

WITH YOUR HEART, HEAD AND HANDS

The Guide for Working with Young Volunteers



Volunteer Centre Istria

Project PYTBUL – Empowering Youth in the Region



With Your Heart, Head and Hands: the Guide for Working with Young Volunteers

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Expressions used in this publication are used in gender-neutral meaning, and refer to both sexes and all gender identities.

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Foreword

The guide for working with young volunteers “With Your Heart, Head and Hands” was created within the project Post-Yu Trilateral Bottom-Up Learning (PYTBUL) – Empowering Youth in the Region.

At the beginning of 2015, three organisations joined in Erasmus+ strategic partnership with the aim to positively influence (self)employment of youth. Zavod Bob (Ljubljana, Slovenia), Impact Hub Belgrade (Belgrade, Serbia) and Volunteer Centre Istria (Pula, Croatia) tied their different areas of (youth) work – non-formal education, (social) entrepreneurship and volunteering i.e. active citizenship – by the common “string”: embetterment of the conditions for youth (self)employment. In the framework of 16-months long partnership, the organisations exchanged their experiences and created several tools that can help to increase (self)employment of young people.

Youth unemployment in Europe (still) represents an unsolved problem. The applied solutions haven't been efficient (enough), or the proposed solutions and programmes (like Youth Guarantee), despite being adopted in different countries, haven't been fully or adequately implemented.

Generally, (youth) unemployment is a complex topic and multidimensional problem, impossible to solve by a single project. However, PYTBUL project aimed to directly and indirectly influence youth who, although it is not fair to put all responsibility to their shoulders, still have power to do something for themselves in existing circumstances, and especially when they have the support of other youth and adults who understand their needs and capabilities. PYTBUL resulted with the following outputs, with maximal youth participation:

- Non-formal education programme *Prikaz* (Zavod Bob), enabling young people to recognize and strengthen their own vision and potentials, and to receive mentoring in the development of self-employment ideas (non-profitable or entrepreneurial projects)
- Online platform *add+venture* (Impact Hub Belgrade), providing youth with guided self-assessment, the development of self-employment ideas and/or positive influence on their community, learning and connecting with other young people

- *Local scholarships policy recommendations* (Volunteer Centre Istria), focused on youth participation in the scholarships policy-making process and the valorisation of volunteering (volunteering as additional/ non-obligatory criterion)
- *The guide for working with young volunteers “With Your Heart, Head and Hands”* (Volunteer Centre Istria)

“With Your Heart, Head and Hands” addresses youth leaders, mentors, coordinators and other persons who meet (up with) young people in the context of volunteering. Volunteering, beside the benefits for the community and volunteers’ personal development, can also influence youth (self)employment. Through volunteering, and especially through long-term volunteering, (young) people strengthen their lifelong learning competencies, gain and develop specific skills (from xeroxing to team work), and get the opportunity to present their knowledge and capabilities to a larger number of people and organisations.

Although not intended to be used *by* youth, the guide works to the benefit of young people: it can help youth volunteer coordinators to provide young volunteers with best possible conditions to experience volunteering as enjoyable and useful. Aside being a contribution to beneficiaries of volunteering and non-profitable organisations, adequately supported youth volunteering can also be one of the best ways for building and strengthening social-emotional competencies and specific skills useful on the road to (self)employment. In that sense, we regard youth volunteer management almost as a synonym for “general” *youth work*.

The guide is based on the opinions of young people who volunteer or consider to start volunteering, gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus-groups, and on experiences and opinions of youth volunteer coordinators working with young people in different contexts (civil society organisations, public institutions, university-level education), gathered through interviews. Young people with the experience of volunteering also participated in desk-research and structuring of the guide.

“With Your Heart, Head and Hands” partly leans on valuable guidelines and handbooks for youth leaders and mentors in European Voluntary Service programme and in volunteering activities organised by schools. It is, foremost, written for volunteer managers and organisations

that involve volunteers of different ages, but wish to attract and retain more young volunteers, but can also be useful for leaders working exclusively with youth.

As youth represent a very heterogenous group and maybe change faster than “the rest of the world”, this guide is potentially living and changeable document and we will be glad to get the suggestions for its improvement.

Tihana and Danijela

Who are youth?

How do we “define” youth? Is someone defined, or ceases to be defined as young person, by their age, the level of biological, neurological or emotional maturity, lifestyle or circumstances (finished education, financial independence, parenthood, preferred leisure activities, etc.), their outlook on life, how they are perceived by the social environment, structural lack of opportunities for reaching independence... or by all of it together? It seems impossible to produce a precise description of “young people”. That is why most European countries, based more on political than on scientific or practitioners’ consensus, regard young people simply as the persons 15 to 29 years old.

Although it offers (at least declaratively) larger care of governments for their 15-29 years old citizens, the definition of youth that relies solely on the age criterion produces an array of difficulties when trying to create measures (or guides, such as this one) that would equally fit all young people. People in that age span can have extremely different experiences (evoke yourself and your acquaintances when 15, 19, 24 or 29...), which is why it is even more important to recognize and respect individual differences and specificities than in addressing other age-groups.

This guide talks about young people as at least 15 years old¹ persons who *perceive themselves as young*, according to their own combination of “criteria”, and those perceived as young by their volunteer leaders. Your volunteer leader practice, and the usage of the guide, may present you with 27-year-olds who don’t consider themselves “youth” in the sense of need for different approach than with older-than-30 volunteers, and with 33 years old volunteers who are perceived as young both by themselves and their environment, especially if they had fewer opportunities during childhood and adolescence.

In any case, we hope you will take these guidelines “with a grain of salt”, trusting also your own experience, critical faculties, and the specifics of youth (volunteers) you know.

¹ In many countries, 15 is minimum age to enter a legal contract for employment and voluntary work.

What is volunteering?

National legislations in Europe define organised volunteering differently, but the majority of them considers it being an activity that fulfills several conditions or criteria *concurrently*. The same goes for the definition by the European Youth Forum², which includes the following necessary aspects of an activity so it can be regarded as volunteering:

- it is undertaken of a person's own free will
- it involves the commitment of time and energy to actions of benefit to others and to society as a whole
- it is unpaid (but can include the reimbursement of expenses directly related to voluntary activity)
- it is for a non-profit cause and is undertaken within a non-profitable organisation
- it should not be used to substitute or replace paid employment.

One of the preconditions of quality volunteer management is to understand the (legal) definition of volunteering in your country, while it is also good to get to know different views on volunteering and impressions of beneficiaries of volunteering, organisations that involve volunteers and, especially important, the views and impressions of volunteers themselves.

