

# Grey4Green

Active ageing and climate action through the involvement of senior citizens in nature conservation



## SENIOR VOLUNTEERS FOR NATURE Implementation Handbook



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## PROJECT PARTNERS

### DENMARK

#### Frit Oplysningsforbund-Aarhus (FO-Aarhus) - Coordinator

FO-Aarhus (Association for Adult Education) is a non-government, non-profit organization established in 1973 to provide non-formal adult learning and counselling to the citizens of Aarhus. It has its own elected Board of Governors composed of representatives from the private sector, public administration, and the formal and vocational education sector. FO-Aarhus' basic expertise lies in non-formal adult education for the general public and specialization in programmes that help disadvantaged groups – e.g. immigrants, unemployed people, people with learning disabilities, dyslectics, people with mental issues – to enhance their quality of life and to integrate (or re-integrate) into society and the workforce. The aim is to strengthen the participants' personal, social, and vocational competencies as a stepping-stone to re-education, re-inclusion into the job market or further education.



### CYPRUS

#### Center for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology (CARDET)

CARDET is one of the leading adult education research and development centers in the Mediterranean region with global expertise in adult education, social inclusion, project design and implementation, capacity building, and e-learning. CARDET is independently affiliated with universities and institutions from around the world, such as the Yale University, the University of Nicosia and the International Council of Educational Media. CARDET has completed numerous projects relating to adult education, eLearning, literacies, blender learning, university – community collaboration, MOOCs, digital tools, volunteering, and VET. CARDET brings together an international team of experts with decades of global expertise in designing, implementing, and evaluating international projects.



### FRANCE

#### European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)

ALDA is a non-profit association founded by the initiative of the Congress of the Council of Europe in 1999 whose main goal is to promote good governance and citizen participation at the local level. ALDA is a membership-based organization gathering more than 350 members (including local democracy agencies, local authorities, an association of local authorities, civil society organizations, universities, NGOs, grassroots associations, and public bodies), based in 45 countries over most of Europe and the European Neighbourhood countries, amongst these the Balkans, Belarus, Moldova, the Caucasus area, Turkey, and a few countries from the North African region. Its offices are based in Strasbourg (FR), Brussels (BE), Vicenza (IT), Subotica (RS), Skopje (MK), Chisinau (MD) and Tunis (TN). ALDA has 40 staff and various interns and volunteers who support the activities of the different offices. Today, ALDA is a key stakeholder in the field of local democracy, active citizenship, good governance, EU integration, human rights, and cooperation between local authorities and civil society. Most of its work is based on multilateral decentralized cooperation.



## ICELAND

### Environment Agency of Iceland (EAI)

Under the direction of the Ministry for the Environment, EAI's role is to promote the protection and the sustainable use of Iceland's natural resources, as well as public welfare by helping to ensure a healthy environment. EAI is a leading agent in environmental issues and nature conservation in the community. Its role is to closely monitor the development of environmental issues and safeguard the welfare of the public. One of the main roles of EAI is to manage and protect the Snæfellsjökull National Park and other 115 protected areas in Iceland. According to the nature conservation act a Nature Reserve is an area protected for its importance for wildlife (flora and fauna) and landscape. The primary work method of EAI is group work and works well for formulating the future policy of the EAI in each instance. It has about 90 full time employees.



## PORTUGAL

### The Municipality of Lousada (Município de Lousada)

The Municipality of Lousada (ML) is a local public administration that manages an area of 95 km<sup>2</sup> with about 50.000 inhabitants. This highly populated area, in a peri-urban region, faces many challenges regarding its sustainable development, life quality, and population literacy and citizenship. Thus, the ML's mission is to define guiding strategies and execute the resulting local policies through measures and programmes in various areas of our competence, promoting the quality of life of all citizens and ensuring high standards of quality services. Our work is directed at achieving sustainable development with benefits and opportunities to all our citizens, in terms of environment, social and economic fields.



## PORTUGAL

### Associação BioLiving

The objectives of this NGO are, among others, to promote sustainability through the engagement in environmental citizenship and public participation for the protection of nature, while boosting the social economy and fostering inclusion, peace, and solidarity, using education, natural resources, and the protection of nature as leitmotiv. BioLiving's operating model focuses on the proximity to communities, municipalities, schools, companies, and other NGOs. It believes that working in partnership with the stakeholders and populations facilitates the dialogue and the search for solutions for environmental education and nature conservation and their involvement and interest in environmental issues is more effectively promoted.



# 01 Introduction

The 'Grey4Green' Erasmus+ Project arises from the need to encourage a greater expression of civic participation from the senior community in Europe in the environmental, social and cultural field, demonstrating the potential of active ageing in favour of a cause unequivocally essential to the whole of society, such as sustainability and the fight against climate change. With a consortium of six European partner countries - Denmark, Iceland, Portugal, Cyprus and France - the project was born with the aim of promoting the social inclusion of elderly people through their involvement in the fight for sustainability and climate change mitigation in Europe.

This manual has been developed to provide a guide, with essential step-by-step guidelines for the implementation of useful, enriching and safe senior environmental volunteering programmes that can be carried out by a wide range of stakeholders, such as private charities, day care centres, senior universities, NGOs, natural area developers, among others.

This is the first step-by-step guide with a special focus on the design of social engagement programmes with the senior community and for the benefit of nature conservation.

The needs, obstacles, challenges and potential of senior volunteering in the environmental field will be presented in detail in this handbook through the experience of Grey4Green partners, so that they can be more easily overcome by entities interested in implementing similar initiatives.



Intergenerational volunteering plantation of native species (Lousada, Portugal)

# 02 What is the importance of nature conservation?



The ecosystem services provided by nature contribute unequivocally and irreplaceably to the quality of life and well-being of humanity in the same way as they contribute to the balance of Planet Earth as a whole. They are divided into provisioning services such as timber and fish, supporting services being pollination one of the most well-known on media, and leisure services such as boating, all of which reflect the multiple benefits that nature offers to mankind. Controversially, monetary efforts, time and energy for nature conservation, restoration and management often seem to be taken as likely to be reduced. Such controversy raises the question 'What if caring for nature alone is an essential component of human well-being?' Adopting and developing the concept of relational values, it is crucial to take the view that well-being must not be reduced, but rather should be prioritised, which raises nature conservation to the level of importance it deserves.

**“It is important to play an active role in the fight against climate change. By 2030, between 68 and 132 million people could end up in poverty as a consequence of global climate change. Denmark is one of the countries in the world with the highest consumption - therefore we have a huge responsibility. **Everyone must do something**”**

*Charlotte, 38 years old, Denmark, project employee*

When we think about protecting Planet Earth, we should think about protecting a system that has a set of elements, resources, ecosystems and services that are intrinsically connected and dependent on each other. Any natural ecosystem functions in equilibrium and is composed of a complex network of all living and non-living beings that exist in a given area and influence the behaviour and survival of other beings. Disturbances introduced into an ecosystem in one place affect the whole system, which is



Workshop of traditional brooms made with native bushes (Lousada, Portugal)

both resilient and fragile. The case of habitat destruction caused by deforestation is one of the best known disturbances to forest ecosystems and expresses devastating effects not only on the countless species living in the disturbed habitats, but also for the Planet as a whole. Trees are carbon sinks and natural factories of free oxygen, so the fight against climate change will necessarily involve a greater protection of forested areas. Forests, like the ocean, are powerful allies in regulating the climate, preventing the worsening of global warming. Coastal erosion is also a major threat to the protection of populations, and again, plants in both terrestrial and marine environments play a key role in dealing with the risk of coastal flooding in coastal countries, done for example by fixing the soil

through their roots and by attenuating the force of the sea. When ecological disturbances affect animals and render them vulnerable or even give them conservation statuses such as 'endangered', it triggers a domino effect with effects throughout the food chain, such as on primary producers like plants. The food dependencies between fauna, when disturbed, lead to harmful consequences such as decrease in the number of carnivores in the proliferation of some species of herbivores, impacting the vegetation cover of an area. The importance of each species ranges from the tiniest living being, such as bees or wasps for the pollination phenomenon, to the great prey like bears, which curiously some other species include food from bees in their diet. Non-living elements such as minerals are also exploited by humans, and the processes of extraction and chemical, physical or biological alteration of these have an impact on ecosystems and levels of environmental disturbance. Nature surprises by its robustness and umbilical connection between all the elements that constitute it.

