



## **WORKSHOP 4: Volunteer training** **Facilitator: Arceli Crespo**

### **Volunteer training. Sílvia Penón Sevilla, Catalan Federation of Social Voluntarism**

**Legal context.** The Volunteer Charter, recognized by the Parliament of Catalonia by resolution 98/V of 28th May 1996, recognizes the right of volunteers to receive training and their duty to actively support their organization while respecting their internal working regulations.

Law 6/1996 of 15th January on volunteering, under section III, states that organizations shall provide volunteers with the necessary training to undertake their activities. Therefore, we start from a right, not an option, and this should be clearly understood by both parties, despite the difficulties this may entail in everyday activities.

**The concept of volunteer training.** In order to have a common concept on volunteer training, we shall start by quoting what M. Elena Alfaro (1990) stated: *When we are talking about volunteer training, we are referring to a constant process of **transformation**, where volunteers, together with their action team, discusses about reality, learning from it and making their **knowledge, working habits and skill** systemic. This therefore entails revisiting, deepening and transforming their **attitudes**.*

Training must therefore be seen from a global perspective, not only for empowerment as regards knowledge and skills, which are indeed completely necessary, but also for accompanying persons allowing to adapt attitudes to the framework of voluntary actions. Seen from this perspective, training should be taken as a process of ongoing training. This process must be based on a set of quality parameters which ultimately revert into the guarantees of an optimum volunteer action. Training means understanding volunteering as a human resource which is part of the entity's team, not only by the organization but also by the remunerated staff. Therefore, the benefits of training are bidirectional and must be fixed in the organization's strategic plan.

**Volunteer training itineraries within organizations.** Learning is inherent to human beings.

That is why we can talk about two training levels:

- **Informal training** seen as daily situations which involve a personal learning but which have not been designed by anyone with a given objective or training purpose. It is the type of training which comes with experience, by facing up to different situations in our day-to-day activities.
- **Formal training** is the type of training that responds to a designed plan with a training purpose, involving a whole process to achieve the targeted objectives.

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Even if there may be some differences as regards the training itineraries set out by each organizations based on their characteristics and the sector in which they act, we can nevertheless establish some basic parameters:

- **Basic or initial training:** by this we refer to the first training received by a volunteer as of the moment they set foot in the organization.
  - o **Introductory training:** essential so that a volunteer joining an organization has all the relevant information on the entity and its activities, as well as on the voluntary tasks to be performed. This training should be updated whenever necessary.
  - o **Basic training:** this training should be based on general concepts on volunteering, voluntary actions and volunteers. Motivation, commitment and values and attitudes are basic concepts which should be taken into account when deciding to become a volunteer.
- **Specific training:** we talk about a type of training which is tailored for each persona and permits them to undertake a specific voluntary action.
- **Specialized training:** this is usually offered when a volunteer has been with the organization for a certain time and needs more concrete training for a specific task.
- **Reinforcement training:** it would be interesting to create spaces for personal growth, depending on the needs in each area of volunteering, as a means of offering reinforcement training for volunteers.
- **Permanent training:** This type of training should be conceived as a part of the training itinerary periodically so as to update the skills of volunteers adapting them to their task.

It can also be seen as a way of offering volunteers a space to reflect upon things, get to know other realities about volunteering, etc. organizing volunteer debate sessions and seminars...

**Training volunteers: challenges for the future or for today?** Training is currently done by the organizations themselves and also by Training Centres for volunteering in organizations – both for the first and second level – which have provided the general training (initiation course for volunteering) and specialized training, depending on the different types of volunteering. The scope of this training has increased and has become more professional, as well as volunteering has grown (age groups, prior training levels, time dedicated to voluntary actions...). This is why it is important, nowadays, to go much further and to have a closer and more real knowledge of the training needs in volunteering, as well as of all those aspects making up this training.