



# THE VOLUNTEERS CLUB MANUAL



VOLUNTARIAT  
SCI SLOVENIA



Erasmus+

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This manual is intended for youth workers and non-governmental organizations that are interested in long-term continual work with youth and in linking volunteering with education. In this manual, we present know-how that has been achieved during the existence of the Volunteers Clubs by INEX-SDA (Czech Republic) and Zavod Volontariat (Slovenia). We believe experience of these two organizations may serve as a good practice example and an inspiration for other NGOs and institutions, which are looking for a strategy on how to involve the volunteers on long-term basis and help them raise their competences to achieve better position in their personal and professional life.

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This manual was created as an output of the project «Upgrade Yourself» supported by the Erasmus + Programme.

*«The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.»*

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# INEX-SDA EXPERIENCE





# 1. Context and Overview

**INEX-SDA** is an NGO founded in 1991 whose primary activities are centered around the area of international voluntary work. Our main objective is to enable people to help where their help is needed the most. At the same time, our aim is to make this contribution beneficial also to the volunteers in terms of obtaining new life and work experience, which they can later on use in their careers. More information can be found at: [www.inexsda.cz](http://www.inexsda.cz).



## Educational vision of INEX-SDA

**The Volunteers Club** is based on the educational vision of **INEX-SDA**, which combines youth education with volunteer projects. A positive experience with volunteering should direct young person towards increased intercultural sensitivity, global responsibility, and active citizenship.

**An active citizen** is understood by **INEX-SDA** as someone, who:

- critically reflects on the world and society affairs,
- assumes a responsible and sympathetic attitude towards the outside world,
- realizes global context and is able to discuss topics related to the changing realities of today's world,
- show understanding towards cultural differences and respect towards other opinions and values,
- is aware of their own identity and interested in the world around with a potential ambition to actively participate in shaping this world, especially on the local level.



### **The Volunteers Club and its place within the educational vision of INEX-SDA:**

**The Volunteers Club INEX-SDA** represents a platform for continual cooperation with volunteers. Past experience showed that the long-term systematic cooperation with volunteers is a necessary premise for enhancing the impact of the international volunteer experience and for multiplication of acquired experience, knowledge, and skills. It is necessary to stay in touch with volunteers after their return from the international projects and offer them further opportunities to engage in volunteering. Further involvement presents new challenges and responsibilities for the volunteers and; moreover, **an opportunity to gain more experience.**

The main idea of the Volunteers Club is that volunteering is not only a mere way to help others, but it also presents **a natural, interesting, and effective way of learning.** Another important thought is that volunteering truly benefits the society and the individuals when they are able to **develop their own long-term project.** We emphasize the practicality of skills and knowledge gained in the Volunteers Club. We want our volunteers to **use those skills to advance their chances in their future careers as well as in life in general.**

### **The way of learning in the Volunteers Club**

We use **the approach of non-formal learning**<sup>1</sup> in the Volunteers Club non-formal learning is realized mainly through **project groups** – these usually use learning by doing approach. Each group has a mentor who plays the role of the guide of the learning process. Mentor helps the volunteers with their self-reflection and with planning of further learning objectives and priorities. Empowerment and the opportunity to learn from more experienced volunteers and mentors contribute to the development of volunteers' project management skills, teamwork, etc. A substantial fact is that volunteers learn in a very natural and effective way.

1. "Non-formal learning is purposive voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments. The activities or courses are lead by facilitators or trainers, whose approach is based on a partnership with the participants; they are not authorities (such as teachers), but rather guides of the learning process. Non-formal learning activities always have educational objectives focused holistically on competences (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) and use various interactive methods and approaches, e. g. learning by doing, experiential learning, etc. These activities maximally use the potential of the group, mistakes are always taken as opportunities for learning (they are not punished). The participants of the non-formal learning process should be aware of what they learned and should be able to plan their further learning .



The mentor typically helps the group reflect on their learning and name their learning outcomes, but to make this process easier and accessible for wider range of volunteers, we have created an on-line **application called “IM-PROVE”** as an output of the “Upgrade Yourself” project. The application **enables volunteers to record their experience from various projects** in a form of a learning diary. After the volunteers sign up and enter the concrete situation they have experienced (such as “I presented my project in front of an audience.”), the application shows which competences they have developed by this experience and what could be their next steps (concretely, which situations they should seek out to further improve their competences). We believe that the application will prove valuable not only for volunteers from the Volunteers Club, but to anyone who is using the approach of non-formal learning in volunteering. The application is accessible on-line for free on [improve.inexsda.cz](http://improve.inexsda.cz).

