportunities resulting from EU programmes as well as to create dialogue spaces between young people and decision-makers on various topics connected to the EU Youth Strategy. Its predominant priorities are employment, social inclusion, volunteering, democracy and youth participation.

Read more about it:

19



Photo: Julia M Cameron

LONG-TERM VOLUNTEERING

This could be a full-time experience, for example, during a gap year in your academic or career life. But it can also be embedded in your daily life if you commit long-term to a cause but just a short amount of time per week (e.g. you could go a couple of hours per week to a daycare center to spend time with the elderly who don't have family members close by).

If, on the contrary, you decide to engage in a long-term volunteering experience full-time (let's say more than 2 months), you should take into account that volunteering is not paid although some organisations may reimburse travel, and basic expenses costs such as food and accommodation, it should not be seen as a salary. In the next pages, you will discover EU programmes that can support you in such projects.

If you are really interested in a specific organisation you can also approach them directly and express your interest in getting involved in their activities.



Photo: Cottonbro



ONLINE VOLUNTEERING

Some people may be put off from volunteering despite their willingness to help for various reasons, it can be a physical disability, study or work schedules, or family obligations, to name but a few. However, there are plenty of activities you can do online which contribute to progress in the cause you want to support.

The tasks you could undertake during your online volunteering will depend on the specific role assigned to you, the organisation and your skills, but there are many ways you can help out online. For example: doing independent research, preparing reports of the activities implemented, running an online campaign to raise awareness about the cause... just to name a few of them!



Photos: Andrea Piacquadio & Mart Production

Article on the EYP

20



EU Aid Volunteers Online vacancies

21



UN Volunteers Online

22



VOLUNTEERING UNDER EU INITIATIVES

European Solidarity Corps

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) ²³ is the EU programme on volunteering which supports solidarity activities in a broad range of fields: integration, environmental challenges, prevention of natural disasters, education and youth activities and much more!

It's clear how important it is by looking at the budget allocated to the programme for the period 2021-2027: €1 billion!

Under the programme several types of volunteering formats are supported: such as volunteering in teams, individual long and short volunteering and solidarity projects.

Team volunteering

A group of 10 to 40 volunteers (between 18 to 30 years old) and coming from at least two different countries can engage for a duration between 2 weeks and 2 months, full-time (between 30 and 38 hours a week) in a solidarity activity, which can take place in your country or abroad. And as long as you are still within the age limit, you can participate in as many team volunteering activities as you want to. For example: restoring cultural heritage damaged by natural disaster, catering for species threatened by extinction; organising educational activities in refugee camps, etc.

23



Photo: European Solidarity Corps

Individual volunteering

It gives the opportunity to young people (between 18-30 years old) residing in EU and programme countries to volunteer in **short** or **long-term** projects (from 2 to 12 months). However, there are some exceptions for people with fewer opportunities and those who have previously engaged with the previous European Voluntary Service, you can check the full details in the latest version of **European Solidarity Corps Call**. ²⁴

Volunteers are devoted to the activity full-time but accommodation and basic needs are covered, linguistic support is provided and there is a small allowance for volunteers.

24



Solidarity projects

You can also join forces with your friends to make a positive impact in your local community by setting up a solidarity project. To do so, you need first to identify an issue or problem you would like to address and find a way in which the added European value (inclusion, climate change, democratic engagement or gender equality) can be of help to overcome it. Key things you need to know:

- The project can last from 2 to 12 months and will be mainly part-time.
- You have to live in one of the **programme countries**. ²⁵
- Your group has to be composed of **at least 5 people** (between 18 and 30 years) who are legally residing in the same country (there is no maximum number of people).
- You receive financial support to cover the cost of managing and implementing the project. The cost of a coach in the project can also be financed, if needed.

25



26



Volunteers receive accommodation and travel expenses, insurance, ongoing learning and development, a monthly allowance, and a resettlement allowance to help with expenses of returning home. Opportunities to volunteer can be in person or online.

Search for vacancies here:

27



EU Aid volunteers

Since 2021, **EU Aid Volunteers** ²⁶ is the humanitarian strand in the European Solidarity Corps offering volunteering opportunities to EU citizens over 18 years old. Projects can be run by EU or non-EU partners and they aim to contribute to strengthening local capacity and resilience of disaster-affected communities.



"Volunteerism is the voice of the people put into action. These actions shape and mould the present into a future of which we can all be proud."

– Helen Dyer

Interreg Volunteer Reporter

If your passion or experience is in communication, why don't you join as an Interreg Reporter and contribute to disseminating information about solidarity and cooperation in Europe?

