

Project "ATTACH – Adult Education Addressing Today's Challenges"

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Human Resource Management of Adult and Senior Coordinators and Volunteers

Work Package 2 – Handbook



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Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction | 3 |
| European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) | 4 |
| Introduction to the European Citizens' Initiative | 4 |
| Origins and Development | 5 |
| The Legal Basis | 7 |
| Referendums, petitions and ECIs: What's the difference? | 8 |
| Who is eligible to participate in an ECI? | 10 |
| The procedure of a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) | 10 |
| Stage 1: Citizens' Committee | 10 |
| Stage 2: Registration | 11 |
| Stage 3: Collection of Statements of Support | 12 |
| Stage 4: Verification and Certification | 12 |
| Stage 5: Submission and Examination | 12 |
| Successful European Citizens' Initiatives | 13 |
| Right2Water | 13 |
| One of Us | 14 |
| STOP VIVISECTION | 15 |
| Ban glyphosate and protect people and the environment from toxic pesticides | 16 |
| End the Cage Age | 17 |
| Minority SafePack | 18 |
| | 18 |
| Managing Adult and Senior Coordinators and Volunteers | 20 |
| Development and Design of Roles | 21 |
| Recruitment | 24 |
| Interviewing | 25 |
| Training | 27 |
| Monitoring | 28 |
| Recognition | 29 |
| Bibliography | 30 |

Introduction

Today, European democracies grapple with a significant obstacle, which is the waning political involvement of their citizens. As per the European Commission's findings, people in Europe exhibit not just disinterest but also apathy and estrangement from traditional political processes and organized participation. Driven by the firm conviction that active and engaged citizens serve as the foundation of a robust democracy and a vibrant civil society, the ATTACH project, which stands for Adult Education Addressing Today's Challenges, seeks to address the adult educators' continuous professional development needs, mainly focusing on enhancing the competencies that enable the active participation of adult learners in society. The consortium aims to tackle the challenge posed by traditional educational methods, recognizing that they may not appeal to adult learners, particularly those with fewer opportunities, such as individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Such learners often feel uncomfortable in formal settings.

The overarching project's goal is the promotion of active citizenship through adult education. To achieve this objective, the partners concentrated on developing the competencies of adult educators and introducing them to innovative educational methods and techniques.

In the initial phase of the project - the needs analysis phase - the partners expressed their intention to engage in European Initiatives facilitated by volunteers. These initiatives focus on causes that matter to adult and senior learners, including:

- Human Rights and Climate Change
- The right of EU citizens to data protection and online privacy
- Immigration and tolerance of difference
- Euroscepticism

As a preliminary step, the partners recognised the necessity to standardise procedures related to the design, implementation, and follow-up of voluntary projects for social change. The current *Handbook of Good Practices and Tools* specifically addresses Human Resource Management for Adult and Senior Coordinators and Volunteers involved in the implementation of European Citizens' Initiatives.

European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)

Introduction to the European Citizens' Initiative

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) serves as a significant mechanism within the European Union (EU), established by the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007, for fostering direct democracy within the European Union, by allowing EU citizens to actively participate in shaping EU policies. This initiative grants the authority to one million EU citizens, spread across **at least** one-quarter of the Member States (seven in number), to request the European Commission to propose a relevant legal act related to the implementation of EU Treaties. This empowering right to request the Commission to initiate legislative action places citizens on equal footing with the European Parliament and the European Council, both of which possess the authority under Articles 225 and 241 TFEU, respectively¹.

Consequently, the ECI plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of participatory politics and is hailed as the most significant development in transnational democracy since the introduction of direct elections to the European Parliament. It functions as an inclusive, engaging and interactive tool, empowering EU citizens to actively engage in the EU policy-making process and call upon the European Commission to address matters of public concern. This active citizen involvement in EU decision-making is facilitated through a bottom-up approach, enabling individuals to initiate political discussions and raise awareness about issues that unite citizens across Europe. While the responsibility for proposing pan-European legislation lies with the European Commission, the ECI remains vital for setting the agenda and promoting a more direct and participatory form of democracy.

The primary objective of this tool is to bridge the gap between EU policy-making and its citizens, expanding the scope of public debate and thereby allowing citizens to participate more actively in the democratic life of the Union². The Commission carefully evaluates ECI

¹ *European Citizens' Initiative*. (2023). From WIKIPEDIA: The Free Encyclopedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Citizens%27_Initiative

² *European Citizens' Initiative*. (n.d.). From Participedia: <https://participedia.net/method/4344>

proposals, even though it is not obligated to advance them for discussion in the EU Parliament. Citizens have the freedom to develop an ECI on a wide range of subjects, provided that these subjects fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission.

