



Recommendations

about the scope of a comprehensive
training course for potential volunteers
aged over 50



Ways to enhance active aging through volunteering – WEActiveVol

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership

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This material highlights a series of recommendations for managing volunteers over 50 years old. The recommendations originated from the practical experience of the partner organizations involved in the Erasmus+ "*Ways to enhance active aging through volunteering – WEActiveVol*" project. Throughout the project, the partners have been exploring the theme of volunteering by exchanging ideas, knowledge, experiences and good practices.

This document is one of the project result. It contains descriptions of the essential elements that constitute the minimum requirements for preparing a comprehensive training for volunteers aged over 50. The recommendations are destined for educators, trainers, coaches, volunteer coordinators, practitioners working in the field of volunteering and active aging with the aim to provide valuable information on how to prepare training program tailored to the needs of people aged over 50.

The objectives of a general training course for 50+ volunteers

Any training activity starts with setting learning objectives. Here are some learning objectives the partners have decided on:

- to explain the volunteers the role and importance of volunteering;
- to give the volunteers the same level of understanding the volunteer project (information, project objectives and activities etc.) and of the organization;
- to get to know each other and help build the team of volunteers;
- to increase the feeling of belonging to the group/organization;
- to enable volunteers to work with different target groups;
- to develop some skills necessary for a specific volunteer activity, if needed.

Investing in providing training for the 50+ volunteers brings about meeting a few long-term objectives such as:

- making them aware of personal skills, encouraging them to be more active, boosting their self-confidence and giving support for them to take initiative;
- to support their engagement as a long term commitment.



Administrative aspects for the training courses

From a logistic point of view, a training session dedicated to those 50+ should include the following elements:

- duration: 1 day or 2, the most. Anything over two days could prove to be not so effective for volunteers at this age;
- hours/day: 4 – 6 hours/day. More than 6 hours per day could be too tiring; anything less than 4 hours would not meet the objectives mentioned at the beginning of the document.
- min/max number of participants: 5-15 volunteers. It is the partners' common view that the group should be limited to a maximum of 15 participants to be able to facilitate direct communication among all the volunteers.

The general content of the training course for 50+ volunteers

This document does not address specific skills needed for certain volunteer activities (such as working with children, or graphic facilitation, or teaching a native language etc.). Our focus is on providing content for a general training session that could be useful to any volunteer over 50 years old. As such, some suggested topics to be included in the training include the following:

About volunteering:

- Introduce the concept of active aging.
- Theoretical background about volunteering – definitions, concepts and practice.
- Basic legal information on volunteering: volunteer contract, timesheets, job descriptions.
- Types of volunteering.
- Rights and responsibilities of volunteers and the host organizations.
- Benefits of volunteering.
- Explore their motivation for volunteering.
- Understand what are some of their roadblocks/barriers in being engaged as volunteers.



Practical information about the volunteer activities:

- general aspects of the project: aims of the volunteer project, key performance indicators, mission;
- time frame of activities;
- give inspiring examples from practice;
- dissemination of the volunteer activities;
- training on how to handle difficult situations, how to address problems and conflicts (concrete examples, situations etc.);
- about the beneficiaries of the volunteer activities.

Others:

- communication among the volunteer group members (channels of communication, the rules, etc.);
- questions and answers.

Working with 50+ volunteers

The project team generally recommends using interactive methods so that the volunteers feel free and empowered to talk to each other, share from their own experiences and express their ideas and suggestions. Here are a few methods that could be used:

- brainstorming,
- team building exercise,
- debates,
- energizers,
- talking about previous experiences,
- working in pairs → new ones + experienced ones,
- role games,
- workshops,
- story-telling,
- e-training,
- visiting host organization,
- videos, movies,
- games,
- improvisation,
- learning by doing.

Working with 50+ volunteers

Below are a few tips and tricks on engaging volunteers who are over 50 years old that come from the vast experience of volunteer involving organizations.

What to do as a volunteer coordinator for volunteers who are over 50 years old:

- teach/inform those who are over 50 years old how to start to be involved in volunteering;
- respect their limits (physical/health/energy);
- organize regular group meetings;
- clarify expectations;
- give them freedom to select their volunteer activities/let them choose;
- offer ongoing feedback on the work;
- offer different possibilities for volunteering;
- have time to discuss about problems;
- organize teambuilding activities;
- provide opportunities for learning and personal development of the volunteers;
- allow them to use their personal knowledge/skills;
- facilitate their engagement with younger volunteers;
- provide a platform for them to talk with other people about what they are doing;
- offer public recognition of their work (in the newspaper, on the Internet etc.);
- understand that they are more than just volunteers – they are also potential recruiters; of new volunteers, ambassadors and marketers of your project.

How to act as a volunteer coordinator for volunteers over 50:

- thank them for their work;
- be patient;
- appreciate the importance and usefulness of volunteers' time and effort;
- support them;
- be flexible.





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