University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice

Faculty of Economics

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Summary of master thesis:

How volunteering can fight against social exclusion?

Case study of the KA3 Erasmus+ project: « ACT – Youth in Movement »

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České Budějovice 2018

Table of contents

Introduction

Globalisation refers to a process of intensifying international trade of all kinds. Often seen from an economic perspective only, globalisation is nevertheless present from different perspectives: cultural, technological, human and social. The phenomenon intensified in the 1980s and revealed the economic divergence, the extent of global inequalities and consequently the social exclusion from which some part of the population suffers. The constant development of new technologies and the Internet have generated almost instantaneous access to information and thus to cultural diversity. The myth of the "global village" suggested that understanding between people and societies would increase as communication techniques and travel increased. The opposite has happened, however, as recent years have been characterized by an increasing rise in racism and radicalization.

How can we combat prejudices that have been ingrained for generations and improve communication between individuals? The challenge of intercultural communication is to facilitate these exchanges and to go beyond the difficulties of understanding, with mutual respect and the concern to preserve the cultural identity of each person. Then, the best way to learn from others is through direct experience, the physical test of otherness and thus displacement. Although a tourist is a person who moves, the negative effects of mass tourism only increase and reveal even more the inequalities between countries, without encouraging intercultural encounters. New ways of travelling have emerged, in the search for environmental respect and total immersion in the host country. Volunteering is an intercultural experience in a multilingual environment and represents considerable advantages. Europe has been cooperating in the youth field for several years and offers many young Europeans the opportunity to benefit from this experience through the Erasmus+ programme.

The project "ACT – Youth in Movement" was created in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme, key action 3: support for policy reform. Its objectives include preventing violent radicalisation and encouraging the inclusion of disadvantaged learners. This project consists in creating innovative citizen paths by enabling young people from France, Belgium and England to carry out a voluntary project with migrants and/or refugees in Greece or Italy. Thus, the "ACT" project is the subject of my case study to answer the question: How can volunteering fight against social exclusion?

Litterature review

Social exclusion

The term "exclusion" has been disseminated in scientific literature and the media since the 1980s, notably following Joseph Wresinski's report to the Economic and Social Council "Extreme poverty and economic and social precariousness" in 1987, where he broadened the concept to all aspects of social life and insisted on the absence of participation in the social and civic life of the poorest. While exclusion reveals inequalities and situations of instability, whether professional (precariousness, unemployment), family (marital breakdown, re-composition of families) or social (difficulties in accessing housing), it also indicates a relaxation of social ties (Paugam, 2001). This occurs in different spheres of community life such as work, family, neighbourhood, school where a socialization process is supposed to take place. When an individual or a group is deprived of recognition or social status, they question or even deny their identity and find themselves isolated and stigmatized. People particularly affected by social exclusion may differ geographically: they are people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The inhabitants of these districts are mostly young and of immigrant origin. These neighbourhoods suffer from a negative image, conveyed by the media mainly representing delinquency and urban violence which propagate a feeling of insecurity. Thus, neighbourhoods are represented as a "problem" and are now a taboo subject.

The increase in racism and radicalisation in Europe

We are now seeing the rise of populism throughout Europe, some countries closing their borders, others integrating an anti-refugee policy, such as Hungary. Moreover, Islam is totally absent from cultural and social representations, unlike Judaism and Christianity, which have their place in Europe, which accentuates the weight of stereotypes (Wolton 2003). For neglected migrant youth, Islam represents an escape, a refuge that host societies do not offer them. Abandoned by Western society, they are prey to radical groups promising them great adventure, heroism with death that they transcend to better sell it to them. The social context is crucial in the first stage, an individual or a minority being discriminated against and marginalized will be led to adopt extreme positions on political, social or religious issues and may end up developing violent behaviour.

