



**Your Guide to
VOLUNTEERING IN EUROPE!**



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What is Eurodesk?

Eurodesk aims to create bridges in Europe and open up international opportunities to all young people, regardless of background or situation in life.

We see that many are not aware of the various programmes out there – from a paid internship abroad to taking part in volunteering projects, all costs covered.

An experience abroad can have a massive positive impact on your life, and we believe Europe needs the involvement of young people.

This is why we operate with a network of youth workers all over Europe to reach out and provide you with neutral, free of charge, and verified information on all financial support programmes for going abroad and having a voice in Europe.

Eurodesk in numbers

Average per year

3000+ multipliers and ambassadors

38 Eurodesk centres in **36** countries

210,000 youth enquiries handled each year

5,000 public events

550,000 followers on social media

1.6 million young people reached through face-to-face activities.

Eurodesk is a support structure of the Erasmus+ programme and of the EU Youth Strategy.

IN VOLUNTEERING EUROPE

Do you enjoy helping out? Do you want to develop competences while gaining valuable experience and making new friends? Become a volunteer! Your age and education do not matter. Any time in your life is a good time to start volunteering.

The motivation to engage in volunteering can come from as many different sources as there are ways to get involved. In this publication, you will learn about volunteering, explore your own reasons for getting involved, and,

most importantly, discover tons of opportunities to start your experience and make the most of it.

Each year thousands of young people decide to volunteer for a cause close to their heart. Environment, social justice, gender equality, education, or animal welfare are just some of the areas in which you can get involved and have a positive impact in society.

What are you waiting for? Let the journey begin!



Did you say volunteering?

Before we take you on a journey through a sea of opportunities and introduce you to volunteering programmes in your local area, your country, abroad, and even online, let's start by explaining what volunteering is all about.

To volunteer means to offer up your time to help for free. Volunteering activities usually respond to human, social, or environmental needs and problems. They may support non-profit organisations or community initiatives. So a volunteer might offer to regularly do shopping for an elderly person in the neighbourhood, sign up to serve dinner at a local shelter for people who are homeless, or join a work camp to restore a historical building.

Can anyone become a volunteer?

Yes! Factors such as age, gender, background, physical ability, or education do not matter.

However, it is important to remember that not everyone can become a volunteer everywhere. Organisations working with volunteers usually define strictly what conditions you need to meet to become a volunteer. These requirements vary from one organisation to the other. They depend on the organisation's profile, the specifics of the work, the type of tasks and related responsibilities, or personal predispositions.

Moreover, EU programmes promoting volunteering – such as the European Solidarity Corps – are meant to be accessible to everyone. They even provide additional financial means to support the participation of young people who have fewer opportunities. “Inclusion and diversity” is a top priority of all EU programmes targeting youth!

Did you know?

Did you know that the word volunteer comes from the Latin word *voluntarius*, meaning “willing, of free will”? This Latin verb originated from the Latin noun *voluntās*, meaning “will, choice, desire”.

How much time does volunteering take?

It's up to you to decide!

There are a wide variety of options, from volunteering in the context of an international project (for example, a 5-day international work camp in which you will work full-time), a specific initiative (for example, cleaning your local beach on a specific day), or as a regular commitment (for example, spending a few hours at the animal shelter each week).



Different formats and durations are possible, as you will discover in the following sections. Make sure to plan carefully, and try not to commit to something you will not follow through on.

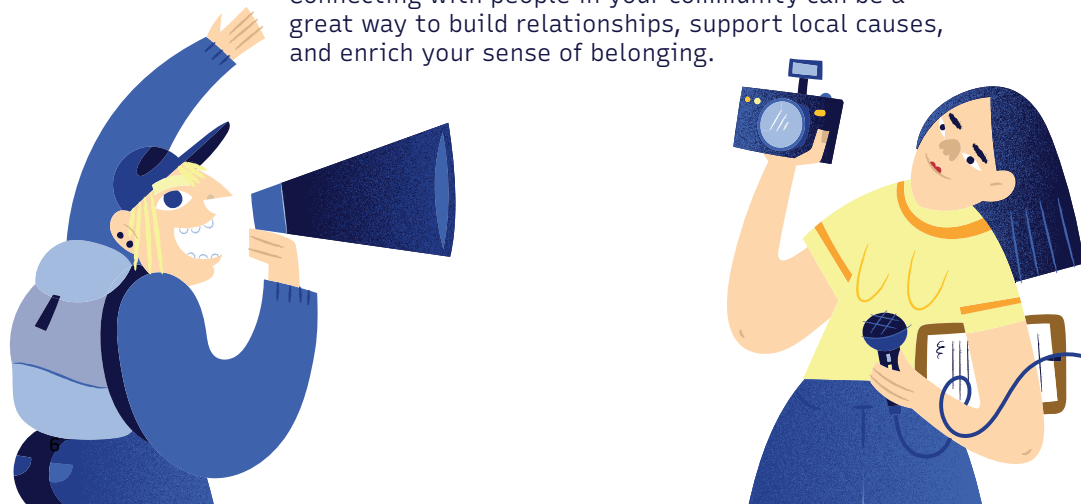


What are the benefits of volunteering?

Through volunteering you can contribute to strengthening communities while gaining experience, skills, and competences for your personal and professional development. Here we have listed 10 potential benefits related to volunteering.

