



Summary “Mobility - Elderly Volunteer Network Meeting”

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Paris, France

Status and Outlook

- 2009 is a crucial year for the success of the Mobility Project. In 2009 our focus will be to further develop the activities of the Mobility Project as it will be the year where the first international exchange of European volunteers will take place. Towards the end of this year we should be able to evaluate the first exchanges that will continue to take place until 2010, when our focus will need to shift towards evaluation and sustainability of the project.
- The National Contact Persons nominated for this project have been carrying out communication activities to ensure large visibility of the Mobility Project among the volunteers of the SSVP as well as other volunteering organisations. **(Updated list of EU Mobility contacts see attachment 1)**
- They united for a “Mobility Volunteer Network Meeting” on March 12, 2009 in order to monitor interim project results and to prepare the exchange phase.
- The next meeting of this group will most likely take place on November 19, 2009 and will serve as a platform for an evaluation of the first exchange trips. The meeting might take place earlier, if this should be advisable by the project’s developments.

National Mobility Contact Persons progress reports

As communication will be a key to the success of this project, the Mobility Contact Persons present, shared and exchanged best-practise on the communication activities they carried out in their countries in order to promote the Mobility Project. Even though the local situations vary, these reports shall help each National Contact Person to establish and further develop an action plan that shall be implemented in the months to come.



▪ Successful communication activities

- Presentation to the National Council, Diocesan Presidents, all related Committees (international relations, twinning, etc.) as well as at national, regional and local meetings.
- Emails, phone calls, letters and word of mouth to inform regional and local Councils as well as individual Conferences and volunteers.
- Publicity page based on the project presentation provided by Council General sent to all Conferences.
- Preparation of project presentations to be published on the Mobility Section of the www.ozanet.org website.
- Distribution of examples of projects to be visited throughout the existing national, regional and local structure.
- Articles on the Mobility Project published in national and regional SSVP magazines.
- “Avis de recherché” – “Want add” to attract interested volunteers (**see attachment 2**)
- Articles and project presentations published on national (and regional) SSVP websites (for example: www.ssvpscotland.com - also on the “Overseas Twinning Page”)
- Contacts to non SSVP newspapers in order to have articles on the project published that inform the larger public.

▪ Challenges

- Organising meetings solely to present the Mobility Project has proven difficult due to travel distances and time constraints. It seems advisable to wait for already scheduled meetings of volunteer groups in order to be able to present the project.
- It might be necessary to provide suggestions of interesting projects to visit. Even though study trips can focus on any topic, this might help to create interest in what countries have to offer and to communicate the invitations to visit specific projects.



- The at times very local focus of the volunteers needs to be widened by showing the benefits of the international exchanges for the local work.
 - Some external volunteering organisations that were contacted expressed the fear that we want to “steal” their volunteers. On the contrary, we want to enhance the image of volunteering and the opportunities to use volunteering as a form of active ageing by reaching out to as many volunteers aged 50+ as possible.
 - The focus on the age group 50+ should not lead to exclude younger volunteers. They are invited to participate in the learning experience of this project. However as they are not the primary target group they can not benefit from the travel grants provided.
 - The age group 50+ is at times reluctant to travel, due to medical reasons, family obligations (care of elderly family member or watch of grand children) or simple fear of the unknown (such as foreign language and culture). Others are still working and need to adapt any volunteer exchange to their vacation schedules. Our efforts need to focus on those volunteers aged 50+ who are fit and willing to experience something new.
- Contact to non-Vincentians
- Contacts to organisations that work in related fields have been established, such as the Red Cross, HOPE (a Family Support Group, whose members visit prisoners and help prisoners' families), Kiwanis and volunteering platforms.
 - Contacts have also been established to associations of retirees such as retired teachers and retired EU officers.
 - Presentations have been made at Inter-Church Groups
 - Word of mouth and involvement of personal networks further widened the outreach.

The above activities have already inspired other organisations and individuals to contact us asking to participate. Such initiatives are a great success.



