INVEST

International Volunteers Educational Skills Training



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INVEST

International volunteers educational skills training

INVEST was a transnational project, developed to promote volunteering through education and sport and help to overcome the barriers of lack of time, training budget and lack of training opportunities for volunteers.

The project ran for 24months. It was funded in the Erasmus-Sport-2024 Call in the key action 2: cooperation among organizations and institutions from the European Union. INVEST supported European volunteers aged 17 to 30 to receive comprehensive educational opportunities and to develop personal skills, intercultural competences and a deeper understanding of the importance of volunteering in society.

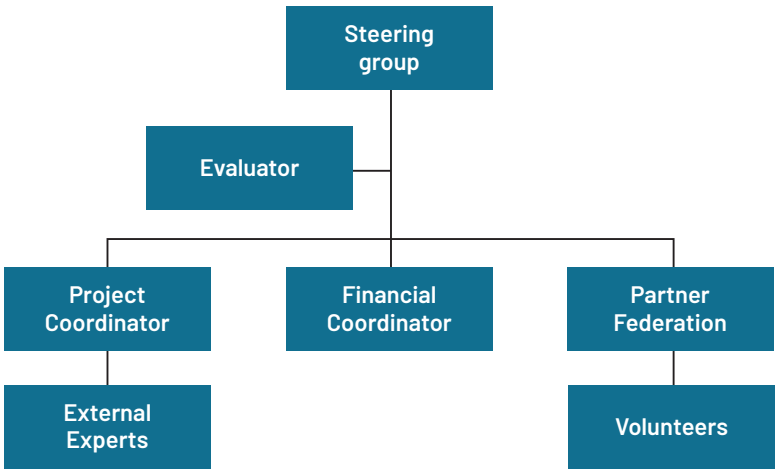
The young volunteers were given the opportunity to address their mostly needed education and training topics and could choose their tasks for the practical training according to their strengths and interests.

Setting

Six organizations from six European Countries (Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy and Romania) implemented INVEST within their settings. All partners were included in the project management, and each partner had a representative in the steering group. All partners had also at least one second person involved in the project who backed up the steering group representative in case of need. The coordinator and the experienced partners supported the partners who were involved for the first time in such an Erasmus project. Each partner was responsible for their volunteers. The training and evaluation were mostly done by external experts and an evaluator outside the partner federations.

Organizational chart:

INVEST Steering group



FICEP in supporting function

The Fédération Internationale Catholique d'Education Physique et sportive' – abbreviated FICEP supported us by providing an event for the practical training of our INVEST volunteers and they provided a subsite for our project website, so that we had no extra cost for the project website and it will continue to exist also after the end of the project.

The project logo

The logo is not only meant to be a person in movement (for sport), but also a person who is reaching for the stars, which means developing their own skills further and becoming a role model (star) for other people involved in movement.

Scopes of the project

Right from the beginning of the project, we chose a participatory process that aimed at both ownership of the project and identification with its aims through the active involvement of the target group.

The focus was laid on education and training in the context of sport and youth, the development of skills that are valuable for the job market, personal development, communication skills and building capacity of organizations to work transnationally and across sectors. The volunteers should be enthusiastic to undertake volunteering tasks in their own organization and in their country, growing into role models for others and so helping to stabilize and increase the number of volunteers.

The events

Five main events were held during the project.



Practical Training in Munich: Photo Challenge

1. Kick-Off Network Meeting of the Steering group in Italy 2025

All steering group members met in person in Italy. The focus of the meeting was to prepare the educational congress week and the online kick off meeting for the volunteers and discuss the timetable of the project. A meeting with representatives of FICEP cleared up the main tasks for the practical training of the volunteers 2026.

2. Digital Kick-Off Meeting for Volunteers 2025

The goal for the kick-off meeting for volunteers was getting to know each other and getting an overview about the project and the congress week in Austria.
A key focus was the input from the volunteers regarding topics they wish to see in the workshops during their theoretical training part.

3. Educational Congress Week 2025

The program of the congress week served the volunteers' formal and informal development. The topics for the workshops were intended to serve personal and professional development. Another focus laid on the preparation for the practical training in 2026. Key tasks were discussed, and the volunteers divided the tasks according to their interests. The evaluation of the project started this week. The evaluator accompanied and observed the progress of the volunteers on site.