Volunteering will help you:

- 1. Make a real difference in the communities you are volunteering for**
Even helping out with the smallest tasks can make a real difference in the lives of people, animals, and organisations in need.
- 2. Make new friends, sometimes from around the globe**
As a volunteer, you'll typically meet people that you might not normally interact with, allowing you to broaden your horizons and potentially build a network of friends around the globe.
- 3. Gain a sense of purpose and accomplishment**
Sometimes what we need is to be part of something bigger than ourselves. When you do something you feel is worthwhile and valuable, it gives you a sense of purpose and accomplishment that may help you feel more fulfilled about your life.
- 4. Connect to your community**
Connecting with people in your community can be a great way to build relationships, support local causes, and enrich your sense of belonging.



- 5. Open opportunities to gain new experiences and skills and boost employability**
Volunteering usually requires you to develop or learn new skills. Often, these skills are useful in other parts of your life, and can increase your employability.
- 6. Explore new paths and find out what drives you**
If you're not sure what you would like to do in your life, volunteering in various roles can give you the chance to identify what really matters to you and your career.
- 7. Appreciate and better understand other cultures**
Volunteering can expose you to diverse perspectives and experiences, fostering empathy and appreciation for cultural differences.
- 8. Be happier**
Being active in your community can often contribute to your mental and physical well-being by building bonds with people you volunteer with or for.
- 9. Give something back**
Whether you've received support from volunteers in the past or simply feel fortunate, volunteering offers a chance to give something back and make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.
- 10. Gets out of your comfort zone**
Through volunteering, you may leave your comfort zone while doing something new with people you may not know. This fosters resilience and adaptability, which are crucial for personal growth and development.

5 December – International Volunteer Day

Did you know that there is a day of the year when the spotlight focuses on volunteers around the world? International Volunteer Day is an opportunity to celebrate and thank people who give their valuable time and effort to volunteering, and to recognise the value of volunteering in promoting peace and development. It is a day when volunteers are honoured and the spirit of volunteering is promoted at local, national, and international levels.

Get to know your purpose and motivation

Every individual has their own reason for volunteering and their own ideas about what it will do for them. There's no right or wrong approach. It's all about exploring the opportunities on offer and finding the one you know is right for you. The most important thing about volunteering is that you should enjoy it on your own terms and that it's a rewarding experience for you, as well as for the people you help.

What benefits do you see in volunteering?
Write down your thoughts.

What's your motivation to volunteer?

Colour in the appropriate number of stars depending on how important it is to you.

I will volunteer to...

- ... make a difference ☆☆☆☆☆
- ... make an impact ☆☆☆☆☆
- ... do something good ☆☆☆☆☆
- ... help others ☆☆☆☆☆
- ... help the planet ☆☆☆☆☆

- ... build a more inclusive society ☆☆☆☆☆
- ... improve my confidence ☆☆☆☆☆
- ... become more independent ☆☆☆☆☆
- ... give something back ☆☆☆☆☆
- ... gain new experience ☆☆☆☆☆
- ... learn new skills ☆☆☆☆☆
- ... build new connections with my community ☆☆☆☆☆
- ... meet new people from different countries and cultures ☆☆☆☆☆
- ... increase my employability ☆☆☆☆☆
- ... travel ☆☆☆☆☆

Do you have other reasons? Add your own motivations: ☆☆☆☆☆
.....



Need more inspiration?

Discover other people's experiences and clarify what you are looking for!

Your own experience will be unique. However, reading the stories or watching the testimonies of those who have already devoted time to volunteering may give you different perspectives on how to approach it and what to expect. It may also help you find meaningful connections with other volunteers – or simply inspire you!

Here are some tips:

- If you already know someone who has volunteered, don't be shy. Ask them to share their experiences.
 - Browse your usual social media channels using key hashtags such as **#volunteer**, **#volunteering**, **#europeansolidaritycorps**.
 - Look for local volunteering centres and ask them if you can meet volunteers they know are active around you.
 - Get in touch with **EuroPeers**.
- the network of young people who have been active with the European Solidarity Corps and would like to pass on their experiences to other young people, just like you.
- Don't forget to explore stories from young people on the **European Youth Portal**.



Discover Tobias's experience with the European Solidarity Corps in Bucharest Romania.



Learn about the steps that took Fiona to do a voluntary service in a multi-ethnic youth centre in Kosovo.



SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO VOLUNTEER...

Local volunteering

There are many places where the help of volunteers is needed. The most popular are the institutions that are part of the third sector, that is, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), foundations, and associations.

They generally work on specific causes (poverty, climate change, animal protection...) and/or target specific groups at risk, such as children and young people living in poverty, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

In addition, volunteers can also work with various institutions such as municipalities, schools, universities, libraries, community centres, or hospitals.

Local volunteer centres and portals

If you're still wondering where and how to start, as with everything, start by researching your options:

- Check if there are local/national volunteering portals in your country and if there is a local volunteering centre in your city/area.

- Contact the organisation or institution where you would like to volunteer – this could be an animal shelter or a specific association working with people who are homeless, for example. Let's see a few examples.

School volunteering

Your school may have a volunteer club where you can get involved in programmes such as:

Buddy programmes (older brother/older sister): helping younger students with their homework or in their everyday life in school;

Fundraising initiatives: getting involved in collecting things for those who are in need, such as blankets and warm clothing for people who are homeless, or food for shelter animals;

Help out in the library: taking care of the book cataloguing, getting involved in book dusting, organising events in the library.

