

Legal and administrative issues concerning volunteering in housing programmes

1. Planning volunteer programmes

- target group, numbers,
- material and financial conditions of recruitment, fundraising,
- media channels,
- description of roles,
- preparation of host organization

2. National regulatory environments in the EU:

- 1. no national law regulating the distinct legal status of volunteers, relevant rules applying are included either in non-written customs and practices, or they are vested in the self-regulation of the volunteer organizations (Scandinavia, England)
- 2. regulation included in various laws affecting volunteerism included in the laws regulating different forms of CSOs, e.g. Latvia; law on public benefit status, e.g. Poland; or other laws, e.g. Code of Obligations in Switzerland
- 3. separate comprehensive law on volunteering as an efficient tool of promotion of volunteering, e.g. Hungary, Macedonia etc.

3. Laws on volunteering:

- definition of a volunteer
- definition of a host organization and what types of organizations qualified as hosts
- what types of volunteerism are subject to regulation
- the apportionment of rights and responsibilities between the volunteer and host
- provision of casualty, health, and other risk insurance,
- liability provisions
- working hours affecting the health, mental and physical well-being of the volunteer
- taxation of expenses related to the volunteering activity, e.g. travel costs, accommodation for volunteers outside of the location of the activity
- conditions for international volunteering: volunteering of nationals abroad and foreigners inside the country

4. Laws in practices:

- laws in the EU
- what is public benefit
- good examples
- informal partnerships between the government, NGOs, and the private sector
- volunteer services

5. Misuses by regulation:

- prohibition and limitation certain type of practices by laws
- absence of a legal definition of “volunteer” resulting in the treatment of volunteers as paid employees
- exclusion certain people from volunteering (migrants, people with criminal records)
- cases of young people engaging of volunteer works
- losing the unemployment and health benefits by volunteering
- taxation of reimbursement
- hindrance by over-bureaucratisation
- political barbarism: state’s intention to abuse the volunteering engagement

6. National strategies promoting volunteering

- marketing and campaigning of volunteering
- good practice development
- developing volunteering opportunities
- strategic development of volunteering

7. National agencies of volunteering:

- supporting a national network of volunteer development agencies
- undertaking research, policy and development activity
- providing grants, support and advice to sustain and develop volunteering
- cooperating with the government in policy development
- coordination of local volunteering development agencies
- awareness campaigns
- providing consultancy, training, publications, information and web-based services
- promoting good practices

8. The volunteer contract

- oral or written
- roles: tasks, place, time, durability,
- rights, responsibilities, liability, checking,
- reimbursement, insurance, taxation
- special rules regarding youth and disabled,
- renuntiation, dismissal, quit
- harm reduction
- rules of data protection

9. Corporate philosophy of host organizations

- motivational plan
- organising supervision, case management, education, training, team building
- forms of appreciation: certificates, rewards, bonuses, common programs indicating of honor and appreciation
- volunteering in CV: competencies
- volunteer portfolio
- property rights of original work produced by volunteers

10. The most hated beasts: administration and finance

- register of volunteers: data collected
- refunding of cost, rules of reimbursement and remuneration, taxation,
- long term sustainability, and fundraising
- insurance policies, liability rules,
- protecting: health and insurance coverage

11. The standards of behavior:

- examples of volunteers obligations
- codes of conducts
- handling of grievances,
- understanding each others: informality in language of documents,
- handling of changes
- data protection, secrecy

12. Special conditions concerning volunteering in international programs

13. Social Housing programs

- social housing criteria
- its roles: meeting general housing need and facilitating urban regeneration
- allocation mechanism
- “social” in the perspective of policy makers
- staircase approach versus housing first
- elimination of mass shelters: the Finnish example

14. Volunteers in housing led programs

- legal responsibilities
- ethical rules
- being together: education, sport, recreation, daily activities
- helping in the managing of housekeeping: rents, bills, budgeting, cleaning
- promoting concrete affairs: benefits, pensions, unemployment fees
- volunteers or peer supporters?
- civil actions unlimited