It is necessary to add that our educational philosophy is primarily aimed at smaller groups of people, whom we try to offer high-quality opportunities for education and self-development. We believe that a relatively small number of active volunteers create projects that have considerable impact on society, not to mention their own surroundings including those not involved in volunteering.

### The history of the Volunteers Club

The club was founded in spring 2011. The motivation for its formation was mainly to stay in touch with volunteers who came back from the international projects, and to enable their systematic support in a continuous process of education while volunteering. Before that, such support for own projects of these volunteers was rather occasional and involved only a handful of people.



In 2011 and 2012, the Volunteers Club became a platform that functioned solely within the borders of the Czech Republic. During those years, the main rules of its functioning were laid down, and the first project groups were established and projects successfully realized. Key topics of interest during those first years were promotion of volunteering, global development education, and non-formal education with an emphasis on experiential learning. For more information about specific topics see chapter “Examples of successful projects”.

These experiences have proved that the Volunteers Club is able to ensure continuity between preparation and after-return reflection of the international volunteer projects. Moreover, it is able to build a community of active people around INEX-SDA and bring in other young people without previous experience with volunteering. There has been an increasing need for local engagement and, in the same time, we have seen a strong educational potential of the Volunteers Club.

This is why we fully turned our attention to the self-development aspect of the club in 2013-14. The system of mentoring got a strong foundation (see below) and the Volunteers Club started presenting itself as a specific educational and supportive programme with its own face. The whole concept of education became an inspiration for international partners in the project “Young Europeans for Global Development”. In 2013, other clubs were founded in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

By September 2014, the volunteers in the Volunteers Club successfully realized 14 projects, which became increasingly ambitious and complex over time. Moreover, the projects’ impact has been expanding towards international dimension since then (see chapter “Examples of successful projects”). There occurred dozens of educational seminars and countless volunteer meetings. In 2015, new project groups were established within the “Upgrade Yourself” project supported by the Erasmus+ Programme.

### **The grant support for the Volunteers Club**

The Volunteers Club INEX-SDA was founded within the project “Youth for Global Responsibility” (running 2011-12) financed by the Europe Aid programme of the European Union. Its further development in 2013-14 was financed by a consecutive project within Europe Aid funding called “Young Europeans for Global Development”. The Czech Ministry of Finance contributed to the budget throughout the first five years as well, specifically the Czech Development Agency. However, individual group projects were covered from these funds only partly and volunteers themselves successfully applied for co-financing, e. g. Vodafone Foundation, ThinkBig programme, Visegrad Funds, Youth in Action. Currently, we also draw on support from the Erasmus+ Programme.



## Summary of the good practices from the activities of the Volunteers Club

The best motivation of an individual can be achieved by delegating as many competences and responsibilities as possible. The awareness of one's own responsibility, when it comes to a project, and possibility to influence decisions about the general direction of the Volunteers Club are very important for volunteers to make them stay interested and identify with the project. **Therefore, we are trying to put into practice the principle of shared leadership and decision making in the broadest spectrum of the Volunteers Club and as much as it is practically possible.** We enable volunteers to get involved in the decision making processes about the overall direction of the Volunteers Club, its educational strategies, topic selection for seminars and so on. **Individual approach** is also important; therefore, it is essential that volunteers are able to contact the club coordinator, who in turn must respond within short time.

When it comes to project groups' activities, it is necessary that **the group has realistic intentions, which correspond to group's potential, clear and specific topic, and everyone in the group is really involved in the activity.** The ideal scenario is that the volunteers work on the project that they came up with. However, in some cases volunteers join the initiative, which was started by the organization itself. In that case (and after all in all projects), it is very important to make sure that volunteers are not merely executing someone else's ideas, but they get fully involved in all activities connected to the project. This is why we have developed a system of mentoring, which has clearly divided the tasks and the responsibilities – the mentor is more an advisor and coach than coordinator of the group's activities.