If your school does not have such a club or programmes, why not start one? Erasmus+ also supports schools (from primary to tertiary education) with such projects, so speak with your subject teachers and head teacher.



Mentoring international volunteers

Would you like to go abroad as a volunteer but... you are afraid that your foreign language level is not good enough, something (or someone) is holding you back in your home country, or maybe you would like to meet people from another country without having to leave your home? Why don't you start by becoming a mentor for an international volunteer who is being hosted in your local area?

A mentor is a support person that assists young people during their volunteering journey within the European Solidarity Corps programme. Your tasks would include supporting the volunteer to integrate into their new environment by explaining the local/national rules and traditions and helping them cope with everyday problems like making an appointment with a doctor or finding affordable leisure activities.

How to get started?

- Check if there are any organisations hosting international volunteers in your town or region, and which conditions you have to meet to become a mentor. You can search in the list of accredited organisations on the [ESC Portal](#)



- Some student organisations – such as Erasmus Student Network (ESN) – also run such programmes in their local sections. Check the map on their website.



European Solidarity Corps: Solidarity Projects

The European Solidarity Corps supports Solidarity Projects. These are non-profit solidarity activities developed and implemented by young people for a period of 2 to 12 months. Solidarity Projects aim to bring positive change in the local community, and are carried out by groups of a minimum of 5 young people. Some activities can also tackle regional or even national issues.

Financial support to cover the cost of managing and implementing the project is provided as well as the cost of a coach in the project.

How to get started

Identify an issue you would like to address (for example, inclusion, climate change, democracy, gender equality). Do your homework: read the rules related to "Solidarity Projects" in the European Solidarity Corps Guide and information on the website of your National Agency. *



Form a group of young people between 18 and 30 years of age, legally residing in an *EU Member State or a third country associated with the programme*, OR contact a youth organisation in your area that may apply on your behalf and help you with administrative and financial tasks. ¹

Develop your project idea – think about your goals, who will be in your group, what outcomes you expect to achieve, how much budget you will need and what activities will be carried out. Check our Euro-Participation brochure for tips!



When you are ready: register on the European Youth Portal.

Apply through your European Solidarity Corps National Agency.



*What is a National Agency?

The National Agencies are based in EU Member States and third countries associated with the programmes, and their role includes providing information on the programmes, supporting applicants and participants, and selecting projects to be funded. Don't hesitate to contact

them! Eurodesk is sometimes hosted within the National Agencies or a youth information service; it's also there to support you in your international endeavours.



¹ EU Member States and Third countries associated with the programme (North Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Türkiye).

EU MEMBER STATES AND THIRD COUNTRIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROGRAMME

Member States of the European Union

Belgium	Greece	Lithuania	Portugal
Bulgaria	Spain	Luxembourg	Romania
Czechia	France	Hungary	Slovenia
Denmark	Croatia	Malta	Slovakia
Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Finland
Estonia	Cyprus	Austria	Sweden
Ireland	Latvia	Poland	

Third countries associated to the Programme

North Macedonia	Liechtenstein
Iceland	Türkiye

THIRD COUNTRIES NOT ASSOCIATED TO THE PROGRAMME

EFTA Countries

Norway

Third countries neighbouring the EU

Western Balkans (region 1)	Neighbourhood East (region 2)	South-Mediterranean countries (region 3)	Russian Federation (region 4)
Albania	Armenia	Algeria	Territory of Russia as recognised by international law
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Azerbaijan	Egypt	
Kosovo	Belarus	Israel	
Montenegro	Georgia	Jordan	
Serbia	Moldova	Lebanon	
	Territory of Ukraine as recognised by international law	Libya	
		Morocco	
		Palestine	
		Syria	
		Tunisia	



International volunteering with the European Solidarity Corps

Volunteering has become a priority of the European Union in recent decades and is a key component of the EU Youth Strategy (2019–2027). More and more opportunities to volunteer are now available, some with financial support through flagship EU programmes such as the European Solidarity Corps. As you will see, this programme offers various options to volunteer abroad, either as an individual or as part of a group. Other international opportunities also await!



European Solidarity Corps: Volunteering Projects

The European Solidarity Corps is an EU programme that supports international volunteering projects in a broad range of fields.

You can either go on your own (individual volunteering: 2 weeks to 12 months) or as part of a group of a minimum of 5 volunteers coming from at least 2 different countries (team volunteering: 2 weeks to 2 months).

To participate, you need to be between 18 and 30 years of age and legally reside in an EU

Member State, a third country associated with the programme, or a third country not associated with the programme.²

You will receive financial support for travel and subsistence costs, pocket money, complementary insurance, and support services such as language support and training. Costs related to specific needs (for example, disability) can also be covered.

How to get started

Register in the **European Youth Portal**, check the offers, and apply.



² Third country not associated with the programme (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Territory of Ukraine as recognised by international law, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, and Territory of Russia as recognised by international law).

European Solidarity Corps: Humanitarian Aid Volunteering

The European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps of the European Solidarity Corps offers volunteering opportunities to strengthen local capacity and improve the resilience of disaster-affected communities. The activities shall take place in third countries that do not belong in the list of EU Member States or third countries associated with the programme, where humanitarian aid activities and operations are taking place, and where there are no ongoing international or non-international armed conflicts.

You can go either on your own (individual volunteering lasting between 2 and 12 months) or as part

of a group (team volunteering for 5 to 40 volunteers lasting between 2 weeks and 2 months).