In recent years, Europe has been the target of numerous attacks, in particular by the Islamic State, a terrorist organisation whose creation dates back to 2006. At the same time, Europe

faces the risk of a shift in the radical violent involvement of young people, most often in relation to terrorist networks. In 2015, following the attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, European ministers adopted European Union actions to strengthen social inclusion and combat radicalisation through education and youth work. In the Paris Declaration of 17 March 2015, ministers announced that they had a particular responsibility in transmitting humanistic and civic values to future generations. Following this declaration, the European Commission published a draft joint report on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018). This report highlights the potential of the 90 million young Europeans in terms of skills, creativity and diversity, despite the fact that they are suffering brutally from the effects of the crisis. Indeed, young people are more vulnerable to changes in the economic, social and environmental situation, given the changes in their situation: transition from the education system to the world of work, leaving financial dependence to manage their own budget and the need to become autonomous. One of the actions at European Union level is represented by the Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport. This programme supports the learning mobility of four million young people and teachers. The EU strategy is to be able to offer more young people the opportunity to become full members of their community, fully involved, and to guarantee their professional integration (European Commission 2015).

The effects of globalisation

The emergence of the concept of social exclusion coincides with the phenomenon of globalization. Although this phenomenon is not new, it intensified in the 1980s and revealed the economic divergence and extent of global inequalities between developed and developing countries. The creation of global financial markets at that time explains why the term globalization is most often considered under its economic aspect alone. There are many additional aspects, including cultural and technological aspects, as well as human and social aspects.

The growing development of new information and communication technologies (NICTs) and the Internet phenomenon since the 1990s have generated almost instantaneous access to information. The omnipresence of information has led to several effects: both awareness of cultural diversity and the emergence of a certain "common culture", marked by the domination of English and American or Western cultural references. According to Wolton, other cultures are thus made visible, but the end of geographical distances reveals above all

the extent of cultural distances and the difficulty of communication with the "Other". There is a rupture between information and communication, a clash between cultures and different worldviews. This opening to the world makes it more accessible but not more understandable (2003). Moreover, today's media treats information less and less objectively, constantly with the aim of surprising and shocking the public. Thus, some media sometimes distort comments and treat subjects with precise angles that do not reflect the exact truth (Parisot 2017) or even show morbid images to shock and "make the buzz", a recently born expression.

Human mobility is an integral part of the globalised world (Withol de Wenden 2018). International migration is considered a key factor in human development in the 2009 United Nations Development Programme report. According to United Nations figures, Europe will need around 50 million immigrants in the coming half century to make up for the shortfall in the working population, which will reach 10%. Public opinion and governments often struggle to accept certain realities, such as the goal of living together in a cosmopolitan world (Wihtol of Wenden 2018). Some people prefer to reinforce stereotypes that make immigrants invaders and profiteers of society, and are in favour of closing our borders.

One sector that has expanded considerably in the context of globalisation and is one of its major components is tourism (Constantin 2011). According to the World Tourism Organization, 1.2 billion tourists travelled around the world in 2016. In 2017, tourism accounted for 10% of world GDP, one in ten jobs and 7% of world exports (Pflimlin 2018). Mass tourism appeared in the 20th century and was increasingly criticised for the negative effects it had on host countries. This sector has indeed made the imbalance between the countries of the North and the countries of the South even more visible and shows that the developed countries benefit the most.

Dominique Wolton argues that the myth of the "global village", popularized by Marshall McLuhan in 1967, suggested that understanding between people and societies would increase as communication techniques and travel increased. It is obvious, however, that not everyone benefits in the same way from this globalization and that the abundance of information does nothing to promote intercomprehension. For Wolton, it is necessary to organize "cultural cohabitation" at the global level to think about the relationships between identity, culture and communication, which he calls the "infernal triangle". Cultural coexistence implies tolerance, respect for identities and openness to dialogue in order to ensure a minimum of mutual understanding.