We have succeeded with stressing the **educational dimension** of the Volunteers Club during the promotion (what can you learn by participating and how can you use it for your further development). General benefits for society lie at the core of all projects and are the primary intention of every project proposal; however, education is the main added value of the Volunteers Club.

What keeps the whole structure truly together is the human potential. Thanks to the fact that the volunteers are active, energetic, and inspiring people, new ideas and thoughts come up continuously, sometimes even outside the main activity framework. Being aware of that, it is necessary not only **to take care of the club's structure, but also of its human dimension** (that is done especially through informal meetings, social events and networking).

These good practices are described in detail in the next chapters.





## 2. Who benefits from the Volunteers Club and how ?

The Volunteers Club positively influences three groups at the same time – the involved volunteers, the organization (INEX-SDA), and the society in general.

### Benefits for the volunteers:

**Benefits for the volunteers are described in points below:**

- development of competences, such as project and financial management, teamwork, leadership, organizational skills, creativity, motivation, etc.,
- long-term opportunity to learn, to realize own growth potential, to assume responsibility and to adjust the learning process according to own personal needs,
- support of own initiative and own project creation and realization,
- possibility to attend educational seminars according to the individual volunteers' preferences,
- contact and cooperation with other active and like-minded people with various levels of experience,
- assistance with fundraising for the projects (such as writing the grant applications),
- mentoring and high-quality feedback.

It is necessary to realize that the volunteer's roles change during their involvement in the project groups. If they are interested, there is an opportunity to climb the "competence ladder" from an ordinary member to a coordination of group activities up to a mentor of another project group.

### Benefits for the organization:

Although the described benefits are based on the experience of INEX-SDA, we believe that these benefits can be applied to any organization which would systematically work with volunteers in the presented way:

- long-term involvement of volunteers is beneficial for the achievement of organization's vision,
- creation and maintaining of a community of sympathizing people around the organization ensures better synergy between volunteers and the organization,
- successful projects with the organization's logo contribute to the spreading of its good reputation and possibly reach new volunteers and target groups,
- volunteer projects help establish contact with other people in the area who might be interested in the activities and future cooperation.

## Benefits for the society:

The benefits for the volunteers and the organization would not have a substantial value, if the whole activity did not aim at benefiting society. The projects within the Volunteers Club are always of a beneficial character, aimed mostly at local communities. A democratic society needs active citizens who are interested in the world around them, able to reflect on current issues and react to them; the Volunteers Club contributes to education and activization of such people. The Volunteers Club moreover raises awareness about volunteering and its positive impacts on an individual and on the society, and rejects any form of social, national, religious, political, racial, gender and any other discrimination; its activities contribute to intercultural sensitivity in the way that promotes tolerance and non-violence.



## 3. Activities within the Volunteers Club

The Volunteers Club activities consist mainly of the project groups and educational seminars, but also other meetings and activities are organized to make the club visible among other young people and to support formation of the new project ideas. It is crucially important for the Volunteers Club to connect with people outside its borders, because these people meet project groups members, coordinators and mentors in person, they get inspired, motivated and eventually involved in the activities. Other tools to make the activities of Volunteers Club visible are, of course, the website and social networks (especially Facebook), but to get the people really engaged personal contact is the best way to do so. In this chapter, we describe the activities of the club in detail.

**1. Project Groups** – This is the core activity of the Volunteers Club. They are mostly formed at the beginning of the season (usually in October) and enable volunteers to carry out their own ideas or join initiatives of other active members. For more detailed information about project groups see the following chapters.

**2. Educational seminars** – The Volunteers Club organizes free educational seminars for its members throughout the year. The participants choose a topic of each seminar themselves. The topic choice reflects the needs of the project groups; we try to flexibly adapt the offer. The topics we covered in the past included: project management, financial management of projects, strategic planning, leadership and group work, mentoring and coaching, presentation skills, experiential learning, new media, marketing and campaigning, and many others.

**3. After-return weekend camp** – Once a year, we organize a weekend camp for volunteers who returned from their international projects<sup>2</sup> These projects usually take place in spring and summer, so this after-return weekend usually happens in the beginning of October. It focuses on the reflection of the experience from volunteering (e. g. naming the personal learning outcomes) and on networking with other volunteers. At this meeting, there in addition generate ideas for possible Volunteers Club projects and form new project groups. This weekend camp is therefore used to sensitize the volunteers about the non-formal learning approach and the educational potential of volunteering together, and to support their motivation towards long-term engagement.