To participate, you need to be between 18 and 35 years of age and legally reside in a EU Member State or in a third country associated with the programme. You should not have participated previously in the European Solidarity Corps' Humanitarian Aid individual volunteering. There is a high demand for this programme, so please be aware that not all candidates will be selected.

You will receive financial support for travel and accommodation costs and exceptional costs such as visa and vaccination costs, insurance, and pocket money.

How to get started

Register in the European Youth Portal.

Express your interest in Humanitarian Aid Volunteering.

Complete the self-assessment and take part in online and face-to-face training before you can take part in volunteering activities.



Combining European Solidarity Corps actions

Bear in mind that a volunteer cannot cumulate the various volunteering activities with the European Solidarity Corps. For example, the total amount of time you spend in European Solidarity Corps volunteering activities must not exceed 12 months and the activities carried out must not overlap. Make sure to check the rules.



Young people who have fewer opportunities

The European Solidarity Corps provides young people who have fewer opportunities easy-access options to help them participate, for example, additional financial and tailor-made projects to suit their specific skills and qualities. For more, see [Europe for all – Integrating young people into the European Solidarity Corps](#).



Young people with disabilities are also encouraged to take part in the European Solidarity Corps, and specific supports are provided for them as part of the overall programme. More information can be found at [EU Solidarity Corps – Inclusion Europe](#).



Interreg Volunteer Youth

Interreg Volunteer Youth is an EU programme for young people eager to gain new international experiences and have an impact through volunteering by supporting solidarity actions between EU regions.

To participate, you need to be between 18 and 30 years of age and from an EU member State or its neighbouring countries. Projects support European cooperation across borders in a variety of fields: environment, education, research, health, transport, and sustainable energy. They last from 2 to 6 months.

Volunteers receive financial support to cover expenses for food and accommodation, and a contribution to travel costs and insurance.

How to get started

Check open **volunteering placements** and prepare your application.



What about the environment?

The European Solidarity Corps places a strong emphasis on sustainability through greener mobility and the promotion of green projects and digitalisation (for example, replacing some of the in-person activities with online ones). Concretely, this means that if you want to travel by train, for example, you can request extra financial support to cover the extra costs related to travelling green.

The Erasmus Student Network and its partners have developed the Green Erasmus Portal to provide students with concrete information on how to be sustainable before, during, and after their Erasmus experience. The tips provided are useful for any type of mobility!



Still looking for opportunities to volunteer abroad?



UNESCO World Heritage Volunteers

The UNESCO World Heritage Education Programme gives young people a chance to get involved in the protection of our common cultural and natural heritage. If you're between the ages of 18 and 30, you can play an active role in the promotion and preservation of world heritage by taking part in a youth action camp as a volunteer for 2 to 4 weeks. You will be able to travel across world heritage sites worldwide. Food, lodging, and travel costs will be covered.

How to get started

Each year vacancies are published on the programme website.

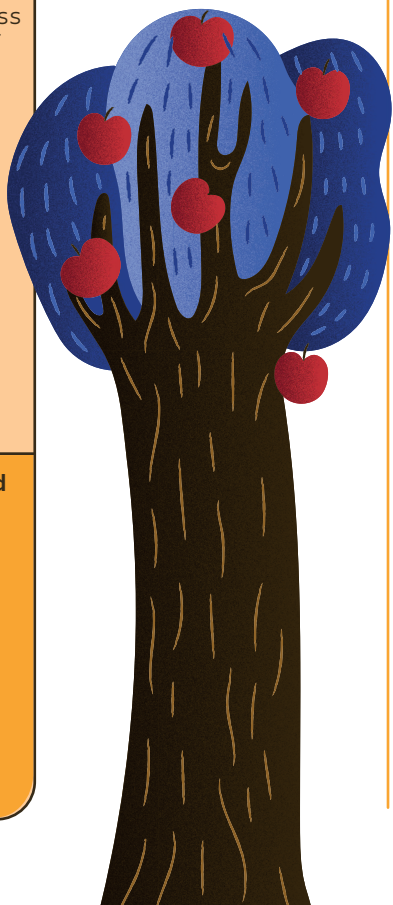


United Nations Volunteers

The United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) contributes to peace and human rights worldwide. UN Volunteers support the work of the United Nations system to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Prior to the start of your experience, you will receive specific training to undertake your assignment.

How to get started

Create your profile in the UNV Global Talent Pool, where volunteer opportunities are regularly published, and start applying.



Work camps

An international work camp is a group of volunteers over 14 years of age from different countries who work together for between 2 and 8 weeks around a project aimed at helping a local community. Activities can take place worldwide.

Each project is different in terms of practical arrangements such as food and accommodation, pocket money, health insurance, and travel costs. Usually a fee ranging from 50 to 350 euros is applied. Minors need parental consent.

How to get started

Different websites – such as [Service Civil International \(SCI\)](#) –



offer work camp opportunities. Make sure to check the conditions before you sign up! You can also check this article on the European Youth Portal listing different organisations that offer work camps.



Idealist

Idealist offers a wide range of social-impact opportunities, including on-site and online volunteering experiences anywhere in the world.

How to get started

Each offer is different, so make sure to read it carefully and learn more about the organisation you want to apply to volunteer with.



Online volunteering

Do you want to volunteer but can't really go anywhere? Does your free time fall at unconventional hours?