*“Volunteering is more than the performance, and more than the action itself.
We see it as a positive centrifugal force - when you “fall into” it... it is hard to drop out.
Volunteering is a special energy. A special emotion. Volunteering is a way of life.”
 (“defined” by young volunteers³)*

Although there is no reliable statistical data on the number of (young) volunteers, the available research (like CIVICUS Civil Society Index, Eurobarometer, etc.) enables the conclusion that the numbers significantly vary from country to country. In 2015, a quarter (25%) of young

² [Policy Paper on Volunteering](#) (2004); [Volunteering Charter](#) (2012)

³ Barbarić, Đ., Maglica, T. (eds)(2007): *Volonterski rad mladih*. Udruga MoST, Split.

Europeans has volunteered, while country-specific proportions vary from 10% (in Bulgaria) to 42% of young people (in Ireland)⁴.

Thanks to the efforts of civil society organisations, countries and European Union, the number of young volunteers is increasing, and can be thought of as the result of motivational and volunteering activities organised within formal educational system and of the programmes like European Voluntary Service (EVS). In last 20 years, since the launch of the EVS programme, around 100 000 young people volunteered (mostly long-term) outside of their country of residence. However, most youth chooses local volunteering, as it is more easily reached and integrated in daily life, and it also enables direct response to the needs of their community. Thus youth more often actively contribute to their local environment, through different non-profitable organisations and voluntary activities such as one-time actions, short-term projects and long-term volunteering engagements. Depending on the specific volunteer positions, the activities can aid the general functioning of a non-profit or be oriented to other persons - the beneficiaries of volunteering.

“The point of volunteering is to be an example and motivate the community to positive changes, and to simultaneously learn how to cooperate and help each other. By helping others, we actually help ourselves, too: to grow personally, to develop our skills, to be more efficient, and to value ourselves more.”

(Karla)

⁴ [Flash Eurobarometer 408 “European Youth”](#) (2015). The poll encompassed a representative sample of 13454 young people in EU28.

“Talking about volunteering sometimes sounds to me as a cliché; I’ve repeatedly told people how much you can gain: from experience, getting to know new people and connect with key people for your future profession, over uncountable strange, interesting, challenging and emotional moments, to the personal change you don’t even notice, and you grow with every contact, get together, and every hour you’ve put into it.

Maybe we might say volunteering is like a plant; green and small at the beginning, that, as you water it more and feed it with good, it grows and strengthens more and more. It raises propelled by sun and gives life in return, and under adverse winds, while doubting its survival, it just looks around and notices it’s not alone in the abundant colourfulness.

And maybe all those colours are like volunteering; the union of colourful people singing even in the rain!”

Ana

Why do (young) people volunteer?

To attract and retain volunteers in your organisation (but also in the general “world of volunteering”), as well as to support their quality work i.e. to enable the benefits of voluntary services to their beneficiaries, it is important to know and understand why people volunteer.

There are many reasons and motives that attract people to volunteering. Since volunteering is a meaningful and socially useful behaviour, it responds to human needs on different levels. Those motives can be distributed in three categories⁵.

1. **Satisfying personal needs, personal growth and development:** it includes different possibilities of growth, like discovering and the development of one’s own potentials and values, gaining new knowledge and skills, sense of usefulness, learning about other (“different”) people and cultures, etc.

“I had that wish to get to know new people, children, situations, life of persons who can’t live in their homes because of various reasons. And I still had some spare time I felt was better to use to help someone and do something than to do nothing.”

“I wanted to see what it’s like to work with people, but when it’s not my obligatory practical work I do for school [...], when I can talk to people normally and make jokes together.”

2. **Response to specific problems in the community and helping others,** like helping/support to persons at the risk of social exclusion, animal and environmental protection, etc.

“[...] to help them in that, because they have a difficult time being that ill and I wanted to make those moments a bit easier for them.”

⁵ Begović, H. (2006): [O volontiranju i volonterima/kama](#). Volonterski centar Zagreb, Zagreb.

3. **Positive changes in the community and overall social development**, which refer to motivating others to active citizenship and responsibility. Volunteering contributes to the strength of the civil society and develops the initiativeness of individuals, positive associations and general democratisation.

“Volunteers are people who are conscientious enough to see the world around them and notice that everyone needs to give a bit of themselves to make it a better and nicer place for all of us.”

Listening to the experiences of young volunteers it is possible to find out that, beside giving the importance to all categories of reasons for volunteering, the first category - satisfying personal needs, personal growth and development - has a slightly different meaning for young people⁶:

- Young people, and especially adolescents, have developmentally larger need to strengthen their self-respect and to engage in discovering their potentials and values than the volunteers from other age groups: a lot of young people volunteers to be happy, additionally explore their interests, put their beliefs into practice, show their altruism and compassion, etc.
- Volunteering is a constructive way to use free time: a lot of young people volunteers to have something new to do, get outside, hang out with their peers, have fun, meet new people, feel useful, etc.
- Volunteering can help youth in further education and in finding employment: they can gain first experiences in applying profession-specific knowledge, new knowledge and skills they couldn't have gotten in formal education, get more opportunities to present themselves to others and/or get recommendation letters, additional points when applying for studies, scholarships, etc.

Some additional reasons why young people volunteer may be that the volunteering experience presents them with new and interesting situations and opportunities to engage a part of themselves, to make new or further steps and to be successful in something that is not

⁶ Šimunković, G., Forčić, G., Milinković, D., Kamenko, J., Šehić Relić, L. (2011): [Generacija za V – Zašto i kako organizirati volonterski program u školi?](#) Volonterski centar Osijek, Osijek.

assessed and graded like the work they do in formal education. Of course, beside already mentioned, there can be a number of specific individual reasons for volunteering, that differ from person to person. That is why youth volunteer management requires as much as possible contact with young people, careful listening to their needs and recognizing of their affinities and interests.

Why would you want to involve young volunteers?

Volunteering is good not only for volunteers, but also for the non-profits who undertakes quality engagement of young people as volunteers. It is not only about practical help in the implementation of activities, but about the added value they bring as well.

