

Talk with me

Volunteer language mentors
for refugees



MANUAL

for an information session
for young refugees



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

Overview of the information session:

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

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

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

The project “Talk with me” was developed by a German organisation called “Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa”. It was so successful, that 2 other volunteer organisations/ NGOs in Bulgaria (Tulip Foundation) and Romania (Cluj-Napoca Volunteer Center) also implemented it in their country.

Why is this project needed?

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

Most of them have little or no contact to locals, so it is very difficult to practice the new language skills.

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

So this is what we are trying to do:

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

How does the project work?

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

The refugee can improve his skills to understand and speak the language. But he also learns a lot about the country, the people and the culture of the new country.

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

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

What can the refugee expect?

What expect from this project?

If you are really motivated to learn the language and are willing to participate in the project, we will not only give you this training, but we will organize also the meeting of matching you with a language mentor and find places, where you two can meet. If you have any problems with your language mentor, you can call us, and we will find a solution. We can also provide you with information, which other activities within our organisation or within the local community, are available, so that you can meet others.

What can you expect from the language mentor?

- That he is willing to communicate with you and to meet you 10 times
- This person has done a training with us, to become a voluntary language mentor
- This person is motivated and helpful, as he or she invests his or her time to support you to learn the language
- That this person is friendly and open minded
- That person also wants to learn something from you

What you can NOT expect from us or the language mentor.

- to accept disrespectful manners
- to help you with other problems
- to give you money
- to find an apartment for you
- to find work for you etc.

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

We expect you

- to come to all meetings
- to bring always a photo to each meeting, which shows the topic you want to talk about or learn something about
- to be reliable, honest and responsible
- to be respectful to us and the mentor
- to be punctual at the meetings
- to contact us and/ or the language mentor in time, if you can't come
- to stay in contact with us, and tell us in time, if something goes wrong
- to sign the supporting documents we need (e.g. list of participants, confirmation document of participating in the project, allowing to take pictures, copy rights ...)

What is volunteering?

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



We'll give you an idea, how we were delivering the information to the participants:

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

Then we describe the criteria of volunteering:

1. non-profit: not for money
2. voluntarily - free will/ not forced
3. giving time
4. for others (no family or friends)
5. for the general good (e.g. for people in need, such as poor people, old, disabled, disadvantaged youth etc. or protection of nature or animals, ...)

And we use pictures to explain:

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

1. They don't get any money
2. They do it voluntarily, because they want to help and support
3. They give time, meaning their "gift" is their personal time, which should be valued
4. They do it for them, even if they don't know them or aren't related to them
5. They want to support their integration and help them understanding and speaking the language in order to feel and live better in the new country.

Then we collect ideas, what kind of volunteer activities they can do, by presenting them different volunteer opportunities in the region, such as volunteering for:
old or disabled people



for rescue services



in sports



in nature



and many other things

What are the benefits for the refugees?

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



How can refugees contribute

- motivation and engagement
- being open-minded and tolerant
- willingness to learn something new
- showing interests in the other person
- sharing their culture and their life experiences
- showing their talents, skills, and knowledge
- having patience
- showing respect
- bring 10 photos of interesting topics to talk about
- giving feedback