Give online volunteering a shot and commit your time and skills to benefit society over the internet.

Your tasks as an online volunteer will depend on your skills and experience, as well as the needs of the organisation you will be supporting. You may design posters, maintain a website, translate text, edit video, design a database, or manage social media channels.

You could simply provide expert advice (for example, on law or education) or respond to an organisation's emails.

You can start by supporting an organisation/institution in your local community or country. This way, the language will not be an obstacle.

Alternatively, you can check the offers of international organisations, such as the UN Volunteers programme.

- We invite you to check our article on the [European Youth Portal for more information:](#)



More opportunities await on the Eurodesk Opportunity Finder. You can also register to receive our newsletter for the latest opportunities or follow our social media channels.



UN Online Volunteering

Share your skills and expertise online to contribute to global peace, development, and humanitarian efforts. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme's Online Volunteering service provides a platform for you to collaborate with UN entities, governments, public institutions, and civil society organisations.

How to get started

Create your profile in the UNV Global Talent Pool, where online volunteering opportunities are regularly published.



Translators without borders

Volunteering with Translators without borders (TWB) is a purposeful opportunity to use your language skills to help people. It's also a great way to build your professional portfolio, especially if you are just starting your career. You don't need to have formal education or prior experience to become part of the TWB community. Many of our community members live in countries where they face barriers to formal education and reliable information. We encourage everyone to join us – to connect, grow, learn, and make an impact.

How to get started

Check the conditions for joining the programme and sign up on the website!



GET YOUR READY FOR NEXT ADVENTURE

Quiz on volunteering programmes

The first step is to understand what could be the most relevant type of volunteering for you. Take a quiz and discover it...

What's your experience with volunteering?

- A. I have heard about it, but I have never been a volunteer.
- B. Yes, I already have experience working as a volunteer in my country.
- C. Sure, I have already participated in an international volunteering project.

Are you able and willing to leave your home/country?

- A. I cannot go abroad now.
- B. I am available only for 1 to 3 months or during the summer holidays.
- C. I am planning to take a year or two out.



Voluntary work is not remunerated and you might even have to pay part of the costs. How do you feel about that?

- A. That's tough. I don't think I could afford it now
- B. I can buy my insurance and find some cash for a ticket, but that's about it.
- C. I will be able to collect some money and look for sources of financial support.

You can choose to volunteer in a cool country, but... are you able to communicate with the locals?

- A. I am not sure. I prefer to communicate in my own language.
- B. I can speak some English – if I can't say it, I will show it. I will manage!
- C. I already speak two foreign languages, and I would also be happy to learn another one.

Do you prefer spending time on your own or working as part of a team/group?

- A. I can work independently or as a part of the team. I am fairly adaptable.
- B. I want to work as a part of the group. There's safety in numbers.
- C. I would be comfortable being responsible for part of the project and coordinating other people's work.

Volunteering means working. It is not a type of all-inclusive holiday. Do you think you can manage?

- A. I don't know, but I am willing to find out.
- B. I can work full-time as a volunteer, up to 6 to 8 hours a day. I totally want to get involved.
- C. I am interested in projects for experienced volunteers that will push me out of my comfort zone.

A: _____ **B:** _____ **C:** _____

If you have more A answers | Everything to gain!

It seems that you can start your volunteering adventure by getting involved in your local area. Contact a volunteer centre in your city or region and see what they have to offer, or contact an organisation/institution that is close to your heart. If you are looking for a volunteering offer without leaving home or want to use your IT/digital communication skills, start with online volunteering! You can support organisations in your local area, your country, or around the world – the sky's the limit!

If you have more B answers | Yet another challenge!

Ready to take a step further? In that case you can try out short-term volunteering experiences like work camps or short-term projects under the European Solidarity Corps, where you will find opportunities to volunteer for a couple of months in European countries. There are several programmes and areas for volunteers, from environmental conservation to integration of people with disabilities or promotion of active citizenship. Why not become a mentor for an international volunteer hosted in your town? Or get involved in volunteering in teams, so you have support from other peers who are involved in volunteering at the same time.

If you have more C answers | Total commitment

It seems you have already made the decision to truly engage in your volunteering experience, so you can explore programmes that require more time involvement, or that will further your skills or knowledge of a foreign language. Some examples could be long-term volunteering under the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), Humanitarian Aid Volunteering (taking place all over the world), or UN Volunteers. This could also be the opportunity to become professionally involved in the humanitarian sector after your volunteering experience.

Your Action Plan

Once you make the decision to become a volunteer – whether in your hometown or abroad, online or in person – it's time to get more information, plan, and make decisions.

How to select your volunteering project

It's important to select your volunteering assignment and the host organisation carefully.

- Why is this topic important to me?
- How does this project/organisation align with my values?
- What do I expect from this experience?
- What skills can I use best to help in this project?
- How does this project help the cause and create a positive impact?
- How much time and energy can I realistically commit to this project?

While you go through this stage, you can check this article on the [EYP on How to choose a good volunteering opportunity](#).



Where can I find the offers?

Carlos: So, I want to do something different... go abroad and stuff. This is what Eurodesk does, right?

EMA: Have you ever thought about an international experience? It can be a volunteering project, an internship abroad, or a learning exchange such as a work camp or an Erasmus study programme. Such an experience can be a turning point in your life. Young people who took part in such projects report developing new friendships, discovering new cultures, and gaining employability skills and self-confidence. Of course, you will have to make sure you're embarking on a quality programme and that you get the right support!