Citizens can shape the EU agenda through the following areas:

- Justice, Freedom and Security
- Non-Discrimination & Citizenship
- Employment & Social Affairs
- Education, Training, Youth & Sport
- Humanitarian Aid, Development & Cooperation
- Environment & Climate Action
- Energy
- Agriculture & Fisheries
- Public Health
- Consumer Protection

This section offers a summary of the regulatory framework governing the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) and outlines the procedural steps from the inception of the ECI to its ultimate approval and registration by the European Commission.

Origins and Development

The roots of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) can be traced back to the Constitutional Convention on the Future of Europe in 2002 – 2003³. Through the concerted efforts of activists and the Convention members, the ECI was hastily incorporated into the Constitutional Treaty.

In 2005 the Constitutional Treaty faced rejection in national referendums in two countries, France and the Netherlands. As a consequence of that, the Intergovernmental Conference undertook the preparation of the Treaty of Lisbon. The ratification of this treaty encountered

³ *European Citizens' Initiative*. (n.d.). Retrieved 2023 from WIKIPEDIA:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Citizens%27_Initiative

delays due to an Irish referendum, where it was initially rejected in June 2008 but later overturned in a second referendum in October 2009⁴.

In December 2007, the Treaty of Lisbon was signed by all EU Member States. Subsequently, on 11 November 2009, the European Commission initiated the process for the European Citizens' Initiative by publishing a Green Paper and launching a public consultation on the ECI.

The council and the commission reached a preliminary compromise on 14 June 2010. Following the production of multiple drafts and opinions, which underwent discussions in the Constitutional Affairs and Petitions Committees, the European Parliament, on 15 December 2010, ultimately voted on the ECI Regulation. After a year of negotiations, all three primary EU institutions—the European Commission, the Council, and the European Parliament—reached a final agreement on the ECI Regulation on 16 February 2011.

The inspiration for this initiative came from Switzerland, a non-EU member. Switzerland, with its extensive experience in direct democracy, employing tools such as the federal popular initiative (since 1848) and the optional referendum (since 1874), served as a model for the development of the ECI⁵.

The European Commission selected the symbolic date of May 9th, 2012, known as the Europe Day, to launch the first ECI officially - Fraternité 2020 (F2020). The Initiative was formally registered on 9 May and was assigned the registration number ECI(2012)000001. Unfortunately, F2020 failed to reach the required number of signatures.

In 2015, the Commission issued the initial report on the implementation of the Citizens' Initiative Regulation and initiated a review of the regulations. The rules for the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) underwent a comprehensive overhaul in 2017 following the Commission's endorsement of a relevant proposal. This revision was a response to input from stakeholders and insights gathered from open public consultations and recommendations put forth by the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. In

⁴ *European Citizens' Initiative*. (n.d.). Retrieved 2023 from WIKIPEDIA:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Citizens%27_Initiative

⁵ *European Citizens' Initiative*. (2023). From WIKIPEDIA: The Free Encyclopedia:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Citizens%27_Initiative

2018, the Commission released a second report on the application of the Regulation on the Citizens' Initiative, and in 2019, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted new legislative rules.

The implementation of ECI rules faced challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the Commission introduced temporary measures to address complications arising from the imposed restrictive measures. These new regulations include provisions allowing for an extension of the collection periods for citizens' initiatives.

The Legal Basis

The legal foundation for the Citizens' Initiative is outlined in Article 11, Paragraph 4 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Article 24, Paragraph 1 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). These articles were introduced with the Treaty of Lisbon, in contrast to the Treaty of Maastricht (1993), which established the rights of petitioning the European Parliament and appealing to the Ombudsman. However, petitions and the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) differ significantly in terms of their purpose, recipients and requirements.

The practical procedures, conditions, and processes of the ECI are defined in Regulation 2019/788 on the European Citizens' Initiative, which has been in effect since January 1, 2020. Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 2019/1779 also establishes technical specifications for the ECI's online signature collection systems.

Regulation 2019/788 replaced the original Regulation 211/2011. Initiatives registered before December 31, 2019, are still subject to certain provisions of the old rules. These include general rules under Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 and online signature collection under Regulation (EU) No 1179/2011.

The new Regulation requires a review by January 1, 2024, and subsequently every three years. During the review process, the Commission presents a report on the implementation of the ECI

regulation, considering possible revisions. The European Parliament responds with a report containing further recommendations⁶.