As is common knowledge, environmental challenges affect a huge number of things and at a worrying scale. Human health and generally physical well-being is most immediately and directly affected. Air pollution, for instance, generates severe respiratory diseases in various parts of the world, both in developing (e.g. India) and developed countries (e.g. United States of America). However, mental and emotional health have been shown to be quite vulnerable to the factors that jeopardise the future of the planet. The phenomenon of anxiety felt by millions of people around the world due to concern and uncertainty about climate change is currently being called 'eco-anxiety'. According to a study published in the scientific journal *The Lancet*, eco-anxiety is more common in younger people, and points out that 84% of children and young people aged between 16 and 25 are at least moderately worried about the climate emergency. Perhaps the scientific community's increased amount of information published in studies in recent years, causes the increase in the stress of the aforementioned group, as they understand that they will have to face whatever comes their way more durably, with climate predictions being less than encouraging. Eco-anxiety may even be the result of real situations, that is, there are effectively children and young people having to be displaced because of threats, which may be drought, floods, diseases, among others. In a report published in 2021, UNICEF states that one billion children around the world will be at extremely high risk due to climate change. So the anxieties and concerns are in fact valid.

Although younger people may be more concerned about the current state of the planet, older people have



some aspects that characterise them as a more vulnerable group. This is because environmental threats impact with greater intensity and frequency on the most fragile human populations, like the elderly. This is due to the decrease in motor skills, the physiological changes that any person experiences during the ageing process, and to the fact that they commonly have less access to essential resources, which can hinder their ability to adapt. Under the effects of increasing extreme temperature events, older people are at greater risk of mortality. The same is expected with the increase in the number of disease vectors, which incites greater exposure and fragility of the elderly population. Cities will also have to progressively adapt to climate change, so older people may have more difficulty in keeping up with changes in land use planning, public policies, among other pillars of environmental sustainability.

It is important to highlight that the senior population is capable of becoming active agents for the mitigation of such threats, and they should not be considered passive victims, as this is a superficial and limiting view. There is a consensus on the alliance of political engagement and transversal involvement of all actors in society.



Wild mushrooms collection by a senior specialist in Lousada, Portugal

**“Volunteering for me is an opportunity to connect with people from all walks of life and to learn from their diverse experiences. It is a chance to contribute to the well-being of others while also growing as a person”**

*Andreas, 29 years old, Cyprus, software engineer*

Seniors cannot and must not remain on the sidelines of the global mission to fight climate change. It is necessary to create inclusive opportunities that give a voice to citizens who have lived and witnessed environmental changes the most, and who have a say and civic action to take.

It is important to think about the global definition ‘Think globally, act locally’ that raises citizens’ awareness about the health of the planet and human beings, and active civic participation in their communities and cities. There is much nature preservation work that needs to be done, i.e. increasing action plans and enforcement aimed at keeping ecosystems untouched, and there is also vast conservation work to be done. The latter concept foresees the safeguarding of natural values through intervention actions, for example by promoting ecological restoration or recovery processes, or aiming at the use of resources in a sustainable way, among other actions directed at nature conservation.

# 03

## How to diagnose environmental needs and priorities

Society is currently facing unprecedented environmental and social challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution increase, deforestation and the disruption of many ecosystem services, among many others. Because of the complexity and interdependence between different environmental, social and economic systems, many of today's challenges are considered 'wicked problems'. Thus, not being the result of a single cause, there is no single 'silver bullet' solution, which places an urgent responsibility on all actors in a society to engage in the processes of mitigating the climate emergency. It is essential that there is cooperation between scientific research, enhanced through natural, social and human sciences, along with engineering and technology innovation, and the government sector, building a scenario of trust for the greater participation of civil society.

The way risk assessment and risk management are carried out is inevitably dependent on the degree of social and cultural acceptance, political sensitivity and the economic situation in European countries, and around the world. Many decisions are contested, even when the scientific community is unanimous about an environmental threat inherent to a site or situation. The state of the environmental and/or ecological quality of a region can be gauged by researching the region's own indicators, which are publicly available to all of society. For example, indicators of rural fires make it possible to understand if



Observations of flora structures with a magnifying glass in a Protected Area in Portugal

this is a factor of environmental disturbance in a certain geographical area. The environmental indicators are a tool to guide and evaluate the evolution of the sustainability parameters of countries. In this way, it seeks to improve the management of environmental, economic, social and institutional performance. It is supported by the objectives and goals of national and international policies, plans and programmes. These indicators make it possible to obtain characterisation and knowledge of the general panorama of the territory's state of conservation on a local scale.

In addition, scientific studies published in journals or books can be consulted and contribute to a better knowledge about the ecological status of the various regions, such as inventorying and monitoring studies of local biodiversity, such as fauna, flora and fungi groups. Studies assessing the quality of bodies of water in the territory or of the air are also important sources of useful and relevant information to assess the environmental challenges of a locality, region or country.

The involvement of civil society comprises a role of great value as it manifests the view of the population towards the environmental difficulties and problems experienced at local, regional or national level. The informed opinion of citizens can help not only to complement environmental studies, but it can also be a key factor in decision making.

**“I think it is very important to instil in young people the taste for the preservation of nature and to remember my childhood times, when I saw my parents taking care of their vegetable garden, from which we used to collect the food we needed to feed everyone at home”**

*Guilhermina Oliveira, 68 years old, Portugal, former teacher*

Instead of local communities contesting the decisions taken by local or national governments in relation to an identified and duly founded environmental problem, the population may understand the need for intervention, and consequently consciously and responsibly support environmental management processes.

Identifying environmental needs may also involve creating a network of local partners, which disseminate and empower more active agents for the inventory, monitoring and financing phases for more and better scientific studies at local level. Asking for the technical collaboration of public entities such as universities, research centres, schools, governments and municipalities, as well as counting on private entities such as universities and public schools, masters or PhD students, among others, is a way to promote the diagnostic survey and establish priorities for action. Likewise, the third sector such as NGOs and ENGOs focused on environmental sustainability and nature conservation should be mobilised in order to have more impact on the environmental, ecological and biological knowledge and recognition of the territory. Generally, the entities of the associative sector already have extensive know-how on the greatest environmental challenges and the priorities identified, as many have specialised teams of ecologists and biologists who work at local level with enormous proximity. In a second phase, it will be safer to make intervention and environmental management plans directed to the problems previously identified. Additionally, there is a window of opportunity to involve public and private entities in raising funds for research to obtain reliable diagnostics, for example through crowdfunding campaigns and, depending on the entity, merchandising sales. Inter-municipal partnerships can also be an asset in technical and financial support for the development of nature conservation plans, environmental assessments or for the implementation of sustainable practices.

Volunteer programmes can and should draw on technical support throughout the project to adjust the work to changing needs, especially through strategic partnerships such as those presented above.

Countries such as Denmark have sought to assess and define environmental priorities and targets, especially in the Central Denmark region, so in 2021 it developed the Sustainability Strategy 2030 for Central Denmark Region (Sustainability Strategy 2030 for Central Denmark Region). Similarly, Iceland has created institutional partnerships between the Environment Agency of Iceland and other institutions like National Parks, Iceland Nature Research Centres, Icelandic Museum of Natural History and others in order to assess the status of Icelandic protected areas. In 2021, the French government published the Environmental Assessment Method in order to provide a coherent and sustainable project, aiming at environmental valorisation and protection, the creation of strict guidelines on negative impacts and the reinforcement on positive impacts on the environment, reconciling the various territorial issues between the economic, social and environmental sectors.

# 04

# What kind of environmental actions can be done by elderly people? What is needed?

Senior volunteering for nature conservation can be spread over a wide range of life skills and levels of difficulty, and can be as diverse as volunteering across other age groups.

As long as there is a detailed and rigorous survey of volunteers' profiles as unique individuals, leaving stereotypes aside, it is possible to target and tailor tasks to allow for the maximum potential that the senior is able to offer. This relates to the more practical aspects of physical and mental health as well as intellectual capacity and the type of fulfilment that each person as a volunteer can feel. The assignment of the most suitable tasks by the volunteer coordinating team can be a key factor, and can lead to the action being carried out with greater motivation and expertise.

“For me, it is important to **contribute to the climate fight with what I can do myself**. It doesn't take much, and changing personal shopping habits in terms of both textiles and food is a small price to pay to reduce my climate footprint on the planet”

*Ida Chalmer, 26 years old, Denmark, development employee*

**“I was involved in volunteering at a young age, from adolescence to working age. Since retiring, I have re-entered the world of volunteering, and it is my intention to continue volunteering, because for me dedicating my free time to those in need of support becomes a way to feel useful in society again.”**

*Mariella, 63 years old, France, former accountant*

However, there are actions common to several volunteering programmes which fit perfectly with the tasks that seniors can carry out in environmental volunteering and which are aimed at mitigating the most significant environmental threats, such as the increase in average global temperature, the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere or the loss of biodiversity.



