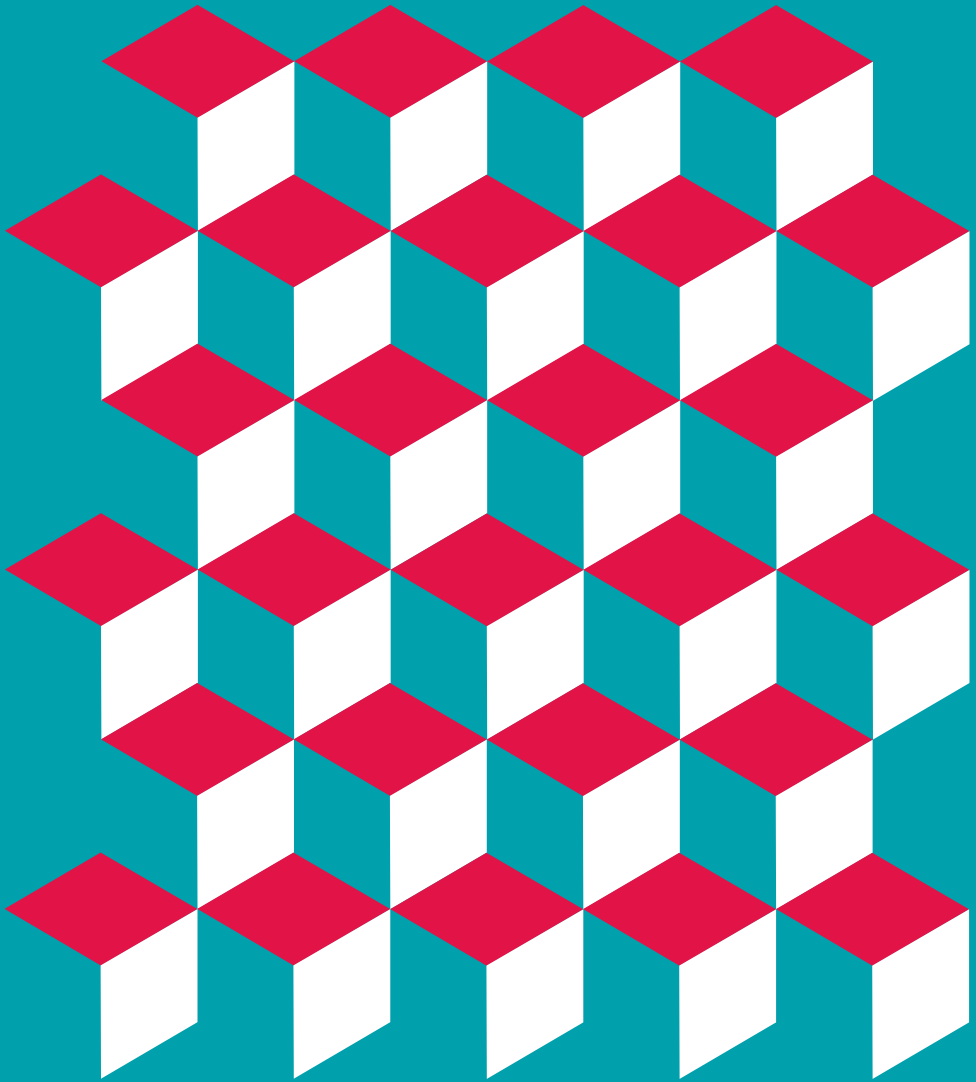


VOLUNTEERING IN THE EUROPEAN GRASSROOTS CULTURAL SCENE



**A MANUAL ON HOW TO
APPLY AND WHAT TO EXPECT**

#volunteering #cultural centres
#post-industrial buildings #youth

VOLUNTEERING IN THE EUROPEAN GRASSROOTS CULTURAL SCENE
A manual on how to apply and what to expect

Published by Trans Europe Halles 2020
ISBN: 978-91-519-6217-7



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Cover and publication design by Darko Kujundžić

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A MANUAL ON HOW TO APPLY AND WHAT TO EXPECT

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Published by
Trans Europe Halles



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FUNDERS

The publication was produced within the framework of Factories of Imagination Project that was co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

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



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

FOREWORD

Trans Europe Halles (TEH) has been an advocate of exchange programmes of many kinds across Europe for several decades. The network not only cares about the arts and its independent spaces, but it also cares deeply about the people involved in the arts. In Trans Europe Halles' almost 40-year history, it has initiated, facilitated and been involved in numerous informal learning, training and residency schemes, both for artists and for its volunteers and staff. These programmes are based on a belief that the community of people involved in and often 'behind' the organisations that form Trans Europe Halles are at the heart of the network – and that this heart needs to be nourished.

International artist-in-residency schemes are a common feature of many organisations and networks (and Trans Europe Halles and its members have organised several such projects). Since the 1990s, however, Trans Europe Halles has also broadened its scope towards its community of cultural operators, as well as introducing mobility and capacity-building programmes for its paid and unpaid staff.

As well as running these kinds of projects, the network also felt it was important to share its expertise about them and published a study about its experiences in collaboration with the Sibelius Academy in 2010: [\[LINK\]](#) and a staff exchange manual in 2013: [\[LINK\]](#)

This manual is another result of that collaboration – we hope it is useful!