Referendums, petitions and ECIs: What's the difference?⁷

| Petition | ECI | Referendum |
|--|---|------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petitions are directed towards the European Parliament, serving as the immediate representatives of EU citizens. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECI allows citizens to urge the European Commission to introduce new legislative proposals directly, provided they garner substantial support across the EU. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petitions do not require a minimum number of signatures or a minimum geographical spread of support in multiple European countries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To initiate an ECI, the involvement of at least seven EU citizens living in seven distinct EU countries is necessary. Moreover, an ECI requires at least 1 million signatures for consideration by | |

⁶ *European Citizens' Initiative*. (n.d.). Retrieved 2023 from WIKIPEDIA:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Citizens%27_Initiative

⁷ *What is the difference between an ECI and a petition?* (2014). Retrieved 2023 from European Parliament: News: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20140214BKG36173/background-note-on-right2water-european-citizens-initiative/4/what-is-the-difference-between-an-eci-and-a-petition>

| EU governing bodies. | | |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petitions may be submitted by EU citizens as well by natural or legal persons residing or having their registered office in a member state, either individually or in association with other citizens or persons. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECI serves as a tool for EU citizens (and not governments) in order to strengthen their participation within decision-making institutes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A referendum is a tool primarily used by member state governments to address citizens, asking them to accept or reject a law. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIs propose issues for EU Institutions to consider, leading to an examination or adoption of new legislation. When it comes to presenting an issue, an ECI extends the binary choice of a simple YES or NO decision. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referendums present a binary choice (YES or NO). |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ECI can only lead to the acceptance or creation of a law; it cannot demand the rejection of a law. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens can only accept or reject laws proposed by parliament. |

Who is eligible to participate in an ECI?

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) allows only EU citizens –individuals who are nationals of a Member State – to engage in the initiative. Non-EU nationals are not eligible to initiate a citizens' initiative, be part of a citizens' committee or express support for it. To participate in any aspect of the process, individuals must meet the age requirement to vote in European Parliament elections, which is generally 18 years old, except for Austria, where the minimum age is 16.

While Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) can participate in citizens' committees, they cannot be considered one of the necessary seven citizens and, as such, cannot be mentioned on the committee registration form. Furthermore, participants in citizens' committees must be residents of at least seven different Member States.

The procedure of a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)

An ECI undergoes several stages, and citizens interested in initiating one should carefully consider essential practical aspects beforehand. The ECI development process includes the creation of a Citizens' Committee, the Registration, the Collection of Statements of Support, the Verification and Certification, and ultimately, the Submission and examination of the proposal. A detailed, step-by-step overview of this process is provided below.

Stage 1: Citizens' Committee

The initial step in the ECI process involves the formation of a citizens' committee. This committee should consist of a minimum of 7 EU citizens residing in 7 different EU countries. This requirement underscores the initiative's aim to unite citizens on matters of pan-European significance rather than focusing solely on national interests. Committee members must possess the eligibility to vote in European elections and be at least 18 years old. Additionally, they must appoint both a representative and a substitute to serve as contact persons for the initiative. These seven individuals also have the option to establish a legal entity in one of the EU countries to oversee the initiative. Notably, it's important to clarify that Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) can be registered members of the initiative's committees, but they cannot be included as part of the essential seven citizens, meaning they should not be listed on the committee registration form.

Stage 2: Registration

After the establishment of the Committee, the initiative must undergo a registration process with the Commission. To do so, committee members must first create an organizer account, followed by a request for registration through the European Citizens' Initiative website. According to the "Guide to the European Citizens' Initiative", the application form should include details such as the initiative's title, its purpose and objectives, the relevant provisions of the EU Treaties, personal information of the minimum seven organizers (identifying the representative and substitute), including their email addresses and telephone numbers, names of other group members, and documented proof of all funding and support sources of the initiative.

For the registration process to be completed, it is necessary the Commission to conduct a thorough examination. During this examination, the Commission verifies several key factors, including:

- Confirmation that the group of organizers has been properly assembled
- Assessment of whether the Initiative falls within the Commission's authority to take action
- Ensuring that the Initiative does not exhibit abusive, frivolous, or vexatious characteristics, nor contradicts the EU values outlined in the EU Treaties or the rights enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

The examination period normally spans two months. After this period, the Commission decides on whether to approve or reject the initiative. However, if the proposal does not entirely fall within the Commission's jurisdiction, a second examination period is initiated, granting the initiative organizers an additional two months to revise the proposal.

Stage 3: Collection of Statements of Support

If a proposal is officially registered and made publicly available, the organisers are granted a 12-month period to gather 1 million signatures, formally referred to as *Statements of Support*. Any citizens from a Member State are eligible to sign a citizens' initiative as long as they meet the age requirement for voting in European Parliament elections. These statements of support can be collected either in physical form or online, but they must adhere to specific forms that comply with the relevant regulations.