Placement of a bird nest in senior's backyard in Lousada, Portugal

**Therefore, we have listed a set of actions that meet the need to combat such global challenges, but with local action:**

- Planting trees;
- Seed harvesting;
- Sowing seeds and maintaining seed nurseries;
- Propagating and maintaining aquatic plants nurseries;
- Building and maintaining community gardens;
- Removing weeds (greater degree of physical difficulty);
- Construction and maintenance of artificial ponds;
- Litter picking or plucking, such as in coastal areas, rivers, forests, urban areas and schools,
- Gardening;
- Holding workshops and training on traditional agricultural practices and techniques (e.g. pruning; grafting, etc.);
- Workshops and training on home and traditional composting;
- Building shelters for fauna (bug hotels, bird nest houses and bat shelters, hibernacula and sandbars, etc.);
- Restoring old parts into new articles (e.g. sewing, etc.);
- Measuring the quality of watercourses;
- Monitoring the state of preservation of water lines (e.g. observe and record if there is pollution from solid waste on the banks, discharges into the river bed; etc.);
- Building natural structures for a playful and pedagogical purpose (deadwood hedges and amphitheatres, etc);
- Building support structures for rural tourism and/or nature tourism (paths, viewpoints, benches, etc.);
- Supporting in logistics tasks in volunteer actions (e.g. meals, materials, cleaning, etc.);
- Recording and monitoring biodiversity • Citizen Science;
- Participating in the study of biodiversity or a species;

**“Volunteering is a way of being in life, but what I feel in this case of the environment is that I can contribute to the quality of the environment and society in general.”**

*Rui Cardoso, 67 years old, retired financial manager*



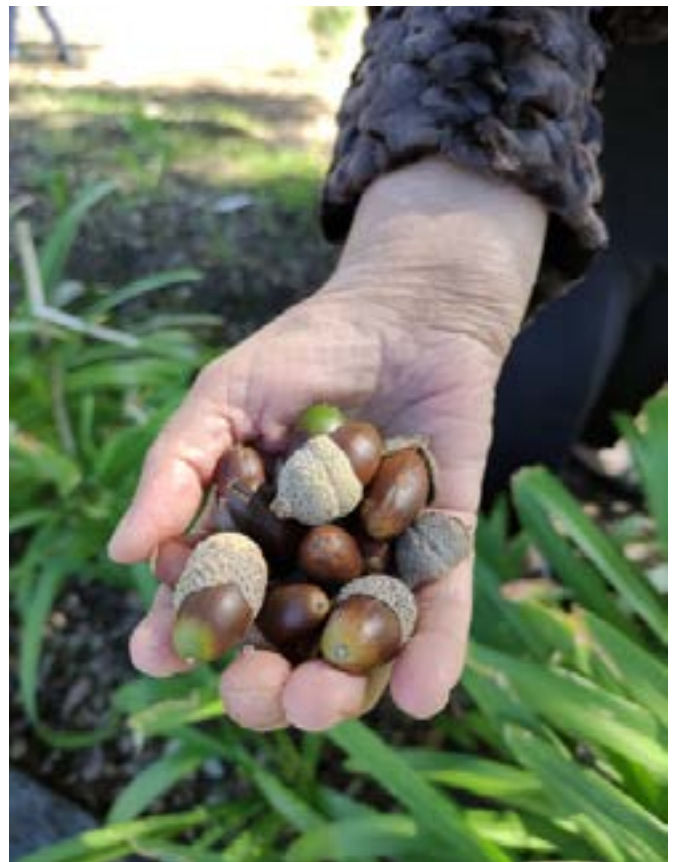
Intergenerational plantation of native species in Lousada, Portugal



Artificial pond built by young volunteers in a senior's backyard in Lousada, Portugal



Collecting acorns by elderly people to build a tree nursery with native species in Lousada, Portugal



Sowing of acorns in an environmental education activity with seniors in Lousada, Portugal



Tree nursery built by seniors in Lousada, Portugal

# 05

## What is the importance of volunteering programmes for the third age?



There is already a wide range of studies and systematic reviews that support the benefits of volunteering in older citizens. Positive impacts are observed in terms of self-rated improved health status, less functional limitation, improved psychological well-being, and a potential decreased risk of some types of dementia. Science also demonstrates the role of volunteering in preventing specific diseases and health-related point events, such as hypertension and propensity to fracture. Through such physical and mental health advantages, participation in volunteering programmes or actions appear to reduce the overall mortality risk of older people. When we focus on volunteering in the environmental sphere, evidence indicates that the value it adds to seniors surpasses any other type of voluntary activity. This effect is explained by a number of distinct factors. On one hand, environmental volunteering promotes direct contact with nature, which reflects a series of benefits for mental health such as an increase in the cognitive functions of seniors, improves psychological and emotional well-being and boosts physical activity, through, for example, the removal of invasive plants, cleaning up marine debris on the coast, among other actions. A study carried out in 2005, verified that people who participate in some type of volunteering have 1.8 more chances of meeting the guidelines

of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for physical activity, compared to people who do not volunteer. However, this study was even more surprising when it suggested that volunteers who engage in pro-environmental actions are 2.6 times more likely to meet the physical activity guidelines.

**“Volunteering has brought a sense of fulfilment and purpose to my life.**

**It’s incredible to see the difference that a little bit of time and effort can make in the lives of others. I wouldn’t trade my experiences for anything.”**

*Stavros, 68 years old, Cyprus, retired pharmacist*

There is scientific evidence that for some decades have



Construction of a wooden xylophone in an environmental ludic-pedagogical activity with seniors

focused on understanding how voluntary environmental work, specifically in ecological restoration, brings benefits to seniors. Studies show that the benefits include the general satisfaction of the elderly associated with the socio-emotional sphere, namely the satisfaction of meeting people with similar interests, making new friends, feeling part of a cohesive community, being outside the routine context of everyday life, being in an environment that awakens feelings of (re) connection to the surrounding environment (nature) and fascination. This scenario has an impact on the volunteer that may be reflected in a state of mind that facilitates introspective reflection. From the perspective of intellectual benefits, there are effects on the level of personal development and growth, through the sense of achievement in the face of the challenge presented, given that some tasks require expertise but also bring new learning, the feeling of satisfaction in contributing with something tangible that helps conserve nature. Still on the subject of well-being, acting actively in tasks in nature

awakens a feeling of resilience and overcoming, since voluntary environmental work requires a sometimes demanding physical performance. Seniors feel physically challenged and motivated to develop physical performance, which proves to be a factor of physical satisfaction.

The assimilation of the various benefits varies from individual to individual and is conditioned by various factors, such as the frequency of participation, the type of task and the responsibility assigned, the greater or lesser sense of belonging and delivery in the face of the challenge/task presented, and depends strongly on the volunteer's level of involvement.

There is a concept - generativity - that expresses the intention of older people to get involved and contribute to the construction of a legacy in which they will leave a better world for the next generations.



Environmental volunteering facilitates the realisation of this intention, as it allows positive actions to be materialised in favour of the planet's quality of life, and consequently the future of humanity, especially of future generations. In addition to the feeling that they are nourishing the world with something positive, they are nourishing themselves on various levels and, for example, the reduction of depression symptoms is a result that expresses well the power and value of senior environmental volunteering in various dimensions that go through the body, mind and emotional part of older people.

In addition to the benefits related to socialisation, the sense of identity and community, and fulfilment as active citizens, voluntary action by seniors in favour of nature conservation can and should be seen as an effective way of promoting active and healthy ageing.





Intergenerational plantation between a grandfather and grandson in Lousada, Portugal



# 06

## Step-by-step guide for implementing a senior volunteer programme for nature conservation



Currently, the information available on effective methods for promoting environmental civic action in the senior community is rather scarce, although there are some case studies published in some countries.

In this section, the focus will be on providing scientifically and technically based information that allows any entity/stakeholder to plan and implement an environmental volunteering programme dedicated to seniors, based on 'best

practices'. It should be noted that this process, when devised and developed from scratch, can take numerous forms, depending on the multiple factors of the local socio-environmental, religious, financial and political reality. However, there are components that are considered preponderant for the success and replicability of any senior environmental volunteering programme, regardless of the entity or place where it is implemented.

## The essential implementation components are:

### 01. Identification and evaluation of the need for intervention from an environmental and social point of view

In the first instance, in order for a nature conservation volunteering programme to be outlined, it is crucial to develop a study of the conservation status of the territory and the environmental/ ecological challenges it faces. This assessment may occur through a partnership or collaboration between the promoter organization (NGO, Day Care Center, etc.) and the municipality or a university, for instance. At the same time, as volunteering is based on the social involvement of the senior community, it will be relevant to assess the demographic indicators of the context of a given locality or geographical region. Thus, a deeper knowledge of the environmental and social context (senior sample) present in the territory will make it possible to design an implementation strategy that is considerably more adapted to the context;



Intergenerational birdwatching activity in Lousada, Portugal

### 02. Partnerships and/or detailed consultation of stakeholders (entities and individuals)

When it comes to a social or environmental entity, the implementation of a senior volunteering programme in the environmental field requires the creation of partnerships between the entity working with the target audience and organisations dedicated to work in the field of nature conservation. By making this match of mutual interest, the environmental organisation provides the knowledge and skills on how to develop and implement an education and volunteering programme based on community involvement, while the

social organisation provides access to senior involvement, as well as providing key information about each person's special needs and interests. In these cases, i.e. when the programme aims to include a restricted group of beneficiaries of a social entity in a pro-environmental volunteering programme, the sample is smaller and the process facilitated.