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2. Both INEX-SDA and Zavod Volontariat are parts of the networks organizing so called „workcamps“ – international projects for small groups of volunteers from all over the world, usually two or three weeks long and focused on helping the local community with some type of work, experiencing the local culture and the cultures of all participants (intercultural learning). More on <https://www.workcamps.info/icamps/>.

**4. Other regular meetings** – Regular meetings of the project group members are essential for sharing experience, networking and establishing stable volunteering community around the organization. There are several forms of these meetings:

- organized by the Volunteers Club coordinator, e. g. afternoon or evening meeting every few months with a structured programme; volunteers share their experience with projects, leadership, etc.,
- regular activities organized directly by project groups according to their focus areas, e. g. debates, workshops,
- organized spontaneously by volunteers or the coordinator in informal settings (e. g. restaurant, pub). We have had overall good experience with informal networking during meetings that were not performance oriented.

Similar concept of connecting education and today's issues is shared by other regular activities of the Volunteers Club, such as the so called “A Window to the World” evenings (presentations of international volunteers), and regular opening event tied to the start of the Volunteers Club season in October. Every year, the Volunteers Club helps with organization of the International Volunteer Day around December 5th as well.

**5. International meetings** – Because the Volunteers Club has connections to international projects and networks of European partner organizations, its members often have opportunities to travel to international projects, e. g. youth conferences and youth exchanges.

The activities of the Volunteers Club overlap with the academic year – regular meetings usually start at the beginning of October. Project groups, educational seminars and other project group activities continue throughout the whole year – the exception are usually only the summer months, when the focus lies on the international projects.



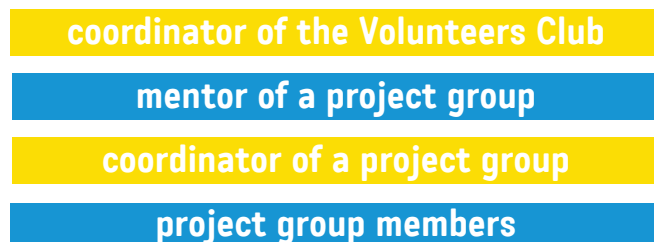


## 4. Who are the volunteers and how do project groups work?

Typical volunteer in the Volunteers Club is 18–30 years old student who wants to be active and has participated in at least one volunteer project abroad. However, the club project groups and other activities are open for all volunteers regardless the gender, age, education, volunteering background, or nationality. The only conditions of participation are the motivation to be active and beneficial for the society as well as the willingness to develop own competences. Most of the project groups work in the Czech language; we also have a very active project group working in English with volunteers from various countries, who live and study/work in the Czech Republic.

The volunteers do not fill in any application forms to be part of Volunteers Club or specific project group; the groups work as community and the membership is open, not formalized. If the volunteers require any kind of certification after they have realized the project, the best way is to use the above mentioned IM-PROVE application, where the public part of the profile (the competence development) can be shared and publicly presented. On this basis, an official letter can be issued by INEX-SDA to prove this experience.

### The organizational structure of the Volunteers Club



The organizational structure of the Volunteers Club is relatively simple; it is structured as shows the scheme above. There are no limitations for the number of project groups nor for the number of members (per group or in total).

- **The coordinator of the Volunteers Club** is currently a paid employee of INEX-SDA. The main tasks are coordinating the projects related to the Volunteers Club's functioning within INEX-SDA (e. g. funding of the club), communication with the mentors, and supporting the project groups.
- **Mentors of project groups are** usually experienced volunteers who have been previously involved in the projects of the Volunteers Club. However, also organization's employees sometimes become mentors, and then they perform the task voluntarily next to their normal job duties. The mentorship system is developed and organized by INEX-SDA, that's why we describe it below in detail.



- **A coordinator of a project group** is a group member whose additional responsibility is the coordination of the group and mediation of the communication among the group members and with the coordinator of the Volunteers Club. It is not necessary to hold this position permanently by one person. However, to make the coordination and communication as easy as possible, all group members must know who the current group coordinator is. The tasks division between the coordinator and other group members depends on individual agreement within the group and varies according to its member and their focus; that is why we don't describe it in detail as the mentorship system. The groups typically consist of **5-10 members** (there is no limit though).