Annette Wolfsberger

At the end of the 1990s, the Youth Exchange Programmes (YEP) included a volunteer exchange scheme between TEH centres that was co-funded through the European Voluntary Service (EVS). This was right at the start, and incidental EVS exchanges between centres have been operating for many years. These programmes led to the insight that such informal and non-hierarchical learning should not be restricted to young people only, but should include a wider constituency of what we called 'cultural operators'. This is how the 'staff exchange programmes' became key elements of European collaboration projects coordinated by the network, such as Engine Room Europe (2011-2014) and Changing Room (2008-2010). The latter was a European pilot programme to test, study and evaluate cultural professionals' exchange and training programmes. They have resulted in an ongoing staff exchange programme within the network ever since.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

This manual is aimed at cultural centres across Europe that want to host volunteers from other European countries. It provides a concise overview of what is needed to take part in the European volunteering programme European Solidarity Corps (ESC). It then gives reasons why it's a great idea to get involved and shares some insights that you should take into account if you decide to get involved. The manual has two different parts:

PART 1 introduces the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) and explains the 'hard facts' and the application procedure in eight steps. This section provides easy-to-follow information based on the experience of a TEH volunteer coordinator, rather than the very extensive (and sometimes confusing information) available on the official websites and in the guidelines. Wherever necessary, we have added references to external websites or guides.

PART 2 shares the 'soft tissue': tips and tricks around volunteering from TEH centres, and particularly from Stanica in Žilina, Slovakia, which has broad experience of volunteering within their staff. This section provides recommendations on how to work with volunteers, and best practice from other TEH members.

This manual might give the impression that hosting volunteers is a lot of work, and to make it work well, that's true. It takes a lot of preparation, planning and management. But when all the steps are put in place, both the host organisations and the volunteers will reap the benefits. Volunteers can potentially gain a lot of knowledge and experience that will benefit both themselves and cultural venues, while the volunteers in turn might provide a great source of support in running cultural centres. To help navigate this manual, here are some tips:

Not heard of ESC before, start from the beginning – PART 1

Thought about taking on volunteers, but not sure it is something for you, start with part 2

Used to work with the EVS programme but got lost with the new ESC programme, start with PART 1

Already host ESC volunteers but would like more ideas, start with PART 2 to get inspired and check the tips and tricks

We hope this guide to the ESC universe and volunteering galaxy will help to make the most of the volunteer experience.

This publication was written at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had an enormous impact on the activities of cultural centers and also the connected volunteering projects. We very much hope that this challenging situation will soon come to an end, but should you have specific questions about this topic, we would advise you to get in contact with your national agency.

PART 1: HOW TO APPLY

THE WHAT AND THE HOW: A GUIDE TO THE ESC UNIVERSE AND VOLUNTEERING GALAXY

A. DEFINITIONS

ESC – EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

The first impression might be that ESC has something to do with the army and it doesn't sound compatible with the independent cultural scene. Let's see what it means when we look it up in the dictionary:

EUROPEAN:

'Relating to or characteristic of Europe or its inhabitants.'

SOLIDARITY:

'Unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group.'

CORPS:

1. A branch of an army assigned to a particular kind of work.
2. A body of people engaged in a particular activity.

So ESC could also stand for European Supporting Community. We hope that ESC sounds more appealing now it's been explained. Read on to find out more about becoming part of this community.

B. WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS?

SOURCE: [\[LINK\]](#)

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) is a programme under Erasmus+, which is an EU programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. [\[LINK\]](#)

It is financed by the European Commission through a €1.009 billion budget for 2021-2027. For more than 25 years, the European programmes have supported the fields of volunteering and youth. The most established programme that provided a lot of experience all across Europe is the European Voluntary Service, which will officially end in 2020.

The ESC aims to foster solidarity in European society, engaging young people and organisations in accessible and high-quality solidarity activities. It offers young people volunteering activities, traineeships, jobs or the ability to run their own projects.

These opportunities give young people the chance to show solidarity and commitment to different communities and to help resolve challenging situations across Europe. Through their experience, they will also develop their skills and gain invaluable personal experience.

The new European Solidarity Corps promotes **inclusion and diversity** and aims to embrace **green practices** in projects (such as traveling by train instead of plane). It supports projects and activities that boost **digital skills** and fosters digital literacy. The programme also promotes participation of young people in democratic processes and civic engagement.

In addition, the new programme has the flexibility to add annual priorities addressing critical situations. This year's additional thematic area is **health**. The programme will mobilise young people in projects addressing health challenges, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and recovery.

VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES

Individual volunteering allows young people to participate in the daily work of organisations. Activities last between two and 12 months, and in some cases, two weeks and more. What is new in this programme compared to the old EVS project is that participants can volunteer in their country of residence as well as overseas. Supported projects can cover topics such as community development, social inclusion, environment, culture and more.

Volunteering can also be done in teams. **Volunteering teams** can consist of groups of between 10-40 young people aged 18-30 from at least two different countries; they volunteer together for a period of between two weeks and two months.

For both types of volunteering, the costs of accommodation and food are covered. Participants also receive a small allowance for their personal expenses.

Although ESC includes elements of language learning, travelling and gaining some work experience, it is important to understand that this is not:

- occasional, unstructured, part-time volunteering
- an internship in an enterprise
- a paid job; it must not replace paid jobs
- a recreation or tourist activity
- a language course
- exploitation of a cheap workforce
- a period of study or vocational training abroad

TRAINEESHIPS AND JOBS

Traineeships count as full-time work practice and last between two and six months. Trainees develop their personal, educational, social, civic and professional skills. Jobs are full-time and last between three and 12 months. They are paid for by the organisation employing the participant.

SOLIDARITY PROJECTS

Solidarity projects are initiated, developed and implemented over a period of two to 12 months by at least five young people who want to make a positive change in their local community.