However, when it comes to a wider social entity (e.g. a NGO supporting minorities), or a public entity, e.g. a town or city council, there is a huge window of opportunities which can represent an enormous potential of intervention, but also a huge challenge.

To increase the programme's chances of success, the management and coordination team will have to define which stakeholders it can or wants to include in the programme. This is because in any society there is a very wide range of groups that make up the senior community, according to the health, social and financial condition of each individual. It is important to think about 'where to start?', because wanting to include all groups, with very specific needs and abilities, can generate several obstacles in the initial stages of ideation and implementation. Therefore, one of the first steps in the planning of the senior environmental volunteering pro-

gramme will be to assess the potential stakeholders and direct beneficiaries, i.e. the promoter will have to identify formal organisations and/or groups, as well as meet individual people with whom it has an interest in working, depending on in which target group the project will achieve (e.g. seniors integrated in groups or seniors in a high risk of isolation, such as the ones living alone and a part from initiatives promoted by the municipality or organisations). In this way, the process of creating the intervention groups that will be invited to participate in the volunteering programme begins. It should be noted that in this phase it is important to carefully and consciously manage expectations, since identifying the intervening

parties does not mean, on the one hand, any guarantee of their interest in taking part in the voluntary programme, and on the other hand, that the legal and logistic structure/ conditions exist so that they can effectively take part.

### 03. First contact with stakeholders

After the clear and objective identification of possible stakeholders, the organiser can first contact the formal entities. The presentation of the partnership idea and proposal can be made directly to the stakeholders through a formal invitation via e-mail, and whenever possible it is advantageous

to make closer contact with the members of the entity's management. Public, private and public-private social solidarity institutions, day centres, retirement homes, senior universities, non-profit associations. In the case of partnerships between social and environmental organisations, it is important that the project management through the coordination teams establishes a moment of detailed presentation of the objectives of the volunteer programme so that there is transparent and fluid communication about the motivations of each entity. When partnerships arise in a wider network of partners, as is the case with partnerships between a town or city council and organisations working for the benefit of the community and/or the nature conservation, contact with the entities should take into account the equality factor with regard to the work of the various organisations operating in the field, without running the risk (albeit unintentional) of manifesting the feeling of social segregation.

#### 04. Financial investment analysis

This point refers to short- and medium-term cost management. The direct costs of volunteer programmes can be relatively low, but an analysis should be made of the estimated costs during the various phases of the programme. It is important to understand the availability of human resources for the implementation of the programme, and the costs associated with hiring employees, if necessary. Sometimes there are senior volunteers who are interested in volunteering in the logistical support of environmental volunteering activities, which can be a valuable resource in the implementation of actions, and in the financial sustainability of the programme. Often, spaces for meetings and occasional events are provided free of charge. What increases cost concerns are usually the travel expenses of the volunteers. This is a factor of great relevance insofar as many seniors do not have the autonomy to travel on their own, which would be a priority factor of exclusion, in addition to the fact that providing public transport incites social cohesion in the group.

#### 05. Bureaucracy and Internal Organization

The bureaucratic part and logistical organization when implementing and monitoring a senior environmental volunteering program emerges as an essential pillar for its success. There are several registration documents and databases that need to be created by the coordination team, documents that are used across any volunteer program. An action plan, schedule, calendar, volunteer registration forms, monitoring and evaluation metrics, among others, allow not only greater performance in planning and organization prior to execution, but also facilitate the monitoring and improvement of results.

The creation of an action plan for the volunteering program is an internal organization tool that uses a detailed

methodology to define goals and objectives, the initiatives to be developed, and point out those responsible for the various tasks, allowing the careful monitoring of the program's progress so that the best results are achieved. Again, an Excel document can be the tool used to create both the action plan and the timeline. The latter has the advantage of organizing the actions to be carried out, the necessary resources and the deadlines to be met through a single visual diagram, such as the Gantt Chart. Calendaring is a simple database that appears as a more detailed complement to the schedule, so that this database can record daily, weekly and monthly actions to be carried out throughout the year. The fields to be completed in this calendar can be: day of the week, date, start and end time, monitor, location, participating entity, responsible person, name of the action and/or workshop, age of participants, session, name of school and grouping, number of classes (in the case of intergenerational actions and being able to involve students), number of students, disciplines, number of seniors, activity number, email address, telephone contact, observations, photographic coverage, vehicles for monitors, need for transport of participants.

Volunteer registration must involve filling out a bulletin or registration form, available online or on paper, and is subsequently returned to the volunteering promoter. Given that in this case the target audience is seniors, and depending on the level of digital literacy of the volunteers, giving the option of registering digitally or on paper can be a way to make the process more inclusive. After these documents are completed, the coordination team gathers the information in a database (an Excel document is always an easy-to-use tool that fulfills the purpose) which will be available for consultation whenever necessary. Generally speaking, the bulletin or registration form should contain the following topics: 1. Identification; 2. Occupation; 3. Experience in volunteer activities; 4. Languages (only in the case of an international volunteer program); 5. Special care; 6. Motivation for participation; 6. Availability; 7. Signature and date. The coordination team will have to manage the database with such information and update the data according to the entries and exits of volunteers, as well as creating daily, weekly and monthly work schedules.

The development of monitoring and evaluation metrics may be more or less robust, or may not even exist. It all depends on the availability of human resources, time and the priorities established by the entity promoting volunteering. Monitoring and evaluation can be excellent indicators of the quality of the intervention and the impact generated over the course of the program, both on volunteers in social, emotional, intellectual terms, among other fields that can be evaluated, as well as on the ground in terms of ecological improvement.

## 06. Human resources and Facilities

It is important to understand the availability of human resources for the implementation of the programme, and the costs associated with hiring employees, when necessary. Sometimes there are senior volunteers who are interested in volunteering in the logistical support of environmental volunteering activities, which can be a valuable resource in the implementation of numerous actions, and in the financial sustainability of the program. Often, facilities for meetings and occasional events are provided free of charge. What increases cost concerns are usually the travel expenses of the volunteers. This is a factor of great relevance insofar as many seniors do not have the autonomy to travel on their own, which would be a priority factor of exclusion, in addition to the fact that providing public transport incites social cohesion in the group.

## 07. Research and Development

An environmental volunteering program requires some research on the actions of interest to be carried out, depending on the group of volunteers, the needs and characteristics of each location and/or region, weather conditions, among other aspects. In this sense, it is important that the coordination team study, understand and analyze what is done in terms of senior environmental volunteering, and more than that, that it has the opportunity to work on creativity and alternative action plans so that the program has a differentiating factor. The time spent on this research component and on stimulating the creative process makes it possible to develop a more attractive and appealing program, boosting the interest and motivation of senior volunteers. Just by way of example, the combination of environmental volunteer actions with socio-cultural moments and experiences are always a hugely enriching factor. This type of model requires some dedication on the part of the promoting entity, which may involve research efforts and proposals for partnerships and collaborations, and may also require some financial effort, depending on the type of complementary activities.

A compilation of good practices from Denmark, Cyprus, Switzerland, Italy, Iceland and Portugal – the countries of the Grey4Green consortium – was developed, endeavoring to provide inspiration to other organizations and volunteers in Europe for projects that they would like to embark on. It can be consulted here.

## 08. Insurance

Regarding accident insurance, there are at least two possible situations here. Social entities have an annual insurance of their beneficiaries, so that environmental volunteer activities are safeguarded by the institution's insurance, not adding

additional costs. However, if the volunteers are recruited in an independent way, that is, if the volunteer programme presupposes the senior participation of the community in general, opening vacancies for registration, there is no pre-established insurance. And in the latter case, the entity or entities promoting the volunteering should guarantee that the volunteers are covered by accident insurance.

## 09. Food

It is also important to estimate food costs, since it fulfills a social function. At the beginning or end of a volunteering action (depending on the agenda of the programme), serving a good snack increases the value of the programme, because volunteers feel appreciated and recognised for the work they have done, and it also generates a moment of rest, recuperation of energies, reflection, sharing and conviviality among volunteers. Independently of the cultural and social reality, this is a factor that generally enhances the motivation of seniors in a transversal way in any community. Water or a hot drink, depending on the region or country, is something that should always be present during all voluntary actions.

## 10. Dissemination and Communication

The planet and environmental sustainability are progressively more in vogue worldwide. With this, it is understood that the dissemination and communication of environmental programs demonstrates in itself the value of the effort made by the community and by the associative sector to contribute to the protection of natural values. In addition, by publicizing the senior environmental volunteering program, it is possible to reach more potential volunteers, employees, partners, among other stakeholders.

Dissemination differs from communication, however both are very important strategies to be taken into account throughout any environmental volunteer program. Dissemination is one-way, and involves sending information through publications, social media, presentations, a project website, among other avenues. Communication is two-way and involves channels such as workshops, round-tables or events.