## Mentorship system

The mentor is a key figure in support of the group.

### The tasks of the mentor are:

- To support group dynamics in a way that enhances teamwork and motivation – this role is essential during the phase of group formation as well as during storming<sup>3</sup> (use of facilitation and mediation – if necessary). The mentor should support this process in order to help the group get over the team establishing discussions and successfully achieve next phases of the group dynamics, when the group is able to perform tasks more easily.
- To assist with setting the rules and objectives and with defining the topic of the project as well as with ensuring that the objectives are achievable and beneficial for society.
- To assist with setting the group learning system – draw attention to self-development through project realization and plan the process of learning.
- To support and assist the group with the project management, especially with following the project cycle and sharing their own relevant experiences. The mentor should intervene as little as possible (e. g. let the group make a mistake – it's the best way of learning). The volume of support depends individually on the group needs.
- When it is necessary, to help the group to remain within the project limits, e. g. prevent the deviation from the main course of the original proposal.
- To communicate with the coordinator of the Volunteers Club in terms of educational needs of the group and its overall performance and needed support.

### The tasks of the mentor are not:

- To coordinate group's activities.
- To directly participate at the group project, completing individual tasks.
- To be responsible for group's realization of the project.
- To consciously influence the group by own ideas on how things should be done.

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3. Second phase in group dynamics. During this phase, the roles within the group are being divided ("struggle for power"). Members exchange opinions, clarify their positions within the team, create subgroups, sometimes criticize other members, discuss the role of the leader or establishment of subgroups. It is very important phase of group dynamics, which ideally leads to a successful establishment of functional team.

It is very important that the mentor is not involved in the group activity itself. It has been proven that if the group does not have an opportunity to function as independently as possible, including making mistakes and learning from them, it can be very demotivating. The mentor, of course, can make the group aware that their course of action has steered significantly from the original aim of the project, or that their proposed plan of action is not realistic. However, the line between a good advice and an open intervention of group's work has to be observed carefully.

Mentors have regular meetings (approximately once every 2-3 months). They discuss current issues related to the project groups and exchange experiences. The coordinator of the Volunteers Club organizes these meetings and is always present. If needed, some educational seminars organized by the club may be focused on the mentorship and coaching skills for mentors as a target group.

### **Generating topics for the project groups**

In general, there are two ways how to come up with a topic of the group. The first, which is ideal in terms of learning efficiency, is the situation when a volunteer or a project group comes up with their own idea. It is quite clear then, what the group is going to work at. The volunteers of these groups are usually very motivated and identify with the topic easier, because they are the ones who came up with it.

The second possibility is that the idea originates in INEX-SDA and the volunteers join in. It was the dominating tactics in 2013; however, these ideas reached the realization phase only in about half of the cases. The main advantage is that it enables to involve interested and highly motivated volunteers who do not have their own ideas or expectations. On the other hand, if the idea does not come directly from the volunteers, their “ownership” of the project is significantly lower, often resulting in the lack of motivation and devotion to the cause.

The best way to generate a topic seems to be the initial motivation of volunteers to create their own project proposals, supplemented with the alternative proposals by INEX-SDA in the second phase (usually during the first meeting of the Volunteers Club). The whole process of topic choice runs during the shaping of the project group.

The volunteers have a full right to the intellectual property of the projects, its content and realization; INEX-SDA provides only the support described in this document.

## INEX-SDA support of the groups and financial matters

The Volunteers Club is the INEX-SDA platform; therefore, any support of activities, projects, etc., relies primarily on INEX-SDA. The support can be divided into organizational and financial parts.

