



Guidelines for Quality Volunteer Management in European Protected Areas

Preamble

These guidelines are the result of the identified need to find and support a common understanding of quality volunteer management in European Protected Areas (PAs). The partners¹ of the Lifelong Learning Project “Volunteer Management in European Parks” have developed these guidelines in consultation with PA-managers and volunteer managers/coordinators within the EUROPARC network.

In accordance with the European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers “volunteering needs an empowering and enabling environment”. In this regard, the project partners are convinced that shared values and principles for volunteer management across protected areas in Europe can generate positive results for the benefit of volunteers, their learning processes and for nature conservation.

Good quality volunteer management in PAs is important as:

- volunteering makes a significant contribution to PAs' work in a number of fields including sustainable tourism management, biodiversity conservation, environmental education and adaptation to climate change;
- it is a good way of promoting active stewardship of the environment and European citizenship;
- it is an effective means of generating commitment or (re-)connecting people to nature;
- the provision of informal learning experiences offers significant opportunities for volunteers' personal development.

These guidelines were published in January 2013 by the project partners for consideration and testing by protected areas in Europe. As such we see them as a document that will evolve over the final year of the project and a definitive version will be published at the end of the project.²

¹ Project partners are EUROPARC Federation (DE), EUROPARC Germany (DE), FUNGOBE/ EUROPARC Spain (ES), The Environment Agency of Iceland (IS), Federparchi-EUROPARC Italy (IT), The Nature Conservation Agency of Latvia (LV), The Association of Lithuanian State Parks and Reserves (LT), Rodna Mountains National Park Administration (RO), EUROPARC Atlantic Isles (UK), The Conservation Volunteers (UK), and EUROPARC Nordic-Baltic as "silent partner" (Scandinavia and The Baltic)

² Please send any comments to Bettina Soethe: Bettina.Soethe@europarc-deutschland.de



The Guidelines

Below are the nine (9) guidelines for quality volunteer management in protected areas as developed by the project partners of the Lifelong Learning Project “Volunteer Management in European Parks”.

1. Expressed commitment

There is an expressed commitment to the involvement of volunteers and recognition that volunteering is a two-way process which benefits volunteers and the PA:

- The PA has a written policy on involvement of volunteers based on the principle of equality and diversity. All staff and partners³ share and understand the values and impact of volunteering in PAs.
- All staff and partners in contact with volunteers should be aware of volunteers' needs and respond to them.
- The PA implements procedures for regularly reviewing volunteer involvement.
- Volunteers have a strategic input into the organisation of volunteering.
- Volunteers add value and extend the services of the organisation. They do not replace paid staff efforts.

2. Appropriate resources

The PA commits appropriate resources for working with volunteers:

- The PA designates responsibility for recruiting, selecting, supporting and protecting volunteers to a key person or a key-group of persons.
- The PA ensures that the supervisors/volunteer coordinators have the relevant knowledge and experience of involving wider society.
- Time is given during staff meetings to discuss volunteer issues.
- Staff and partners working with volunteers are provided with appropriate insurance.
- There is an annual plan with objectives for volunteer involvement.
- There are sufficient material and financial resources allocated for volunteer roles.

3. Recruiting volunteers

The PA is open and actively seeking to involve volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community and wider society.

- The PA welcomes and proactively involves volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities.
- Information about the PA and ways in which volunteers can be involved is made as widely available as possible.
- The PA monitors the diversity of the volunteer team and intends to increase diversity.

³ Partners are e.g. NGOs, council members or volunteers who coordinate volunteers

4. Role of volunteers

The PA develops appropriate roles for volunteers that are of value to them especially in regard to informally gained competencies:

- A description is drawn up for each volunteer role that reflects the different volunteer motives that can be met with this activity (e.g. aspects of learning, physical activity, socializing,...).
- The PA sets out the necessary skills, attitude, experience and availability needed to carry out the role.
- The PA describes a variety of tasks which will attract a range of people according to the PA's aims.
- Where possible, tasks are adapted to suit the needs, abilities and interests of individual volunteers.

5. Safety

The PA undertakes that volunteers are protected from physical, financial and emotional harm arising from volunteering:

- An assessment of potential risk to volunteers is conducted when designing the volunteer roles.
- Volunteers are covered by appropriate insurance.
- There is a policy for reimbursement of volunteers' out of pocket expenses.
- Volunteers' personal details are protected.

6. Recruitment process

The PA is committed to use fair, efficient and consistent recruitment procedures for all potential volunteers.

- People interested in volunteering are provided with clear information about opportunities, recruitment and selection.
- Recruitment procedures are appropriate to the volunteer role.
- Volunteers are informed about the selection results.
- The PA takes a considered approach to taking up references which is consistent and equitable for all volunteers.
- The PA has considered which types of convictions/disciplinary actions may or may not be relevant to the volunteering being undertaken.

7. Training for volunteers

Clear procedures are put into action for introducing new volunteers to their role, the PA, its work and policies.

- Volunteers are made aware of the hopes and expectations the PA has about them, and also what they can expect from the PA to fulfil their role.

- All new volunteers are introduced to the relevant paid staff and other volunteers with whom they will come into contact.
- Volunteers are provided with the necessary information and/or training to carry out their role.
- Volunteers are advised how the PA will address situations where the volunteer has behaved inappropriately and about how they can complain about their treatment by paid staff, users, committee members or other volunteers.
- There is clarity between the volunteer and the PA about the boundaries of the volunteers' roles.

8. Support and supervision

The PA takes account of the varying needs of volunteers regarding support and supervision:

- Either one-to-one and / or group support sessions are offered, as appropriate regarding the level of responsibility and emotional demand of the volunteer role.
- Volunteers are aware that they can refuse demands, e.g. as they consider it unrealistic, beyond the scope of the role or that they do not have the skills to carry out.
- The volunteer and the volunteer coordinator develop the specific role of the volunteer together.
- Volunteers are asked for feedback about their role and their involvement with the PA.
- Volunteers are informed of all relevant changes in the PA which affect their role.

9. Recognition

The whole PA is aware of the need to give volunteers recognition:

- The PA recognizes the value of volunteers' contributions and communicates effectively their appreciation to volunteers, both formally and informally.
- The PA provides volunteers the opportunity to continue developing their skills and talents within the roles on offer if appropriate.
- Volunteers leaving the PA, who have made a regular commitment to the PA, are offered a reference and/or other statement of their achievements.
- The PA endeavours to obtain feedback from volunteers leaving the PA.

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