## 11. Field materials and equipments

The implementation costs also include the acquisition of some individual protection and hygiene materials, such as a first aid kit, sun cream, tissues or toilet paper, work gloves (opting whenever possible for reusable gloves, but if not possible, disposable gloves should be made available). Additionally, it is necessary to have field work materials and tools available. There are shops where you can rent these materials, but if it is an ongoing programme, it will be more viable to purchase the tools. It is important to list the materials

of first and second necessity, depending on the type of volunteer actions that will be implemented (for example, picks and hoes if the aim is to plant trees and remove invasive species; extendable tweezers, appropriate containers and portable scales for the collection and weighing of general rubbish and cigarette butts; among others. It is recommended that thick cloth gloves be purchased to provide greater protection in jobs where there is a greater risk of accidents (debarking or pulling up invasive plants), which although more expensive than disposable gloves, provide greater protection and are more environmentally and economically sustainable in the long term. Washing materials and gloves is a cost that can be reduced if the coordination team can accomplish this task. If it is time consuming and there is financial flexibility to do so, gloves can be washed in the laundry. In the cost analysis, the network of local partners can be an asset, not only in terms of institutional partnerships between social, environmental and municipal organisations, but also in terms of the creation of funding and sponsorship from the business sector.

## 12. Fundraising and Grants

Considering all these possible senior volunteering program associated costs, it's quite relevant that the promoting organisation takes into consideration the existence of public and private fundings that are available to support projects working on environmental and social impact, so the coordination team can apply. Depending on the country, there are several funding opportunities, such as national, regional and international or european promoted by the European Commission to promote innovation projects. Regarding the European fundings, there are financed programmes and open calls focused on different field work, such as cohesion funding and funding for climate action. Grants and private financing opportunities are made available through grants for traditional, integrated and preparatory projects as well as for non-profit organisations' operations. Besides those international fundings, crowdfunding has been an important way to get financial support to implement and drive new programs and projects. Generally, crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising money from a wide range of people who have the voluntary will to contribute a relatively small amount, but sometimes large amounts, typically via online funding. All the steps pointed above represent some crucial concerns to start a senior volunteering project focused on nature conservation, thus there are several bureaucratic aspects related to executive and administrative work that are equally essential to cover. This handbook was designed abreast of an executive package, which is one of the intellectual output of Grey4Green Erasmus+ Project to facilitate clear and useful information for the organisations interested on creating a project dedicated to senior volunteering towards nature conservation.

## Recommendations to consider during the senior environmental volunteering programme ideation, planning and running process:

### 01. Understanding the level of general knowledge about the environment and nature conservation of seniors

with potential or motivation to become volunteers, as well as exploring and recording the life course with regard to, for example, empirical knowledge about nature and local traditions, arts and crafts, life skills and life occupation, and hobbies, and also gauging the opinion, perception and behaviour towards the environment is work that can add value to the volunteering programme, even if it can be a bit exhaustive. All this can be done by means of surveys applied in person or digitally, and open and closed questions can be put with the use of a survey scale, such as the Likert scale. It is also very important to use simple and direct language. Informal interviews and round-table dynamics also represent valid and effective approaches for promoting a sharing environment about each senior's journey and vision. This information could therefore be included in the senior information portfolio.

### 02. Providing a technical, theoretical knowledge base on environment and sustainability

in order to incite the involvement of older people is a highly relevant action, not only in the initial phase of the programme, but throughout the entire volunteering. This is intended, on one hand, to promote the transfer or deepening of knowledge about the area of work, and on the other hand, to clarify possible misperceptions about the capacity of older people to contribute. This is because some seniors think they do not have sufficient knowledge and specialised expertise to perform certain tasks. By creating regular and interactive sessions of scientific literacy, environmental education and citizen science initiatives tailored to the target audience, it is possible to give a boost to the confidence of volunteers, in addition to contributing to SDG 4 (Sustainable Development Goals).

Within the scope of the Grey4Green Project, in addition to this handbook that presents the step-by-step guidelines for the implementation of senior environmental volunteering programmes, another handbook was also produced, specifically dedicated to seniors who are interested in participating in a program of this nature. This includes several chapters on volunteering, but also on the environment and the potential contribution of seniors to nature conservation.

**03. To make a training offer available to senior citizens** so that they feel empowered and enabled to truly exercise civic action and understand their value in the role of active citizen, both within and outside the volunteering programme. The learning acquired in the training process develops seniors' leadership capacity for climate action, but it also has the function of fostering a critical sense about their own actions and the actions generated by increased social awareness and mobilisation. Finally, the training opens up the range of opportunities in which seniors can integrate according to their areas of interest and expertise. The training model must be adapted to the reality of each country, local contexts, types of public and the financial power available. The Grey4Green Project included two training courses entitled 'Active Aging and Nature Conservation' taught in Cyprus and France, in which seniors from the project consortium countries had the opportunity to participate and broaden their knowledge around three main themes: active and healthy ageing, environmental volunteering and nature conservation.

**04. Adapt the activities and tasks taking into account the capacities and limitations of the group, while paying special attention to each person as an individual**, so that no one feels excluded or limited by some logistical or organisational issue. An essential step, after defining the needs and priorities for voluntary intervention, is to organise voluntary activities that allow for different tasks with different levels of difficulty. In this way, seniors can choose and benefit from developing activities or tasks that match their interests and abilities.

**05. The planning of volunteering actions should have as a primary criterion the accessibility to the site**, both regarding the transport that will take people to the site, but also the access on foot from the place where the seniors are dropped off by the transport and the exact location where the action will be developed. It is also important, depending on the profile of the group, to guarantee facilities such as toilets.

**06. Ensure that senior volunteers receive detailed and clarifying information about the work plan and logistical issues:** access, transport, facilities (if there is a bathroom or not), meals, snacks, timetables, clothes and shoes that are more appropriate for the activity to be carried out and clearly present the objectives of the activity and a possible plan b in case of any unforeseen constraints.

**07. Include alternatives in case of actions that require the mandatory use of internet or electronic equipment.** There are many environmental programmes that emphasise the promotion of citizen science actions (e.g. using international platforms for biodiversity recording such as BioDiversity4all, but also initiatives such as the BioBlitz 'lightning' inventory of all biodiversity found in certain hours or days) and that lack internet as a key element of engagement. It may be important to listen to the conditions of the place, but also to assess whether the objectives of the action suit the skills and interests of the seniors. Sometimes it may be advantageous to request or provide physical materials for recording biodiversity, such as a notebook and a pencil, and using only the mobile phone camera or a camera may be enough to fulfil the purpose of an activity of this nature, depending of course on the degree of scientific and/or technical rigour sought by the monitor. Activities strategically designed to be carried out without the use of these types of technological devices may, in many situations, be a factor in the greater participation of older people, as they may not easily access or use these technological and digital devices and platforms.

**08. Promote bridges between organisations linked to nature conservation and associations supported by the senior community.** There are numerous associations or non-formal groups of seniors in various countries who come together and seek to benefit from involvement in these spaces through socialisation, for example, while generating benefits to the communities where they live, such as combating social isolation, promoting dignity, quality of life and the individual skills of older people. Such spaces where the senior community meets frequently provide meaningful activities, social contact and opportunities for community participation. As many of these associations have deep and established roots in local communities, it can be an added value to create collaborations aimed at involving older people in environmental volunteering actions.

**09. Combining intergenerationality as a valuable resource for senior volunteer involvement in nature conservation.** Promoting intergenerational volunteering in the environmental field is extremely promising and has multiple benefits. Intergenerational encounters in nature and for the benefit of nature strongly enhance older people's sense of 'legacy motivation' and 'generativity'. In addition, it opens up space for sharing knowledge, expertise, experience, perceptions of nature and the numerous landforms that have occurred over many decades. Therefore, it

is possible to promote conversations and discussions about the vision of the various generations in the face of the current climate scenario and the urgency of intervention. Affective and emotional bonds, cooperation and mutual help, tolerance, empathy and many other socio-emotional skills are nurtured in parallel in intergenerational volunteering actions.

**“Environmental volunteering provides not only an opportunity for personal fulfilment, that comes from voluntary work, but also the promotion of the health of the environment and therefore our own physical and mental health. In my point of view, it also allows for a new connection and closeness with nature, something that is lacking these days, and it is always an enriching and interesting experience.”**

*Victoria Garbayo, 21 years old, Portugal, master student*

**10. Developing payback strategies for senior volunteers is a worthwhile step**, as the organisation promoting volunteering demonstrates recognition, appreciation and value towards the contributions of seniors in protecting nature. The payback is not a monetary reward, but rather providing moments, experiences and messages that make volunteering more rewarding. This can be, for example, a musical moment, an outing, a ticket to a school play, a visit or activity with children or young people, a post-card thanking the organisation and the team that works closely with the seniors, or even a photograph of one of the most significant volunteering actions. All these paybacks serve as a trigger for joyful moments in community, valuing the volunteer work carried out and fostering the feeling of intergenerational motivation in favour of the environment.

