



1 “Refugees and European NGOs volunteering, learning and changing the world together”

INFO SHEET



1. In specific cases other legal forms can be considered as hosting entities.

TANDEM INFO SHEET

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1. WHAT IS TANDEM?

Tandem is an initiative that was set up in 2016 to help and support refugees and asylum-seekers residing in Belgium. The aim is to provide a possibility for them to contribute to the community, and support the restoration of their dignity and autonomy through volunteer placements.

Tandem also aims to bring the direct experience of individual refugees and asylum-seekers and the challenges facing them into the hosting organisation. These organisations are often concerned about the situation of refugees and asylum-seekers but may not have identified opportunities to support them directly individuals here in Belgium. Tandem has recently become part of the work programme of the European Volunteer Centre with the support of [European Solidarity Corps](#) trainees.

The European Volunteer Centre is the European network of over 60 organisations dedicated to the promotion of, and support to, volunteers and volunteering in Europe at European, national and regional level. Working on the development of the Tandem project together with refugees and asylum-seekers in Belgium, and hosting several volunteers ourselves, we've recognised the mismatch between their desire to be active and engaged, their experience and capacity, and the absence of opportunities to enable them to build a social network, access work, and most urgently, to give structure and purpose to their day-to-day existence. By supporting the Tandem project, we are hoping to match willing NGOs with prospective volunteers and play a small part in increasing the possibilities to restore the dignity and autonomy of the refugees and asylum-seekers here in Belgium, and support their integration and well-being.

2. HOW DOES THIS INITIATIVE HELP THE REFUGEE/ASYLUM-SEEKER?

Offering opportunities and supporting autonomy:

Many refugees and asylum-seekers are eager to work, contribute and give back to the Belgian community. Despite this, they are often stuck in reception centres with little structure to their day, and facing a lack of opportunities. Volunteering may help to restore their sense of self-worth and their dignity, crucial to their individual well-being and health, but also valuable in their path to rebuilding their lives here in Belgium.

After arriving in the country, many refugees and asylum-seekers often find it very hard to build a network of contacts and friends. Such a network is vital to get support, advice and to access employment opportunities, and for general well-being. Volunteering will enable refugees and asylum-seekers to meet and engage with new people - many of whom are themselves migrants to Belgium - benefit from their experiences, and establish and widen their social networks.

Supporting change-makers:

Engagement with your organisation may also ultimately support the capacity of individuals to work for change/reconstruction in their countries of origin.

3. HOW DOES IT HELP MY ORGANISATION?

Supporting your role in integration work:

Many people care deeply about the difficult situation facing refugees and asylum-seekers but are often unsure as to how to make a meaningful contribution at the national/local, Belgian level. This initiative aims to facilitate this contribution and enable NGOs to play a part in the integration and support of individuals regardless of their sphere of interests and activities.

Increasing your capacity:

Engaging a Tandem volunteer will provide organisations with additional volunteer capacity to meet their objectives and in some cases help to identify new ones.

4. IS IT LEGAL?

Yes!

Refugees, individuals in receipt of subsidiary protection, and asylum-seekers who have not received a final, negative decision on their application, are legally allowed to volunteer in

Belgium. This is distinct from employment so any restrictions/requirements regarding social security, taxes etc do not apply to volunteers.

Refugees and asylum-seekers do not need special authorisation to volunteer, aside from informing Fedasil (the Federal Agency for the reception of asylum seekers) in advance of their volunteering placement if they are living in a reception centre and receiving material subsistence.

Volunteers are allowed to receive a small fixed allowance to cover their expenses. The volunteer and the hosting organisation should sign an agreement outlining clearly the tasks and hours involved, the allowance provided for reimbursement of expenses, and other rights/obligations. Volunteering CANNOT be done for commercial businesses or private individuals.

The Tandem team have worked together with Het Punt, the Flemish Agency for Volunteering in Brussels to ensure all legal and admin issues are fully clarified. We can help take care of all necessary paperwork to Fedasil, CPAS...

5. WHAT IS EXPECTED OF MY ORGANISATION?

- To host a refugee/asylum-seeker as a volunteer for an agreed period of full or part time engagement.
- To cover the expenses incurred by the refugee/asylum-seeker in relation to their volunteering with either a fixed rate of 25 Euros per day or direct costs on presentation of invoices and tickets etc, as agreed with them.
- To establish an agreement with the volunteer. This should specify, *inter alia*, information on the tasks and responsibilities of the volunteer and the hosting organisation, the hours involved, insurance coverage, the conditions for refund of expenses. NB: This is not a contract. We can provide a sample and support your organisation with this.
- To provide insurance coverage for the refugee/asylum-seekers for accidents at work. Many organisations will have existing insurance coverage for volunteers, and refugees and asylum-seekers could be covered as normal under these policies. If not, Tandem can provide insurance.
- To nominate a contact point or similar who will lead on supervising and supporting the volunteer during their time at your organisation.
- To provide the guidance and support to ensure the volunteer can get their tasks done.
- To provide the volunteer with a certificate noting their achievements, number of hours/days that they volunteered (if applicable), any training received and any skills or competencies gained.
- To fill a short report / feedback form about the volunteer, the Tandem project and the placement after the volunteering period is over.

- To learn, cooperate and enjoy :)

6. WHAT KIND OF TASKS COULD THE REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS DO?

The volunteering tasks undertaken by the refugee/asylum-seeker should be agreed between the individual and the hosting organisation. This should not include tasks that through their nature, duration or frequency would not normally be done by a volunteer. Your organisation may not be in the habit of engaging volunteers – as opposed to interns or trainees – so you may not immediately be able to imagine how they could support your work. Here are a few suggestions of the kinds of activities the refugees/asylum-seekers could help you with. The European Volunteer Centre is also available to provide advice and support on this..

- Supporting you with media work: e.g. writing blog posts, taking photos, acting as interviewees for media outputs, providing testimonies, meeting your members/partners.
- Supporting your research and policy work, acting as interviewees, or supporting outreach to other refugees/asylum-seekers for research work and acting as interpreters.
- Supporting your campaign activities, e.g. helping you to reach out to other refugees/asylum-seekers and their communities in Brussels and Belgium.
- Supporting event organisation and providing logistical support at events.
- Providing a fresh 'out of the Brussels bubble' perspective on your work, e.g. bringing in new ideas to help design projects or activities.

7. HOW DOES MY ORGANISATION GET INVOLVED?

Get in touch!

If your organisation would like to host a volunteer, please fill in the form [here](#).

If you still have some questions or would like to discuss the possibilities with us first, don't hesitate to drop us a line at tandem@cev.be and at cev@cev.be indicating "Tandem volunteer" in the object of the email. You can also follow our Facebook page www.facebook.com/Tandemvolunteering/

We will help to connect you with participating refugees/asylum-seekers who have suitable language skills and experience and/or skills to get involved with your organisation. Give us an idea of the type of work that would be possible – no need to be too detailed, our aim is to get the volunteering up and running and allow flexibility to both the organisation and the individuals – and when you would be able to host a volunteer.

We look forward to hearing from you!

The Tandem Team