The final set of regulations stipulates that signatures must originate from a minimum of one-quarter of the EU's countries, which translates to 7 out of 27. However, to ensure that the 1 million signatures are reasonably representative and not disproportionately derived from just one or two Member States, the initiative is required to gather a minimum number of signatories from each of these 7 member states. This threshold is directly linked to the population of each Member State. Consequently, the minimum number of signatories from Cyprus is 4.230, whereas Croatia is expected to provide double this number, 8.460 signatures and Germany 67.680.

Stage 4: Verification and Certification

Once the organizing committee has collected the necessary number of signatures and fulfilled the relevant national thresholds, national authorities must verify the signatures from their polity, within a three-month period. If verified, the organizing committee is able to present the initiative in front of the Commission formally.

Stage 5: Submission and Examination

After the successful completion of the verification process and the attainment of the required minimum number of supporting statements, the initiative becomes eligible for official submission to the Commission for thorough review. The examination phase can extend for a maximum of six months, following which the Commission will extend an invitation to the organisers of the Initiative for a public hearing in the Parliament. This provides the members of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) with an opportunity to present their perspectives on the issue in question and elaborate on the reasons necessitating action by the EU. Subsequently, the Parliament may engage in deliberation and pass a resolution, thereby contributing to the ECI's pursuit of political support.

Successful European Citizens' Initiatives

Right2Water

On March 21, 2013, Right2Water achieved the milestone of gathering over one million signatures, becoming the first successful ECI in history. By May 7, 2013, it had also met the required signature quota in seven different countries. The signature collection phase concluded on September 7, 2013, with a grand total of 1.857.605 signatures⁸.

The Right2Water initiative advocated for the universal implementation of the human right to water and sanitation. Their primary goal was a shift in focus of European water policy, which, until then, has emphasized the vision of a single market in goods and services. Given that approximately 2 million people in Europe do not have access to suitable water or sanitation, the Right2Water Initiative called on the European Commission to stop its constant push for the liberalization of water and sanitation services. Instead, the Commission must focus on ensuring water and sanitation for all European citizens and adopt a new approach that places human rights at its core.

The leading Committee submitted their requests to the European Parliament during a public hearing held on February 17, 2014. Subsequent to the hearing, the Commission issued a



Right2Water Goals:

- Giving an end to the liberalisation of water services
- Ensuring universal access to water and sanitation for all EU citizens
- Exempting water supply and water resource management from internal market regulations
- Strengthening EU efforts to achieve universal access to water and sanitation

⁸ *About the Campaign*. (2023). From Right2Water: <https://right2water.eu/about>

communication in March 2014 outlining the steps it planned to undertake in response to the initiative.

Considering the European Citizens' Initiative, the Commission has chosen to undertake the subsequent tangible measures and activities:

- Enhance endeavors to ensure that Member States fully implements EU water legislation.
- Initiate a public consultation spanning all EU nations regarding the Drinking Water Directive to evaluate the necessity for enhancements and strategies for their realization
- Enhance transparency in data handling and distribution related to urban wastewater and drinking water.
- Delve into the concept of benchmarking water quality.

One of Us



One of Us is one of the first registered ECIs in the European Union. This Initiative is the second European Citizens' Initiative to have satisfied all the requirements of the EU Regulation. On February 28, 2014, One of Us was presented to the Commission after

gathering the record-breaking number of 1.896.852 signatures, marking the highest number of signatures ever collected for an ECI. The Initiative's goal was to urge the EU to ban and cease funding activities involving the destruction of human embryos, particularly in research, development and public health⁹.

A public hearing pertaining to this initiative was held at the European Parliament on April 10, 2014. Subsequently, on May 28, 2014, the European Commission issued a communication

⁹ *Initiative Explanation*. (2020). Retrieved 2023 from ONE OF US: <https://oneofus.eu/about-us/initiative-explanation/>

addressing the 'One of Us' ECI. The Commission decided against proposing new legislation, citing that the existing legal framework, established by Member States and the European Parliament a few months prior to the ECI submission, was deemed appropriate. In their communication, they elaborated extensively on the rationale behind their decision not to modify the existing legal framework.

In response to the Commission's refusal to act, the 'One of Us' initiative pursued legal action against the European Commission. Their argument included claims that the Commission's reasoning for its inaction was inadequately substantiated. However, the initiative faced defeat in the General Court in April 2018 and lost on appeal before the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Justice in December 2019.

STOP VIVISECTION

STOP VIVISECTION



Stop Vivisection was the third ECI that gathered the required number of signatories to be submitted to the Commission. The Initiative was requesting the replacement of animal testing with more accurate, reliable, and human-relevant methods. Having collected more than 1.150.000 certified signatures, STOP VIVISECTION seeks to raise awareness of the cruel treatment of animals and it proposes a new paradigm for the conduct of biomedical and toxicological research. In May 2015, a public hearing at the European Parliament took place. Less than a month later, in June 2015, the European Commission adopted the Communication on the European Citizens' Initiative "Stop Vivisection" proposing a series of non-legislative follow-up actions¹⁰.