4. Youth Congress-Practical Training 2026

The practical training was held during a 3-Day international youth congress together with our partner federation of FICEP in April 2026. The volunteers helped to prepare the program for the next generations of volunteers. The practical training included many administrative/logistics tasks the volunteers were able to do during the congress. The volunteers were guided by two people. The evaluator documented the process. The volunteers will summerized their learnings in the adapted "youth pass".

The volunteers presented their experiences to the youth committee of FICEP our international supporting organization, and new volunteers of the partner federations. The volunteers learned in a non-formal way and were able to use their knowledge gained from the educational workshops. Furthermore, they had additional educational workshops on one day.

5. FICEP General Assembly 2026

The volunteers presented the project and their learnings at the general assembly of our international support organization FICEP in October to 9 national sports organizations from European- and 3rd countries.



Practical Training in Munich: World Cafe

Promotion and visibility of volunteering

Until the end of September 2026, the volunteers had time to present the project in their home countries to 20 people. They gave short summaries about the projects and spoke about their experiences. They wore INVEST Shirts with the project logo and the EU logo.

We asked them to send us some key points and summarize their experiences, learnings, improvements and the feedback they received from their audience. We also wanted to know if the training in Austria and Munich helped them for their dissemination activities- Presentations in their home countries.

Method used:
All volunteers used a Power Point Presentation (with pictures and videos) and oral presentations. Some also included games.

„I have always loved presenting topics in front of people, and after the presentation, I felt even more confident that this is something I really enjoy. I always find it great to share new/different opportunities with other athletes, and I am very happy that my presentation received so much positive feedback. I had a lot of fun, and I would definitely do it again."
Volunteer of SPORTUNION

„The presentation was a useful experience because it allowed me to share information about volunteering with other young people and encourage them to consider getting involved in sports and international projects."
Volunteer of CSR

EXPERIENCES:

- The presentation was a valuable experience for them because they had the opportunity to share their knowledge and personal experiences with other young people and could encourage the participants to discover new opportunities through volunteering.
- Most of them felt a little nervous at the beginning but became more confident and comfortable speaking in front of the group during their presentation.
- The presentations helped them to improve their public speaking, communication, and presentation skills.
- They enjoyed giving the presentation and were surprised how attentive the listeners were.
- They were reminded of the project's success and their personal desire to continue the commitment as volunteers.
- They realized that they had acquired a wide range of skills.
- It was truly rewarding to collaborate with their fellow citizens to try and inspire the new generations.

LEARNINGS:

- It is important to communicate clearly and adapt presentations to the interests and needs of the audience.
- They learned how to organize information effectively, manage their time, and become more confident when speaking in front of a group.
- Sharing personal experiences can inspire other young people to become more active in their communities.
- They learned to be kinder to themselves and accepted that presentations do not have to be perfect and that you could present anywhere to anyone and make it work.
- Talking very naturally and adding anecdotes and funny things can make it more enjoyable for the participants, depending on who you present to.
- There is still much that can be done to inspire young people to get more involved.
- The presentation helped to build self-confidence.
- It supported a better showcase of their international experience and inspired them to continue getting involved in European projects.
- Sharing a personal experience can be more valuable than presenting fact-based information.
- They improved and reinforced their understanding of the fundamental concepts of the INVEST project by explaining it to somebody.
- Simplifying complex concepts about the European Union makes them easily understandable and interesting for the kids.
- The presentation showed them the importance of involving participants and giving them space to ask questions and share their interests.
- The preparation for an event sometimes is much more extensive than the actual presentation and far more time-consuming than initially expected.
- One volunteer learned that many athletes have felt the same way that she has. They become so focused on the main goals (winning competitions and being the best) that they sometimes overlook everything happening around them. After the end of a career, it can be quite challenging to find a new sense of purpose, and this is where volunteering positions can be a great opportunity to stay connected to the sport while also giving something back. Without volunteers they would not have been able to experience and pursue their careers to the same extent.