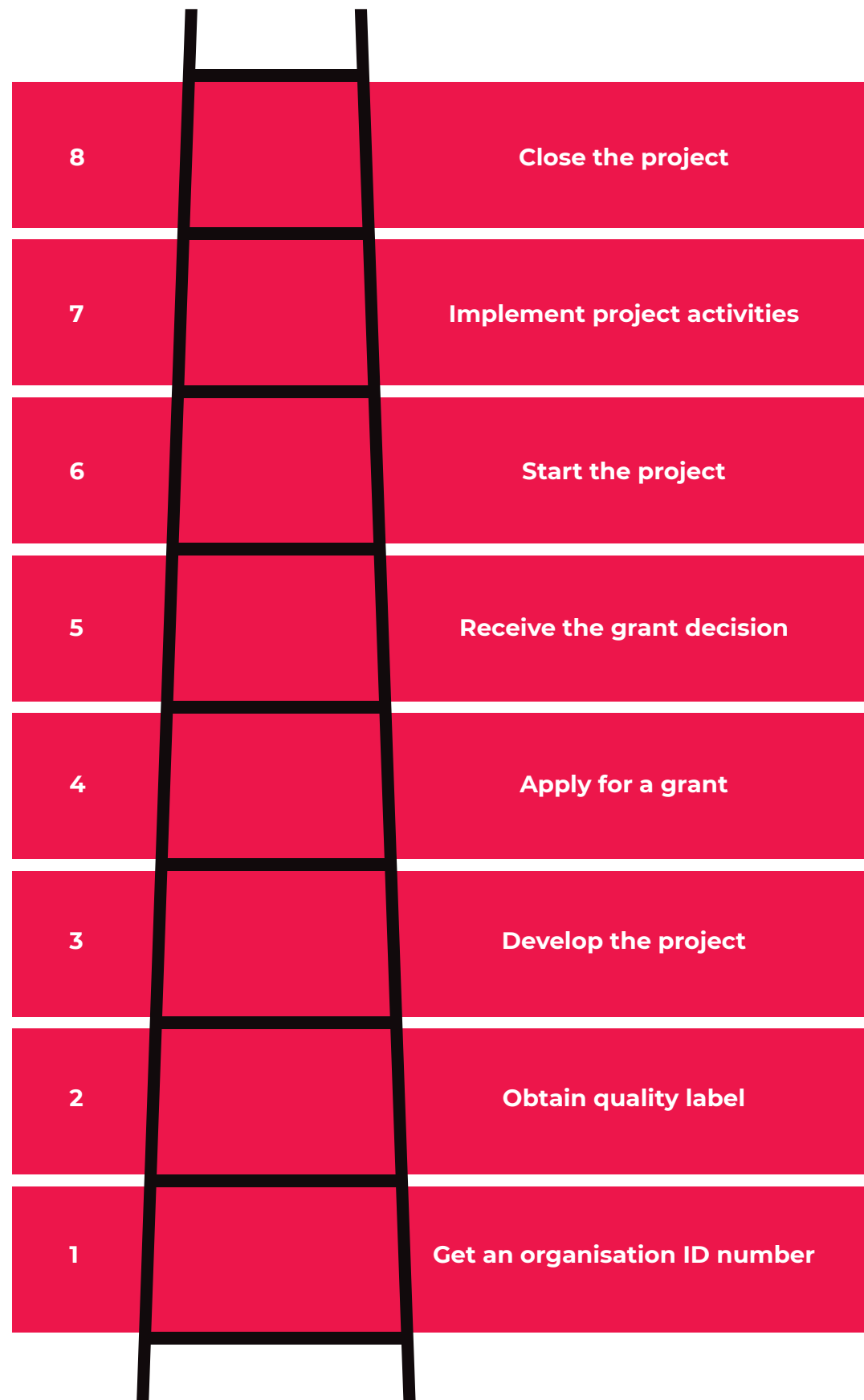
This manual will solely focus on volunteering projects. This part of the programme is similar to the previous EVS programme and has proven to be successful for cultural centres. The process required for other schemes – such as solidarity projects, traineeships and jobs – have similarities but differ on some points.

For more information, please look at the [\[WEBSITE\]](#) or contact your National Agency ¹

1. National Agencies are organisations that manage the ERASMUS+ programme for each country.

EIGHT STEPS TO TAKING ON A VOLUNTEER

The steps from the application process until finishing of the project can be divided in eight steps, which are described in more detail below.



C. NAVIGATING THROUGH THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

SOURCE: [\[LINK\]](#)

1. GET AN ORGANISATION ID NUMBER [\[LINK\]](#)

This is the first registration process and it allows the applicant to log in on the websites to find out the further steps. For those with previous EVS experience, this used to be PIC partner information. When an organisation had a PIC, they automatically got an organisation ID number provided by their national agency.

2. OBTAIN QUALITY LABEL

The applications for the Quality Label can be submitted at any time. An organisation applying for the Quality Label with a host role must declare predefined activities in which volunteers are involved, with a set of tasks that they will carry out in the organisation.

There are two options of quality label, regular and as lead organisations. As a lead organisation you would be able to apply for the funding otherwise you can only be a partner in a project in which someone else is the lead organisation. It has nothing to do with having years of experience in the EVS or ESC program so also when you are new in this galaxy you can apply for the lead organisation. It will require a more extended vision and plan. You can also first apply for the standard quality label and later apply for the lead organisation role.

For more details see [\[LINK\]](#) (info at pages 36-42).

3. DEVELOP THE PROJECT

(including finding your potential participants)

When applying for a project, applicants need to have at least one partner organisation. This can be an organisation chosen by the applicant or by volunteers. That means there are two options before developing a project.



A. Search for partner organisation(s)

A partner organisation is needed when applying for a project as a hosting organisation, the sending or 'supporting organisation' who will be responsible for sending a volunteer. If there is an organisation that has a good network or database of volunteers, agree that you will apply first only with the partner organisation and after looking for suitable participants.