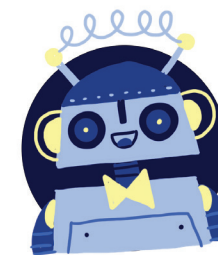
Carlos: Blah blah... What do you offer?

EMA: Eurodesk offers great services to young people willing to go abroad, such as its unique database



Carlos

EMA



of available opportunities to go abroad to volunteer, learn, or do an internship. It also advertises open European and international competitions to make your voice heard and get a chance to win prizes. This tool is free, so have a look and see where it can take you! [Eurodesk Opportunity Finder](#)



Carlos: Love it! I didn't know I had so many options! Thank you Eurodesk!

Remember that you can always get in touch with any Eurodesk info point if you want individual advice and recommendations: Eurodesk Map.



Getting ready to apply

We can see that you are getting more and more excited to start your next volunteering adventure. Great! You're probably wondering where to start.... Let's take it step by step.

If you choose to volunteer online, you may need less planning. But don't underestimate it, and make sure you allocate enough time to meet the commitment you have made to the activity.

If you decide to volunteer abroad, more planning and organisation will be needed.

Knowing your host organisation

Getting to know your host organisation is as important as getting to know yourself and your motivation! Other than checking their official website, take a look at their social channels, and don't hesitate to reach out to their staff or former volunteers. Doing this may help you to get a more personal version of their experience, as well as their perspectives on the organisation's work. Thorough research of the organisation you will be volunteering with will give you the confidence to know that it is the right opportunity for you.



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Doing your research on the quality of the volunteering placement...

Here are some guiding questions to check the quality of the volunteering placement you are potentially interested in.

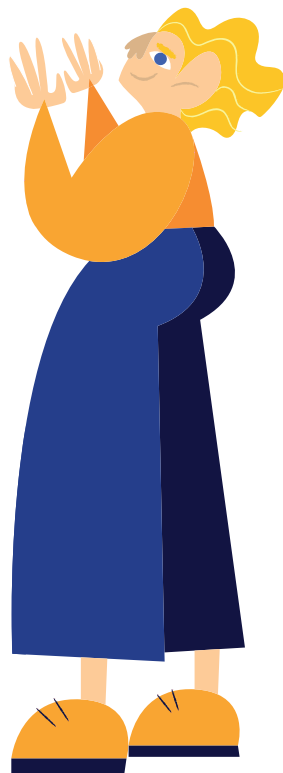
- What exactly is covered by the host (lodging, insurance, etc.)?
- What is the organisation providing as support to its volunteers before, during, and after the volunteering placement?
- Will you receive training and, if so, what kind of training?
- Will you have an assigned mentor?
- Will the organisation make you sign a volunteering agreement stating clearly your tasks and responsibilities and theirs?
- How much impact do volunteers have towards achieving the goals of the volunteering project?
- How many volunteers will be involved with you? Are you going to work in teams?
- Are there opportunities for the recognition of the competences gained during the experience?
- Can the organisation provide you with the contact details of previous volunteers?
- Who will benefit from the volunteering project? Does it involve children?
- What is planned to ensure the environment is safe?
-
(add your own questions)



Have you ever heard of “voluntourism”?

The term voluntourism, which emerged in the '90s, comes from merging “volunteering” and “tourism”. It refers to mixing practices and activities from both the volunteer and the tourism sectors. It happens when a person is visiting a foreign country and decides to engage in a volunteering experience while there, or when the person pays an agency (sometimes a considerable amount) for a “ready-made” volunteering abroad package.

Some people are critical of voluntourism practices, questioning whether the impact is meaningful for the local community, whether progress is achieved over time, and the commercialisation of an experience that should be based on solidarity. In particular, you should pay attention to opportunities involving work with children that could prove not so helpful. You can find more food for thought on volunteering with children on the [ChildSafe website](#).



While you go through this stage, you can check this article on the EYP on How to choose a good volunteering opportunity.



Create your CV and cover letter

Before you apply, you will also need a CV and a cover letter. Your CV is your first opportunity to communicate your skills and experiences and convince the organisation to select you. It is a snapshot of who you are, your skills, your educational background, and your work experience and other achievements.

Be aware that if you don't have a lot of experience, you can always put the focus on your motivation by explaining what drives you to volunteer for the organisation. Of course, this really depends on the programme. In some international programmes for humanitarian aid, for example, organisations will pay more attention to your skills.

If you don't have a CV or don't know where to start, don't worry. You are about to discover a platform that will make your life easier...

Europass is a portal with a set of online tools to help you create a CV and cover letter, and also to find some interesting courses in the EU. The [Europass CV builder](#) makes it easy to create, store, and share CVs in 31 languages. You can use it to apply for volunteering projects, as well as for education or training opportunities.



It's very simple – first you will have to create your Europass profile with information on your education, training, work experience, and skills. After you complete your Europass profile, you can create as many CVs as you want with just a few clicks. Just select which information you want to include, pick your favourite design, and Europass will do the rest.

Moreover, Europass can guide you through all the steps to develop a structured, consistent, and professional [cover letter](#). You can create new cover letters or edit existing ones using the Europass tool to create and edit cover letters in 31 languages.



Getting ready to go!