### **Organizational support consists of:**

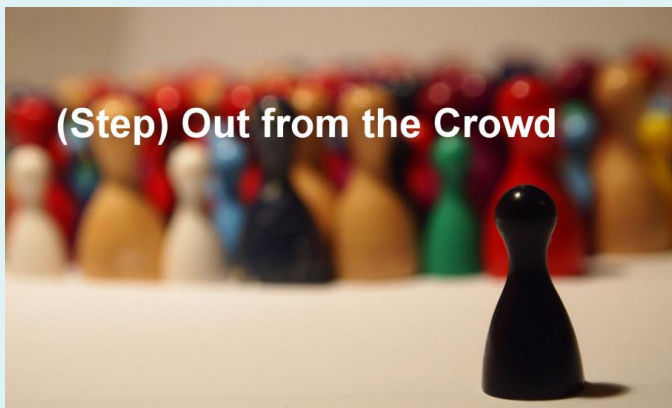
- mentoring by an experienced volunteer or organization's employee,
- providing space for team meetings and workshops (INEX-SDA seminar room) and material,
- know-how in PR, teamwork, fundraising (incl. grant applications), etc.,
- offer of assistance with project realization and organization (individually according to what is needed),
- networking meetings among volunteers and groups,
- tools for self-development (application IM-PROVE, seminars, etc.),
- contacts on potential donors and possible project partners based on the organization's good practice.

Providing **financial support** is tied to the fact that the Volunteers Club was established within a project financed from European programme EuropeAid. The programme enabled INEX-SDA to finance undifferentiated expenses such as materials, print, part of accommodation or travel costs (if necessary for project group's activities), compensation for lecturers, etc.

However, it has never been possible to finance specific needs of the project groups, especially the financially demanding activities (team building weekends, youth exchanges and other similar types of activities). For these, the project groups have to search for co-finance from other sources. What appeared as a weakness of the program at first is viewed rather as an asset now. The need to search for and write specific grant applications or perform individual fundraising has brought members of the project groups to greater understanding of financial management and fundraising issues.

Currently, the approach to financing is that the potential operating costs coverage is individually discussed between a project group and the Volunteers Club coordinator (financing depends on current financial possibilities of the organization). At the same time, volunteers are motivated towards their own fundraising initiative, independent budget management and active search for other financing options. The Volunteers Club further supports independent fundraising through up-to-date grant calendar, which is available on its website.





## (Step) Out from the Crowd

### ***Step out from the Crowd (realized in 2013)***

A course based on direct experience – participants had an opportunity to experience life during the totalitarian regime, and reflect on freedom and its boundaries within today's society. The project belongs among the most ambitious as well as the most successful ones in our history. The organizers invited 24 young people from four European countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) and received financing from the Visegrad fund.

## **Experience with the Volunteers Club through the eyes of the volunteers**

Volunteers alone are the ones who determine whether the vision of the Volunteers Club is successfully achieved. Most quotes presented are from internal evaluations from the years 2013 and 2014.

*"I have learned everything that is necessary to create a functional project (grant, campaign, etc.), how difficult it is, but also how much fun it brings. I have learned to use various online communication tools, improved communication skills, learned more about marketing during a seminar..."*

*"I have realized what exactly working on a project entails, from organization of meetings to preparation of a whole day for volunteers."*

*"Thanks to my participation in a project group, I have learned more about experience-oriented pedagogy."*

*"I find valuable that I could use English a lot even during communication with people I do not know. I have experienced the feeling of bringing something to the end successfully."*

*"I have learned to plan and formulate goals with the SMART method."*

*"I have learned a lot about leadership, group meeting, facilitation, effective team communication, project presentation, design and targeting of campaigns, PR, etc."*

*„The Volunteers Club presents an active and meaningful way to spend your free time. It gives you an opportunity to try new things and meet new people, but most importantly to find oneself."*

*"The work on Na Den campaign is an opportunity to meet open-minded and inspiring people. It has been my first experience with volunteering but definitely not the last!"*







# ZAVOD VOLUNTARIAT EXPERIENCE



**Zavod Voluntariat** is an NGO working in international volunteering, the organization is based in Slovenia. The mission of the Voluntariat Institute is to promote the ideas of peace, social justice, sustainable development, international cooperation and solidarity through volunteer work and volunteer projects. We believe that international volunteering is beneficial for the personal development of an individual, for the promotion of social justice, for intercultural learning, and for education for peace and tolerance. Our vision is a world of peace, social justice and sustainable development, where people live together in mutual respect with a view to resolve conflicts without promoting any form of violence. More information is available at the website: [www.zavod-voluntariat.si](http://www.zavod-voluntariat.si)





# 1. The Club of Volunteers at Zavod Voluntariat

**The Club of Volunteers** (CoV) that operates within Zavod Voluntariat was established already in 2001; however, since then it went through various changes. For the last six years the club has been working as it is presented below, with only minor changes every year.