B. Put a call out for volunteer(s)

Another scenario is to look for particular volunteers who would fit the organisation. Before participants reach out, they need to decide what they are looking for and what they can offer. Formulate the details about the start and end date of the project, profile of ideal volunteers (what interests fit best), what kind of activities they can do? Give a clear idea of what the organisation can offer in practical matters and what they can learn (e.g. what kind of tasks, freedom to implement their own ideas).

What organisations have to provide for the volunteer:

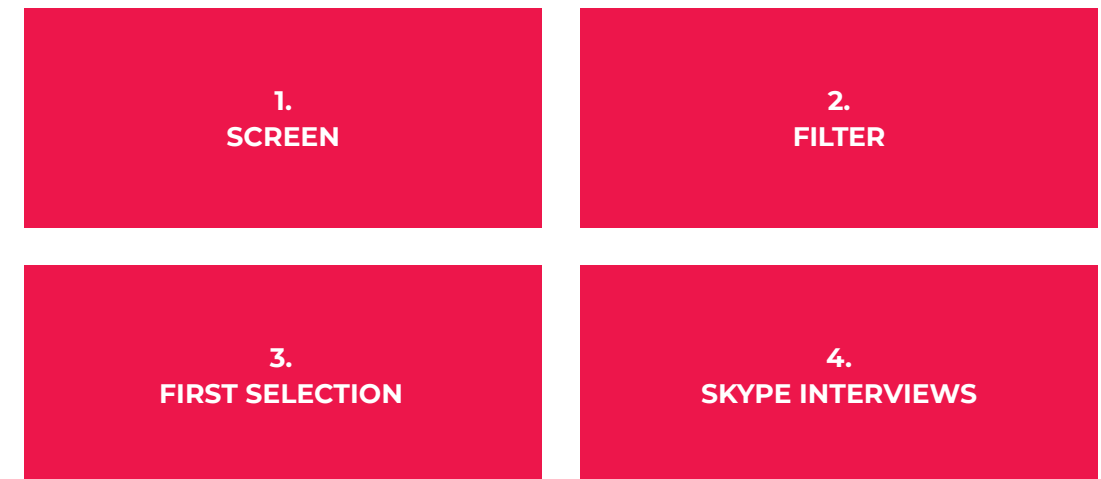
- Accommodation, preferably private room but they can share a room (if informed in advance)
- Coordinator and work tutor (this can be the same person)
- Language course or teacher
- Mentor (for personal support)
- Food or money for food
- Pocket money
- Opportunity to learn and develop personally
- Refunding travel costs

FINDING VOLUNTEERS

It is the best to have a short description of the project and to post this on several Facebook pages for ESC projects – including the organisation's own website, as well in the database of [\[EUROPA.EU\]](https://europa.eu).

Don't forget to illustrate the call with a good photo. With the new ESC programme, participants can also find the volunteers themselves in the

SELECTION OF THE VOLUNTEERS



database from the solidarity corps website. When an opportunity is published in the database, the volunteers apply through this system and can leave a small motivation next to it. For this reason, there is not so much chance to stand out from the crowd for them creatively, which is a pity.

1. Screen

Delete the application letters with no motivation letter or those with a standard motive of wanting to save the world and travel through Europe, as well as those not addressed specifically to the hosting organisation. For example: 'Dear... (wrong name), I cannot wait to help with the kindergarden and learn the German language'.... This is most likely sent to every open call they could find.

2. Filter

When there are a lot of applications, it can be a great help to create a questionnaire asking specific questions. For example, what did they find interesting about the organisation (did they do some research?) or what kind of tasks would they like to do (or not). In this way, it is possible to compare volunteers more easily and collect them all in one spreadsheet.

3. First selection of candidates (longlist)

From this group, select around 10 people who stand out. Present these candidates to current volunteers and team members who are interested. Together discuss how to make a decision. After making a first selection, it is good practice to invite between three and five candidates for a Skype interview. It can help to make a list of some specific questions for the candidates together with colleagues.

4. Skype interviews (shortlist and selection)

When inviting candidates for an interview, offer them contact with current volunteers so that they also can ask questions of them. The questions they have are also important in the final decision. An initial Skype interview of up to half an hour is often enough to get the first impression, as well as asking and answering questions. It can be helpful to have a volunteer or staff member on hand during the interview to answer work-related questions and also to have a second opinion. Tell the candidates in advance, because it can make them nervous.

4. APPLY FOR THE GRANT

It is possible to make three applications a year for each project.

[\[APPLY HERE\]](#)

THIS ONLINE APPLICATION FORM INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING MAIN SECTIONS:

– Context

This section asks for general information about the type of project and which National Agency it is for.

– Participating organisation(s)

This section asks for information about the organisation and – if relevant – about any other organisation involved as partners in the project.

– Description and management of the project

These sections ask for information about all the stages of the project. In detailed questions, explain the plan and aim for the project, the expected outcomes and how everything will be managed and prepared, implementation of main activities and follow-up. This should follow the objectives of the programme, which can be found in the guidelines from Erasmus+ on page 29 and in the ESC guidelines on page 6.

– Budget

In this section, there is space for more information about the amount of the EU grant requested. This is automatically calculated according to the information provided (number of volunteers, where the volunteer comes from, where the organisation is based and whether extra support is needed).

THE REQUESTED GRANT IS DIVIDED INTO SEVERAL SECTIONS:

– Organisational Support – Project Management (€225 per participant)

To cover the planning, finances, coordination and communication between partners, administrative costs

– Travel (based on the travel distances per participant)

This covers a volunteer's return travel from the original country to the volunteering venue. For example, Jeanne is from Lyons, France. She will be a volunteer in the TEH office in Lund, Sweden. This covers her flight tickets to Lund at the start of the project and the ticket back to her country of origin, in this case €275. For travel distances between 500km and 1,999km: €275 per participant.