  That made her and the audience realize how valuable volunteering can be. Not only for the sports community but also for athletes themselves, especially when transitioning into life after competition

> *"I realized that I had actually learned a lot during the project, especially about communication, adaptation, stress management and working with people from different cultures. Preparing the presentation also helped me look back at the project and understand how much these experiences have influenced my own personal and professional life."*
> **Volunteer of FSCF**

> *"The presentation made me realize that we are all so thankful for being a part of this project."*
> **Volunteer of FSCF**

IMPROVEMENTS:

- Make the presentation more interactive by including more practical activities, questions, and group discussions.
- Improve time management and provide more opportunities for participants to share their opinions and experiences.
- Include more visual materials, interactive games and real-life examples to make the presentation even more engaging.
- Incorporate more hands-on activities, targeted questions, and small-group discussions to transform passive listening into active participation and encourage attendees to share their own experiences.
- Prepare even more for presentations and speak more freely and fluently.
- Simplify the presentation and focus more on the messages.
- Manage stress better and be more confident.
- Interact more with the audience, particularly by making more eye contact.
- Increase the participants' enthusiasm and motivation before the presentation starts. Begin with a more interactive activity, questions, or discussion to get their attention and involve them from the beginning.
- It´s important to plan a presentation for a larger audience with more lead time. When targeting representatives from schools, kindergartens, federations, and social institutions, it is crucial to schedule the event outside of holiday periods.

> *„The training in Austria and the practical training in Munich helped me feel more prepared and confident. They gave me practical experience in working with people, communicating in an international environment and presenting ideas clearly."*
> **Volunteer of CSR**

Did the training in Austria 2025 and the practical training in Munich help you for the presentation?

All volunteers except one agree that the training in Austria and Munich helped them. One volunteer was already experienced in giving presentations due to university projects.

> *"The training in Niederöblarn and Munich taught me a lot of different things. On the one hand, they showed me how much work actually goes into organizing and running all these events and competitions. On the other hand, I learned valuable skills that will definitely help me in the future, including skills that I was able to use during this presentation."*
> **Volunteer of SPORTUNION**

SUPPORTING ASPECTS OF THE TRAINING:

- It provided them with the fundamental theoretical foundations to master the topics of the European project.
- The practical sessions in Munich were crucial for learning how to effectively structure the delivery and actively engage the live audience.
- Developing important skills such as communication, teamwork, public speaking, and working with young people from different backgrounds.
- Gaining practical experience and learning new methods for organizing activities and sharing information effectively.
- All volunteers felt more confident during their presentation and were less stressed speaking in front of an audience.They were less stressed because they learned not everything has to be perfectly prepared (80% rule learned in the educational congress week).
- All improved their English skills.
- They received a lot of tools and experiences that helped them prepare and communicate their ideas and to adapt their communication depending on the people they spoke with.
- The project itself helped them to get a better view of the problematic with lack of volunteers and some think that they have found some solutions to motivate people to become volunteers.



CSR

All four volunteers held one presentation together.

- **Target Groups:** Young Volunteers 17 and above in a Roman Catholic College
- **Duration:** 50min
- **Number of participants:** 24
- **Participants Feedback:** The participants showed interest in the topic of volunteering and the opportunities available to young people. They were attentive during the presentation and had the opportunity to learn about the benefits of volunteering and international projects. The presentation encouraged them to reflect on their own involvement in the community and on how volunteering could contribute to their personal development.

> *"I am grateful for the opportunity to share my volunteering experiences with other young people. This presentation was an important step in my personal development and motivated me to continue participating in volunteering activities and encouraging others to become involved. I would like to organize similar presentations in the future to promote volunteering and inspire more young people to take an active role in their communities."*
> **Volunteer of CSR**

DJK

One presentation was held.

- **Target Groups:** Young volunteers of a sport club, Coaches, Board of the association, senior football team and parents of club members.
- **Duration:** 45min
- **Number of participants:** 20
- **Participants Feedback:** The feedback was very positive, and the club's leadership board promised to support young volunteers who are interested in participating in Erasmus or other personal development programs.



FSCF

Three volunteers held a presentation together and the fourth volunteer made two presentations separately. In total they had 3 presentations.

- **Target Groups:** gymnastics team and coaches (volunteers) age 12-21; Gymnastic club including parents, siblings, friends, volunteers, employees (gala event); Executive Committee FSCF (age 30-60)
- **Duration:**15-30min
- **Number of participants:** 47 in total and about 250 people at the gala event.
- **Participants Feedback:** The participants appreciated the review of the experience and were very interested. They congratulated the volunteers for their presentation and encouraged them to continue this commitment.



> *"Thank you very much for making me a part of this project. It has been, since the beginning a wonderful experience, which taught me a lot of things. I am very grateful to have been able to participate in such a project; it allowed me to learn, meet people, gain confidence, practice and improve my English, and discover new cultures."*
> **Volunteer of FSCF**



NBA Aquila

Three volunteers held one presentation together and the fourth volunteer held an extra presentation. In total they had two presentations.