Generally speaking, the organisation that involves volunteers can gain:

- new perspective in old issues and topics, bigger chance to develop innovative approaches
- new „energy“ in teams, positive influence to the motivation and creativity of existing employees and volunteers
- new people in the network of collaborators, among whom can probably also be found those who will stay longer in the organisation (as volunteers or as paid staff)
- additional and more “personal” raising of awareness about the problem that is central to the organisation, the promotion of the organisation’s values

By involving *young* volunteers, there are possible additional benefits for the organisation:

- **new themes for projects and activities** that youth consider important: young people may be the only ones who recognize a problem in the community, factors that contribute to the problem or new and potentially successful solutions to the problem
- **specific new knowledge, skills and interests in the organisation**, that may be more difficult to find among older volunteers: social networking, foreign languages, better knowledge about the interest of young people, places they visit, contemporary slang, etc.
- **direct positive influence on young people:** beside benefits of volunteering in the area of personal growth and the development of competencies for future profession, volunteering empowers young people for other forms of active citizenship
- **indirect positive influence on young people:** young volunteers can be a great example to their peers, promoting volunteering and extending the sense of purpose of the active engagement in solving problems
- **easier attraction of new youth volunteers:** young people choose to volunteer more readily when they hear (about) the experiences of their peers, and already involved young volunteers can be great mentors to newcomers

- **more fun** in implementing your regular activities :)

“The most valuable thing you can give to someone is your time, and by volunteering you’re doing exactly that... Also, I feel much better if I do something good and useful, and, of course, you learn a lot and meet a lot of people. When you volunteer you simply help the organisation and their beneficiaries, but you also help yourself.”

Tea V.

Volunteer (programme) management cycle

A well structured volunteer programme includes the description of the organisation's general approach to volunteer management, description of the specific activities needed for the successful volunteer management and the implementation plan. General approach of the programme should reflect its orientation to the benefits of both organisation (and target groups of beneficiaries of volunteering) and volunteers. The volunteer programme ideally describes the following elements or phases of quality volunteer (programme) management⁷:

0. Foundations of the volunteer programme

1. Plan of implementation
2. Volunteer positions
3. Finding volunteers
4. Volunteer selection
5. Orientation and training of volunteers
6. Supervision and evaluation of volunteers' work
7. Evaluation of the volunteer programme
8. Volunteer recognition

One volunteer programme usually encompasses more than one **volunteer position**, which is a set of connected tasks leading to the goal of the volunteering position. When that is the case, volunteers can start volunteering in your organisation at different times and the volunteer management phases will "follow" volunteer(s) in the specific volunteer position, and not the presented linear list. In organisations with larger number of volunteer positions and volunteers, the management phases can overlap very often, making the volunteer manager's job more difficult. Well thought-out and planned volunteer programme helps!

The management of a volunteer programme that involves young volunteers has the same elements or phases as the general volunteer programme management. However, there are some specifics of *youth* volunteer management in almost all phases.

⁷ Prgić Znika, J., Kordić, I., Jeđud Borić, I. (2015): [Menadžment volontera: priručnik za vođenje volontera i volonterskih programa](#). Volonterski centar Zagreb, Zagreb.

Volunteer coordinator

When setting the foundations of your volunteer programme, your organisation needs to choose the programme manager and, depending on the scope of the programme, one or more volunteer coordinators. As the role of coordinators and/or manager can be most briefly described as taking care of all people and processes that constitute a volunteer programme, the key factor of success of your volunteer programme is **the selection of adequate person(s)** to fulfill that role. What the “adequate person” exactly means will be clearer in the end of the guide, after we present the specificities of work with young volunteers in all phases of volunteer programmes.

Volunteer positions

The detailed description of any volunteer position primarily serves the purpose of explaining to yourself/ your organisation what you expect from volunteers and what you will offer them in actual volunteer positions.

A good volunteer position description consists of⁸:

- the name/ title of the volunteer position
- time and location of volunteering
- goals and expected results of the position
- content of the position: tasks and responsibilities of the volunteer
- knowledge, skills, experiences and qualifications you expect your volunteers to have before they begin with volunteering
- benefits of volunteering for the volunteers
- description of the preparatory activities (orientation, training, meetings, etc.)
- methods of supervision and evaluation of volunteers' work
- suggestions to potential volunteers on how to apply (deadline, forms, contacts, etc.)

⁸ Modified from Prgić Znika, J., Kordić, I., Jeđud Borić, I. (2015): [Menadžment volontera: priručnik za vođenje volontera i volonterskih programa](#). Volonterski centar Zagreb, Zagreb.

When you are preparing the description of volunteer positions with the aim of attracting *young* volunteers, you may want to pay additional attention to cover or emphasize the aspects of volunteer position and your organisation that **youth consider important**⁹:

- **flexibility**: having the option to choose between volunteer positions/ tasks, mogućnost izbora zadataka, flexible volunteering hours/ periods, willingness of the organisation to discuss the details of the engagement with volunteers
- **ease of access**: different sources of information about volunteering, simple application procedure, the availability of coordinator before and during volunteering, showing you acknowledge the experiences of young people (having some expectations, but not too great)
- **legitimacy (relevance)**: explain the significance of their contribution to the target group of beneficiaries and the community, especially when you are exclusively looking for young people to fill the volunteer position¹⁰
- **experience**: interesting and motivating tasks and activities, opportunities for learning and achieving personal goals
- **incentives**: certificate of volunteering, certificate of the competencies developed through long-term volunteering, letter of recommendation, publications and other materials produced in your organisation, incentives/ rewards as T-shirts, tickets, etc.
- **organisation**: clarity and efficiency of the processes, balanced with non-formal and supportive approach
- **laughs**: fun, enjoyment, satisfaction, get togethers of volunteers, etc.

⁹ Institute for Volunteering Research; modified from [Volunteer Connections: New Strategies for Involving Youth](#) (2001)

¹⁰ Although age should never be the only criterion of selection, in some volunteer positions it can have an important role: e.g. when the beneficiaries of volunteering are children or youth, young volunteers can be role models or mentors who are more easily accepted by the beneficiaries, when the beneficiaries are adults from a vulnerable group (e.g. the homeless, refugees, older persons), youth volunteers bear a stronger message about the interest and care of the community for the group.

Table 1: Possible adaptations of the (description of the) volunteer position in accordance with what young people state is important for them

	Volunteer position elements							
Characteristics of volunteering young people find important	Name/ title of the position	Time and location of volunteering	Goals and expected results/ contribution to the community	Contents : tasks and responsibilities	Expected knowledge, skills, etc. before the start of volunteering.	Benefits of volunteering	Preparatory activities (orientation and training)	Supervision and evaluation of volunteers' work
Flexibility		X		X			X	X
Ease of access	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Legitimacy	X		X	X	X		X	X
Experience		X		X		X	X	X
Incentives						X	X	X
Organisation				X		X	X	X
Laughs	X		X	X		X	X	X

In addition to the description of volunteer position, adaption to what youth want in their volunteering experiences can as well be useful in your “public appearance” i.e. in your efforts to attract young volunteers by written materials or oral presentations.

Finding volunteers

Where and how to promote volunteering: what do young people propose?

“The first step is the most difficult one, to make up your mind to start volunteering and to get into the ‘system’.”