The CoV at Voluntariat is a space devoted to the promotion and realization of active citizenship among young people in Ljubljana. It gathers young people who have the desire for voluntary work, international networking/dialogue, overcoming various forms of discrimination, and social engagement. In CoV, young people carry out activities (initiatives, projects) that they have thought up themselves, and at the same time they learn and gain experience/skills in a relaxed and supportive environment. Young people who are active in CoV are quite independent, but when they need help they receive it from ZV staff or experienced volunteers. Thanks to gaining competences and autonomy the volunteers' employment opportunities are increasing. CoV is partially formed by EVS volunteers in ZV, who change on the annual basis, therefore CoV has different dynamic every year. CoV is also shaped by local volunteers who have been either active for few years now or just entered the world of volunteering. Thus CoV changed over the years and had different groups working on different topics. Nevertheless, young people have always played the key role in CoV since it has been a place for realization of their ideas and gaining social skills. Young volunteers are also largely associated with other organizations according to their interests. This is how young people co-create common spaces – through collaboration with other organizations and co-organization of events like “Festival of Migrant Film”, “Week of Global Learning”, “Festival Bivak”, etc.



This year, 2016, the CoV is formed by three project groups: one is responsible for organizing activities in Ljubljana and managing a blog and the two others are responsible for realizing Youth Exchanges. Even though that only these three groups are active during the whole year, we are in contact with other volunteers. It is a mutual cooperation – they can approach us with their own ideas throughout the year, and if we need help with something we always contact them as well.

The Club is in constant transformation – every year new volunteers come and the others go, it is up to them to shape the group and decide on its direction.

The next sections illustrate how the CoV functions in detail.

## 2. How does the CoV work within Voluntariat

Despite that Voluntariat doesn't have such good support system as INEX-SDA has for their Volunteers Club (there are only two persons employed), the volunteers get all the support they need. There is always one person from Voluntariat who is their mentor, so volunteers always know whom they can ask for support/help. If they have any queries, e. g. how to prepare a project, mentor makes sure that they receive all the needed information and support. The mentorship works in similar way as in INEX-SDA.

On the one hand, the CoV is always interested in welcoming people who would like to develop their own idea or project, thus providing them with the space and know-how to do so; on the other hand, through the organized events the CoV tries to raise awareness about volunteer projects in general (mainly Youth Exchanges, SCI workcamps and EVS). These events are an opportunity for the CoV to be publicly visible and to play a role of the contact point between young people and Voluntariat.

An event organized by the CoV is successful when the organizing group carries out their idea until the end and finds their way around the obstacles that came up (e. g. difficulties with finding a suitable location, drop out of an external project partner). With each event it is important that the group learns what to improve for the next one.

Attracting participants and new volunteers has proved to be the biggest challenge in the CoV. The CoV has inquired the participants of their activities about where did they find out about each event; Facebook has repeatedly proved to be the most effective way of promoting the activities. Therefore, the CoV uses Facebook as their main online platform to get visible and attract new participants and volunteers.





## 3. The CoV project groups

### 3.1. Ljubljana project group

This group represents the main component of the Club of Volunteers. It is composed by EVS volunteers and interns at Voluntariat. Occasionally, the local volunteers join in to cooperate on specific activities or projects. The group works quite independently, but is in constant communication with the EVS coordinator and Voluntariat's director. The project group has two main tasks:

#### a) Organization of Events

Organizing events is the main task of the Club of Volunteers, and the one that takes most of the time and dedication. For the year 2016, the group of volunteers working on this topic has decided that its activities will focus on promoting Voluntariat's volunteer projects happening in Slovenia and abroad, both short-term and long-term. The activities carried out vary from artistic workshops, movie screenings, dance workshops, picnics, to pub quizzes... depending on the group's interests. The activities tend to refer to topics such as sustainability, Human Rights and social justice; they aim at reaching young people in Slovenia who are interested in getting to know others with similar interests and would like to volunteer but don't know how or where to start.

The group decides together, which activities to organize and whom is responsible for what; given that the team members have many different interests, this allows a wide range of activities to be done. In general the member that proposes the idea is the responsible one for coordinating the event, the others then assist. Each event or idea is discussed in weekly group meetings.

