

GUIDELINES

- how to apply for an international volunteering opportunity -

You would like to volunteer, go abroad, learn lots of new things. You found a project you like, a training course, an EVS or a youth exchange and now it's time to apply for it. Applying for international opportunities, both long and short term, is a process that always requires time, effort and some abilities. Here you will find 3 'must do' and a few extra tips for your future applications.

First step: **READ THE CALL** - carefully. In every call for volunteers, you will find a list of requirements for the applicants. Requirements may be about age, sex, skills, previous experiences or whatever the organisation judges appropriate. Before starting your application, check whether you are suitable or not; if you are not suitable, don't waste your time with the application. You will always find a description of the project too. There, you will see what the project is all about and what is the work the volunteers will do. To make a good application, it is absolutely fundamental to read this description. So do it carefully and, if necessary, underline the text or make notes of the most important points. If you see that a particular project is not suitable to you, don't give up! For sure, there are many projects which suits you. For example, there are many for young people who don't have any previous experience. A good first step is to start with Youth Exchanges projects.

Second in the 'must do' list is always remembering to **PROVIDE ALL THE DOCUMENTS REQUIRED**. You will generally be asked a number of documents and it is very important that you prepare all of them: when selecting applicants, the first ones to be excluded are those who submitted incomplete applications.

Third but most important thing when writing your CV, cover letter is always to **EXPLAIN WHY YOU ARE SUITABLE FOR THIS PARTICULAR PROJECT**. Selectors neither need to know how much their project is amazing nor a detailed story of your life. They need to know how your personality, skills, previous experiences are related to the project you are applying for. Moreover, they wonder what makes you a good volunteer for it; this means you should select some information about yourself that are relevant to the project and will be useful for it. That is a crucial point. Many applicants provide general information instead of specific skills, experiences and abilities; this makes them much less likely to be chosen.

To avoid that, the first thing you need to do is thinking about the kind of person the organisation is searching for (what kind of previous experiences? which skills, interests, abilities, personal characteristics?). Then think about yourself: in which ways are you similar to that person? When you find the answer, use it for your cover letter and explain how, when and where you achieved those abilities/developed those interests, etc. What you also need to put in your cover letter is why you are applying, which is your motivation. This is something really personal and you should try to be very specific; for example, 'spending a year abroad to improve my English' is certainly a good motivation, but it can be valid for an unlimited number of projects. Instead, the point is: why do you want to improve your English? What do you plan to do with what you will learn? Why do you

want to spend a year of your life volunteering in this particular organisation and project?

Those are the 'must do', and it is absolutely necessary to be aware of them to make good applications for international volunteering opportunities, with TOG or any other organisation. If you would like to apply through TOG you can check out the Facebook fan page 'TOG - Youth Mobility Projects'.

Now let's look at your application more in detail.

First of all, **length** of your cover letter and CV: never exceed one and a half page each. All you need to write can perfectly fit in one/one and a half page. You can use many different tools to show your motivation, writing a cover letter is not the only option. You could shoot a video, create a presentation adding your photos and recorded voice, but remember that the content is always the most important thing.

English: people who will read your application perfectly know English is not your first language, so don't worry about writing in perfect English. The most important thing is that your application is easily understandable: use short sentences and simple vocabulary.

Language: it may sound a bit odd to say, but a very important rule is always to use the language in which the call is written, very often is English.

Many applicants **ask for aid** to other people. It is good to ask a friend to read your CV and cover letter and give an opinion on them: are they easily comprehensible? Is it clear what I want to express? But remember that the content is completely yours, there are no right and wrong things to write and trying to guess what the organisation wants to read is not a good strategy.

Remember that it doesn't look good to apply for all the projects an organisation offers: you would give the impression to be interested just in going abroad and not in the content of single projects.

Good luck in your research! It will be a bit tiring at the beginning, but certainly very rewarding!