- **Target Groups:** Young Athletes, Volunteers and Coaches
- **Duration:** 15-30min
- **Number of participants:** 21 in total
- **Participants Feedback:** Everyone was interested in International Volunteering and our experiences, and the young athletes have shown great excitement to take part in one of these future projects. The kids were very engaged and asked lots of curious questions about how the project works. They seemed genuinely enthusiastic to hear the stories and direct experiences of such an international group. Overall, they gave positive feedback and appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the Erasmus project.

> *"It improved my ability to coordinate within a multicultural team."*
> **Volunteer of NBA Aquila**



OREL

Two volunteers held a presentation together and the other two made separate presentations. In total they had three presentations.

▶ **Target Groups:** volunteers, athletes, Public (age 10-75); young athletes (age 14-18); volunteers and students (age 15-50)

▶ **Duration:** 20- 60min

▶ **Number of participants:** 61 in total

▶ **Participants Feedback:** The feedback from the participants was positive. They were interested in the topic and listened attentively. They asked questions about the possibilities offered by Erasmus+ and showed interest in learning more about volunteering and getting involved in the activities of OREL.

Some participants expressed an interest in becoming more active in the future. Most of them didn´t know about these kinds of projects and some asked if the INVEST volunteers could volunteer in their organization.

"I´m glad I was part of it and feel better with the presenting stuff."
Volunteer of OREL

SPORTUNION

The volunteers held in total 3 presentations.

▶ **Target Groups:** professional athletes age 18-19 in a sports school; employees of SPORTUNION who are mainly volunteers in clubs themselves in their free time; future teachers of preliminary school education age 18+

▶ **Duration:** 25-30min

▶ **Number of participants:** 61 in total

▶ **Participants Feedback:** The participants reflected on how important volunteers are during competitions, and some were motivated to get involved themselves and help behind the scenes. They said that they never really considered volunteering before, but after the presentation and seeing how nice the whole experience was, they now see it as a much more interesting and meaningful opportunity. The feedback was positive and they thanked us for presenting the project.

"I am grateful that I had the opportunity to be part of this project, and I hope that I will have the chance to be involved again in the future. Thank you very much! It was a great experience, and I am glad that I was there."
Volunteer of SPORTUNION



INVEST

Summary and prospects of the project

INVEST – International volunteers educational skills training started in December 2024 with the aim of empowering young Europeans for local, national and international volunteering issues in sport through education. To achieve this goal, SPORTUNION Austria established a consortium of partner organizations in Europe from Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy and Romania.

INVEST was externally evaluated by the University of Vienna (Department of Sport and Human Movement Science). The evaluation is based on two systematic questionnaire surveys for the youth and the national coordinators conducted in the beginning and at the end of the project. In addition, conversations with the young volunteers and the project partners during the Educational Congress Week, the Youth Congress and several online meetings offered besides other monitoring documents (minutes of the meetings, reports, youths' presentations) a good overview of the project.

These methods were applied to get evidence about the outcomes but also to gain insights into problems and challenges to facilitate responsive results for process-evaluation supplying the steering group in the project with information and further suggestions. As it is challenging to give a short summary of the outcomes, the following summary and prospects show a focused perspective on main issues and challenges.



Educational Congress Week 2025 in Austria.

PROJECT SUMMARY IN NUMBERS:

- Effective 1st of November 2026 one month before project end.
- INVEST included **six partner organizations** from the field of sport in six European countries. The **eight steering group members** took part in a four-day Kick-off Meeting in April 2025 in Italy to agree upon the steps to implement the project and start the preparations. Following this the partner organizations recruited **21 volunteers** in their countries from age 17-30. The 21 volunteers, four steering group members and the evaluator were invited to take part in the educational congress week in Austria 2025.
- **14 tasks** were divided between the volunteers. The practical training took place in April 2026 in Munich during the FICEP Youth Congress. **42 participants from seven different nations** participated in the youth congress.
- In total the volunteers were offered **seven workshops** during the project.
- **13 presentations** were held in the partner countries and **484 people were reached.**
- 3 videos, 17 articles on partner websites and 26 on social media were published and **4 articles in printed magazines** who reached **15680 readers.**
- One Volunteer **founded a club** during the project and became a member of SPORTUNION with his club.

INVEST

A model of good practice for educating and recruiting professional volunteers

To educate and train young volunteers has been one of the main tasks in this project.

