

Talk with me

Volunteer language mentors
for refugees



MANUAL

for an Information Session
for Young Refugees



The following manual should help you to deliver an information session about the project for refugees. Additionally, you will find some recommendations on how to deliver a short and simple intercultural training for the refugees participating in the project.

Overview of the information session:

- Explain the objective and idea of the “Talk with me” project
- Tell them who you are and which organisation you represent
- Explain what volunteering is
- Clarify what a voluntary language mentor is and what he is NOT, so that they understand and accept the limitations and boundaries of the project
- Describe the rules and regulations of the project and what will be the consequences if they are broken
- Inform them about contact details and the support given during the project
- Tell them how they can contribute to the success of the project and what is expected of them
- Motivate them by explaining the benefits the project gives them
- Refer to other, additional opportunities of active participation in your organisation or within the local community

Always remember: as most of the refugees have very limited language skills you have to keep it simple and use easy language. In the following section, we give you an idea of how we delivered the information to the participants.

Short information about the project, the general idea behind it, and its objectives

The project “Talk with me” was developed by a German organisation called “Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa”. It was so successful, that two other volunteer organisations/ NGOs in Bulgaria (Tulip Foundation) and Romania (Cluj-Napoca Volunteer Center) also implemented it in their country.

Why is this project needed?

It is very difficult for refugees to learn, understand and speak the new language.

Most of them have little or no contact to locals, which makes it very difficult for them to practice the new language.

But to learn and practice a language you need to talk to people. And to feel welcome, you need people who talk to you, who like you, and who like to spend time with you.

Therefore, this is what we are trying to do:

We bring people together, so that they communicate, get to know each other, speak to each other and learn from one another.

How does the project work?

Within the project we find local volunteers, who will be a “language mentor” for one refugee. The language mentor meets the refugee at least once a week for a minimum of one hour. In this hour, they talk about topics of interest and get to know each other. They meet 10 times.

The refugees can improve their skills to understand and speak the language. But they also learn a lot about the people and the culture of their new country.

The “language mentors” get NO money. They work as volunteers. They do this because they like to help others and because they want to get to know someone from a different country and learn about a new culture. So this is something the refugees contribute to this project.

And if both like each other, they can become friends and carry on meeting each other after these 10 meetings. This is something they can do, but don’t have to do. So it is completely up to the two how they will go on after the 10 weeks.

What can the refugees expect?

What to expect from this project?

If the refugees are really motivated to learn the language and are willing to participate in the project, the project coordinators will not only give them a training session, but they will also match them with a language mentor and find places where the teams can meet. If they have any problems with their language mentor, they can call the coordinators, and they will find a solution. They can also provide the refugees with information on other

volunteer activities within their organisation or within the local community.

What refugees can expect from their language mentors:

- They are willing to communicate with the refugees and to meet up 10 times.
- They have done a training to become a voluntary language mentor.
- They are motivated and helpful, as they invest their time to support others to learn a new language.
- They are friendly and open-minded.
- They would also like to learn something from the refugees.

What refugees CANNOT expect from the coordinators or their language mentors:

- to accept disrespectful manners
- to help them with other problems
- to lend them money
- to find an apartment or a job for them

What do we expect from the refugees involved in the project?

We expect them

- to attend all meetings
- to bring a photo to each meeting, related to a topic they want to talk/learn about
- to be reliable, honest and responsible
- to be respectful
- to be punctual
- to contact the coordinators and/or the language mentor in time if they cannot come to a meeting
- to stay in contact with the coordinators and tell them in time if something goes wrong

- to sign the supporting documents (e.g. list of participants, certificate of participation, permission to take pictures, data protection statement)

What is volunteering?

Volunteering is an “altruistic” activity, where an individual or a group of people provide services for no financial gain to benefit another person, a group or an organisation, who are not family members or friends. Volunteer activities promote goodness and help to improve the quality of life of the persons involved.

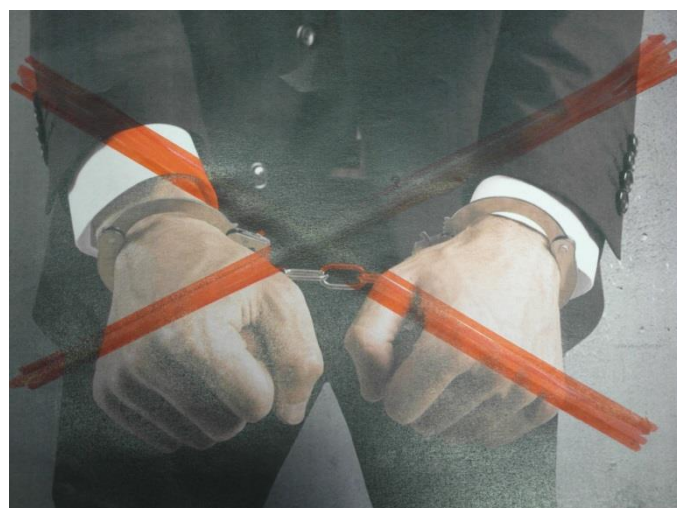
We will now give you an idea of how we deliver this information to the participants:

First of all, we ask them if they know what volunteering is and if they have ever been volunteers themselves.

Then we describe the characteristics of voluntary work:

1. non-profit: not for money
2. voluntarily - not forced
3. giving time to help others
4. for people who are not family members or friends
5. for the general good (e.g. for people in need, such as poor people or the elderly, people with disabilities, disadvantaged families or young people etc. or for the protection of nature, animals etc.)

We use pictures to explain these characteristics:



Then we explain that their language mentors are volunteers, meaning:

1. They are not paid any money
2. They do it voluntarily, because they want to help and support others
3. They give their time, meaning their “gift” is their personal time, which should be valued
4. They help refugees although they do not know them and are not related to them
5. They want to support their integration and help them understanding and speaking the language in order to feel and live better in the new country.

Then we collect ideas on the kind of volunteer activities they could do, by presenting them different volunteer opportunities in the region, such as volunteering for:

elderly or disabled people



rescue services



sports clubs



the preservation of nature



and many other things

What are the benefits for the refugees?

- They can improve their language skills
- They get to know local people
- They will be better connected within the community
- They will learn about the culture, the people and the country of their new home and they have the opportunity to ask questions if they do not understand something or want to learn how things are done here
- They can practice different important communicative situations in a “safe” environment (e.g. speaking with a doctor, authorities in the job center, a landlord etc.)
- They learn about other opportunities for active participation



How can the refugees contribute to the project?

- by being motivated and engaged
- by being open-minded and tolerant
- by showing a willingness to learn something new
- by showing interest in the other person
- by sharing their culture and their life experiences
- by showing and sharing their talents, skills, and knowledge
- by being patient
- by showing respect
- by bringing 10 photos of interesting things to talk about
- by giving feedback at the end of the project





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