



# EURO SCOUT.DOC

## Making sure their voices are heard

### Diversity in recruiting adults in Scouting

#### Introduction

Among the many challenges facing Scouting is the increasing diversity of its members and volunteer base. The growth of immigration, changes in the family structure, the expanding role of women and continuing economic constraints all contribute to making the work of Scout organisations more challenging.

At the policy level, the Scout Movement is committed to the fulfillment of its educational purpose to contribute to the education of young people, male and female as equals, and on the basis of the needs and aspirations of each individual. Scouting does that through equal opportunities and equal partnership. We need to make sure that we study all the aspects of diversity in Scouting and in our societies carefully and systematically, to seize the opportunity and welcome new members as well as to adequately respond to the social inclusion process.

In the past, Scouting reached out to those marginalised by society. We managed to open doors and integrate people into the community. Methods and approaches once used may no longer be appropriate as the world around us becomes even more diverse. The future success of voluntary organisations such as Scouting will depend, in large part, on how different value systems can be incorporated into ongoing programmes and in how well these programmes can integrate new groups of people.

While Scouting has had success with recruiting young people from minority groups, we also need to be more efficient in recruiting a diverse leadership base. This is not simply about finding adults from the same minorities to work with young people, but about harnessing individual differences and creating a more diverse and stronger organisation.



Moving forward, we need to focus on recruiting a more diverse leadership base. This document offers practical advice and tips to help with the recruitment of these men and women. We should explore ways of enriching our work by involving leaders from different backgrounds and cultures.

## How to define diversity

*Diversity not only assumes that all individuals are unique but that difference is indeed value-added.*

*Santiago Rodriguez, Diversity and volunteerism, Journal of Volunteer Administration, 1997.*

### The definition of diversity

Diversity is a word that every one of us has heard. It means that everybody is different and unique. It also includes understanding, respect and acceptance. As human beings, and especially as Scouts, we should respect everyone's uniqueness and diversity. In recruiting new volunteers we also have to remember the diversity point of view.



### Elements of diversity

There are four layers of diversity. From the inside out, they are:

1. **Personality** – every person is unique, with unique characteristics and qualities!
2. **Internal dimensions** – age, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, sexual orientation, etc.
3. **External dimensions** – family status, income, religion, educational background, personal habits, etc.
4. **Organisational dimensions** – work content/field, union affiliation, personal status in the professional hierarchy, etc.

### Diversity in Scouting

It is useful to emphasise that in Scouting we tend to separate what we call 'anti-discrimination' and what we call 'diversity'.

- **Anti-discrimination** involves an equal distribution and recognition of people with different backgrounds, religions, ethnicity, age, and so on in all areas of activity and in all positions within Scouting.
- **Diversity** is about individuals having the right to make their voices heard in Scouting. It means that we respect and can handle the actual differences that exist between people. It means that all these different people with different backgrounds, knowledge, experience, and values are looked after and encouraged to contribute to the evolution of Scouting in all areas.

Both concepts include an acceptance of and a respect for differences. Anti-discrimination has to do with outer differences that tend to sort us into groups; for example, gender and skin colour. Diversity is also about inner differences, like experience, education, personality – things that make us individual. Anti-discrimination is something that goes well with our basic principles and it is quite normal that Scouting should support it. Diversity is an opportunity to harness the potential in every person and every group of people. This means that we don't recruit leaders from minority groups just to work with minorities but because they bring specific qualities and experience to Scouting and make it a better learning environment. Diversity is about learning to include different perspectives and processes so that the work of the organisation can be as effective as possible.

Diversity can begin by educating children to be accepting of other people. The most important things here are to ensure a favourable environment for adults to have open discussions, to coach the volunteers and different groups to confront diversity issues, and to encourage them to integrate diversity into Scouting. To do this in a proper way, Scout associations need to adopt a diversity framework, which should be put into practice through an achievable plan.

## Diversity in recruiting volunteers in Scouting

Diversity is also important in recruitment. A big first question to answer is 'why'. Why do you want to be more diverse? Problem solving? Or curiosity?

Here are some questions you can consider while thinking about diversity in your own Scouting:

- Is it because you lack leaders and see a chance in specific recruitment to solve this problem? So is diversity an answer to a practical problem?
- Is it because you believe that Scouting is good and everybody has to be a Scout? Providing for the needs of others without giving them rights or responsibilities is not applying the principles of best diversity practice.