– Organisational support – activity costs (calculated per day, per participant)

An organisation receives money to provide the volunteer with accommodation, food (or extra cash), transport (this can be a public transport card or a bike, for example), payment of the coordinator, to support their activities such as personal projects or events they organise. This depends on the country where the host organisation is based. In Slovakia, the amount per day is €20 and in Sweden the sum is €27.

– Pocket money

This is the daily allowance volunteers are entitled to. The amount also depends on where the host organisation is based. This is between €3 and €6 per day, for example in Slovakia as well as in Sweden, a volunteer receives €5 a day.

– Linguistic support

There is the option for volunteers to use the online linguistic support system with which they can study themselves or they receive €150 support to pay a teacher (individual or group lessons).

THE FOLLOWING SIDE ACTIVITIES CAN ALSO BE FUNDED:

– Advance planning visits (APV)

These are planning visits to the country of the host organisation before the volunteer starts. The visits will be typically organised for activities involving young people with fewer opportunities or when the visit is a prerequisite to the successful implementation of the activities.

Participants with fewer opportunities can be involved in the visit to help integrate them fully into the project and complement any other preparatory activity. For example, volunteers with autism would benefit from a visit before starting their placement. Staff members and volunteers alike would benefit from experiencing what kind of tasks would work and which require some extra guidance or training.

– Complementary activities

These are relevant side activities designed to add value and augment the results of the project, as well as strengthening its impact at the local, regional and/or European level. Complementary activities could include: job shadowing, meetings, workshops, conferences, seminars, training courses, coaching etc.

The costs will not be covered 100%; the hosting organisation pays 20% of the total costs. Example: Volunteers could join one of the Trans Europe Halles meetings, if this could fit towards the whole project.

5. WAIT FOR THE GRANT DECISION AND PREPARE FOR ARRIVAL OF THE VOLUNTEERS

After the application is approved, a volunteering agreement needs to be set up. This is based on a draft provided by the National Agency and includes all details about the conditions, responsibilities and rights for the organisation as well as for the volunteers. All details that have been agreed together need to be included in this agreement, such as:

- Volunteer's tasks
- Number of working hours per week (max 32 hours)
- Free time/holidays
- Accommodation specification
- Any other expectations and commitments



6. START THE PROJECT

At the start of the project, some time will need to be taken to help the volunteers adapt to the new environment. Explain background information about the organisation by sharing documentation such as images or videos. All the key staff members can provide a sharing session to tell their personal story about how they came to the organisation, what they do and importantly, in which areas of cultural management the volunteers could learn from them.

7. IMPLEMENT PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Plan regular meetings with the volunteers to give and receive feedback. After the first two months, the volunteers will know their way around better and could be given more responsibilities. Have a look again at the project details and aims, as well as revisiting planned activities.

8. CLOSE THE PROJECT

After the end of the project, there are two months to submit the final report and upload the requested documentation to prove dissemination. When writing the final report, it can be useful to include notes and pictures collected during the project. Look back at the starting points and aims included in the application form?

After the volunteer has left, they will be asked to fill in a feedback questionnaire sent by the European Commission in which they reflect on how the project went, what they learned, how they improved their skills etc.

D. USEFUL LINKS

ESC guides created by the European Commission

There are two guides, one for the whole Erasmus programme (including all the different programmes) and one specific guide for the European Solidarity Corps (ESC). Below is a summary of the most relevant information to reduce reading time and explain terminology. The original guides can be helpful, however, when looking for more detailed information:

New programme guide for Erasmus+

[\[LINK\]](#)

New program guide for solidarity corps

[\[LINK\]](#)

General Facebook pages to share calls for volunteers

To find and publish (only) ESC projects:

[\[LINK\]](#)

ESC Vacancies

[\[LINK\]](#)

ESC projects

[\[LINK\]](#)

This group has been set up to share posts about the Erasmus+ projects (not only ESC) and follow them:

[\[LINK\]](#)

TEH volunteer coordinators group:

[\[LINK\]](#)

Information about the programme

An official website of the European Union, including information and opportunities for young people across Europe:

[\[LINK\]](#)

Contact list of national agencies

[\[LINK\]](#)

Animation video explaining the ESC program

[\[LINK\]](#)

INTRODUCTION

The second part of this manual shares the 'soft tissue' behind sending and receiving volunteers, and is more focussed on tips, tricks and experiences.

This part is based on my – Nienke Voorintholt's – experience as coordinator of the volunteering programme EVS and now ESC in Stanica, a cultural centre in Slovakia. I know the whole EVS/ESC process very well from both sides. In 2016, I came to Stanica as a volunteer from the Netherlands. I became part of the team and have been mainly working as the coordinator of the volunteers for the past three years.

Stanica's Director Marek Adamov was one of the first European volunteers from Slovakia and went to Kulturfabrik in Luxembourg. There he got to know of Trans Europe Halles, which had a great impact on our (European) development and vision. The first volunteer of Stanica came from France in 2003 and he was one of many volunteers who stayed and became part of the team.

Our motivation for being part of this programme is sharing our experience and knowledge. The voluntary work should be aimed at volunteers' personal and professional growth, as well as making a contribution to the organisation. We look for ways to motivate the volunteers through non-financial means and following the volunteers' needs – development of their individual potential.

The application process is not where the fun begins – the bureaucratic part can be rather draining. But it is worth going through from my experience: the energy – and sometimes also the struggle – with volunteers is what I love about it. For Stanica, the volunteering programme has always been equal to giving opportunities. It comes with a 'Why not? Just try!' mentality. This ensures that volunteers will learn a lot and as a host, you will often be surprised by new and fresh ideas.