**11. Promote and disseminate the project** on the project website, social media or through press releases. Also, tackle all the communications on a data basis, in an Excel document, for instance). Developing an effective communication and dissemination strategy allows for increased reach of volunteer projects and programmes, which in turn generates greater recognition and visibility. Establishing collaborations and partnerships that sometimes become essential for the evolution and sustainability of the project often arises from the ability to make transparent and regular communication. Alongside this, when news appears in the media or in the press of actions where seniors were the active agents, there is a great feeling of pride and self-worth, promoting healthy ageing due to the fact that seniors feel useful and publicly recognized.



Environmental educational activity regarding giant native trees in Lousada, Portugal





# 07

## Make the most out of the senior volunteers' payback (experiences, sharing, motivation, joy, fulfilment, citizenship, etc.)



Volunteer work opens up opportunities for seniors to add innumerable learning experiences to their lives, not only in the technical-scientific field but in the cultural, social, emotional and human fields. When a volunteer moves to another location, region or country to carry out volunteer work, he/she or she generally values knowing more about the richness and authenticity of this new reality. Naturally, occasional or regular participation will bring different experiences, perhaps daily or weekly volunteer work can facilitate a more immersive experience, namely with the local community, but also with the organisation promoting volunteering, the respective team with which you are collaborating, as well as with observation of long-term results.

**“Volunteering in protected areas in Iceland is very important since it is supplementing the work of the**

**local rangers and managers for projects which often wouldn't be possible without the help of the volunteers.”**

*Roger, 78 years old, Iceland, former teacher*

Contact with the locals can be promoted by the organisation itself through occasional volunteering actions open to the community, in which, for example, icebreaker dynamics, group work dynamics and sharing about the territory and local impact are developed about environmental volunteering. Also the moments of conviviality and entertainment can be planned to include the local community, schools, universities, ethnographic groups or others. The involvement of the local community allows them to be informed about the motivations that lead volunteers to their

lands, and thus to be more open to eventually collaborate in carrying out environmental work. Aside from the satisfaction of doing volunteer work, and sharing experiences with like-minded people, the experience of volunteers among themselves can also be enriched by promoting interpersonal relationships, where feelings of cooperation, team spirit, understanding, tolerance, humility, willingness to learn from others, adaptability and even possible bonds of friendship can be built. Such contact between volunteers can be fostered by organisations that promote volunteering, and serves as a key factor for volunteers to regard the experience with a true sense of personal fulfilment. The organisation can also, on the other hand, encourage the volunteer to take the initiative to seek to integrate themselves autonomously in being part of the cultural and social life of the region, presenting the volunteer with tips on places and events of cultural, historical, leisure, fun and natural areas (national, natural, urban parks, protected areas, among others) that may even serve as inspiration for the ecological restoration work carried out by senior volunteers.



Defoliate corn to keep the ancient farm tradition alive in an intergenerational activity in Lousada, Portugal

The volunteering promotion team has a very important role in terms of actively listening to the volunteers' feedback. In the management that the coordination and/or field team has to do on a daily basis, knowing how to give space to volunteers to share what they feel, what they think, what makes them doubt or what makes them stronger and makes them more motivated is capable of, sometimes, makes all the difference in the meaning that the volunteer attributes to the experience, and in the results obtained from the actions. As with everything else, the team will have to be sensitive to what it receives from these shares, but it will also have to be carefully managed, filtering out what is worth rethinking, adjusting and/or improving, between the team and the work that the organisation develops and between what is only in the personal field of a volunteer and that the organisation can change little. Volunteering sometimes generates a picture of phases of enormous motivation and a decrease in that same motivation, due to numerous factors, and in the case of

seniors, physical or mental/emotional health challenges may be at the root of these motivational oscillations. In this sense, the coordination and/or field team must welcome the volunteers' feedback, but avoid allowing the foundations of the programme structure to be called into question, or weakened. Effective communication is a pillar that will play a huge role throughout the management of expectations and results of volunteers. Likewise, the volunteer advocacy team can keep a close eye on the volunteer, being open to sharing team feedback on the senior volunteer about his work, adaptation, etc. Good leadership involves a lot of respect, recognition and gratitude from the team for the effort and dedication of seniors to volunteer work, and this aspect can increase the commitment and motivation of volunteers, boosting the success of the organisation and creating a strategy based on human and social values. Therefore, valuing and recognizing volunteers are essential ingredients in the recipe for carrying out a volunteering programme focused on environmental motivations but without diminishing social and human motivations.

When volunteering programs require accommodation, it is important that the organisation understands the needs of seniors and tries to adapt the resources available to priorities as best as possible. Food and sleep are factors that can greatly favour the experience, or, on the contrary, when conditions are limited or inadequate, they can generate some discomfort or dissatisfaction on the part of the volunteers. And when it comes to an audience that generally seeks security following their routines, it becomes essential to ensure that the needs of seniors are met.

The topics mentioned are just some indicators that can be adopted or considered by organisations in order to provide more meaningful volunteering experiences, and that, in the ideal scenario, cause some kind of transformation in seniors, that is, that adds knowledge, learning that accompanies them in the day-to-day.



Intergenerational activity about nature conservation through social approach in Lousada, Portugal

The page features a light green background with white clouds and a small green plant with two leaves growing from a white mound on the right side. The title '08 What to do in case of...' is prominently displayed in the upper left quadrant.

# 08

## What to do in case of...

There are several scenarios that can occur during a senior volunteering programme, and specifically in a volunteering activity or action.

If the seniors face difficulties to accomplish the tasks-which technical, social and emotional tips/strategies can seniors receive in order to be more prepared and confident? How can the seniors as volunteers contribute to the group cohesion and motivation? Seniors who face difficulties accomplishing tasks while volunteering can benefit from technical training, social support, and emotional reassurance.

Seniors can contribute to group cohesion and motivation by sharing their experience, providing guidance and support, leading by example, and fostering a sense of community within the group.

If volunteers face any difficulties during the programme, they can always find the support of the team leader or the coordinator of the programme. They do always keep the information given by the volunteers confidential. Volunteers will be surrounded by people with the same mindset and willingness to help you feel included in the project.

# 09 Rights & duties of a volunteer



In 2012, the European Union launched a Charter specifically aimed at detailing the rights and responsibilities of European volunteers, believing that the implementation of these would improve conditions for volunteers and for volunteering in general. According to the EU, access to volunteering opportunities and active citizenship are rights, not privileges, and anyone has the right to volunteer, anywhere in the world. Ensuring access and encouraging participation in voluntary activities is crucial to fostering a culture of participation, responsible personal development and active citizenship in Europe and beyond. However, in the first instance, volunteers must be safeguarded and empowered through the ethical basis of the rights they need and the responsibilities that any workplace requires, whether volunteering or not. Thus, the EU has established the principles, norms, standards and objectives of volunteering, recognising that there are different realities and types of volunteering, and this is the starting point. The instruction and empowerment of volunteers allows them to be able to claim their rights, just as they know their responsibilities. In short, the European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers develops a cross-cutting understanding of the definition of a volunteer, volunteer activities and volunteering (independent or structured by an organisation) from the local to the European scale.

## 9.1 Rights of volunteer

### Core rights

**Article 1** Everyone who is doing a volunteering activity is entitled to have the status of “volunteer” if they so-wish and they should be entitled to these basic rights;

**Article 2** The volunteers are entitled to full protection of their human rights, when carrying out the volunteering activity;

**Article 3** Every person is entitled to equal access to volunteering opportunities and protection against all kinds of discrimination such as on the grounds of age, gender, sexual identity, race, colour, language, disability, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status and shall not be discriminated against on the basis of their background or beliefs;

**Article 4** No one shall be restricted by law from participating in a volunteering activity of their choice, as long as the volunteering activity is carried out in respect of Human Rights

and contributes to the public good;

**Article 5** All volunteers shall be informed about their rights and responsibilities.

**Article 6** Every volunteer has the right to social protection during the volunteering activity in form of health care and liability insurance;

**Article 7** Every volunteer has the right to reconcile their volunteering activity with their private and working life, and thus can achieve a certain amount of flexibility during the volunteering activity. Every volunteer is furthermore entitled to refuse tasks that would go against their beliefs and/or convictions;

**Article 8** Every volunteer has the right to volunteer outside of their country of residence or birth. Therefore, if needed, a visa, free of charge must be obtainable through an open, accessible and transparent procedure which favours volunteer mobility. Right to support from volunteering providers (once volunteer positions are unpaid, make the volunteers eligible to enter as a tourist).