Multilingualism and intercultural competence

Multilingualism, which is the ability to express oneself in several languages, appears to be essential in the context of the globalization of exchanges in order to facilitate communication between individuals. Even though English is considered the first and simplest international language to communicate with as many people as possible, the domination of this language is increasingly criticized. Speaking only English is a danger to minority languages. Of the approximately 6,000 languages spoken in the world today, a large number are disappearing and this phenomenon is accelerating year by year. This phenomenon is of concern to linguists, particularly Claude Hagège, for whom the plurality of languages is the first condition of cultural diversity. According to him, a language is not only used for communication, it is also a way of thinking, a way of seeing the world, a culture and it structures an individual's thinking. Language does play a considerable role in defining the identity of an individual from birth, but also of a group of people who speak the same language. Thus, there are as many world views as there are different languages and multilingualism appears to be a matter of public interest, which implies the development of exchanges that respect human diversity. Learning the other's language is a first step in improving intercomprehension.

However, Byram (1997) stresses that foreign language competence must be combined with knowledge and understanding of the foreign culture in order to communicate successfully. It introduces the concept of the "intercultural speaker" as the ideal product of language fluency. Ideally, the intercultural speaker has specific cultural knowledge and understands how to act as a mediator between different cultures. The notion of "interculturality" implies the concepts of reciprocity and interaction in exchanges. This encounter with otherness can be destabilizing and a source of conflict, but above all an experience that encourages reflection on oneself and one's own social behaviour. The challenge of intercultural communication is to facilitate these exchanges and to go beyond the difficulties of understanding, with mutual respect and the concern to preserve the cultural identity of each person. This learning involves avoiding ethnocentrism and recognizing the elements that are different in each other's communication. The knowledge needed to achieve intercultural communication can be grouped into a single competence, "intercultural competence". Darla K. Deardorff has created a model representing this competency that results in effective communication. Based on his studies, his model includes essential attitudes of respect, openness, curiosity and discovery. Openness and curiosity imply a willingness to take risks and go beyond the comfort zone. Knowledge involves cultural knowledge of oneself, that is, how one's culture has influenced one's identity

and worldview and sociolinguistic awareness. Skills include observation, listening, evaluation, analysis, interpretation and relationship skills. These attitudes, knowledge and skills ideally lead to an internal outcome that includes flexibility, adaptability, an ethnorelative perspective and empathy. The sum of attitudes, knowledge and skills, as well as internal outcomes, results in effective and appropriate behaviour and communication in intercultural situations (Deardorff 2006).

Tourist or traveller?

The intercultural dimension therefore has an important place in language teaching. However, there is no learning of differences without physical travel (Wolton 2003). The best way to promote life skills is through direct experience, the physical test of otherness. According to Wolton, tourism is a considerable resource to open a reflection on multiculturalism. Indeed, moving around reveals the difficulty of relating to the other, allows stereotypes to be reified and represents a factor of openness and interest. The negative effects of mass tourism, especially environmental tourism, have given tourists a stereotypical image of an individual who benefits from capitalism and his holidays in a country without taking into account the local population. For Philippe Bourdeau and Rodolphe Christin, "a trip is not deserved, it is prepared", and implies having a basic culture to understand the country where we go. The lack of preparation indicates a total lack of consideration for those who will welcome us. Travelling now means not only entering into deep and sincere communication with others, but also carrying a message of peace among peoples. What tourism does not know and will never be able to accomplish, in its greed for profit at any price. One thus comes to distinguish the traveller from the tourist, who would belong to a cultural elite who knows how to look at and make authentic contact with the natives (Raspaud 2011).

However, more and more travellers are aware of the gap between them and the populations they visit. New forms of tourism have been emerging for some years now, "alternative tourism", in order to practice active and respectful tourism, unlike mass tourism. Examples include sustainable tourism, fair tourism, solidarity tourism, ecotourism, responsible tourism, "slow tourism", etc. These different branches of tourism have similarities, the main challenge of which is to avoid a negative impact on the environment. Other forms of travel also appeared in the second half of the twentieth century, such as international work camps, au pair stays, voluntary work, wwoofing, etc. The objective sought in these trips is mainly active participation and total immersion in the host country and there are several interests (Bouchard

2016): economic (accommodation and sometimes food are offered in exchange for work), ecological (these infrastructures are not used by the tourism industry), human (integration into a family, a group of travellers, a local community, often results in lasting ties, depending on the degree of interaction).