¹⁰ Union, E. (n.d.). *European Citizens' Initiative: Stop vivisection*. From https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/initiatives/details/2012/000007/stop-vivisection_en

Follow-up European Commission's Actions :

- Arrangement of a scientific conference aiming to engage the scientific community and relevant stakeholders in a debate on “how to exploit the advances in science to develop scientifically valid non-animal approaches.
- Commitment to active monitoring of compliance and enforcement of legislation.
- Commitment to continue to support the development and validation of alternative approaches to the use of animals in research and testing.
- Continuation of the dialogue between EC and the scientific community to advance towards the goal of phasing out animal testing through knowledge sharing, dissemination and education and training activities on non-animal alternatives.

Ban glyphosate and protect people and the environment from toxic pesticides



Ban Glyphosate and Protect People and the Environment from Toxic Pesticides Initiative was submitted to the Commission on October 6th, 2017, having gathered 1.070.865 statements of support. The Initiative asked the EC to propose to

member states a glyphosate ban, reform the pesticide approval procedure, and set EU-wide mandatory reduction targets for pesticide use¹¹.

Ban Glyphosate Requests and Goals:

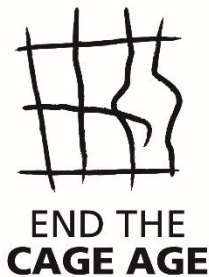
- Prohibit the use of herbicides containing glyphosate due to their association with human cancer and environmental deterioration
- Establish a requirement for the EU to assess pesticides for regulatory approval exclusively through studies initiated by reputable public authorities rather than the pesticide industry.
- Enact mandatory pesticide reduction goals at the EU level, aiming for a future free of pesticides.

¹¹ *Ban glyphosate and protect people and the environment from toxic pesticides*. (2023). From European Union: https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/initiatives/details/2017/000002/ban-glyphosate-and-protect-people-and-environment-toxic-pesticides_en

Follow-up European Commission's Actions :

- The Commission committed to come forward with a legislative proposal by May 2018, amongst others, to strengthen the transparency of the EU risk assessment in the food chain and enhance – through a series of measures – the governance for the conduct of industry studies submitted to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to risk assessment.
- The Commission declared that it wants to focus on the implementation of the Sustainable Use Directive and will re-evaluate the situation initially in a report to the Council and the Parliament on the implementation of the Directive to be produced in 2019.
- The Commission committed to establish harmonized risk indicators to enable the monitoring of trends at EU level.

End the Cage Age



Over the span of a year, this European Citizens' Initiative received support from numerous scientists, companies, and over 170 NGOs to eliminate caged farming practices in the EU. Their efforts successfully selected nearly 1.4 million signatures, underscoring the necessity of banning the use of cages for various farmed animals, including rabbits, pullets, broilers, breeders, quail, ducks and geese. The organisers also

advocate prohibiting farrowing crates for sows, sow stalls and enclosed calf pens. The organisers met with the European Commission Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Věra Jourová and the Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella Kyriakides on 30 October 2020. After the public hearing conducted, which took place on April 15, 2021, the Initiative was debated at the European Parliament's plenary session in June 2021. With a Resolution adopted in the same day, the European Parliament expressed its support for the ECI¹².

¹² *European Citizens' Initiative: End the Cage Age*. (2020). From European Union: https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/initiatives/details/2018/000004/end-cage-age_en

Follow-up European Commission's Actions :

- The EC committed to propose a revision of the animal welfare legislation, including on transport and rearing.
- The EC committed to support further measures in key related policy areas, such as trade and research and innovation.
- The new Common Agriculture Policy will provide financial support and incentives to help farmers upgrade to more animal-friendly facilities in line with the new standards.

Minority SafePack

Minority SafePack Initiative consists of a package of 9 proposals aiming to “improve the protection of persons belonging to national and linguistic minorities and strengthen cultural and linguistic diversity”. More specifically, it is a package of law proposals for the safety of the national minorities, that enable the promotion of minority rights, language rights and the protection of their cultures.



Their goal is to urge EU to take responsibility and genuinely promote cultural and linguistic diversity across Europe. They also seek the Copenhagen Criteria on protecting the rights of minorities to be seen and observed by the Member States of the EU¹³.