General guidelines

- think through, organise and implement the first contact with youth well
- present more simple, less demanding activities
- make sure you can provide and then present the flexibility of the volunteer position, especially regarding time (especially with college/ university students)
- emphasize other aspects of volunteering important and attractive to youth: beside ease of access and flexibility, they are legitimacy (relevance), opportunities for varied experiences, tangible incentives, good organisation balanced with non-formal and supportive approach, fun/ laughs
- keep in mind that young people choose more easily volunteer positions where they can volunteer together with their friends/ peers
- it is recommendable that the promoters of volunteering are young(er) people or someone who can be a positive role model or inspiration
- make and use informed assumptions, depending on the age and developmental needs of youth you address, about what motivates young people for volunteering: invest more time and words in the promotion of benefits of volunteering, and especially of the variety of volunteering experiences, new social connections and fun
- use real-life examples and your own volunteering experiences in concise forms
- put aside enough time for questions and answers: (young) people appreciate two-sided communication/ interaction and specific information (e.g. workshop instead of frontal presentation, add face-to-face information to written promotional materials)

Formal education institutions

- young people strongly feel that there should be a stronger bond between organisations that involve volunteers and their schools/ university
- in schools, organisations should cooperate with out-of-classroom staff/ counsellors
- best timing to invite young people to volunteer is the beginning of school/ academic year

- when possible, the promotion of volunteering should be integrated with subjects connected with volunteering or specific volunteer positions (e.g. sociology, ethics, active citizenship, biology/ ecology), including field classes and visits to organisations that offer volunteer programmes
- posters and leaflets with *specific* information on volunteering or motivational posters created in workshops by other youth

Direct personal contact

- youth especially appreciate the authentically conveyed experiences and sincere enthusiasm of their peers who volunteer, but also those of more experienced people whose opinion is important for them (e.g. teachers, (extended) family members, mentors, trainers)
- in targeted search for volunteers, if you are personally acquainted with young people¹¹ who would make great volunteers for specific positions, think through and tell them why you think volunteering in your organisation would be (also) good for them, taking care not to put pressure on them

Local organisations

- they are excellent places for youth to meet and share information: it can be spontaneous or in the form of organised presentations and workshops (that can also be facilitated by more experienced young volunteers)
- visits to organisations that involve young volunteers, in cooperation with formal education institutions or youth CSOs

Social networks

- a simple way to promote volunteering, reaching large groups of young people
- enables quicker spreading and sharing experiences and personal news related to volunteering, like cultural and social events, travelling, awards, etc.
- more efficient when the contents related to volunteering are followed or liked by larger number of friends

“I don’t really know where you can volunteer. I get the information about it if someone from my crowd volunteered, especially on FB.”

¹¹ E.g. they were previously your volunteers on different position, have participated in your activities as beneficiaries, your acquaintance is from private sphere...

Depending on the number of volunteers you need and for what type of volunteer positions, you will choose one or more “channels” of finding volunteers. The experience of many organisers of volunteering shows that it is **best to use several simultaneous ways of attracting volunteers**, to combine e.g. presentations in schools/ at the university and social networks. You can also contact volunteer centres in your area, which can usually promote (your) open volunteer positions via additional channels (online “marketplace” of volunteer positions, public and media presentations of local volunteering opportunities, basic workshops on volunteering, etc.).

“Volunteering is not present enough in public. Everyone knows vaguely what it is, but no one knows something solid. TV shows us ‘wow, it’s volunteers’ day’, two or three minutes and that’s it. People don’t know about volunteering. Maybe it should enter all schools.” (Jelena)

Selection and placement of volunteers

The precondition for the successful selection of volunteers is a good description of the volunteer position. The other key element of selection are, of course, information about the potential volunteers you will use to assess their suitability for the open positions. The information you need about volunteers can be gathered through application forms, letter of motivation, group meeting, interview, references, probationary volunteering, introductory workshop...

For the positions that require a very specific set of knowledge or skills, or greater level of responsibility (as in volunteering with vulnerable beneficiaries), we recommend combined techniques for gathering information and the assessment of the suitability of volunteer.

In the process of selection and placement of volunteers, regardless of the specifics of volunteer position, you will first assess the compatibility of potential volunteer with these technical or **general criteria:**

- **time:** volunteers should have sufficient time to participate in all important activities in the planned period

- **location:** the location of volunteering has to be accessible to volunteers, check if they need to travel or commute and how that influences their time (also, can you reimburse them?)
- **legislation:** check if some of your volunteer positions cannot involve underaged volunteers, whether you need written legal guardian consent for minors or criminal background check for volunteers working with vulnerable groups, and how you can obtain the documents

The next step is to compare all information you now have about your potential volunteer with the detailed description of volunteer position. If your volunteer position description is clear and you collected the information about/ from the volunteer having in mind what is needed for the position, the final decision about the selection should be quite simple. Remember that the well-done selection and placement are your responsibility to your beneficiaries and the organisation, but also to the volunteer!

During the selection and placement of young volunteers, keep in mind that they have some specifics:

⇒ **Different schedules and rhythms:** Be understanding towards differences in circumstances and lifestyle of young people, and adapt to their rhythm: accelerate the process of selection as much as possible (so youth don't wait too long to start volunteering), balancing it with the need for the quality of the process

⇒ **Self-presentation:** Young people can express themselves in various and dynamic ways. Use different methods of assessment and selection, and combine them: written applications can be good and simple (and more comfortable for some youth), but a lot of young people prefer more personal and more active approach (like meetings, workshops, probationary volunteering, etc.), avoid using psychological tests and give the advantage to face to face conversations

⇒ **Self-image:** A lot of young people don't have fully developed self-image. For some youth it may be quite difficult to recognize and talk about their strengths, knowledge, skills and successes, while a minority may overemphasize them. Be supportive during the selection process, as well as later in the management cycle: youth need support and guidance to make a more accurate assessment of their capabilities and to build a positive self-image.

Some examples of questions for selection interviews with youth

The purpose of these questions is to enable you to get to know young people and their motivation for volunteering in a less direct and, for them, easier and pleasanter way. Choose those questions, and create some new ones, that can be truly useful for the assessment and help your potential volunteers to connect their answers with the requirements of the volunteer position they applied for. Be friendly (and not too inquisitive): be sincerely interested in youth as persons, assess *with them* instead to assess *them*, share something about yourself, use the selection process to start building a quality relationship with your volunteers.

How would your best friend introduce you to someone?

What do you like most in your current job/ school/ studies?

What were you most proud of in the last year?

What makes you happy?/ Where do you feel the happiest?

Which characteristics you appreciate in other people?

How do you like to spend your free time? (beside volunteering :))

How did you engage in that activity?/ How did you discover you liked it?

If you had no obligations, how would you prefer to spend Saturday?

What has attracted you to volunteering in our organisation/ his volunteer position? What do you hope to gain/ experience through volunteering (here)?

