

Bulgaria, Germany, Romania

Talk with Me – Voluntary Language Mentors for Refugees

Level of implementation	Implemented on local level in 3 different EU countries
Name(s) of implementing institutions	Tulip Foundation, Bulgaria, Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa, Germany, Centrul de Voluntariat Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
Main idea behind it, initial situation (why?)	The main idea of this project was to create an easy-to-multiply framework that could be used in various places in order to facilitate the integration of refugees in the host communities.
Objective (what for?)	From the experience of implementers, one of the most important needs of refugees, after they settle in Europe, is to speak the local language. Therefore, a context had to be created where people with different backgrounds, locals and refugees, get to meet and start to develop a relationship. An unconventional language course was conceived that would get young people to really connect, share their experiences and explore each other's culture, providing a comfortable environment for this purpose.
Description of practice (what?)	A volunteer programme was designed, lasting 10 weeks, implying 10 meetings for local young people, in which they participate as language mentors for refugees their own age. Each volunteer is matched with a refugee and they meet in pairs and discuss different topics each week, for approximately one hour. Both the volunteers and the refugees benefit from trainings before the beginning of the programme, during which they are prepared, on one hand for the work they are supposed to do and, on the other, for intercultural learning. Volunteers are supposed to use the Toolbox as well as to develop further the existing themes or create and develop new themes based on the interests of the refugees.
Managed/driven by	Civil society organisations: Tulip Foundation, Bulgaria, Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa, Germany and Centrul de Voluntariat Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Time-frame (start/end/ongoing)	Start: March 2016, End: February 2018 Ongoing in Germany
Stand-alone initiative or incorporated into other initiatives?	Stand-alone initiative

Main target group (nationals, non-nationals - types)	<p>Nationals: Young local volunteers from Sofia, Bulgaria, Cluj-Napoka, Romania and Passau, Germany</p> <p>EU nationals</p> <p>Third country nationals</p> <p>Asylum seekers/international protection status holders: young refugees living in the three cities</p>
Promotion	<p>Oral, online and printed</p> <p>Languages: Bulgarian, Romanian, German, English, Arabic, Farsi</p>
Information provided on legal, practical and procedural aspects of protection against racism/hatred and discrimination	Yes
Methods of language/content teaching	<p>Conversation and learning/teaching a foreign language were used as a tool for building a bridge between cultures. During this process the student/teacher roles are interchangeable and the school-like atmosphere is replaced with a more casual one that favours trust, and friendship.</p>
Accessibility:	<p>Costs: All the information, materials, guidelines and programmes are available in Bulgarian, English, German and Romanian languages at https://voluntary-mentors.eu/ for free.</p> <p>Obligatory: no</p> <p>Eligibility criteria: n/a</p>
Budget, sources of financing	<p>The project was funded under Erasmus+ programme / Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices / Strategic Partnerships for youth. The budget covered three transnational meetings in every one of the countries involved; the development of the detailed programme, manuals, guidelines, toolboxes, trainings and resources in 4 languages; the recruitment and training of young volunteers and refugees; the conduct of at least 10 meetings of 10 pairs (language volunteer mentor with young refugee) in every one of the countries involved; dissemination events in every country.</p>
Sources and references (hyperlink(s))	<p>https://voluntary-mentors.eu/</p> <p>http://www.tulipfoundation.net/en/programs/bg/programs/talk-with-me-project-76/</p>

Impact assessment foreseen?	Yes
How often?	An evaluation was done after the 10 pairs of young language volunteers and refugees finished their 10 meetings (each lasting at least 1 hour).
By whom?	By the volunteers, by the refugees, by project partners
Is the target group involved into the evaluation/impact assessment?	Yes
If yes, how?	All the volunteers and refugees involved were asked to fill in an anonymous questionnaire, a separate type for each group.
Methods of impact assessment	Questionnaires, face to face discussion among the local teams; online discussion among the three partner organisations.
Indicator based? If yes: please name some indicators	What do you think should be changed? Did you gain any personal benefits from being part of the programme? What conclusions did you make? What do you think were the benefits for your language partner?
Which actors of host communities are included?	Young local volunteers from Sofia, Bulgaria, Cluj-Napoka, Romania and Passau, Germany
Degree of inclusion:	voluntary
How can racism and xenophobia be countered through this activity?	Meeting each other, close personal communication and getting to know each other's cultures, which the programme ensured, are key to combat xenophobia and racism.
How can the impact of this practice be measured/made measurable?	Four out of the ten pairs in Sofia are still continuing with their contacts and meetings six months after the official end of the programme.
Elements of sustainability	Partner organization in Passau is still continuing doing the programme. After the dissemination event in Sofia the Bulgarian partner was contacted by 4 other Bulgarian organisations who asked for the materials and said that they will use them to start their own programmes.
Elements of transferability	The materials and documents created are designed to offer any willing organization the guidelines, tools and resources for implementing a similar volunteer programme successfully and efficiently. They are available online in Bulgarian, English, German and Romanian and are free of charge.