¹³ *Minority SafePack - one million signatures for diversity in Europe*. (2020). From European Union: https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/initiatives/details/2017/000004/minority-safepack-one-million-signatures-diversity-europe_en

The Minority SafePack Initiative proposes :

- EU-Recommendation for the protection and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity
- Funding programs for small linguistic minorities
- The establishment of a Language Diversity Centre
- The objectives of EU's regional development funds to include the protection of national minorities and the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity
- Research about the added value of minorities to our societies and Europe
- Approximating equality for stateless minorities, e.g. Roma
- A single European copyright law so that services and broadcasts can be enjoyed in the mother tongue
- Freedom of service and reception of audio-visual content in the minority regions
- Block exemption of regional (state) support for minority culture, media and cultural heritage conservation.

Follow-up European Commission's Actions :

- The Commission monitors the implementation of several EU initiatives adopted before submitting the 'Minority SafePack', which are directly relevant for the citizens' initiative. It also continues to conduct policy actions in these areas. For example:
 - Programmes in the areas of culture and education: Erasmus+
 - The "Horizon Europe", the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027), provides plenty of research opportunities in relation to cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe.
 - Cooperation between EC and the Council of Europe's European Center for Modern Languages (ECML).

Managing Adult and Senior Coordinators and Volunteers

The term “volunteer” is commonly used to convey the idea of individuals who are willing to contribute their efforts either free of charge or in exchange for a small fee. In the same pattern Volunteering is a voluntary act of an individual or group freely giving time and labor, often for community service. Although there is no single, official European definition for this concept, the European Union has initiated numerous projects and policies aimed at addressing the engagement of volunteers. One of the main programs EU has been running for years is the European Solidarity Corps (ESC). This program has been in existence for several years, initially as the European Volunteer Service, before 2018.

Volunteer management refers to the process of creating systems for recruitment, training, engagement, and coordination of volunteers. In simple terms, it involves managing the volunteers within a non-profit organization and the work that they do¹⁴. Volunteers often require training to perform tasks that are typically beyond their existing skill sets, as it can be challenging to find individuals with the specific skills needed who are willing to volunteer rather than seeking paid employment. Additionally, there is the matter of staff management: effectively coordinating volunteers demands dedicated resources, which may not always be readily available or accessible to organizations for ancillary activities. The availability of volunteer staff varies depending on the nature of the tasks and sectors involved. Ultimately, organizations must weigh the balance between costs and benefits when considering the engagement of volunteers.

In broad terms, entities can be categorized into two main groups: those that depend on volunteers for essential activities in a regular and structured manner and those that only engage volunteers sporadically and for specific projects or tasks. Within each of these groups, there are further distinctions based on entity size and the complexity of volunteer-related responsibilities. Refer to the following tables for more details:

¹⁴ <https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/management/volunteer-management/>

Primary Tasks

| | Smaller Entities | Average Entities | Larger Entities |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Basic Training | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Average Training | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Longer Training | 6 | 7 | 8 |

Ancillary Tasks

| | Smaller Entities | Average Entities | Larger Entities |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Basic Training | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| Average Training | 4 | 6 | 8 |
| Longer Training | 2 | 4 | 6 |

The figures in the boxes represent an approximate assessment of the value of the investment in terms of time and resources. Values below 6 indicate situations where such an investment should be approached cautiously and evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine its necessity. Values of 6 or higher are generally considered acceptable.

Development and Design of Roles

Designing a valid volunteer position hinges on two essential factors: the role's alignment with philosophical principles and its practical viability¹⁵.

Philosophical alignment denotes roles that adhere to the core definition and principles of volunteering. Such roles **respect volunteers'** rights and **contribute value to the organization** in ways distinct from paid positions.

¹⁵ (2018). *Designing Volunteer Role Descriptions: A guide for Volunteers Managers to help design quality volunteer experiences within your team*. volunteer ireland:obair dheonach eireann. From volunteer.ie

Practical viability encompasses roles tailored to evolving participation trends and attuned to the organization's and volunteer's requirements. It's crucial to stay attuned to shifting trends to maintain realistic expectations for potential volunteers, ensuring that they both desire and can balance the role alongside their family, work, leisure, and other commitments.

Determining whether a role is an appropriate volunteer role is one of the most difficult and challenging issues that volunteer-involving organizations and their paid staff and volunteers face.

To design roles that are in keeping with what volunteering is all about, the first thing to consider is how volunteer roles differ from paid roles. In accordance with the EU guidelines, it is crucial to exercise caution in order to prevent the transformation of volunteering into paid employment.