Have you ever worked/ volunteered/ been in contact with... (target beneficiaries or the "theme" of volunteering)?

(if "yes") What did you like most? How did they receive you? Do you have an anecdote you especially like? What have you learnt (about yourself) from that volunteering experience? Did you have any difficulties in volunteering (and how did you solve them)?

(if "no") What do you think (*the target beneficiaries*) may like about you most? What do you believe you can offer them along with your time?

What do you need from us to feel good during/ about volunteering?

What would you like (to "have", know) when your volunteering here ends?

Orientation and training

“In my first encounter with an organisation, it is very important to me to feel welcome and significant, especially if I’m the only young person there.”

Before the training of volunteers, when you will have a more intense opportunity to get to know them, it is important to adequately and pleasantly introduce them to your organisation:

- **receive the volunteers personally** and help them orientate in your organisation
- **inform them about the volunteer position and the context:** give them a copy of the volunteer position description and go through details together, emphasise the contribution of volunteers to the beneficiaries and the organisation, inform them about your tasks in the framework of the volunteer position, give them other written materials about your organisation
- **inform them about/ agree on next steps** and activities that take place before the start of volunteering

Volunteer training

The preparation for volunteering or, specifically, ***the duration and content of the preparation should be adjusted to the requisites of the volunteer position.***

Regardless of the complexity (or simplicity) of preparation or training, it should encompass the information about the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and of organisation, and a thorough familiarisation with the volunteer position.

In volunteer training, you should preferably use ***methods and techniques which correspond to the distinctive features of youth*** and the general principles of learning, and that are, at the same time, suitable for the transfer of the planned content. Here are the recommendations of youth volunteers and their coordinators¹².

¹² The recommendations are especially useful for the trainings of longer duration, but can also guide you in compiling other forms of training.

Use interactive and practical/ experiential methods and techniques

- for the theoretical part use short presentations that leave enough time for questions and discussion; enable volunteers to teach each other; use simple language (i.e. avoid professional jargon) and examples; prepare easily read printed materials
- use illustrations, photographs, video clips, graphs... and if you use other visual aids, make them clear and simple
- use interactive activities, games, group discussions, work in pair and in small groups, associative techniques and brainstorming, worksheets, posters made by the participants...
- when you teach skills or problem-solving specific for the volunteer position, you can offer immediate practical application or simulation (e.g. role-play)
- when the volunteer position includes direct work with beneficiaries or field work, you can organise a visit to the location of volunteering or an activity that will enable them to meet the beneficiaries

Enable fun and the building of relationships

Enable, don't pressure it :D

Connecting with others and fun are some of the fundamental psychological needs, and young people often indicate them as an important part of their motivation for volunteering. As (group) preparation for volunteering usually represents the first "real" opportunity for connecting and fun, here are some ideas on how to provide them in training:

- begin with an icebreaker: be careful not to choose the activity that is too intensive for your volunteers, adapt it to the theme of volunteering or specific position, whenever possible engage actively (instead of being only the facilitator)
- change the way you form small groups or pairs to enable volunteers to get acquainted with as many other youth
- use trust-building and team-building activities and connect them with the theme of volunteering or with particular tasks
- when appropriate, use humour in speech and visual materials
- be aware of the levels of the participants' concentration and of the group atmosphere and introduce energizers when needed

- if the trainer is not the volunteer coordinator for the same participants, it is very good that their coordinator is involved in some of the activities or to visit during breaks

Finally, although fun is great and a desirable part of the training, the goals of the training have to stay in focus: be careful not to overuse the activities whose *only* purpose is fun. With some creativity, every activity can be connected to one of the goals or topics of the training (or to volunteering in general), and if you get the impression that you have “too much” fun, it is good to explain the purpose of the activity to your young volunteers (and yes, connecting and relationships building is a completely valid purpose :)).

Supervision and evaluation

“I would like older people stop thinking we youth don't have any problems, that all is easy for us... and then expect us to do everything perfectly and to smile while doing so.”

Generally, ***the purpose of supervision and evaluation is to enable the realisation of the results planned by the volunteer programme*** i.e. by particular volunteer positions. As already visible in the volunteer position description, a part of the expected results regards the volunteers' activities and the other part regards the benefits of volunteers. In other words, from the preparation and planning of the volunteer programme, that are the foundation for its successful and quality implementation, ***all phases of the programme are oriented both to the activities and volunteers***. This orientation is maybe most prominent in the process of supervision and evaluation, when the main goal is to simultaneously take care about the quality of volunteering activities and the welfare and development of the volunteers.

Supervision of volunteers' work

Supervision consists of these “activities and elements:

- overseeing and monitoring volunteers' work
- mentoring (transfer of knowledge, guidance, volunteers' growth and development)
- examining and boosting volunteers' motivation

- supporting volunteers on personal level.”¹³

In this guide, we adapt and cluster the elements and activities in two areas of supervision: monitoring and support.

Monitoring and support are the intertwined and complementary elements of supervision in regard to their content and the time they are carried out. Although all phases of volunteer management cycle are oriented both to the activities and volunteers, monitoring is slightly more concerned with the realisation of goals and results of the volunteer programme, while support is more concerned with the well-being of volunteers, their satisfaction and motivation. It is important to remember that the realisation of the goals and results of the programme depends on the *quality* work of volunteers, which is only possible, or at least much more likely to be attained, when you provide volunteers with an appropriate and effective support. What do the appropriate monitoring and effective support entail?

Monitoring volunteers' work includes:

⇒ **technical part**, which is about performing the tasks: have the tasks been/ are they being conducted in accordance with the plan and how many volunteer hours are put into the tasks, that can be monitored through individual and group meetings, reports, logs, etc.

⇒ **part concerned with the content**, which is about the *quality* of volunteers' performance and their well-being: whether they work in accordance with the instructions, have they had any difficulties in volunteering and of what nature, how they collaborate with others, how they feel in their role and whether their expectations are being met, how do the beneficiaries and collaborators perceive volunteers, what is happening in volunteers' private life (if they are willing to share), etc. Depending on the volunteer position, all of this can be monitored by means of questionnaires, journals and reports¹⁴, regular communication via phone or e-mail, situational and planned individual conversations, meetings, etc. With young volunteers we recommend you use more personal communication, and in emotionally demanding volunteering with

¹³ Prgić Znika, J., Kordić, I. i Jeđud Borić, I. (2015): [Menadžment volontera: priručnik za vođenje volontera i volonterskih programa](#). Volonterski centar Zagreb, Zagreb.

¹⁴ Young volunteers mostly don't like this type of monitoring, which is why it is better to phone them or use short online questionnaires.

beneficiaries make sure to organise regular group supervision meetings that, beside monitoring, ensure continuous learning and support.