Volunteering

Volunteering is acting without coercion and of one's own free will. The term refers to the legal status under which people can engage in work, in the collective interest and in a particular field. Unlike volunteering, volunteering involves a reciprocal and formalized commitment, on a full-time basis, for a defined period of time and a specific mission. At European level, the European Voluntary Service (EVS) programme was created in 1996 as a pilot programme by the European Commission. EVS has since become the flagship action of the Youth strand of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) and has enabled over 100,000 volunteers to contribute to a cause in the field of their choice. EVS is for young people aged 17 to 30, can last a minimum of two months and covers transport, accommodation, insurance, food, and pocket money based on the host country's living costs. Volunteers also receive training and language support, both online and in the form of courses provided by the host organisation. This program is recognized to offer participants the opportunity to discover a new culture while developing many skills, which they will be able to enhance in their socio-professional integration path. One of the European Commission's target audiences for access to international mobility is "young people with fewer opportunities" (JAMO). That is to say young people who, for one or more reasons linked to the precariousness of their personal situation, encounter obstacles in accessing mobility and therefore the programme.

Support before, during and after volunteering is provided by these structures. A tutor will be appointed both at the sending and at the reception, to allow the volunteer to have direct and personal contact. Leaving the volunteer alone in the face of his or her experience would not be productive, since it is often difficult to take a step back alone. The place of the mediator is therefore essential, whether it is the teacher in learning or the tutor during volunteering. Its role is to accompany the participant in the discovery of knowledge and to highlight the significant elements so as to lead the participant to question the meaning of the situations encountered.

Volunteering is a form of non-formal education. The Erasmus+ programme guide states that non-formal learning activities aim to enhance young people's skills and competences, active

citizenship and autonomy (Erasmus+ 2014). With the development of supervised mobility programmes since 1990 and the opening of the European market to all its citizens, the personal, non-formal experience of staying abroad has diminished in favour of a perspective more focused on the gains of this experience for employability. This is how competence becomes the mobility issue (Coudret-Laut 2016). Immersion in other cultures provides an opportunity to acquire intercultural competence. It reflects an open-mindedness that makes it possible "to understand the cultural norms and expectations of others, to make them interact, communicate and articulate effectively, including outside their original environment" (Hunter et al., 2006). Therefore, non-formal and experiential learning play an important role in supporting skills development. However, these experiences do not lead to a diploma, and one may wonder how to value them. The Erasmus+ programme supports the tools that the EU has created to ensure transparency and recognition of competences and qualifications. For example, the use of instruments such as Europass and Youthpass as documentation and self-assessment tools can support the validation process. Another way of increasing the visibility of the skills acquired during an experience abroad is to disseminate as much as possible the positive results and figures of the projects. The dissemination and exploitation of results thus gives participating organisations the opportunity to communicate and share the results and outputs of their projects and thus increase their influence, improve their sustainability and justify the European added value of the Erasmus+ programme. For example, in 2014 the European Commission conducted an impact study of the Erasmus+ programme confirming that student mobility in the EU promotes employability. This study, conducted by independent experts, collected responses from 80,000 individuals, students and businesses. In particular, it shows that with international experience, graduates are much more successful in the job market. They are half as likely to become long-term unemployed as those who have not studied or trained abroad and, five years after graduation, their unemployment rate is 23% lower.

Methodology

Within the framework of the Master "Regional and European Project Management", a three-month internship is required. Wishing to have a longer experience and being interested in the associative field, I searched for a civic service. An offer of civic service at ADICE, an association working in international cooperation and mobility, caught my attention. A mission was proposed to me, consisting in working with a project manager on European volunteering.