Checklist for your volunteering experience abroad

- ☐ Do your background research on the host organisation and the country/city.
- ☐ Contact your hosting organisation (and sending organisation, if applicable).
- ☐ Check local transport options.
- ☐ Get familiar with the currency (there are cards that allow

you to pay in different currencies without commission – so-called travel cards).

- ☐ Order your European Health Insurance Card (if within the EU) and check the health measures that apply (vaccines, etc.).



- ☐ Travel permits: make sure your identification document is up to date and still valid throughout the period you are volunteering.
- ☐ Learn a few words of the local language.
- ☐ If you stay within the EU, remember that you can "roam like at home"; otherwise, check which local phone company best meets your needs while volunteering abroad.



Volunteers' Rights & Responsibilities

Before you start volunteering, you should know that every volunteer has their rights as well as their responsibilities. Rights and responsibilities are designed to make sure that both parties (volunteer and host) are safe and respected, and that they benefit from the partnership.

Did you know?

Did you know that there is a European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers? The Charter brings together the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and the rights of volunteer providers in order to ensure that access to volunteering and active citizenship opportunities are rights, not privileges.

Below you will find a list, as described in the European Charter on the rights and responsibilities of volunteers.



Rights of the volunteer

The volunteer is entitled to:

- full protection of their human rights while volunteering
- equal access to volunteering opportunities and to be protected against all types of discrimination
- receive a written volunteer agreement
- be informed about their rights and responsibilities
- health care and liability insurance while volunteering
- refuse to carry out tasks that would be in conflict with their beliefs and/or convictions
- be informed of the risks to health and life associated with their duties
- be reimbursed for travel expenses related to the implementation of the provisions of the volunteer agreement and for expenses incurred as a result of the volunteer's tasks
- be treated in line with the applicable norms, rules, standards, and objectives of the volunteer policy
- a coherent task description that allows them to implement the volunteering activity with a clear understanding of its aims and objectives
- receive support and feedback before, during, and after the volunteering activity
- participate in the decision-making process for volunteering activities at the most appropriate level and have some ownership of the project by co-determining the implementation of the project
- receive the necessary educational/training support in order to carry out voluntary activities according to their full capacity
- develop new skills and competences and the space to discover, experiment and develop their own learning path
- receive written confirmation of their voluntary service.

Responsibilities of the volunteer

Every volunteer shall:

- respect the rules of law and non-discrimination throughout their voluntary activity
- respect the integrity, mission, objectives, and values of the volunteering provider
- respect the commitments that have been made with the volunteer organiser in terms of the jointly agreed amount of time and effort to go into the voluntary activities, the quality of which must be ensured
- participate in free of charge training offered that is relevant for the volunteer and related to skills needed in order to carry out the agreed tasks
- respect the confidentiality of (organisational) information
- understand that volunteering aims to benefit the common good or society
- cooperate with other volunteers within the organisation where relevant and contribute to the organisation's sustainability through communication with others and a handover at the end of their engagement
- If a minor, provide a written agreement to participate to volunteer, signed by parents/legal guardians.



Volunteering Agreement

A volunteering agreement is an essential document. It usually contains the following elements:

- the contact details of all parties between whom the agreement is signed – usually the volunteer and the host organisation
- information on the duration of the volunteering contract
- the number of working hours (and days off)
- the rights and obligations of the volunteer and the host organisation
- a description of the volunteer's role and tasks
- information on insurance and other forms of support (financial, training, language).

So, as you can see, this agreement provides the answer to almost every basic question you might have about your project. The contract is also a legal document that protects you during your volunteering project, so it is worth remembering to sign it before you start your volunteering period. If important elements are missing, such as the insurance, make sure to ask the organisers before the project starts.



Practising the language of the destination country

As soon as you know your volunteering destination, you can start learning the language with the following free resources:

- Duolingo:** easy way to get you started in the language



- Busuu:** learn a language in ten minutes a day



- Speak.social:** speak with people from the country and other learners in an informal way



- Memrise:** phrases useful in everyday life thanks to video clips of speakers from the country



Tandem: connect with other peers to learn together the languages you are interested in



- Local news on YouTube or checking online news outlets.

See the article on the European Youth Portal about learning new languages while travelling

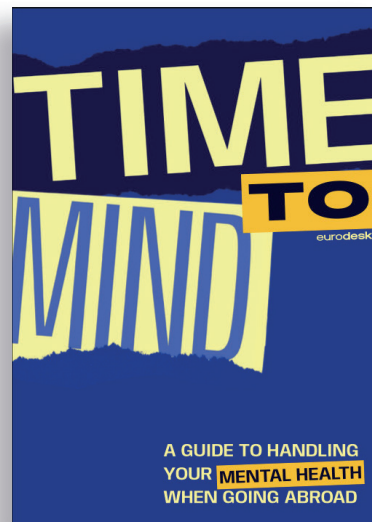


Time to Mind

Living abroad can be a great experience, but it's important to look after your well-being and be aware that you may experience "culture shock". Going abroad to study, work, or volunteer is about more than just discovering new places. It's an opportunity for personal development and self-discovery as you explore new environments and cultures and meet new people.

