

Quick-Checklist for crisis management in volunteering Work



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Glossary

APV - Advanced planning visit: Visiting of the local/project partner by the hosting organisation to plan out the details of the project.

HO - hosting organization: The organisation hosting the volunteer in the hosting country, which is responsible also for the hosting project the volunteer works in.

Leaders/Co-Leaders: The group leaders of the project, usually also volunteers and living and working with the group throughout the entire camp.

Local partner/project partner: Usually the partner of the hosting organisation, provides the work tasks and place for the volunteer.

Mentor: The contact person taking care of the volunteer throughout the whole project. Usually from the hosting organisation, answers questions, advices and support volunteers to deal their problems and challenges.

NA - national agency: part of the Erasmus+ Programme, based in the programme countries, tasks include providing information on Erasmus+, selecting projects to be funded and monitoring and evaluating Erasmus+-projects.

Participant/volunteer: The person participating in the project.

Project: The place/framework where the volunteer works in the hosting country.

SO - sending organization: The organisation sending the volunteer from their country of origin.

Stakeholders: All parties (organisations, individuals) involved in a project.

Youth worker: a) in case of workcamps: the group leader b) in case of long-term services: the mentor c) in other cases, co-worker from the hosting organisation or the local project who are responsible for the volunteers.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The Quick-Checklist was created during the KA1 Seminar on Crisis Management on Volunteering Services organised and carried out by Grenzenlos – Intercultural Exchanges with the support of the Erasmus + Program of the European Commission and with the support of the Austrian National Agency.

At the same time, we would like to acknowledge the great work of the participants from our partner organisations at both parts of the seminar (face-to-face in Vienna and virtual): Zavod ODTIZ Slovenia, Allianssi Finland, IBG Germany, LYSV Belarus, Egyesek Hungary, LYVIV Union Forum Ukraine, CBB Belgium, Pi Youth Association Turkey, IJGD Germany, Verein Junger Freiwilliger e.V Germany, ICYE Kenya, CIVS International, and VWAN Nigeria

The main idea was to create a Quick-Checklist that can help future youth workers at different levels to organise themselves and to be ready to intervene during crisis situations.

Important to highlight is that this Quick-Checklist needs to be adapted to each organization and each country, as you (the reader) may encounter stakeholders or processes that are not relevant for you, and at the same time, you may have other stakeholders and processes that are not here described. This Quick-Checklist should act as the base for the creation of your own manual.

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How to read this Quick-Checklist?

There are three main sections:

- * Prevention and Preparation
- * Risk Analysis and Crisis Management
- * After the Crisis.

Each section guides you mainly to work with crisis from **3 perspectives**: the perspective of a youth worker on the field, a hosting organisation and a sending organisation, and which important information you need to know to work during a crisis.

Remember that you may not need it all, but it is important to know that at each level, there are needs, limits, and information that needs to be known and passed to the responsible person.

The more you know about this and the clearer and easier to follow your own checklist is, the more efficient you will be.

Let's get started!

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1. Avoiding Crisis (Prevention and Preparation).

The best thing that could happen is to not have a crisis at all, but if you have one, these are the steps you can take to ensure that as much important information as possible is already available in the preparation phase. Being prepared can save you time and energy that can be spent on the crisis itself and on your own physical and mental health.

In order to prevent a crisis, you have to be aware of the plan project and consider all its frameworks and conditions.

From the youth worker perspective

Knowing the stakeholders (parties involved):

- leaders/co-leaders
- participants/volunteers
- hosting and sending organisation
- local partner/project partner
- external partners (e.g., media, or business partners)
- families of the volunteers
- any other you may have and it is not listed.

Knowing how and where to get contact information for every stakeholder:

- Have a list with the important information. It should be easy to access and everyone should know where it is. This could be for example a spreadsheet.
 - Personal and official Information from all participants and stakeholders (email, telephone number, emergency contact, medical related information like insurance). Beware of that this is sensitive data!

Have a list of Numbers of externals:

- police, emergency doctor, fire brigade, pharmacy, embassy.
- know who is responsible for each crisis scenario.

Training before the start of the project

- active participation of the youth worker in a training

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- preparing myself before the project (e.g., the organisations rules, laws, budget, coordination with co-leader, animations)
- being aware that you will find people with different backgrounds (cultural, economic, social, ...) and being ready to work with it
- self-reflexion on your own professionalism (and also your limits)
- prepare my co-workers, for all the new ones to be able to use this list

Understanding the Limits

- Know your own limits and make them clear to others
- Transparency and open/honest communication are key
- Have an overview of the budget
- Delegate the tasks (you don't need to do everything)
- Don't hesitate to ask for help/support

Rules during the project

- knowing the standard rules (legally and from your organisation)
- communicating the rules and let the participants also take part in creating their own rules, making a common contract (let's sign it); visualisation could help