After a few days of observation, I was led to discover the "ACT – Youth in Movement" project by reading the training manual. This project caught my attention because it corresponded to my thesis topic, entitled "multilingualism and interculturality in an international work or project environment". The project is indeed intercultural, and at several levels: within ADICE, one of the project managers is of Romanian nationality; the project partners are based in France, Belgium, England, Italy and Greece; the volunteers come from France, Belgium, England, possibly have origins and are brought to work in Italy or Greece, in contact with migrants and refugees. The themes of the project being to sensitize volunteers to the migratory crisis, I decided to take inspiration from it to create my question: how to fight against exclusion through an intercultural experience, in a multilingual environment. Volunteering being the definition of this type of experience and the mobility on which I work at ADICE, my problem has redefined itself: How can volunteering fight against social exclusion? Being involved in the project through the follow-up of the French volunteers, which is part of my civic service mission, and being in daily contact with my colleagues in charge of the project, I decided to take an interest in their respective points of view. So I interviewed my colleagues Elena Popescu and Fanny Corallo, ACT project managers, and three French volunteers taking part in the projects. Other elements were also at my disposal to analyse the project, as the association's database with information from volunteers, the educational tools they use, the written testimonies of volunteers who have already returned in France as well as videos produced by ADICE for the dissemination of the project.

The ACT project

Presentation of the project

"ACT – Youth in Movement" began on December 31, 2016 for a two-year term ending December 30, 2018. This project aims to create innovative citizen paths for young people with fewer opportunities by enabling them to carry out a voluntary project with migrants and/or refugees in Greece or Italy. The sending partners have planned to send forty-five youth volunteers to participate in projects for people in vulnerable situations. Thus, this project aims to encourage other young people to participate in voluntary projects and to fight against the risks of isolation and violent radicalisation. In order to enable young people from different backgrounds to participate, including the least privileged young people, this project covers transport, insurance, accommodation, food and pocket money. Young people receive training

on the following topics before and upon their departure: intercultural communication, fundamental rights of migrants, reception and integration of migrants in Greece or Italy.

The project responds to a 2016 call for proposals under the Erasmus+ programme, key action 3: support for policy reform. This call for proposals supports projects in the fields of education, training and youth aimed at improving and disseminating good practices that are both innovative and within the scope of the declaration on the promotion of education for citizenship and shared values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination of 17 March 2015 (the "Paris Declaration"). As ADICE is used to working with young people with fewer opportunities and experience in sending volunteers on different mobility programmes, the association has taken an interest in this call.

The ACT partnership brings together six European organisations. ADICE, in Roubaix, Merseyside Expanding Horizons, based in Liverpool, Dynamo International in Brussels are sending organizations of the project. Per Esempio in Palermo, U.S.B. "United Societies of Balkans" in Thessaloniki and "K.A.N.E. - Social Youth Development" in Kalamata are the three organizations that welcome volunteers. ACT is inspired by the economic and social reality experienced by the young inhabitants of Roubaix, Liverpool, Brussels and their surroundings. These cities concentrate more than a dozen economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods where a young population is living, hit hard by various socio-economic problems.

The project's objectives

The context thus marked by a radicalization of inward-looking ideologies requires the promotion of values of openness to the world and to cultures. By emphasising citizenship, solidarity and the fight against exclusion, volunteering can indeed be a response to these problems, in particular because it is accessible to all, requiring no qualifications, experience or resources. Volunteering can enable young people to get involved abroad, far from their country where they sometimes have difficulty integrating, and thus enable them to experience the values of secularism, civic commitment, solidarity, while contributing to missions of general interest. It responds to the danger of radicalisation, and in the worst cases to the risks of leaving for areas of armed conflict, which can, for some young people, respond to an existential quest (giving meaning to their existence, feeling useful) and/or a desire for

adventure. What seduces young people today in extremist discourse is a framework that seems to transcend individualism and materialism, and exalts a certain "heroism". The "remedy" must therefore also have characteristics that promote young people (Corallo 2016).