Supporting volunteers includes:

⇒ **positive environment:** it is coordinator's task to create an environment of trust, appreciation and support, that enables volunteers to build and sustain good relations with all involved and to get many opportunities to satisfy their psychological needs. That way young volunteers feel safer and can more readily express their opinions or ask for other forms of support. Also, remember that relaxed approach and fun are important, too, as they make it easier to connect with others, as well as to execute "more serious" tasks. Beside formal meetings, youth volunteers especially like gatherings that allow them to get familiarised and connect with each other, e.g. volunteer "couch" or corner, excursions, having coffee or dinner together, holiday, carnival or birthday parties, etc.

"For me, it is great to have more experienced volunteers available for questions and answers."

⇒ **help and/or support in solving difficulties in volunteering:** during volunteering, smaller or bigger difficulties can arise, that can have a negative influence on motivation and the perception of benefits of volunteering, and that volunteers won't be able to solve without your help. Sometimes it may be enough just to listen, understand and remind them of their strengths, while other situations may require of you some sort of "intervention", like checking their understanding of the volunteer position description, changing the methods of monitoring, adjusting the deadlines with their circumstances, creating and giving them individualised support aimed at the better quality of their work, conversation with some of the beneficiaries or staff/ other volunteers, "repositioning" the volunteer to another volunteer position, etc. The options are countless and it is important you agree and choose them together with the volunteers.

⇒ **mentoring:** it is the type of support when older (more experienced) coordinator guides and teaches the young (or less experienced) volunteers in the area of his/ her own competence, giving the youth the opportunity to progress, develop, and work together with the coordinator on the betterment of the volunteer programme, give opinions and ideas, and suggest the improvements. Good mentoring entails the interest for the person as a whole, which includes

more dialogue and posing questions (and less instructions and advice), with the purpose of strengthening volunteer's competencies and self-confidence.

⇒ **support with personal difficulties:** volunteers sometimes need your help and support in coping with different personal difficulties, like problems in family or love relationships, or difficulties regarding school, health, self-confidence, etc. In youth whose coping mechanisms and problem-solving skills are still developing, personal problems can affect the perception of benefits of volunteering and the motivation to continue with it¹⁵. It is important that you show interest in youth as persons and in their private life, but take care of their boundaries: if you notice young volunteers have difficulties in coping with a situation, or something has changed in their reliability, quality of work or communication, let them know you care and you are available *if* they want to talk about their private sphere as well.

*"It's important to me that they put an effort to get to know me better, my interests, my life...
That's how I know I'm not just 'one of the volunteers' but also significant as a person."*

Evaluation of volunteers' work

The evaluation of volunteers' work is an important part of the implementation of the volunteer programme that gives you the insight into **the quality of volunteers' work**, as well as into **volunteers' satisfaction**, growth and development. The purpose of the evaluation is to maintain and improve the quality of volunteers' work and the experiences of young volunteers in your organisation. In this regard, the evaluation is built upon and interlaced with the support to volunteers.

For the evaluation to be useful both for the organisation and volunteers, it is necessary to think of it, and to use it, as **a two-way, cooperative process**, where:

- a) volunteer coordinator, other collaborators and beneficiaries evaluate volunteers' work
- b) volunteers have the opportunity to evaluate their own work, the volunteer position, and other elements of the volunteer programme

¹⁵ The effect can go in the direction of weakening or strengthening motivation for volunteering. Some young people may tend to give up volunteering, while others may "escape" to volunteering, thus avoiding facing their problems. (Youth who don't currently experience any difficulties, will probably strengthen their self-confidence and skills useful for solving problems in the future.)

When you evaluate the volunteers' work, you can base your overall impression on the direct observation of their work (only if you work together!), on information collected from their collaborators and beneficiaries (e.g. through conversations or questionnaires that cover additional topics connected with the volunteer programme), and on the comparison between the results of their volunteering and the agreed plan. The comprehensive impression can be conveyed to the volunteers as feedback that will help them in future volunteering:

⇒ **positive feedback** indicates and praises specific desirable actions and aspects of volunteers' work, and it is good to give it continuously, to encourage the volunteers and strengthen their motivation

⇒ **guidance feedback** suggests volunteers what they should change in order to be fully successful in their tasks, and it is very important to give this type of feedback supportively.

When volunteers evaluate their experience in the volunteer programme, it is important to include these elements significant in quality assessment¹⁶:

- have their expectations of the volunteer position been met
- were they sufficiently supported by their coordinator (and mentor)
- have they acquired new knowledge and skills
- the extent and quality of their cooperation with others involved in the programme
- did they have the opportunity to participate in making decisions and how much they have used it
- do they have suggestions for the improvement of the volunteer programme
- generally, how satisfied with volunteering in your organisation they are
- do they have suggestions for new volunteer positions in the same field of work

You can collect volunteers' feedback using:

- different questionnaires and forms
- planned interviews, informal conversations, focus-group discussions, etc.

In the end of volunteering within a specific volunteer position or in your organisation, you can conduct the **final evaluation** that will review and summarise your cooperation. Be sure to

¹⁶ Prgić Znika, J., Kordić, I., Jeđud Borić, I. (2015): [Menadžment volontera: priručnik za vođenje volontera i volonterskih programa](#). Volonterski centar Zagreb, Zagreb.

organise a personal meeting with youth and centre it around the volunteer's perspective and empowering them: encourage them to recognize and verbalise their benefits from volunteering, give them individualised positive feedback and thank them for their time and specific contribution.

Periodical and final evaluation of volunteers' work, i.e. *getting* your volunteers' feedback, can be organised within the framework of the *programme* evaluation. Final evaluation, because of its empowering character, can also be a great introduction to volunteer recognition.

Recognising volunteers' contribution¹⁷

Freely chosen engagement of time and effort to the benefit of others, without the expectation of material compensation, is a great gift, that needs to be taken seriously and with gratitude. Although (young) volunteers mostly don't start volunteering with the goal to be shown gratitude, as all people, they like to feel noticed, useful, appreciated and successful. Put an effort to notice every, personal or volunteering-related positive change and progress your volunteers make, so you would be able to recognise volunteers' contribution fairly and timely.

In addition to showing volunteers appreciation for their time and effort, the recognition of volunteers' work positively influences their further engagement, i.e. the quality of their work and volunteer retention, as well as the continuation and strengthening of their wish to stay part of volunteering "world". Besides, happy volunteers contribute to the positive working atmosphere and can attract new volunteers to your organisation.

Formal recognition can take the form of volunteering certificate or the certificate on the competencies gained through volunteering, personalised thank you cards, public acknowledgement and nominations for volunteering awards, letter of recommendation for a paid job or scholarship, etc. You can also offer the volunteers formal membership in your

¹⁷ We use the expression "recognition" as a common name for all forms of validation and rewarding volunteer work.

organisation and/ or a new position in accordance with their growing capabilities, payed training of their interest, etc.