**Article 9-13** Right to support from volunteering providers. *See on the Appendix*

## Rights to personal development

**Article 14** Every volunteer is entitled to the necessary educational/training support in order to implement the volunteering activity to her/his full capacity and best knowledge;

**Article 15** Every volunteer has the right to have the contribution, skills and competencies gained through volunteering activities recognised by formal educational and professional structures and institutions. Volunteers should have the right to develop new skills and competences and the space to discover, experiment and develop their own learning path;

**Article 16** Every volunteer is entitled, if required by the volunteering activity, to flexibility of working time and educational activities in order to undertake volunteering activities. Should the implementation of volunteering activities require certain flexibility on the part of contractual or educational obligations, the volunteer shall seek agreement from the contractor or educational provider.

## 9.2 Responsibilities of the Volunteer

**Article 17** Every volunteer respects the rules of law and non-discrimination throughout their voluntary activity,

**Article 18** Every volunteer has the responsibility to respect the integrity, mission, objectives and values of the volunteering provider;

**Article 19** Every volunteer respects the commitments that are made with the volunteering provider regarding the amount of time and effort that have been commonly agreed to be put in the volunteering activity and the quality that has to be delivered;

**Article 20** Every volunteer has the responsibility to participate in training offered that are relevant for the volunteer and are related to skills needed in order to carry out the agreed tasks. The training shall be free of charge to the volunteer

**Article 21** Every volunteer respects the confidentiality of (organisational) information, in particular regarding legal affairs and concerning personal data of members, staff and beneficiaries of voluntary activities.

**Article 22** Every volunteer understands that volunteering aims towards benefits for the common good or society,

**Article 23** Every volunteer cooperates with other volunteers within the organisation, where relevant and contributes to the organisation's sustainability through communication with others and a hand-over at the end of their engagement.

**Article 24-28** Rights of volunteering providers. *See on the Appendix.*

**Article 24** Non-profit Organisations and groups, that are independent, govern themselves as well as other non-profit entities or public authorities that provide volunteering opportunities, are entitled to the status of a volunteering provider;

**Article 25** Volunteering providers are entitled to a stable and sustainable support framework and enabling environment, including adequate funding structures that provide accessible, sustainable and flexible financing;

**Article 26** Volunteering providers are entitled to participate in political decision-making processes at all levels in the

area of volunteering, representing the interest and needs of volunteers. Considering the expertise of volunteering providers, as the actors that are the closest to the volunteer, they must be consulted on matters regarding policy or law on the volunteering sector at all levels;

**Article 27** Volunteering providers should not be taxed on their income;

**Article 28** Volunteering providers shall select volunteers according to their mission and vision, and the specific skills and profile of volunteers if certain volunteering activities require them.

**Article 29-35** Responsibilities of volunteering providers. See on *Appendix*

## 9.5 Responsibilities to support volunteers

**Article 36** Volunteering providers shall reimburse expenses occurring in relation to the volunteering activity for the volunteer;

**Article 37** Volunteering providers shall give a clear task description for the activity that the volunteer should carry out. The content of the task description should be, to furthest extent possible, developed and agreed on together by the volunteering provider and the volunteer and, if needed, should be updated during the volunteering activity;

**Article 38** Volunteering providers commit themselves to developing and implementing quality standards that ensure preparation and briefing, offer personal guidance, assistance and monitoring throughout the entire process, clear evaluation mechanisms and full support in the realisation of the required follow up activities; ideally the volunteer provider should aim to have a quality assurance system;

**Article 39** Volunteering providers shall offer the necessary tools and access to existing and foreseen resources to volunteers in order to allow them to implement the agreed activities;

**Article 40** Volunteering providers shall ensure efficient handover and reporting structures for volunteers in order to guarantee sustainability of volunteering activities;

**Article 41** Volunteering providers shall ensure the right to participate in the decision-making process for volunteers in

regards to the volunteering activity at the most appropriate level. Volunteering providers should ensure volunteers feel ownership of the project through co-decision in the process implementation and the right to participate in the democratic processes related to the project. The volunteering provider should ensure access for volunteers in order to participate in the organisation's life and decision-making processes. Furthermore, providers shall ensure that volunteers have the autonomy to develop their own initiatives as long as they contribute to the organisation's cause;

**Article 42** Volunteering providers shall ensure that the necessary support for specific target groups of potential volunteers, such as people with disabilities or mental health problems, minors or older people are provided for those who want to volunteer. Responsibilities to support the personal development of the volunteer;

**Article 43** Volunteering providers shall ensure necessary educational support for volunteers throughout the process. Moreover, the volunteering providers shall ensure that the volunteer is given the possibility to develop skills and competences and provided with the tools to consciously reflect on the learning processes;

**Article 44** Volunteering providers shall ensure that tools for recognition of the competences and skills acquired during the volunteering activity are put in place, in cooperation with educational and professional structures and institutions;

**Article 45** Volunteering providers shall ensure the privacy of the volunteer in personal and working life, and shall also protect their data.



Grandparents of Climate Action in a protest for climate held in Aarhus, Denmark

# 10 Legal framework of green volunteering programmes



Basis of the legal framework for volunteering/ main legislation regulating and framing the activity of volunteering. None of the partner countries have a specific law for volunteering among seniors, but rather the law covers all volunteers and for all types of volunteering work.

## Denmark

Denmark has no specific law for volunteering among seniors, but rather the law covers all volunteers and for all types of volunteer work.

- Rules and guidelines for volunteering in municipalities and regions;
- Rules on the working environment in voluntary social organisations.

## Portugal

Portugal has in accordance with current legislation, volunteer work is guided by the principles of solidarity, participation, cooperation, complementarity, gratuitousness, responsibility and convergence.

- Basis of the legal framework of volunteering- Portuguese Law No. 71/98;

- Legal framework for the practice of volunteering in Portugal-Current Legislation;
- Decree-Law No. 388/99 of 30 September regulates Law no. 71/98, of 3 November, creating the conditions to promote and support volunteering;
- Study on Volunteering in the European Union- Report Portugal.

## France

The French Ministry of Cities, Youth and Sport publishes an annual guide to volunteering, "LE GUIDE DU BÉNÉVOLAT", which includes important provisions such as insurance for volunteers. While some associations are required to take out insurance (e.g. holiday centres, sports clubs), it is strongly recommended that others take out civil liability insurance. Associations should list the people and activities involved when taking out insurance.

Temporary extensions of cover can be requested for exceptional events. Other options include personal accident insurance and special cover for company vehicles. It's important to check that personal insurance covers volunteers using their own vehicles. Many banks and insurance companies offer policies suitable for associations.

Reference: Law of 1 July 1901 on the contract of association

## Cyprus

As a Green Volunteering programme in Cyprus, it is important to understand the legal framework for volunteering in the country. Here are some resources and information regarding the legal framework for green volunteering programmes in Cyprus:

**“I discovered the joy of volunteering while in college, and I haven’t looked back since. I find it truly rewarding to see the smiles on the faces of those I’ve helped, and it keeps me motivated to continue giving back to my community.”**

*Eleni, 55 years old, Cyprus, former teacher*

- Cyprus Law on Volunteerism: The Cyprus Law on Volunteerism (Law 93(I)/2017) outlines the legal framework for volunteering in the country. It defines volunteering, outlines the rights and obligations of volunteers and volunteer organisations, and establishes procedures for the recognition of volunteer organisations;

- Legal Framework for Individual Volunteers: Individual volunteers in Cyprus are protected under the country’s labour laws, which outline the rights and protections for workers. Additionally, volunteers are protected under the Cyprus Law on Volunteerism;

- Legal Framework for Organisations Engaging Volunteers: Organisations engaging volunteers in Cyprus are required to register with the Department of Volunteerism of the Ministry of Interior. Registered organisations are recognized as legal entities and are entitled to certain benefits and protections;

- Legal Framework for Profit-Making Organisations: Profit-making organisations in Cyprus are not eligible to engage volunteers. However, they may engage in corporate social responsibility programmes, which can include supporting volunteer initiatives;

- Insurance and Protection of Volunteers: The Cyprus Law on Volunteerism requires that volunteer organisations provide insurance coverage for volunteers during their service. This includes coverage for accidents, illness, and liability. Additionally, volunteers are protected under Cyprus’ labour laws;

- Websites and Articles on Regulatory Framework: The Department of Volunteerism of the Ministry of Interior is the main government body responsible for regulating and promoting volunteerism in Cyprus. Their website provides information on the legal framework for volunteerism in the country, as well as resources for volunteers and organisations.

## Iceland

The general framework is that special laws do not apply to the employment of volunteers or to their work. However, it may be that special groups are stipulated in special laws, e.g., in the law on lifeguards and search and rescue teams. It is worth mentioning that according to Article 1 Act on workers’ working conditions and the mandatory insurance of pension rights, salaries and other working conditions, which the member organisations of the labour market agree on, must be the minimum wage, regardless of gender, nationality or length of employment for all workers in the relevant profession in the area covered by the agreement.

**“The Iceland Conservation Volunteer programme gives you the incredible opportunity to widen your horizon by getting to know various people with different lifestyles and backgrounds from countries all around the globe.”**

*Sophie, 33 years old, Iceland, head of Research and Commercial Development at Medical Detection Dogs*

The parties to the labour market have also specifically emphasised that it is considered contrary to collective agreements and principles in the labour market for volunteers to perform general jobs for employees in the economic activities of companies, since the aforementioned laws apply to



those jobs.