Responsibilities you have

- towards the volunteers: safety, satisfaction, transparency, daily evaluations (check their mood regularly!)
- towards the project partners: satisfaction (work), rules, cleanness (accommodation)
- towards the organisation: being aware of your responsibilities, being available before the project, preparing your project, being available after the project in order to evaluate it
- towards the funder of the project (e.g., EU, National Grands, etc)
- towards **yourself**: limits, well-being, stress level, accorded to you free time, delegate tasks)

Communication in a team

- regular evaluation with your co-youth workers
- exchange before on your different youth workers styles and find a common understanding (frame of work)
- planning different crises that have occurred before and exchanging how you would act

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- have one person as responsible for the crisis, who is leading the team and keeping track of the changes and needs of the crisis and the actors involved

From the organisation perspective

Knowing the stakeholders (Actors involved):

- leaders/co-leaders
- participants/volunteers
- hosting and sending organisation
- local partner/project partner
- external partners (e.g., media, or business partners)
- families of the volunteers (social workers)
- funding institutions/national agency
- outside stakeholder
 - state actors/institutions

Responsibilities of the organisation

It is the central actor of the activity and also the link and coordination to all other stakeholders:

- coordination
- collecting and providing information
- selection and preparation of involved persons
- collaboration with local partners/communities
- planning
- towards the volunteers: preparation, information
- towards the leaders: quality of the trainings, providing important information, support
- towards the partners: providing information/support
- towards yourself: maintaining a quality level, taking care and covering of your organization (legal, financial, well-being of your workers)

Limits of the organisation

- **Professional:**
 - Something illegal has been committed → authorities have to get involved.

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- Psychological help → contact a profession -> number of emergency psychological counselling prepared.
- Corona – related issues → health authorities will take over at different stages, please check the information of your country
- time resources of staff
- financial limits
- **limitation of staff & expertise & responsibility!**
- **Making limits clear for all parties by prior agreements:** paper agreements, advanced planning visits (APVs) for people with fewer opportunities, minimal conditions that define responsibilities and duties.
- **Limits of the law:** As an organisation, you should officially always comply with the law, as a human in individual cases you might try to navigate the grey areas – informing the police could lead to an even bigger crisis.
- **Official first responders as outside stakeholders:** e.g., ambulance, police, health authorities, emergency psychological services, support for victims of abuse ...

Knowledge management:

- distribution of roles and tasks → not everybody in the office must know everything
- information should be written down and need to be passed to the rest of your co-workers.
-> When possible, make a small seminar/Training inside your own organisation to pass the knowledge.
- **make your own Crisis management List** that can be applied in your own specific realities. Try it out with your co-workers with different scenarios to see if it is sufficient
- standardise your own documents for all the HO/SO organisations
- make a glossary (e.g., acronyms) or use common words
- understand how your organisation works
- know who is responsible for what (e.g., conditions sending/hosting)
- write a project agreement fixing responsibilities of all involved parties in a prior & written way
- if possible, communicate both in national language & English
- set up the team's meeting about the crisis management plan
- participate in training with others organisations in order to share perspectives

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Legal obligations

- towards the national agencies (e.g., administrative ones and informational ones)
- towards international, national, regional, local laws
- towards the hosting/sending organisation (e.g., administrative ones and informational ones)
- towards the volunteers

From the national perspective (things to have into consideration - Check your own countries Rules, etc)

- **Legal frame of hosting & sending country:**
 - e.g., child protection law: alcohol, drugs, abuse, dress code
- **Fund-givers (EU, family ministry ...)**
 - expectations & guideline of project → e.g., providing a space for learning, contract between volunteers & organisations
- **Regional laws**
 - e.g., from local authorities, accommodation, etc.

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2. During a crisis - Crisis Analysis and Management

Key Points to have in mind:

- Safety first!
- Have pen and paper ready, always take notes!
- Have one responsible person for the communication to avoid loss of information.
- You don't have to deal with the situation alone → Find support!
- Take care of yourself (physically and emotionally).
- There is not always one right solution or decision (always trying to look for the best decision can be blocking) → is it good enough for now and safe enough to try?

(Emergency) Actions in a crisis from the leaders' / mentors' perspective

- Think about safety (safety first)!
- Always have the emergency/contact phone charged.
- Divide the tasks:
 - someone taking care of the person in distress
 - someone taking care of the other people involved
 - someone who is responsible for the overall coordination of the people working at the crisis (supervision and counselling)
- Gather Info
 - What, When, Where, Who? → assess the situation, make a decision.
- Provide first aid if necessary and possible
 - Call the Emergency Numbers
 - Check the Insurance documents
- Gather other participants
 - Check in with them (their needs, feelings)
 - Give them crucial info ☒ facts: No speculations
 - Make sure everybody has the space to speak
- Inform the office (hosting organisation)
- When to inform them depends on the time and level of emergency.