The main things to remember about volunteering which differentiate it from paid work can be summed up as follows:

- Volunteering is inherently a matter of personal choice, occurring within the context of not-for-profit initiatives or organizations.
- It remains unpaid and is distinct from job substitution
- Volunteerism's ultimate goal is to foster positive change for the volunteer, the organization, and the community

Volunteer roles are developed according to the principle that they add value to an organization in a way that a paid role does not. Conceptualizing what “added value” means remains a crucial challenge for volunteer-involving organizations. In general, volunteers add value to their organization by bringing skills, knowledge and a willingness to make a positive contribution that opens up new possibilities for the organization. They contribute to the organization by assisting it to carry out its objectives and by providing it with resources that it wouldn't otherwise have access to.

In the post-pandemic era, it is crucial to consider ways to minimize – to the least possible extend – the sense of isolation the volunteer may experience. This can be achieved by providing them with adequate training and induction, regular feedback and acknowledgement, introducing them to colleagues and inviting them to relevant meeting and celebrations and

generally ensuring that they have access to all the information necessary to complete their tasks and responsibilities.

ROLE TITLE

TASK

What?
List tasks in order of priority
Identify the client group
What skills are needed

When?
What is the required minimum/maximum
time commitment?
Day/morning/evening?

Where?
Work pace including any other sites

With whom?
Will they work with paid staff?
Will they work alone?

Support and Training
Who is the designated supervisor?
What training is provided?

Administration
What expenses do you offer?
What other assistance?

Expectations/Benefits
What does the role offer or not offer?
Personal development? A chance to change
things?

Recruitment

After the initial stage of Developing and Designing the volunteers' roles, the stage of Recruitment follows. It is essential for any organization to recruit the right volunteers. An organization needs to put systems in place that contribute to finding the right volunteers with specific skills and talents that would benefit the organization. Designing in advance and pre-determining the preferences for the type of volunteers that the organization is interested in can help speed up the recruitment process and get people with specific skills and experiences.

When recruiting volunteers, the organization must collect data such as:

- Volunteer's educational qualifications
- Volunteer's skills and hobbies
- Languages that a volunteer speaks

This information can assist the organization in aligning volunteer responsibilities with their areas of passion or where they feel most comfortable working. Matching duties with the skill set can help increase productivity and unity among the volunteer teams.

The European Solidarity Corps Portal (ESCP) is a tool designed to make it easy for eligible organizations to search for and recruit European Solidarity Corps participants for their placements. This tool is accessible to all individuals participating in various EU programs related to volunteering, including not just the ESC, but also EU Aid Volunteers and the European Voluntary Service. Those who have already registered on the European Solidarity Corps Platform (ESCP) have undergone preliminary screening and have provided their profiles before any selection process begins. As a result, the potential for bias is minimized, making ESCP a dependable selection tool. It is highly recommended for anyone looking to engage in volunteering activities.

Even if an organization has no intention of utilizing the ESCP system or participating in EU programs, the principles embodied by the ESCP methodology can still be applied. Interest and motivation are critical factors in selecting all volunteers, and it is essential to choose candidates with a strong commitment to gaining comprehensive knowledge of the world of volunteering. Selecting volunteers indiscriminately could potentially prove detrimental to the initiative or the organization itself.

When an organization lacks knowledge of where to find volunteering resources, it is preferable to explore local, regional, or national institutional channels. However, networking is prevalent in this field, so it is highly recommended to join such networks to establish trusted and reliable connections with partners who can supply volunteers when needed. Since volunteering differs from regular employment, open personnel calls should be minimized, as they may attract applicants driven solely by curiosity or other low-commitment motives, resulting in numerous unnecessary interviews and a waste of the organization's time.

Interviewing

Interviewing potential volunteers online has become increasingly common, especially in today's digital age. Conducting effective online interviews carefully, planning and adhering to best practices. Here are some guidelines to help you conduct successful online interviews.

1. Choose the right video conferencing platform
 - i. Select a reliable video conferencing platform, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet or Skype. Make sure that the potential volunteer is familiar and comfortable with the chosen platform.
2. Prepare in advance.
 - i. Get familiar with the interview format and the candidates' application.
 - ii. Test your equipment to ensure they work properly
3. Create a structured interview plan.
 - i. Develop a structured interview plan with a list of questions and evaluation criteria.
 - ii. Assign specific roles to the interviewers (one person will be asking questions and another will be taking notes)
 - iii. Allocate a specific amount of time for each section of the interview
4. Communicate clearly.
 - i. Provide clear instructions to the candidate-volunteer regarding the interview format, duration and any technical requirements.
5. Maintain professionalism.
 - i. Limit distractions and ensure a clean and clutter-free background

6. Be Mindful of Nonverbal Cues.
 - i. Pay attention to your body language and facial expressions
 - ii. Maintain eye contact by looking at the camera rather than the screen
7. Start with a casual conversation
 - i. Start the interview with small talk to help the candidate feel more at ease and build rapport.
8. Use a mix of question types.
 - i. Include behavioral, situational and technical questions in the interview to assess different aspects of the candidate volunteers' qualifications.
9. Encourage volunteers to ask questions.
 - i. Allocate time for the candidate to ask questions about the role, organization or the interview process.
10. Follow up.
 - i. After the interview, promptly communicate with the candidate regarding the next steps in the hiring process, including feedback timelines and potential follow-up interviews.
11. Respect privacy and compliance.
 - i. Ensure that you comply with privacy laws and regulations when collecting, storing and sharing candidate data.