On the other hand, the encounter with the other, especially in the case of migrants and refugees, makes it possible to exchange opinions, to overcome prejudices, often conveyed by the media, to better perceive reality and to open up to other perspectives. It also develops curiosity and a true understanding of each other's stories, contexts, languages and customs. It is through real intercultural learning between volunteers and the local population, around a common project, that there will be a better construction and understanding of Europe and its citizens. This begins with the fight against stereotypes and clichés in order to reduce intolerance, discrimination and racism. These young people therefore have the opportunity to discover and discuss the social problems encountered in their host country. They can analyse them and realise that poverty, exclusion and racism are all common points shared by a large number of countries. Through these volunteer projects, volunteers can step back from their situations, be seen as individuals in their own right, integrated into a team, a project or a local community. They are invited to take initiatives, to bring out new ideas. The aim of volunteering is also to enrich the intercultural and socio-professional skills (self-confidence, integration, autonomy) of the participant. At the same time, they acquire qualities relating to intercultural competence such as tolerance and compassion.

The experience of working with vulnerable people is also useful for the community of origin of the volunteers since they will be able to testify of what they have seen and thus sensitize their close entourage. Far from the clichés disseminated by the media, they will be able to explain to their entourage their actions as well as their reactions to the realities of the countries in which they will have carried out their projects. Through a solid plan to disseminate and exploit the results, young people in difficulty will be able to discover the added value of volunteering and multiply the impact of the mobility undertaken as part of the ACT project.

The experience of volunteering

Of the sixteen French participants, aged 20 to 30, at the time of their departure, twelve lived with their parents, four living independently. Seven participants were unemployed, six stopped their studies. Finally, nine of the participants had little or no mobility experience

(source: ADICE database). These criteria are part of the categorisation of a young person with fewer opportunities defined by ADICE. Two of the volunteers interviewed live with their parents in rural areas and therefore consider themselves disadvantaged.

Volunteering is never a perfect experience. The volunteer may encounter difficulties or not be completely satisfied with the project. The result is therefore for some "mixed" and the reasons are often related to the professional aspect of the project. Some volunteers are bored or not satisfied with the tasks assigned to them. Other volunteers did not appreciate the ways in which the structures with which they worked were made. Sometimes the structures lack the means or are even corrupt and this affects the participation of the local community in the activities proposed by the volunteers. Indeed, taking initiatives is very important in volunteering and if the participant does not realize it or if the host structure does not leave enough freedom to the volunteer, it impacts on his experience.

Nevertheless, despite the few difficulties encountered, volunteers remain satisfied with their personal experience, manage to adapt and integrate easily, both with the other volunteers who are often their roommates as well as with the local community. Each volunteer has been in contact with migrants and/or refugees, both at work and in their daily lives. Some volunteers were finally more in contact with migrants and/or refugees and got along less well with Sicilians.

Being a volunteer allows you to get involved in local life and meet more people. The volunteers have fully integrated it and in no way consider themselves as tourists. We find the negative image of the tourist, who travels only to have fun and enjoy unlike the traveller who is interested a minimum in the country where he goes. Volunteering also brings something to the local community, to be in contact with it while learning from it.

In contact with cultures they did not necessarily know, this experience allowed them to make discoveries. They were able to share important moments by eating and making music together, which represent important aspects of a culture. These moments sometimes led to interesting and meaningful discussions. Volunteers meet people with totally different backgrounds and stories that can be overwhelming, and much more real when a person tells it than when it is broadcast in the media. Volunteers have to question themselves and take a step back and put their situation into perspective.

Volunteers thus adopt new attitudes, or develop them further, essential to intercultural competence: respect, openness, curiosity and discovery. Humility and tolerance are qualities that seem innate to some and most people will take them for granted. Yet few people actually develop them.