Informal recognition can be more creative and personal, like saying thanks in every occasion, being supportive and showing volunteers you care (e.g. congratulate them their birthday, International Volunteer Day, graduation, other important dates and personal events, share information you know they consider important or interesting), organisation of get-togethers, excursions and outings, rewarding them with free tickets to different events or symbolic presents, etc. You can also recognise and empower your young volunteers by praising their specific accomplishments, conveying positive feedbacks from beneficiaries and staff, involving them in making decisions about the volunteer work they do, support them in showing their initiative, etc.

Although formal forms of recognition may seem “more significant”, informal forms are equally important: they enable you to show attention and care more often, and continuously positively influence both their motivation and the feeling of being appreciated. Whatever forms and activities of recognition you employ, it is important that you are sincere and authentic, as well as to approach your volunteers as unique individuals.

Recognition is present in all phases of the volunteer management cycle that include direct communication with volunteers, and you will periodically enrich it with other, more tangible forms. It is especially important to recognise volunteers and their work at the end of your cooperation, when once more you thank them for their time, effort and specific contribution. When young volunteers are involved, final recognition is an excellent chance to empower them on personal level and contribute to their general motivation for volunteering.

Volunteer programme evaluation

The purpose of volunteer programme evaluation is to enable you to continuously improve all its elements: the phases of implementation, volunteers' work and the services to the beneficiaries, and relationships between all the participants of the programme.

Evaluation helps you find out whether you are achieving what you planned and what needs to be changed to realise the goals of the programme, i.e. it is the assessment of the successfulness of different parts of the volunteer programme.

Volunteer programme evaluation can encompass the assessment of one or, desirably, more of these elements:

- **processes and results:** how many of the planned activities you implemented and to what measurable results specified in the action plan you have achieved, have you met the deadlines or not and what contributed to it, what all people involved in the programme consider its strong suits and weaknesses, etc.
- **effects and influence:** what kind of changes you have achieved, e.g. how did the programme influence the beneficiaries, what benefits were experienced by volunteers, how much the programme contributed to the solution of the problem
- **sustainability:** does your organisation find the ratio between the invested time and money on the one hand, and the results and the effects of the programme on the other hand, acceptable, can the programme be continued in the same manner or it needs changes, what kind of changes is needed

Beside regular monitoring, the **key source of information** about the success of the programme implementation are people who participated in it: volunteers, beneficiaries, volunteer coordinator(s), employees, external collaborators. As in the evaluation of volunteers' work, the participants' feedback can be collected in different ways, and the evaluation questions should be created/ chosen bearing in mind *your* volunteer programme i.e. what you need to find out to be able to assess the success of the programme.

Like all phases of the volunteer programme management, ***the extent of evaluation should be balanced with the complexness of the programme and volunteer positions***: collect only those data that are the most interesting and most needed to enable you to draw conclusions about the strengths of the programme, as well as about the changes that can make it better.

When youth volunteers are concerned (especially long-term volunteers), we recommend that, beside knowledge and skills they have acquired, you also investigate other benefits of volunteering i.e. the changes experienced by volunteers they are linking to volunteering: self-confidence, free time activities and other interests, certain attitudes, new friendships, feeling of connectedness with the community, energy level and general health, etc.

“I want the young people volunteering in our organisation to leave happy, satisfied and so much in love in volunteering that they have the need to volunteer for the rest of their lives :)”

Svetlana, youth volunteer leader

Youth volunteer leaders

“I love it when my coordinator is communicative, approachable and kind person with a smile on their face, that we can talk nicely also when we’re not working, that I feel I can ask whatever I want, and that they find time for me.”

As shown in previous chapters, the volunteer coordinator role can be very demanding. Complex volunteer programmes, that incorporate many volunteer positions and/ or volunteers, can have a volunteer programme manager and several volunteer coordinators, responsible for different elements of the programme (e.g. coordinator of specific volunteer positions, based on the extent of volunteers’ involvement or target beneficiaries, coordinator of different phases of the volunteer management cycle, coordinator of a number of volunteers, based on their arrival to the organisation or some other criterion, such as age, intensity of the need for mentoring, etc.) Regardless of how wide your responsibilities stretch, whether you manage the whole programme or coordinate some of its particulars (and regardless of the formal name of your role in the organisation), the scope of the job and the tasks you need to perform are diverse, extensive and demand different competencies.

Some of the significant competencies of a volunteer programme manager/ coordinator¹⁸:

- volunteer management skills
- organisational and project management skills (performing and managing different tasks, administrative skills, writing reports, etc.)
- knowledge about different sectors and networking skills
- the art of leadership, motivating and inspiring others
- social-emotional competence (including empathy, perspective-taking, appreciating diversity and respect for others, analysing social situations, responsible decision-making)
- communication and presentation skills (including clear expression of ideas, negotiating)
- abilities to work independently, as well as part of a team
- adaptability
- creativity and innovativeness

¹⁸ Modificirano prema [Occupational Profile for the Volunteer Manager](#) (2016)

Throughout the guide we used the expression “youth volunteer coordinator”, to communicate the importance of the coordination of **young volunteers’ work**, along with the coordination of other activities that make a volunteer programme. In this chapter, however, we wish to emphasise the significance and the demandingness of **working with youth** (*youth work*), who are in need of guidance, mentoring and support. That is why we now introduce the expression “youth volunteer leader”.

Youth work is usually focused to¹⁹:

- values (higher purpose): it tries to contribute to social cohesion and inclusion
- acknowledgment and respect of all youth and their key needs, aspirations and concerns, identified by young people themselves
- voluntary participation of youth and accessibility to all young people
- personal, social and ethical development of young people
- self-reflection and continuous improvement of youth work in order to ensure the quality, autonomy and living up to its mission
- relations: it seeks authentic communication with young people and to contribute to sustaining viable communities

To be able to implement (volunteer) programmes with youth in the described manner, youth worker needs some specific competencies i.e. certain attitudes, knowledge and skills, as well as the capability to apply them with self-reliance and creativity, in different contexts and with diverse young people. We may paraphrase experiential pedagogy and link it to the dimensions of youth work competence, as defined by the Council of Europe²⁰: youth work requires synchronous engagement of your **heart, head and hands**, the same way it enables young people to develop in all of those spheres.

¹⁹ [Youth work essentials](#) (n.d.)

²⁰ [Youth work competence](#) (n.d.)