PART 2: TIPS AND TRICKS FOR VOLUNTEERING

HOW TRANS EUROPE HALLES CENTRES HAVE DONE IT

POTENTIAL TASKS OF VOLUNTEERS

Try to find a good balance of tasks with a little bit of everything: stuff that just has to be done (but is maybe boring), everyday stuff that becomes part of a routine, as well as challenging tasks such as organising an event. The tasks should be useful and it can make a difference if you explain why it has to be done. Place it in the bigger picture, for example, working more effectively or providing good service.

Often volunteers have one main task, for example, photography. However, avoid the volunteers only experiencing the events through their lens or spending their day always behind the computer editing pictures. Practice makes perfect but a change of scenery or activity would definitely be needed once in a while. The tasks the volunteers do very much depend on their interests and ability. This does not mean that volunteers only do what they like. Some tasks are just part of the job. By writing those explicitly in the volunteering agreement, they agree to that by signing the agreement.

List of possible tasks:

PHOTOGRAPHY VIDEOGRAPHY	SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT
TICKET SALES	DISTRIBUTION OF POSTERS
GRAPHIC DESIGN	ASSISTING LIGHT / SOUND TECHNICIANS / STAGEHAND
WRITING TRANSLATING	ASSISTING / LEADING WORKSHOPS OR CHILDREN'S ART CLASSES
GARDENING	SMALL MAINTENANCE
COOKING (FOR GROUPS)	INSTALLING (ART) EXHIBITIONS
IMPROVING SUSTAINABILITY	WORKING ON ARCHIVES

REFLECTIONS

TIME INVESTED WILL PAY BACK

Include the volunteers in the team. In one year, they should have a basic understanding of what the day-to-day operation of your centre looks like. First, make them feel part of the team, include them in the meetings by speaking (partly) in English, give them responsibilities and feedback on what they do. You can never show enough appreciation. This will definitely help them to take more initiative and give back more energy.

It is not always easy to include the volunteers in the team because everyone is busy, has stresses or is not patient enough to explain things. So the task for the volunteer coordinator is to work with staff members and explain that it is worth investing some extra time in volunteers because it will often pay back many times over. If you know that some team members are not willing to work with volunteers, then it can sometimes be better to accept this and not force them into it.

Some volunteers ask about ways of working, which will help you to reflect and improve what you have been doing, maybe for years, in a certain way.

CHALLENGES FOR THE COORDINATOR

Being too involved. There are many coordinators who will maybe be recognised in the role of mother or father (also with just a few years' age difference). It is a great quality if you are empathic but this role should not impact your personal life.

If the collaboration does not go as planned, you will be advocating on both sides: for the volunteers and for other staff members. You will have to defend and confront both ways.

I have identified 5 challenges during my time as a coordinator. Then, I asked other volunteering coordinators working at TEH members about their experiences about the benefits of volunteering for their organisations. Finally, some tips that can help you for your organisation hosting a volunteer.

CHALLENGES

Challenge 1: Socialising

You did your best to find people who would fit in the team but it doesn't always turn out as expected every time and sometimes it just doesn't click. After a few months, you may already be exhausted by indulging in uncomfortable small talk with the volunteers.

It's OK if you don't have a connection on a personal level but still you could develop a working relationship. Find a way for the volunteers to create friendships outside of work by joining a sports club or attending other events. It's important that they gain some positive energy out of socialising, wherever that might be.

Challenge 2: Passivity

At first perhaps you thought that the volunteer is shy and does not dare to take the initiative, but after a while you realise your volunteer is not as productive as you thought. The problem, most of the time, is in the way of working. The volunteer might work better under a strict schedule and with firm consequences. Another option is that they are more motivated when they feel freedom in a given task. It can be a compromise that there is a balance between the things they have to do and want to do. The solution is as with so many things – talking, on a regular basis.

Challenge 3: Homesickness

When volunteers suffer from homesickness, it can help to let them go home for a week. If this is not possible due to financial reasons, you can discuss if there are any other ways to reduce the homesickness. Maybe there is someone from their country who the volunteers can connect with. Another solution might be to ask the volunteers to organise an event where they will take you to the country, and give space for reflection about what is special about their home country. Provide a budget for some food and drinks so that this can become a social occasion.

Challenge 4: Irregular working hours

In most cultural centres it is fluctuating whether it is busy or not. Some months there are more events than other months. This means that often volunteers don't have the same number of hours every week and some days we work 12 hours because of an upcoming concert, for example. This is something you probably told them from the beginning, but it can be hard for someone who is not used to this. The best way is to provide some extra free days or reward the volunteers to show appreciation – a trip somewhere or a free dinner, for example.

Challenge 5: Language

Most likely you will not have the same mother tongue as your volunteer(s). Often the main language of communication is English, but some team members or visitors would be not comfortable speaking in a different language all the time. The volunteers might feel excluded when everybody around them speaks in their own language, but it will definitely motivate them to learn the language. After all this is one of the main objectives and it will also help to integrate in the local community. Of course, speaking slowly and simply would make it much easier to understand and show solidarity with the volunteer.

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

Some of our TEH centres told us about the main benefits of taking on volunteers through the ESC programme. Fresh ideas and diversity were two of the main benefits mentioned:

ROJC (Croatia):

“There is a fresh air, and definitely new ideas, coming into our team with each volunteer, and we learn more about other cultures. Volunteers can take care of creative tasks that we never have time for and they can come up with creative solutions! It also gives us really strong feedback on our organisation – since the volunteers are often new and see us from outside – so thanks to them we keep on improving our organisational environment.”