As a result, volunteers change personally and discover other criteria of their personality and other skills related to intercultural competence (observation, listening, analysis, interpretation and relationship) but also other valuable skills in the world of work. To succeed in doing things for which they have not been trained brings them new skills and above all a feeling of pride and appreciation that is comparable to no other experience. Volunteers also improve their language skills, both by giving courses to the local community and by adapting their language to their interlocutor while respecting linguistic diversity.

Discussions between volunteers and migrants sometimes raised the question of the situation in France. The volunteers are aware of the poor management of the migration crisis in France, which contrasts with the image of Eldorado that migrants have. They are also aware of the growing rise of racism and populism throughout Europe. As far as the media are concerned, the volunteers also have very strong ideas and are indignant at the way the migration issue is handled. In particular, they are aware that most people listen to and believe the media even though they do not represent reality and may manipulate according to their political opinions. Based on their experience, they try to reason with people who are still persuaded by the prejudices spread by the media. Despite this, they know that solidarity initiatives exist and wish to do the same, hence the importance of disseminating these projects and their testimonies.

Finally, when volunteers are asked if they recommend volunteering, all respond positively. Everyone has their own reasons and provides valuable advice for future participants. For some, such experiences are more effective than formal education. It is an intense experience where learning is accelerated compared to their daily lives in France. For others, this experience should even be mandatory for everyone. Thus, the volunteers derive from their experience above all an enrichment and will be able to testify of the benefits of the commitment with their return to sensitize a maximum of people.

Conclusion

In my opinion, volunteering is the best way to combat social exclusion, involving benefits for the participant, his/her community of origin and his/her host community. Accessible to all, it represents a different way of travelling, respecting the local environment and being in total immersion avoiding the negative effects of mass tourism. Volunteering involves several structures that offer the participant essential support. The participant receives administrative, financial and above all moral support in the three phases of his project: before, during and after. The preparation before the departure will bring him knowledge and allow him to be reassured. The sending structure takes the role of the mediator in the follow-up during the experience to support the participant in his difficulties and help him to step back. On return, the sending organisation supports and guides the volunteer in his future steps and encourages him to make the most of his experience.

Encouraged to leave his comfort zone, the participant will develop personally, gaining autonomy, self-confidence and thus become independent. In contact with new people and new cultures, he will learn to open up to others, communicate in another language and adapt. He is led to take initiatives, will develop professional skills, and discover new ways of working. All these elements are assets for the professional integration of the participant. His experience will broaden his perspectives for the future, strengthen his commitment to associations and perhaps create a vocation. Being part of a team, a mission, a cause, gives the participant a sense of belonging. By helping the local community in its mission, it will feel useful and valued.

The ACT project is just one example. But in addition to providing a rewarding volunteer experience, it responds in particular to the objectives and priorities of the Paris Declaration of 2015. It fights against exclusion, discrimination and the risks of radicalisation of young people with fewer opportunities by enabling them to participate, engage and integrate through volunteering. Opening up volunteering in Europe to young people from sensitive neighbourhoods will enable them to engage in educational and civic pathways that act as levers for access to citizenship and employment more widely. Finally, by connecting young people and migrants, the project enables young people to discover the reality of a country in crisis and to learn to understand and accept differences of opinion, conviction, beliefs and lifestyles. The project's training will strengthen young people's critical thinking and judgement and provide them with the knowledge base necessary to respect the rule of law, diversity and gender equality.

By being in contact and forging real links with people directly affected by the migration crisis, they can compare reality with what the media represent, and thus form their own opinion. Upon their return, they can actively participate in the debates, raise awareness among those around them and combat the clichés and prejudices that still exist among some people. Hence the importance of disseminating the results of the project as widely as possible, in order to reach as many excluded people as possible, particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, encourage them to get involved in such a project and consequently combat the risks of radicalisation.