Participatory approaches

The project design and the content for the Educational and the Congress Week were selected through a participatory process. Proposed topics were aligned with the interests and needs of the young people, thereby contributing to a training program that was more tailored to the target group. For example: The topics for the workshops have been chosen after a ranking of the volunteers and proposed activities (like sport activities, hiking, active breaks) have been integrated into the program.

Both the young volunteers as well as the project partners highlighted in the evaluation this approach as a very promising procedure for a higher commitment of and better educated volunteers. The evaluation also yielded extremely high levels of agreement regarding the individual learning objectives, especially in the area of:

- **Event management skills** (organizing events, voluntary tasks)
- **Personal skills** (time and stress management, self-confidence and presence, presentations, ...)
- **Skills for** (international) **collaboration** and building up intercultural friendships
- Recruitment and **motivation of volunteers**
- **Insight** into the ideas of European projects

Theoretical preparation and practical implementation

Another key factor in these positive results was, above all, that the knowledge gained at the Educational Congress Week could be put into practice. The tasks for the practical training at the Youth Congress were also chosen in a participatory way by the volunteers.

One project coordinator stated that the project offered the young people not only training opportunities to put their skills into practice, but also the possibility to take an active role in an international project and summarized that the young volunteers became increasingly involved and autonomous throughout the project. And the youth themselves saw the transfer from theory into practice as a highly valuable experience, which for some was also 'challenging, but rewarding': 'Having full responsibility for a task was challenging at first, but it really helped me improve my time management and decision-making skills. It felt great to see that the team trusted me, and it made me much more confident in my work. It also taught me when to ask for feedback and how to check my own progress.'

Professional development through international exchange

In the view of the national coordinators, the combination of educational training, international mobility, practical responsibilities and opportunities to disseminate the experience seems particularly effective in strengthening the engagement of the volunteers as the following quote from a volunteer shows: "Overall, I gained valuable experience in teamwork, communication, organization, and adapting to new situations. The project helped me become more responsible and confident, while also allowing me to meet new people, work in an international environment, and learn from different cultures. It was a great opportunity for both personal and professional development."

Long-term involvement through dissemination and further engagement

One task to train self-confidence and presence was the obligation for the volunteers to organize and to present the INVEST-project activities and learnings within their communities and at the FICEP General Assembly. To summarize the activities, the experiences and the ideas in front of audiences up to 250 participants was a perfect opportunity for the volunteers to highlight the relevance of the project and to disseminate the results to a bigger audience. In addition, it was a great opportunity for the volunteers to get known in the field and to get in contact with decision-making bodies of the organizations as a basis for integration in further activities and projects.

The French coordinator for example commented, that several project participants are already involved in other projects. Facilitating and ensuring sustained involvement and integration in sports club activities—beyond the end of the project— is also a key component of the project and a main indicator for its success.

INVEST
and its challenges

To build up teams of volunteers is a widespread challenge for many sports organizations and has been therefore the starting point for the INVEST – project.

Recruiting volunteers for the project

So, it is not surprising that it was also a challenge for some partner organizations to find four volunteers, who committed their participation for the whole length of the project. For club level partners, it seemed to be easier to convince young volunteers because of their closer contact with the youngsters. For the bigger federations it was much more challenging to reach this target group through their communication channels. Some partners recruited even more volunteers than needed and kept people on a waiting list for the cases of last-minute replacements.

Transition to a professional volunteer

Becoming a professional volunteer is a process. During the Educational Congress Week in Austria for example, the young people accumulated a great deal of knowledge and participated with great enthusiasm. Even though, as a part of the transition from a sports club member to a responsible volunteer and leader, it was sometimes necessary to remind them to fulfill their tasks and their obligations for delivery on time. Supporting methods were on the one hand reminders from the partners which regularly met with the project coordinator checking open tasks from the volunteers. And on the other hand, the mix of more experienced volunteers supporting the beginners in the group offered them the chance to learn from one another on their ways to become a responsible and professional volunteer.

Educational training for a wide and diverse range of young volunteers

The learning content, which the young people helped to determine, was received very positively, even though the format during the Educational and Youth Week leaned quite close to formal or university-style education, with long training days and a strong emphasis on presentations and theoretical content. To address the needs of young people with different educational and diverse backgrounds, a stronger non-formal and inclusive education approach with shorter inputs, experimental activities, learning through practice, games, peer-to-peer-learning and more frequent changes of the learning formats etc. would be more enriching and accessible for the young people.

