

Volontheke

summary of research results on volunteer services for
migrants/refugees in UK, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and
Hungary



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Volontheke

- To identify existing practice in partner countries in order to define recommendations for improvement of volunteer services in times of refugee crisis.
- Questionnaire for volunteers (preparation and education of volunteers, organization of support for refugees/migrants, support to volunteers, recommendations, etc.).
- Questionnaire for refugees (contacts of volunteers, organization of volunteer support, sensibility of volunteers, etc.).

Volunteers

- 71 questionnaires
- Providing support through organized work of NGOs, church or as self-organized groups of volunteers.
- Support – not precisely defined (mostly delivering humanitarian aid, social support and creative workshops).

Education of volunteers

- No structured and organized preparation and education of volunteers, mostly as orientation on the field (division of tasks, „on job trainings”).
- Some volunteers were involved in educations in the field of providing first aid, psychosocial support, crisis response, assistance in disaster, international law – asylum seekers, volunteering, cultural awareness, working with vulnerable groups, etc.

Organization and coordination of volunteers

- Well organized within their own NGO.
- Self-organized groups of volunteers – problems with coordination - tensions among volunteers.
- Poor cooperation between various NGOs on the field.
- Sense of usefulness, valued and appreciated.
- Problems: defining priorities in distributing humanitarian aid (who are those that are in need the most).

Support for volunteers

- Psychosocial support available to some of volunteers.
- Most of the volunteers don't recognize this kind of support as necessary and needed – „burn out”.
- Good relations among volunteers and volunteer coordinators (exchange of experiences – mutual support – debriefings).

Suggestions and recommendations recognized by volunteers

- Centralized national coordination of volunteers (on-line platform – specific skills, more available volunteers, etc.).
- Better preparation and education for field work (including principles of humanitarian work).
- Regular meetings with volunteers (exchange of information, better communication).
- Closer cooperation among NGOs and governmental organizations (flow of information).

Refugees

- 126 questionnaires
- Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Ethiopia, Libya
- Situated at refugee camps, asylum centres

Engagement and organization of volunteers

- Refugees are mostly satisfied with engagement and organization of volunteers.
- Commitment of volunteers is visible.
- In some countries there is no clear recognition and distinction between volunteer services and services provided by employees.
- There are individual cases of complaints of volunteers.

Refugee care

- Inadequate infrastructure (toilets, showers – low hygiene standards).
- Not enough cooked meals.
- Inappropriate medical care.

Sensitivity of volunteers

- Satisfaction with understanding of the crisis and situation of refugees.
- Most of the volunteers are emphatic, kind, supportive, trying to solve the emerged problems, tolerant.
- There are also some negative experiences with volunteers (mainly during the distribution of humanitarian aid).

Communication with volunteers

- In general, refugees appreciate communication with volunteers and find it very helpful for their stay in general.
- Language barriers (lack of interpreters).
- There were also some negative experiences – lack of communication, inappropriate communication.

Recommendations for improvement

- Better prepared, educated and supervised volunteers and employees.
- Create better conditions for volunteering.
- Providing legal information for refugees.
- Better care (food, shelter, hygiene standards, etc.).
- Language courses.
- Needs assessment.
- Organizing psychosocial support.

CONCLUSION

- There is a visible need for structured and organized national/international approach for organizing volunteer services in times of refugee crisis.
- To develop and set-up educational standards for volunteers working with refugees.
- To provide psychological support for volunteers (and refugees).
- To set-up effective volunteer programmes and services that respond to the existing needs of refugees.
- To design and implement integrational strategies, policies and programmes.