A4 (Slovakia):

“Why do it? We get fresh and new ideas coming from young people; a positive outlook, enthusiasm and willingness to contribute; multiculturalism; pluralism of ideas; the dynamism of activities conducted in our centre; opportunities for the team to develop and grow; development of already established programmes and activities of our organisation; connecting with other centres and organisations on local and European level; travelling to meetings and trainings hosted by the National Agency. So why not do it?”

Introducing new ways of working and expertise was also mentioned as a benefit:

STANICA (Slovakia):

“Volunteers help us reflect on how we work, and change ways of working. They bring in new ideas, (fresh) energy, and connect our audiences with European youngsters and their perspectives. In addition, it has proven a way of finding new staff members and of expanding our network.”

Intercultural exchange was also considered to be really important:

P60 (Netherlands):

“We feel (more European), we get new fresh ideas, and volunteers coming from abroad also stimulate Dutch young adults to use ESC.”

FREIWILLIGENDIENSTINITIATIVE TURBINA POMERANIA (Germany):

“EVS and ESC are a great opportunity for international exchange in the rural areas of the Euroregion Pomerania and provides intercultural experience for young people.”

MANIFATTURE KNOS (Italy):

“Participating in EVS/ESC makes us a cultural centre at a European level. It's a great opportunity to send or host volunteers to increase our international dimension and contribute to the growth and development of young people.”

SOME TIPS

Tip 1:

Depending on circumstances, starting with two or three volunteers can be easier. It is often the case that a volunteer who is alone working in an organisation needs more guidance and support, especially in the beginning. Being with other volunteers makes the experience a more social and shared experience.

Tip 2:

It depends on each National Agency but the turnaround time from application to results is about eight weeks. In the time between selection of the volunteers and the start of the project, it helps to be in regular contact with them. Share some updates on the organisation's activities, ask what the volunteers are doing (finishing school, goodbye parties etc). It helps a lot to have a stronger relationship before the volunteers arrive so that they feel included.

Tip 3:

By giving the volunteers a lot of information in advance, it will be easier for them to adjust to their new situation.

Tip 4:

The questions in the application form place a lot of emphasis on the word solidarity and how this project is contributing to solidarity. When answering this question, bear in mind that 'cultural activities are serving the community'. For example, the volunteers in a cultural centre have the possibility to enrich the local community on several levels – by creating a dialogue, increasing critical thinking or bringing positive life to our community. If you are a Trans Europe Halles member, don't forget to emphasise the fact that you are a member of a European network.

Tip 5:

It is helpful to work with a general planning framework for the first two weeks and to divide all the information and instructions into smaller chunks. This is often easier than spending two days being overloaded with information. If there are other volunteers, discuss with them how to welcome the newcomer. Make sure to introduce the volunteers well to the team before they come and after they arrive. A welcome party or lunch can be a good way to start and to get to know each other in an informal way.

Tip 6:

Personal project - combining a personal project with the volunteering experience can be a great way of setting some learning goals and initiating an activity that the volunteers can work on more independently, while also being relevant for your organisation. Examples might include organising an exhibition, community dinner, a workshop or editing a publication.



FUTURE COLLABORATIONS WITHIN THE NETWORK

ESC Hub

Finding good volunteers who understand TEH values and ways of working is often the hardest part. But most TEH centres are filled with interesting young people who might be very suitable for this programme, and who would benefit a lot from taking part. The biggest challenge seems to be reaching out to them. Since there is a lot of proof that inter-network exchanges can work very well, and that everyone can learn so much from each other by sharing ideas and information, future TEH Meetings will always include a session dedicated to the ESC programme.

During this ESC Hub we can exchange experiences, discover new opportunities, discuss difficulties, help newcomers and share exchange opportunities. The recently launched TEH App for [\[APPLE\]](#) and [\[ANDROID\]](#) also provides an opportunity to strengthen our connection.

Interactive Map of ESC opportunities in TEH

On the interactive map on the [\[TEH WEBSITE\]](#), it is possible to select 'European Solidarity Corps' and choose the option of either hosting or sending organisation. To exchange information and promote an open call for volunteers, there is a [\[FACEBOOK PAGE\]](#) for coordinators within Trans Europe Halles.

Die Bäckerei – Kulturbackstube AUSTRIA – INNSBRUCK
Rojc Alliance CROATIA – PULA
KC Malý Berlín CZECH REPUBLIC – MALOVICE
Švestkový Dvůr / Plum Yard CZECH REPUBLIC – MALOVICE
Veřejný sál Hraničář CZECH REPUBLIC – ÚSTÍ NAD LABEM
Freiwilligendienstinitiative Turbina
Pomerania / STRAZE GERMANY – GREIFSWALD
Associazione Oltre APS ITALY – BOLOGNA
Sud Est cultural organisation / Manifatture Knos ITALY – LECCE
Zō Centro Culture Contemporanee ITALY – CATANIA
Anibar KOSOVO – PEJA
NOASS LATVIA – RIGA
Kanepes Kulturas centrs LATVIA – RIGA
Timis County Youth Foundation – FITT ROMANIA – TIMIȘOARA
A4 - asociácia združení pre súčasnú kultúru SLOVAKIA – BRATISLAVA
Truc sphérique SLOVAKIA – ŽILINA
Mejeriet SWEDEN – LUND
P60 THE NETHERLANDS - AMSTELVEEN



COLLECTION OF GOOD PRACTICES FROM TRANS EUROPE HALLES CENTRES

“There are many inspiring stories that we could share, for example, such as the volunteer hosted from Denmark who organised a big festival during his EVS. [\[LINK\]](#) Two years after his EVS project, he returned to Slovakia and set up several projects here that also our current EVS volunteers were involved in, and he also inspired them to start their own projects.”