Communication with partners at club level

On the level of partners, the greatest challenge was reaching the partners at the club level, as both are presidents in their clubs and also have professional jobs – meaning they have only a limited space of time. Therefore, the coordinator arranged personal meetings with the partners and supervised them on a regular basis via telephone, zoom and email-communications to keep them updated. With one of the partners the coordinator even communicated in his mother language which made the collaboration significantly easier, especially when it came to language barriers.

Application requirements

The biggest challenge at the beginning of the project was to provide all the requirements of the application in the funding and tender portal because two partners had no LEAR yet and the club of one partner had not yet been validated in the system. This took a lot of time, as it was two months before a response received from the relevant EU Organizations. The coordinator suggests that it should not be possible to add a partner to a project if his organization is not yet validated or has no LEAR.



Workshop-Practical Training Munich.

INVEST

Conclusion and recommendations

Yet, on the basis of the evaluation results, it can be stated that INVEST – International volunteers educational skill training is a vital part of changing the culture in sport clubs: The aim to educate volunteers shows the responsibility of sport clubs for a higher professionalization and offers opportunities for a higher engagement and long-term commitment of young volunteers to their organizations.

The project and its activities (Educational Week, Youth Congress, Presentations) encourage young people in sport to commit themselves to a culture of participation and to take over more responsibilities in sport.

Furthermore, INVEST produces a vivid network of young people from different countries for the next leader generation on local, national, European, and furthermore international level.

It was impressive to see the growth of the young people and the engagement of the partner organizations involved in the project.

These positive outcomes of the project were primarily facilitated by the project coordinator Alexandra Hoffmann and her team from SPORTUNION Austria, who established a perfect collaborative project atmosphere through constructive and transnational relationships among the partners and the volunteers. The results of our evaluation surveys show that both - the partners and the volunteers - were very satisfied with the coordination of the project: with clear goals and professional project management, with participatory approaches in planning and implementing tasks and project activities, through reflecting the project processes and through communicating on equal footing with all project partners.

General recommendations to support young volunteers

The recruiting and long-term involvement of young volunteers is a widespread challenge for many sports organizations. Based on several guidelines the following general recommendations could be helpful for sports federations and sports clubs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Invest** in young volunteers **over a longer period** rather than involving them only in isolated activities. Start interesting and involve them from the beginning of their sport activities.
- **Include** the relevance of educating and recruiting of young volunteers into the **mission statement** as a sustainable strategy of professionalization.
- **Install structures** within the sports organizations, like youth commissions, where young volunteers get a visible place for their activities and learn to raise their voices in decisions.
- **Offer education and training** for young volunteers as a basis for long-term involvement.
- **Offer national and international exchange opportunities** for collaboration with other stakeholders from within and outside the sport domain.

Recommendations for educating and empowering young people as volunteers

The learnings from the INVEST – project offer a variety of recommendations for projects and educational programs to support and professionalize young volunteers.



Educational Congress Week 2025 in Austria.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Develop the program design** for young volunteers on evidence-based didactical concepts.
- **Listen closely to the young people´s interests** and use participatory approaches in all phases of the project and program (e.g. topics for workshops and training).
- **Be inclusive** and take diverse needs and interests in your planning and implementing into account as young people come from very different (learning, social, ...) backgrounds.
- **Integrate their tasks** according to their interests.
- **Offer a more non-formal educational approach** with a mix of youth-oriented methods to make education more accessible for young people with different needs: Combine for example short inputs, experimental activities, learning through practice, games, peer-to-peer learning, simulations, small-group work, frequent changes of the format.
- **Combine theoretical preparation and practical implementation** and offer opportunities to gain experiences integrating the learnings into practice, e.g. events, congresses, special tasks in the organization.
- **Take care of the proactive energy** in the process by offering assistance, constructive feedback and emotional support.
- **Raise mutual trust and an atmosphere of respect** within the volunteer group and empower them to act respectfully among each other, so that they can smoothly collaborate and support each other during their tasks.
- **Find a balance between handing over the initiative and responsibility for tasks** to the young volunteers and taking over the responsibility for the outcome of the process.
- **Support and accompany** the young people in their tasks but do not direct them to your result or do not leave them alone.
- **Install a partner network and regular exchange** to support the work process and the volunteers.

Imprint

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