Table 2. *Examples of competencies for youth work*²¹

Selected functions of youth work	Selected competencies for youth workers
Address the needs and aspirations of young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● build positive, non-judgemental relationships with young people ● understand the social context of young people's lives ● involve young people in the planning, delivery and evaluation of youth work using participatory methods, as suitable ● demonstrate openness in discussing young people's personal and emotional issues when raised in the youth work context
Provide learning opportunities for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● create safe, motivating and inclusive learning environments for individuals and groups ● provide young people with appropriate guidance and feedback ● inform young people about learning opportunities and support them to use them effectively
Support and empower young people in making sense of the society they live in and in engaging with it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● assisting young people to identify and take responsibility for the role they want to have in their community and society ● support young people to identify goals, develop strategies and organise individual and collective action for social change ● support the competence and confidence development of young people
Actively practise evaluation to improve the quality of youth work conducted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● plan and apply a range of participatory methods of evaluation ● use the results of evaluation for the improvement of their practice ● stay up-to-date on the latest youth research on the situation and need of the young people

As the scope of the topic of youth work and youth work competence is very broad, the competencies shown in the table are only examples selected for illustration purposes. The original text contains several more functions of youth work and a large collection of competencies, along with the attitudes and values, knowledge and skills that constitute each competency. Furthermore, the complexity of youth work is evidenced by the fact that some

²¹ Modified from [Youth work competence](#) (n.d.)

documents, setting down the standards of professional youth work²², present several hundred (!) knowledge items, skills and performance criteria. Although documents like these are probably too extensive for what an average youth volunteer leader needs in their work, they can provide very valuable guidelines for self-directed learning and the development of youth work competence, especially to those youth volunteer leaders who work with same young people for longer periods.

“It’s nice to feel I’m part of the team and to have good, friendly relationships.”

Specifics of the relationship between the leader and young volunteers

The literature in the field of volunteer management and youth work, as well as the personal experiences of many youth (volunteers) and their leaders, allow us to conclude that the capability of building and maintaining **quality relationships** with young volunteers is one of the exceptionally important leader’s competencies.

What do youth volunteer leaders need to build, retain and strengthen good relationship with young people? The topic could probably fill a separate guide, but here we offer an attempt of compacting **the key elements of a good relationship with young people**:

- *accepting* youth as they are (as unique persons and a group living in a specific social context), orientation to their *strengths*, creating *opportunities* for development
- the perception of one’s role as a supporter and nondominant teacher, who *enables* young people to try out different roles and tasks, *offers* them knowledge and support, *facilitates* their learning through experience (and some mistakes, too)
- *managing the processes* (tasks, activities, the programme) and one’s own actions instead of managing people, supporting and helping youth to participate in the processes with more quality and satisfaction

²² E.g. documents like [Youth Work National Occupational Standards](#) (UK National Youth Agency) ili [National Occupational Standards for Youth Work](#) (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008) in UK or the document [Competencies for Professional Child and Youth Work Practitioners](#) (Association for Child and Youth Care Practice, 2010) in USA.

- *clear and respectful communication*, including timely directions and feedback, the intention to see and understand young people's perspectives, active listening, empathy, checking for understanding, etc.
- *readiness for reciprocity* and co-creation of the relationship: building the relationship by the authentic engagement of their personality, sharing experience, the ability to both give and receive, being aware that relationships can change both young people and leaders themselves
- *being friendly in performing the professional role*: building trust, using relaxed communication, doing activities together and having fun, accepting their responsibility for the quality of the relationships with youth (creating conditions in which youth feel well and realise the benefits of volunteering), responsible use of power in the relationship (ethical standards, sharing only the experiences that are useful for youth/ restraining from sharing the topics typical of close friendships), sensitivity and respect for young people's boundaries, taking care of one's own boundaries

“For me, it is important that people I volunteer with (i.e. the leader and other volunteers) are approachable, pleasant, accessible and ready to talk outside the volunteer activity, too.”

Taking the elements of good relationships with young people into consideration, we can also say the youth volunteer leader is a **mentor**, which is a complex role within the other complex role. The mentor is “usually described as having the following roles: *teacher, sponsor, guide, role model, advocate, friend*”²³. At the same time, the mentor can't be reduced to any of the roles, and is also much more than their sum. Although mentors perform in one of the roles in certain situations, “they bring their unique personality, interests, skills, knowledge and experience into the mentoring relationship [...] thus making a new quality”²⁴.

Building relationships takes time, but the youth (volunteer) leader sets the foundation and, in a way, defines the core principle of the relationship with young people. It is desirable that the leader *initiates* each leader - youth relationship as “cooperative mentorship”: that ensures good

²³ Jeđud, I., Ustić, D. (2009): *Mentoriranje i mentorski programi*. Edukacijsko-rehabilitacijski fakultet, Zagreb.

²⁴ *ibid.*

short-term connections and creates the preconditions for longer-term relationships which may enable young people to gain from volunteering much more than merely a good coordination of their work.

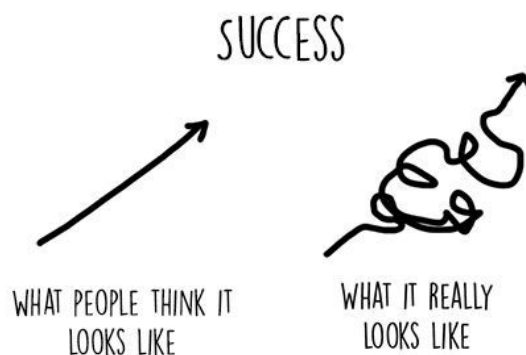
If we additionally condense all that was stated about the good relationship between the youth leader and young volunteers, we can give the ***two most important directions for youth volunteer leaders:***

- respect the readiness of youth to direct their free time to volunteering and enable them to experience it as both pleasant and useful
- consistently make your actions and words the reflection of attitudes and values you wish to impart to the young people.

Instead of a conclusion

Though, from time to time, this chapter may have seemed to aim to frighten the potential youth volunteer leaders, the true intention was exactly the opposite: to make you aware of the fact how important you are, or you may be, in the life of every young person you meet through the volunteer programme, as well as to bring to your awareness the competencies you already possess and use, but you had either taken them for granted or hadn't considered them at all.

If you have read this chapter or the whole guide with the *intention* to be an (even) better youth volunteer leader, you already own the most important prerequisite to be a great one! While going/ staying there, remember that the success is a "place" we arrive to through different ups and some downs, and every one of us in their own unique way...



Mentors, youth volunteer leaders, youth workers... although they have demanding roles, very often enjoy them and constantly grow through them. This page is dedicated to that: write down what gives you joy in working with young volunteers and the ways you grow with them and by their side, as a leader and as a person... Of course, you can also draw something into the frame (and outside of it :))...

A large, empty rectangular frame with a thin black border, occupying the lower two-thirds of the page. It is intended for the user to write or draw their responses to the prompt above.

Resources

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