Here is a concise list of questions that can be valuable for gaining a better understanding of candidates:

Could you begin by introducing yourself and sharing your name, profession, and place of origin?

What was your area of study?

What were your educational expectations?

If you want to succeed, what skill is indispensable?

What are your most noteworthy qualities?

How do you generate ideas?

What keeps your sense of curiosity alive?

On an average day, how much time do you spend in solitude?

When it comes to your work, do you find solitude or collaboration more productive?

| |
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| Have you been actively engaged in your field? |
| Do you actively engage in networking? If so, how? |
| Do you typically work with specific goals in mind? |
| Have you experienced moments of self-doubt? If so, how do you manage them? |
| What instills confidence in your work and what you do? |

Training

Regardless of how much motivated and eager new volunteers can be, most new recruits will require some sort of volunteer training in order to make the most impact. Organizations that take time to implement engaging volunteer training are more likely to enjoy greater volunteer retention and engagement – prepared volunteers make for happy volunteers¹⁶.

The structure of your volunteer training program will be determined by the objectives of your organization. You should consider what knowledge and skills you intend for your volunteers to acquire during their training in order to assist your organization effectively.

Here are the most basic steps of planning your volunteer training program:

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| 1. Establish a budget. |
| Creating a budget for your volunteer training initiative is crucial for efficiently managing resources such as finances and personnel. Common expenses associated with volunteer training may involve staff hours, equipment and venue rentals, refreshments and printing. |
| 2. Content planning. |
| When shaping your volunteer training program, it's essential to address a few key questions. What specific knowledge and skills do you aim to impart to your volunteers? How comprehensive will your training program be? These considerations play a crucial role in your planning process. |
| Typically, fundamental training encompasses the following areas: |

¹⁶ *Volunteer Training: The Definitive Guide for Volunteer Managers*. (2023). From Get Connected by Galaxy Digital: <https://www.galaxydigital.com/blog/volunteer-training#1>

| |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Understanding the background of the cause or community need ➤ Effective communication of the organization's mission ➤ Clear articulation of activity goals and evaluation methods ➤ Instruction on volunteer task execution ➤ Implementation of safety measures ➤ Familiarization with the rules and guidelines for volunteering with your organization ➤ Overview of equipment and its proper usage ➤ Guidance on reporting volunteer hours |
| <p>The extent of training your volunteers will receive depends on the complexity of the tasks they are expected to undertake. Training will be more extensive for roles that require specific skills and expertise.</p> |
| <p>3. Preparing your instructional approaches.</p> |
| <p>Subsequently, it is essential to contemplate the methods you will employ for instructing your volunteers and the resources you will employ to bolster your training efforts.</p> <p>To optimize the effectiveness of your volunteer training program, consider strategies for sustaining your volunteers' engagement with the content.</p> <p>Research indicates that adults retain just 20% of the information presented during a traditional lecture. This underscores the fact that there is no universally superior teaching method. This is primarily due to the variation in how people learn, with most individuals falling into one of three primary categories: visual learners, auditory learners, and kinesthetic learners. Delve deeper into these distinct learning styles.</p> |

Monitoring

One of the most effective methods for overseeing and supporting volunteers involves the appointment of a central figure known as the mentor. This mentor serves as a dedicated point of contact for volunteers, acting as an intermediary between the volunteers and the organization.

The organization should plan regular weekly meetings between the mentor and each volunteer to assess their progress in their assigned activities. These meetings serve as a platform for volunteers to confide in any emergencies, seek support, and receive guidance from the mentor.

In summary, the role of the mentor becomes pivotal in monitoring all aspects of volunteer involvement, with the added benefit of streamlining coordination between volunteers and the overseeing organization.

Recognition

Recognizing the skills acquired through volunteer activities holds significant importance in emphasizing the role of volunteering in the European Union, particularly within the non-profit sector.

In this context, a noteworthy initiative worth highlighting is the European Skill Passport²², established following a European Parliament resolution. The European Skill Passport is designed to validate volunteering experiences by officially recognizing the skills acquired through voluntary work. This recognition adds value to a person's CV, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the employability of young individuals by showcasing the skills, knowledge, and competencies they have gained through volunteering.

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