Voluntary work for the benefit of the public good, charity-culture or humanitarian issues, on the other hand, has a long history, and the members of the labour market have not commented on this.

Statement by ASÍ and SA regarding volunteers, where i.a. the above is stated.

Voluntary work for the benefit of nature conservation is based on strong viewpoints or ideals. The goal is that the work benefits the natural environment and the public, like rescue teams, the Red Cross and scouts, but does not promote the economic interests of individuals or companies.

**“Doing pathwork around Iceland taught me a lot about different techniques, teamwork, and improvising but also appreciation of someone’s hard work when walking on a well-made path.”**

*Chris, 28 years old, Iceland, Aquaculture technician*

Volunteer work for the benefit of nature is known in many parts of the world. Without the help of volunteers, conservation goals would not be achieved in many areas, they carry out practical work but also have a lot of knowledge that they acquire and share. Volunteers often do tasks that would otherwise not be done. The Europarc Federation has prepared guidelines for the quality management of volunteer work in protected areas in Europe , and there is a description of the definition of volunteer work at the Environment Agency in accordance with those rules.

More information on the Environment Agency of Iceland website.



Intergenerational activity regarding sustainable cities using LEGO bricks in a school in Lousada, Portugal



Environmental interpretative tour with seniors in a native forest in Lousada, Portugal

# 11

## Health & safety issues



Prioritising health and safety ensures a positive experience for senior volunteers, team leaders and reinforces the quality of the organisations. Thus, in most of the European countries the volunteers may have full access to the safety information, to keep them aware and responsible for the things which depend on them and those that depend on the organisation.

- In order for volunteering to take place safely, essentially tasks that may have some increased risk, it is important that volunteers follow a set of rules and guidelines in order to prevent accidents or incidents. When volunteering programmes involve the use of work tools, their modus operandi must also be introduced to the volunteer in a clear and detailed manner;

- Once again, depending on the type of organisation and volunteering, the implementation of training can be pre-

ponderant not only in terms of volunteer safety, but also for the quality of the work done;

- The field and coordination team, when the organisation provides such positions, must be fully available for any further clarification to the volunteer about the health and safety conditions of the volunteer program;

- During the application and/or recruitment process, the volunteer must disclose his medical condition in a responsible manner in order to ensure that the organisation is aware of any type of medical condition that deserves special attention from the field team and/or coordination, as the existence of autoimmune disease (e.g., rheumatoid arthritis) or chronic disease (e.g., coronary heart disease);

- If the volunteer is , he must ensure that he has the necessary and sufficient medication with him for the period of

time in which he will be carrying out the work;

- The volunteer must inform the organisation about any food or environmental allergies and/or intolerances. In addition to avoiding cases of allergic reactions that may require medical assistance, it can also facilitate the organisation's internal logistics;

- The volunteer must never work alone, being generally accompanied by a member of the team and a leader (or a coordinator), who can ideally be first aid trained, especially when it comes to outdoor volunteer programs;

- The team leader or coordinator should have a phone to call the emergency services if needed;

- The volunteer must be informed if he will be covered by insurance, because, depending on the organisation, this may be the responsibility of the volunteer himself, in which there is an obligation to take out accident insurance, or it may be guaranteed by the organisation itself. There are also certain entities that do not require any type of insurance, however, the volunteer must be aware of the implications that this may have in case of any health problem or accident;

- Most European countries have a national healthcare system, which provides healthcare services to citizens and residents of the country. Green volunteering programs should ensure that their volunteers are aware of their rights to access healthcare services under this system. It is advisable that the volunteer carry the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) with her/ him if she/he is a European citizen, so that if there is a need for medical treatment, hospital expenses can be reduced;

- Each European country, although it has some cross-cutting guidelines as members of the European Union regarding health and safety issues in voluntary work, has differences in regulation and legislation at government level. Thus, it is important for the volunteer to be properly informed about all health and safety issues with the organisation with which he intends to collaborate.

The guidelines presented above cover a large part of volunteering programs in the European Union, however, it is important that the volunteer consults the specific guidelines/regulation of each European country, and of each promoting organisation. For example, regarding Denmark, the aim of the Working Environment Act is to create a safe and healthy physical and mental working environment for everyone. The rules in the law therefore apply to everyone

who 'works' - even if it is voluntary work, and regardless of whether it is carried out under the auspices of an association, municipality or a third place. Health and safety legislation voluntary work in Denmark is subject to a number of requirements, such as the layout of the workplace, how the work is to be carried out and how technical equipment is to be used. There are also requirements to ensure that volunteers are not at risk of injury in connection with their voluntary work. Apesar da presente legislação nacional, existem organizações, como é o caso da Associação Grandparents' Climate Action in Aarhus in Denmark, that , although they include citizens in civic actions, do not require the same type of specificity in terms of health and safety issues, since the involvement of volunteers has a greater activist expression and less practical field work (such as, for example, plantations, construction of paths , etc.). In Iceland, all the volunteers should agree to a general health and safety guideline.

Thus, it is clear that the team leader and/ or coordination team need to inform the volunteers in detail about the conditions related to health and safety issues, considering the country where it is operating and also the policy of the own organisation.



Intergenerational activity about nature and local traditions in Lousada, Portugal

# 12

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# Appendix

## Additional information regarding rights and responsibilities of a volunteer:

### VOLUNTEERING CHARTER

#### EUROPEAN CHARTER ON THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF VOLUNTEERS

**Article 9** Every volunteer is entitled to the reimbursement of expenses incurred in relation to the voluntary activity, respecting the different levels of reimbursement that result from the diversity of voluntary activities. These reimbursements shall be excluded from any form of taxation;

**Article 10** Every volunteer is entitled to be treated according to the existing norms, principles, standards and goals of volunteering policies;

**Article 11** Every volunteer is entitled to a coherent task description that allows them to implement the volunteering

activity with a clear understanding of its aims and objectives. The task description should be, to the furthest extent possible, developed and agreed on together between the volunteering provider and the volunteer and, if needed, should be updated during the volunteering activity. Furthermore, it should be defined in the European Charter on the rights and responsibilities of volunteers. (Universal Declaration of Human Rights 7) Please see Article 28 volunteers and paid staff have complementary roles and the volunteering providers must ensure that good cooperation exists between these two personnel categories;

**Article 12** Every volunteer is entitled to support and feedback throughout the volunteering activity. This includes preparation of the activity, personal guidance and assistance during the implementation of the activity, proper evaluation and debriefing following the activity and full support in the realisation of the required follow-up activities;

**Article 13** Every volunteer has the right to participate in the decision-making process regarding the volunteering activity at the most appropriate level. In addition, each volunteer should have access to the organisations' democratic

decision making processes. Each volunteer should have some ownership of the project through co-decision in the process implementation and the right to participate in the democratic processes related to the project.

## Rights of volunteering providers

**Article 24** Non-profit Organisations and groups, that are independent, govern themselves as well as other non-profit entities or public authorities that provide volunteering opportunities, are entitled to the status of a volunteering provider;

**Article 25** Volunteering providers are entitled to a stable and sustainable support framework and enabling environment, including adequate funding structures that provide accessible, sustainable and flexible financing;

**Article 26** Volunteering providers are entitled to participate in political decision-making processes at all levels in the area of volunteering, representing the interest and needs of volunteers. Considering the expertise of volunteering providers, as the actors that are the closest to the volunteer, they must be consulted on matters regarding policy or law on the volunteering sector at all levels;

**Article 27** Volunteering providers should not be taxed on their income;

**Article 28** Volunteering providers shall select volunteers according to their mission and vision, and the specific skills and profile of volunteers if certain volunteering activities require them.

## Responsibilities of volunteering providers

### Core responsibilities

**Article 29** Volunteering providers commit to develop a volunteering policy that respects the rights of the volunteer;

**Article 30** Volunteering providers shall be acquainted with the valid legal framework for volunteering and verify legal aspects concerning the implementation of the volunteering activity;

**Article 31** Volunteering providers shall ensure the minimisation of risks and provide clear guidance for the volunteer. In this context the provider commits itself to creating the

safest possible environment for the volunteer and to providing full information linked to the possible risks related to the volunteering activity;

**Article 32** Volunteering providers shall offer equal and transparent access to information concerning volunteering opportunities, as well as to the rights and responsibilities of volunteers;

**Article 33** Volunteering providers shall put into effect inclusive and equal recruitment processes for volunteering activities. They shall identify barriers and develop measure to overcome them, in order to engage diverse groups;

**Article 34** Volunteering providers shall ensure an infrastructure for insurance provision that covers social protection in form of health care and liability insurance for the volunteer during the volunteering activity;

**Article 35** Volunteering providers shall promote volunteering and its benefits for the society and for the individual.



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