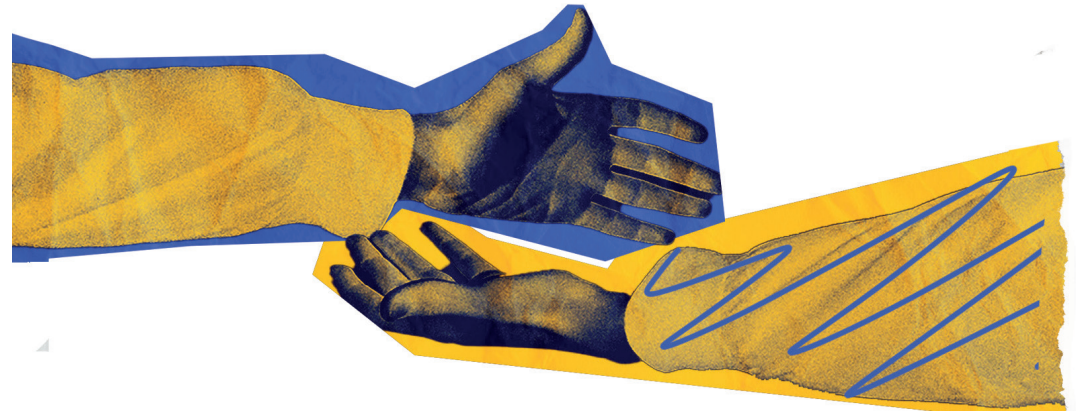
This journey can expand your horizons, challenge your assumptions, and help you become more open-minded, flexible, and resilient.

This journey can also come with some challenges related to adapting to change and experiencing "culture shock." Don't worry if you experience some of these challenges or "culture shock"! It's all part of the adventure. Stepping out of your comfort zone is not easy, but it will help you discover the world around you... and yourself. Being prepared will help you a lot. Before you start your next journey, have a look at Eurodesk's [Time to Mind – A guide to handling your mental health when going abroad.](#)



Make the best of this experience

- Stay open-minded, flexible, and curious to maximise what you learn.
- Make an effort to engage with the local community and understand their views. Enjoy what you are doing and report any problems you may encounter. If in doubt, you should always refer to a third party for advice (for example, Eurodesk or your sending organisation).
- Stay in touch with your home, family, and friends.
- Set time aside for yourself, and keep your energy levels up by taking care of your nutrition and sleep.
- Keep a journal with you to record what you live, learn, and experience: it can also be in a series of stories on your Instagram account, a blog, or whatever best helps you to record your experience!



There is a life after volunteering!

Your volunteering experience does not end the day you get home... It is likely to give you a new set of memories, skills, and people that will stay with you. There are also many ways to continue contributing to the cause you volunteered for.

In addition to your personal development through your volunteering experience, there are many ways in which you can continue using your experience for the benefit of the cause and for your own benefit:

- **Select the skills you improved while volunteering and present them in your CV.**

This could be mediation skills, sustainability practices, a foreign language, etc. Additionally, if you engage in volunteering under the European Solidarity Corps, your activity will be recorded in the [Youthpass](#), which is the tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth projects.



- **Raise awareness of the cause you personally contributed to.**

You never know who you may inspire with your passion and involvement. Social media can be a powerful tool to reach people who, despite being far away, are conscious about the same issues.

- **Share your story with others!**

It can be on social media, with the organisation you volunteer with, or on the European Youth Portal through your National Agency* and Eurodesk! Just as other people's experiences might have helped you to decide on your engagement, why not share what your volunteering experience has meant to you? What have you learned? How would you motivate others to play their role in helping others – contributing to a cleaner environment, for example?

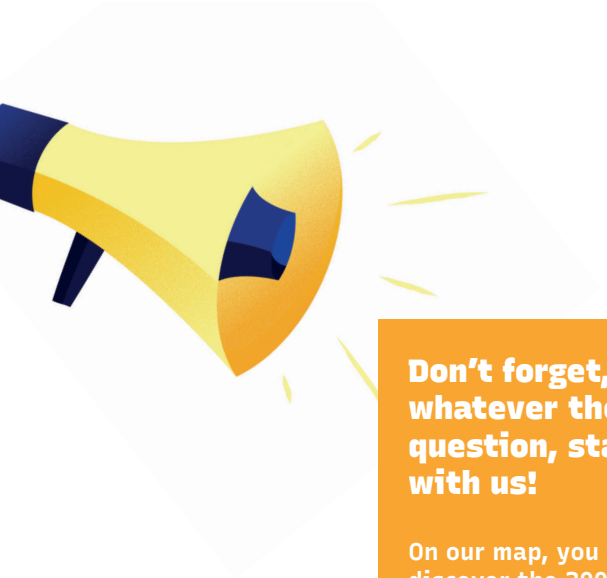
- **Become a EuroPeer!**

Want to share your experience? You can become a EuroPeer if you have participated in, or organised, a European Solidarity Corps or Erasmus+ youth project in recent years (volunteering project, solidarity project, youth exchange, youth participation project, DiscoverEU, etc.). You will access a community of former volunteers and networking opportunities.



- **Make the best of your experience and create your project in your community.**

Do you want to make a positive change in your community and transfer the ideas/skills you have gained in your local context? Solidarity Projects allow a group of young people aged between 18 and 30 to develop and implement projects at the local level. By creating such projects, groups of young people can be socially engaged in their community in a creative way. Whether it's on topics like participation, climate change, sustainability, or the integration of migrants, the opportunities for engagement are endless!



**Don't forget,
whatever the
question, start
with us!**

On our map, you will
discover the 3000
members of our
network and find the
closest to you.



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Learn more at eurodesk.eu



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