Under the framework of the European Solidarity Corps, volunteers get the opportunity to participate in cross-border, transnational or interregional programmes and related projects for a duration between 2 to 6 months long. **28**



Photo: Burak Kebapci



OTHER OPPORTUNITIES



UN Volunteers

As a United Nations volunteer, online or on-site, you can help promote peace and human rights around the globe. Prior to the start of your experience, you will receive specific training to undertake your assignment and for those volunteering outside of their home area, travel costs and some other basic costs are paid by the host agency. **29**

Interested in preserving cultural heritage? The programme **World Heritage Volunteers** **30** is for you in that case! Under the UNESCO umbrella, groups of 10 to 30 volunteers come together during, approximately, ten days to undertake hands-on tasks related to preventive conservation activities and awareness sessions on issues related to World Heritage.

Idealist

Offers a wide-range of social-impact opportunities including on-site and online volunteering experiences anywhere in the world. Each one of them is different so make sure to read it carefully and learn more about the organisation you want to apply to volunteer. **31**

OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:

WOOF, the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms, is a worldwide movement linking volunteers with organic farmers and growers to promote cultural and educational experiences based on trust and non-monetary exchange, thereby helping to build a sustainable, global community. The tasks depend on the project, location and host with whom you will agree on a duration that fits the two of you and they really range from one and two weeks, though some may be as short as 2 or 3 days or as long as 6 months. **32**

If your main concern relates to climate change and the environment, volunteering with **Greenpeace** may be the right choice for you. You will join more than 15,000 across the globe committed to fight for a greener future and carrying out a huge variety of tasks: from painting signs and organising local marches, to dropping banners and occupying oil-rigs or campaigning on social media to advance advocacy and raise awareness. **33**

World Wide Fund For Nature, WWF, also offers between 30 to 35 volunteering opportunities during 3 to 6 months either online or in locations like Bolivia, Madagascar, Pacific, the Carpathians and at WWF International where the organisation pursues safeguarding the natural world -oceans, forests, freshwater and rich diversity of wildlife- while tackling climate change and food production problems. **34**



Photo: Anna Shvets

And of course, if you want to find all these opportunities in one place, make sure you bookmark in your browser the **Eurodesk Opportunity Finder!** **35**

Remember that you can always get in touch with any Eurodesk info point if you want individual advice and recommendations: **Eurodesk Map** **36**



6

SKETCH

YOUR PLAN BUT NOT TOO TIGHT

Now that you know which volunteering opportunity is for you, it's time to plan.

If you opt for volunteering online you may need less planification, but still do not underestimate it and make sure you allocate the necessary time that you have committed to devote to that activity.

If you decide to go volunteering somewhere else more planification and organisation will be needed.

Photo: Pexels / Pixabay



CHECKLIST FOR YOUR VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE ABROAD:

- Do your background research on the host organisation and the country/city
- Contact your hosting organisation (and sending, if applicable)
- Check local transport options
- Get familiar with the currency (there are cards that allow you to pay in different currencies without commission, so-called travel cards)
- Order your **European Health Insurance Card** (if within the EU) and check the sanitary measures that apply (vaccines, etc.)
- Travel permits: make sure your identification document is up to date and still valid throughout the period you are volunteering
- Learn a few words of the local language (Hello, thanks, please, sorry, good morning)
- If you stay within the EU, remember that you can "**roam like at home**" otherwise check which local phone company meets best your needs while volunteering abroad

As soon as you know your volunteering destination you can start practicing the language with the following free resources:

Duolingo: easy way to get you started in the language 37

Busuu: learn a language in ten minutes a day 38

Speak.social: to speak with natives and other learners in an informal way 39

Memrise: Phrases useful in everyday life thanks to video clips of native-speakers 40

Tandem: Connect with other peers to learn together the languages you are interested in local news on YouTube or checking online news outlets. 41

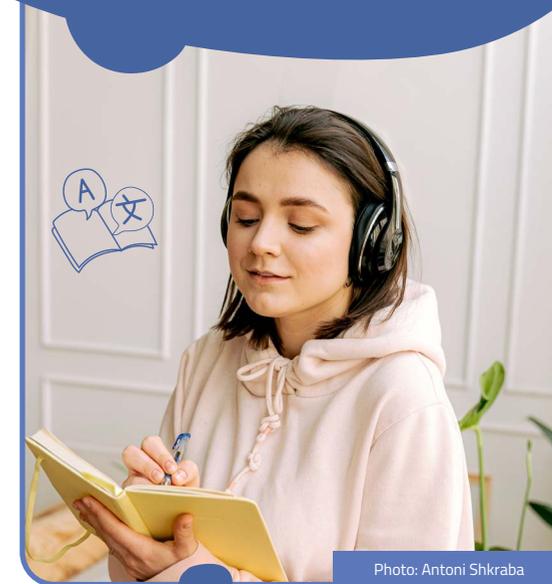


Photo: Antoni Shkraba



Read the article on the European Youth Portal about learning new languages while travelling:



START APPLYING

As volunteering has become more and more popular for various reasons, it is quite possible that several people will be applying for the same opportunity as you. That is why it's important to highlight your motivation and interests in the opportunity to make your application stand out from the rest. Though this may not totally guarantee you a position it will come to reflect much better who you are and why you are a good fit for the opportunity.

7

START APPLYING

BUILDING UP YOUR CV

Using the platform **Europass** ⁴³ will be of great help to craft your CV and shine in the application process: it is easy and free to use. However, if you don't have extensive experience yet you can also highlight your skills and show how they will help the project/organisation you are applying for.

If you apply to an organisation that is value-based (e.g. focused on environmental protection), it's crucial to explain why you care about the cause. Your personal motivation will be as important as your skills. Make sure to share your passion.



Photo: Keira Burton



SOME TIPS TO WRITE YOUR MOTIVATION LETTER



- State your interest in that specific project or activity
- Highlight what skills will be valuable to the organisation or project
- Mention if you already have some experience in volunteering or in that field of activity (e.g. if you were a Scout leader for example and developed love and care for nature it could be of help to apply for an environmental project)
- Refer to any ways you would like to multiply the impact of your own experience (e.g. writing an article for a local newspaper, publishing a blog post, stories on your social media or presenting the project at a highschool).

Here ⁴⁴ you will also find more insight on how and why recording your volunteering experience might help you land your next professional job!



WHAT ARE COMPETENCES AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?



A competence is the ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context, for instance in a particular work environment. A competence is not limited to cognitive elements (e.g. you know everything about climate change), it also encompasses functional aspects (e.g. you know how to measure CO2 emissions with this particular instrument) as well as attitudes (e.g. you can work with teams). As the world is changing so fast, employers are looking more and more for soft skills (e.g. people who are flexible, who innovate).



BEFORE/DURING/AFTER YOUR VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE

Before you start volunteering...

- Set some objectives like: improving certain skills, advocate for the cause you are volunteering for, learn a new language.
- Make sure you have all the necessary information about the project, country and host organisation.
- Know your rights and duties as a volunteer by checking national regulations before you go and reading through the **European Charter on the rights and responsibilities of volunteers.** ⁴⁵



During your experience...

- Stay open-minded, flexible and curious to maximise what you learn
- Make efforts to engage with the local community and understand their views. Enjoy what you are doing and report any problems you may encounter, in case of doubt, you should always refer to a third party for advice (e.g. Eurodesk or your sending organisation)
- Stay in touch with your home, family and friends
- Set a time for yourself and take care of your nutrition and sleep to keep energy high
- Keep a journal with you to record what you live, learn and experience: it can also be in a series of stories on your Instagram account, a blog or whatever helps you best to record your experience!



After your experience...

Your volunteering experience does not end the day you get home... It is likely to give you a new set of memories, skills and people that will stay with you. There are also many ways to continue contributing to the cause you volunteered for.

In addition to your personal development through your volunteering experience, there are many ways in which you can continue using your experience for the benefit of the cause and your own:

- Select the skills you improved while volunteering and present them in your CV. This could be mediation skills, sustainability practices, foreign language, etc. Additionally, if you engage in volunteering under the European Solidarity Corps, your activity will be recorded in the **Youthpass**, ⁴⁶ which is the tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth projects.

- Raise awareness on the cause you personally contributed to, you never know who you may motivate with your passion and involvement and disentangle a chain of volunteers. Social media can be a powerful tool to reach people who - despite being far away - are conscious about the same issues.



- Share your experience on social media, with the organisation you volunteer with or the European Youth Portal! Just as other people's experiences might have helped you to decide on your engagement, why not share what your volunteering experience has meant to you? What have you learnt? How would you motivate others to play their role in helping others, contributing to a cleaner environment, for example?

And don't forget, whatever the question, start with us!



European youth portal



NOTES

NOTES

EURO VOLUNTEERING

A GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT
TO HAVE A VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE ABROAD

eurodesk



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.
This publication reflects the views of the author, and the Commission cannot be held
responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.