(A4, Slovakia)

“Dušan, one of Stanica’s staff members, got a bit bored with his work at the centre after a few years and decided to go for EVS. He had a great year and returned to Stanica with fresh energy and became the volunteer coordinator. We have many examples of volunteers who stay after the project finishes. Two are currently still a part of the team after having been volunteers: Ints (for 12 years) and Nienke (for 4 years).”

(Stanica, Slovakia)

“Most of the volunteers stayed after their project in the Netherlands. Our volunteer Eren from Turkey, for example, had studied business there, and discovered here that he had talent for light design. He learned all the technical skills and was one of the best light designers for shows that we ever had. After returning to Turkey, he also found a job as light designer.”

(P60, The Netherlands)

“There is more than one successful story, but the one we want to highlight is that one volunteer whom we hosted from Morocco was really engaged in one of our projects. This led her to a job in a nature conservation organization in the region and she now lives in the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.”

(Freiwilligendienstinitiative Turbina Pomerania, Germany)

“Team members Michal and Juraj from Malý Berlín went to Serbia to present short movies on a film festival in Belgrade. Timea was volunteering and co-working on that festival. Somehow, they met and talked and she suggested that she would come to join our organisation to volunteer here. It was amazing also because she had exactly the same interests and hobbies that we needed and accepted.”

(Malý Berlín, Slovakia)



“First and foremost, being in a place that is hugely different from home invites you to think about your own identity, skills and flaws. I was truly given a space to see who I am from closer by, and work on myself personally and professionally. Second, being around an inspiring, diverse group of people (such that EVS provides) will not only teach you so much about the world, but it will also give you so many ideas for projects that you can develop at home. Sharing thoughts, experiences and practices with each other created a wonderful pool of knowledge that each of us benefited from. Last but not least, you can never underestimate how deeply travel can change you. This is especially critical for us Kosovars, knowing that there are so many difficulties for us to travel around casually, something that a big part of the world takes for granted.”

(Plator Gashi, volunteer at Anibar, Poland)

“In addition to the artistic and social skills that I have acquired during the exchange project – and which are proving invaluable in my professional career – what is most important for me to redeem from this experience is the possibility of transformation both personally and as part of a community.”

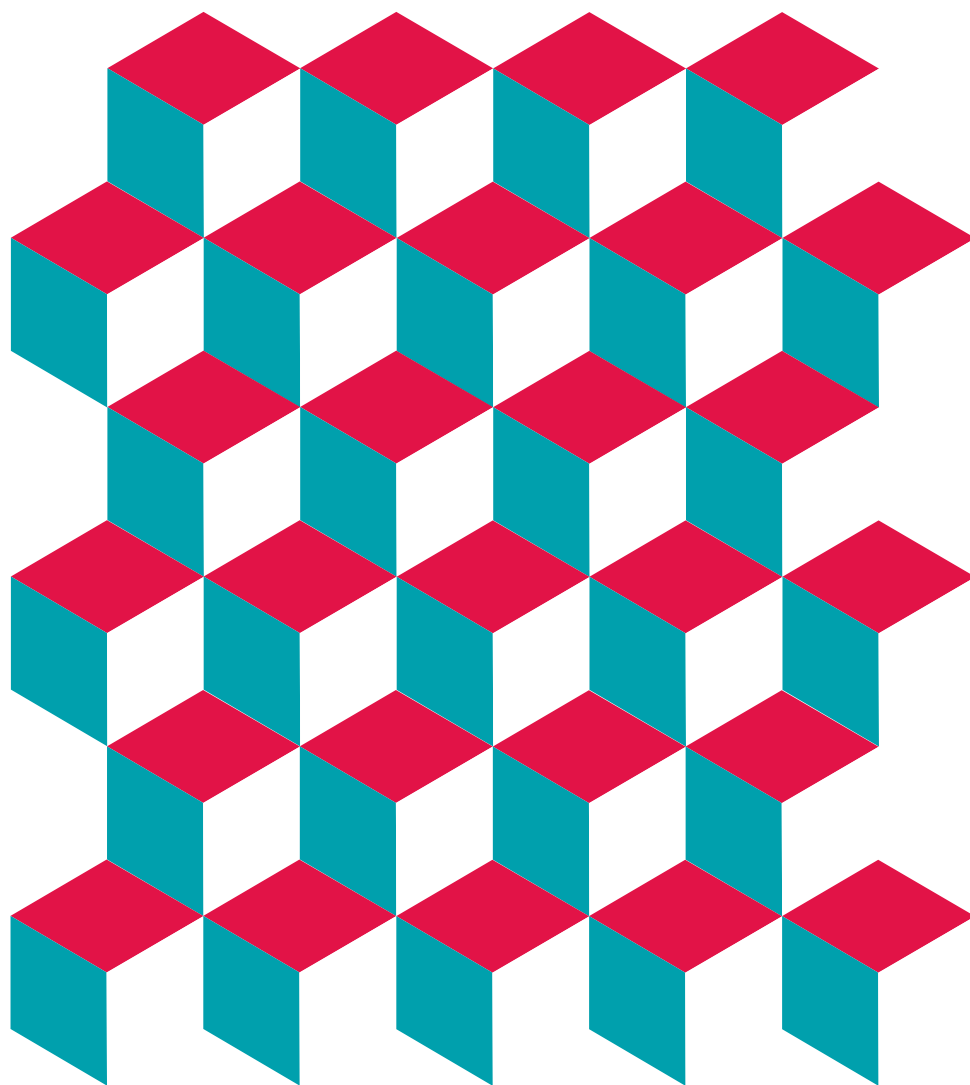
(Manifatture Knos / Sud Est cultural organisation, Italy)



stanica žilina-záriečie

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Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union



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