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- Have pen and paper ready for every call / meeting
 - Ask for (future) guidance
- If necessary, inform local partners (e.g., accommodation)
- Write a report
- In case the media/press is interested → check with your organisation what you are allowed to share, maybe only the office wants to talk to the media/press

(Emergency) Actions in a crisis from the hosting organisation

perspective

- Get detailed Information of what happened?
- Who is involved? What? When? Where?)
- Check in with the first responders
 - Ask for the needs (take care)
 - Give (realistic) support
- Evaluate the situation
 - Gather the information about/from the parts involved
 - If you are not the main contact, contact the person
 - Consider all the stakeholders
 - Check all the needed documents
 - Check the legal frame
- Plan of action:
 - Delegate / divide task → include co-workers
 - Give clear instructions and information what to do now to the involved stakeholders

(Emergency) Actions in a crisis from the sending organisation

perspective

- From whom I got a call / information?
 - Volunteer / Family / Sending / Hosting
- Get detailed Information of what happened? Who is involved? (What? When? Where? Who?) → Which decisions were already made? Which actions were already taken? (hospital, exclusion of the camp) PAPER and PEN!

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- Ask what the hosting organisations needs from you now → Expectations, responsibilities
- If you are not the main contact, contact the person
- Info we have:
 - Check if you have more information about the volunteer
 - Check the documents/contracts you have from the volunteer
- Delegate and take care of yourself
- Report
 - documentation of the situation → some note about the volunteer
- Decision → all the stakeholders have to agree with it
- Inform the parts
 - When do I inform whom? (volunteers, Families, Government)
- Direct contact to the volunteer (same language)
 - Listen to the volunteer's side of the story
 - Ask for the volunteer's needs → what do they need from us?
- Can the volunteer change the project?
- How is the volunteer coming back? How can we support the volunteer?
- If the volunteer stays in the project:
 - make the consequences clear for all the volunteers
 - Get involved with the hosting organisations
 - Be more in contact with all parties now

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3. After the crisis

Important: clear cooperation between the hosting and the sending organisation.

- Try to come up with as many solutions as possible and choose one, which is, for you and at the moment, the best one
 - Who makes the decision depends on the situation; usually the hosting organisation is the one deciding what to do?
 - Sometimes, you can't do it all by yourself and external help is needed
 - Sometimes, sending the participant back is not the only solution; changing the project is also an option (give the participant another occupation, option)
- Inform all parties about the verdict
- Finish the report
- Reflection process - evaluate and make the necessary changes
- Take care of the people involved (physical and mentally) → this will help to avoid burnouts

Follow-ups from leaders' perspective

- Towards myself:
 - well-being
 - understanding your limits and needs
 - asking for help if you need it (this is your right!)
 - remembering you're not alone
- Towards the others:
 - support, reassurance (offer – in case of denial, let it go; they may get back to you later)
- Towards the hosting organisation:
 - Provide all the information (contact with the sending organisation and families is not your responsibility)
 - Write the report
 - Give them feedback (one shortly at the end of a crisis and one after a few weeks).
 - Follow all their processes and guidelines
 - Ask for what you need from them

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Follow-ups from hosting organisation perspective

- responsibilities for the finances, the legal parts (e.g., insurance)
- responsibilities for your own organisation
 - making sure you have all the information and documents
 - knowledge management
 - writing a report
- evaluating and reflecting yourself
 - Try to learn from the experience without putting the blame on yourself.
 - Reflect the experience with a colleague, use e.g., colleague counselling methods.
- reflection with partners and leaders
 - Changes needed? In the camp leader training, in the local project?
- checking in with leaders sometime after the end of the project
- self-care after the project
 - do not forget to breathe
 - Take care of yourself
 - Do not feel guilty for taking time for yourself

Follow-ups from sending organisation perspective

- Evaluate if the plan of actions worked
 - Preparation meeting mandatory?
 - How was the communication/work together with the H.O.?
 - Working in the team?
 - Knowledge management?
 - Did we have all the hard facts?
 - Can we influence this?
 - Where are our limits?
 - Collect the feedback!
- What is needed to make it better/different next time (supervision, money, external support)?
- Maintain your database: some notes about the volunteer/H.O., some changes in documents are maybe needed, probably adapting your emergency concept
- Set deadlines and make agreements (supervision, changes in guidelines)

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- Optional - think bigger: campaign in social media, pressure to local government for more money (e.g., to give better psychology support, supervision for your team), influencing or change the programs (e.g., guideline for social inclusion)

Another check-in after some time has passed: HO and mentors, as well as HO and SO

- everyone's well-being
- Were the necessary changes carried out?
- Are any other changes needed?
- procedures for future similar events

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