The events are generally attended by 5 to 25 people. It is always hard to predict how many people will show up and, at this moment, the group has not been able to determine, what the cause for such discrepancy is. Every event is promoted as a Facebook event, included in Voluntariat's newsletter and shared across various Facebook groups and pages and the volunteer's acquaintances. However, the most successful events in 2016 in terms of the number of participants have been the movie screenings, which gathered around 20 people each. The group concluded this as an indicator that young people prefer to attend rather passive events than actively make something. This is the fact the volunteers would like to work with while preparing future events.

#### b) The CoV blog

Another task of the Ljubljana project group is to manage the blog that gathers testimonials of volunteers, who have been involved in YE (Youth Exchanges), EVS and SCI workcamp projects. The main idea behind it is to promote projects in informal way through personal stories that the group collects from other volunteers and participants. You can read the blog at the following webpage: <http://blog.zavod-voluntariat.si>.

### 3.2. Youth Exchanges project groups

These two groups, that are responsible for realizing youth exchanges, currently have two members each. Both of them have a mentor who is employed at Voluntariat. This mentor is present only when the group needs him/her.

The groups consist of volunteers who were connected to Voluntariat in the past. For instance, the group which prepared the “Craft your own success” YE (described below) was established after the training in the Czech Republic that was organized within the frame of “Upgrade Yourself” project. At this training participants developed their own ideas and learned basic things about project management. Because of this successful training and the great idea of volunteers, Voluntariat gave them the opportunity to bring this idea to life and assisted them during the whole process.

The other group working on “The Butterfly Effect” YE consists of one ex-GLEN volunteer<sup>4</sup> and one Erasmus+ intern from Slovakia. When the GLEN volunteer came back from the internship, she was full of ideas on how to transfer the knowledge to the local community and she formed a team with the intern, who was also very interested in the topic of Global Education. When consulting the idea with the Voluntariat staff all found it a perfect opportunity for a Youth Exchange. Even though the Erasmus+ intern has finished her internship at Voluntariat, she will still be actively involved in realization of the YE as there is partner organization from Slovakia.

#### Descriptions of both YE's:

##### - **Craft your Own Success**

This YE took place between 5th and 13th of August, 2016, in Jesenice (Slovenia). It aimed to offer a space for intercultural meeting, where young people could get to know different old crafts and their importance to modern society. Another aim was to inspire participants to think about possible alternatives to classic employment, for example about their own entrepreneurship. Participants were given the opportunity to develop their manual dexterity, precision, persistence, and creativity through various workshops; this contributed to their professional and personal development. This exchange also wished to (1) raise awareness about the meaning of tradition, craftsmanship, and concept of self-sufficiency; (2) to give the basic entrepreneurship skills to the young people and raise their self-initiative; and (3) to strengthen the critical thinking of young people about consumer society and to encourage them towards more sustainable and ‘DIY’ lifestyle. The partner organisations were: The International Youth Exchange Office – Torino City Council (Italy), Útilapu Hálózat (Hungary), STEP Organization (Slovakia), and My dreams come true (Poland).

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4. More about the GLEN educational and internship cycle is available on <http://glen-europe.org>.

## - The Butterfly Effect

This project will take place in Ljubljana (Slovenia) during winter 2016/2017, dates are yet to be announced. The exchange aims at exploring the possibilities of sustainable lifestyle in everyday life of young people and at transferring that knowledge to their local environments. The main themes of the exchange are sustainable development, global interdependencies, goods production and fair trade. The participants will discover the connections between their personal consumption and local/global issues through peer education. They will be able to critically assess their individual consumption and to develop alternative and more sustainable patterns of action. The YE also wishes to raise awareness about current global challenges and how to make use of them for participants' own benefits (e. g. a business opportunity – how to create your own career path in accordance to values of universal respect, solidarity and justice). The participants will create a brochure which will contain all outcomes of all activities and principles and good practices of ethical and socially responsible companies/cooperatives coming from the partner countries. The partner organisations are: Zala Briviba/Green Liberty (Latvia), Ekumenicka akademie (Czech Republic), Magyar Onkenteskuldo Alapitvany (Hungary), and Vicolocorto (Italy).