- Study trips in preparation
 - Northern Ireland – Paris, France: to study the organisation of volunteering work as Council level (Mid June 2009)
 - Paris, France – Transylvania, Romania: to study enhanced direct French-Romanian cooperation and to study cooperation with other NGOs in the work of schooling Roma children (May 18-25, 2009)
 - Paris, France => **looking for host country**: to study home visitations and or emergency housing

- Applications for study trips in preparation for volunteers aged 50+

These planned trips have not yet filled out the official application form.

 - Belgium => Italy: best practise exchange on work for alphabetisation
 - Newcastle, England <=> Spain: to work on debt relief services
 - Romania => Portsmouth Central Council, England: to study volunteering projects of the Bournemouth District Council
 - Hungary National Council => Scotland National Council: to study the organisation of volunteering work at Council level
 - Hungary => Madrid, Spain: to study the work for those infected by HIV as well as law assistance services
 - Hungary and Scotland => Austria: prison visits
 - Romania => Miskolc, Hungary: to study the work with handicapped children
 - Romania => Steiermark, Austria: practical exchange on the day-to-day work of the elderly volunteers
 - Romania, Slatina => England, to share best practise
 - Spain => **looking for host in Italy**: on communication tools for volunteer organisations

Next steps

The two key aspects for the upcoming phase of this project are “Communication” and “Motivation”.



The interest that has been raised for the Mobility Project needs to be leveraged into an active participation of the volunteers. This can be done by organising to go on an exchange trip or hosting such a trip at home. Volunteers might need support in making the step from strong interest into the project to an active participation. It is up to the individual National Contact Person to decide how to foster this development. Among the possibilities are:

- To further spread the word about the special projects that have already been presented by the various countries.
- To organise an exchange trip around a specific topic and then search for interested volunteers to participate.
- To actively invite volunteers from other countries to their country, for example through building upon already existing international contacts.

National Contact Persons are advised to make as much use of the existing structures as possible for example through informing twinning and communications officers.

The International Council General is ready to help where it can. At the same time the direct communication among the National Contact Persons, especially from neighbouring countries, will be crucial in supporting all activities.

Practical matters

- The mobility section of www.ozanet.org started listing a selection of projects that are inviting volunteers to come and visit. This database should be a valuable source of information for any volunteers interested in organising or participating in an exchange, but uncertain where to go and what subject to study. It should be increased by additional texts sent by the Mobility Contact Persons. Translations can be provided.
- Study trips can be based on any (volunteering related) topic the participating volunteers choose. They are not limited to those projects that have been presented by the countries or published online. They should rather be based on the interests of the participants and their ability to share and expand knowledge on their volunteering work.
- All study trips must fill out the application form that needs to be approved by the National Contact Person (or the National Council)



before being submitted to Council General. Feedback or approval should be granted on very short delay. (**Application form, see attachment 3**).

- Once an application has been approved, the participants should make and book their travel arrangements (within the agreed budget). They will get reimbursed without delay. Only in exceptions the International Council General can book the travel arrangements. Daily subsistence costs can be provided upfront or reimbursed after the trip upon the presentation of receipts (within the agreed budget). When a stay at host-families has been agreed, their expenses can be reimbursed.
- With the help of the National Contact Points the participants should organise the details of their exchanges. Accommodation will best be organised by the host. It could be in host-families, convents and seminars or at moderate hotels.
- In order to overcome language barriers the host country should try to find a local volunteer who can translate for the guests (for example a migrant worker or a student). Alternatively the travelling group can look to include one person into their group who can translate. However it seems easier to look for translation directly in the host country.

Final remarks

- Please send us copies of all published materials as well as links or screenshots of websites that publish information on the Mobility Project. This enables us to share good ideas and to compile a file of all communications activities.
- In between meetings please do not hesitate to keep all project partners including the International General Council informed about your activities.
- Please make use of the projects presented at the “Mobility Section” of www.ozanet.org and provide us with additional project presentations and any other information you would like to publish!
- **Many thanks to all for your enthusiasm and hard work!**



Attachments

1. List of EU Mobility contacts
2. “Avis de recherché” – “Want add”
3. Application form