- Is it because you believe that everybody who wants to has to be able to become a Scout?
- Can you really welcome and accept everybody?
- Is it because you believe in the social benefits that diversity provides for everybody? It makes you look at yourself and makes you aware of the choices you make.
- Is it because you believe you can learn from and understand everyone, thus creating a better world?
- What does diversity mean to you and to your group?

You have to be honest with yourself in answering these questions as they will affect the actions you take.

## Some practical advice and ideas for diversity in recruitment

The tips offered can help you to better structure your approach when facing the challenge of increasing diversity in your leader group.

### How to start?

Find out who lives in your community and build relationships with groups within it. Community group leaders can help you to involve their members in your programme especially if you highlight the benefits of volunteering. Choosing a champion from within the group may help you to recruit others.



### What are the main things that you should consider?

Highlight what's in it for volunteers (references, work experience, etc.) What can you offer volunteers? It may be the chance to learn from others, to build on their skills, or just to gain work skills, with responsibilities to a team or organisation. They may gain a reference or something to add to their CV. Others will want to meet people, gain personal satisfaction, or help a cause they believe in.

Don't discriminate – allocate tasks based on the individual volunteer's skills and desires. Don't allow your preconceptions about a particular group of volunteers to dictate what you ask them to do.

Develop policies for your organisation that are inclusive of diversity. Don't be exclusive – think of all groups in society as potential volunteers and don't leave anyone out. Develop policies that recognise and harness community diversity. The best way to do that is to involve men and women with different backgrounds to help you take all diversity aspects into consideration from the beginning.

Actively target a diverse range of volunteers in your recruitment strategy. Advertise for young volunteers at local universities, put signs up at youth venues, advertise in newspapers, contact your local ethnic radio stations and newspapers, target the free newsletters, have a stall at a local festival. Word of mouth also plays a big role in recruiting volunteers – treat your existing leaders well and ask them to spread the word.

Don't forget to step back from time to time, think creatively and maybe take a risk or two. Check out whether there are tasks within the organisation which individual volunteers or a group would be able to undertake and run as their own project with background support.

### **Where can you find the volunteers?**

Find 'buddies' for your new volunteers and think about recruiting volunteers in groups. Often volunteers feel safe in numbers and enjoy the support of a more experienced colleague. Think about finding an 'established' volunteer of a similar age or background to be a buddy to each new volunteer on their first few visits, or to be a long-term mentor. Do remember that some volunteers may find large groups intimidating, so divide them into smaller groups for question/answer sessions.

### **How can you be sure that volunteers are motivated and committed to Scouting?**

Make sure that all your volunteer positions are useful and of value to your organisation and not just 'token' positions. Think of roles suited to your volunteers, as well as volunteers suiting your needs. Make tasks relevant to the particular target group. Make sure that you are sharing skills that will be of practical use to your volunteers.

Make your promotional materials relevant to volunteers from diverse backgrounds. Use varied positive images of volunteers of different ages and from different backgrounds. Look at recruiting a volunteer designer from within your target group to help you create a poster or leaflet relevant to that group. Use larger type sizes and plain language. Remember that the words 'volunteering' or 'leader' may not be understood by all cultures – use phrases such as 'find a way to support the community'. Describe what people can get out of being a volunteer and how valuable it is to their community.



Make it easy for volunteers to get involved. Simplify the screening process. Arrange an interpreter if necessary. Email interviews allow people to use a dictionary, but don't forget to reply promptly. Fill out the form together with the person being interviewed. Make sure that volunteers realise they are not being singled out and that the procedure applies to all volunteers.

Be prepared to give your volunteers extra support. Provide regular supervision and opportunities for two-way feedback so that they know you support them and that they can talk to you. Ensure that volunteers have the opportunity to have a say in the way the organisation or project is run. Get to know your volunteers and ask them how they prefer to do things.

Consider how much out-of-pocket expenses (insurance, transport, etc.) you expect from volunteers. Some groups of people may not be as well off as others. Be particularly aware of this especially when organising events.

Make it as easy as you can for people with disabilities to participate in your activities. Does your building have wheelchair access? How can you construct disability toilets on the camp?

Think carefully about the best way to communicate with your volunteers. Different people have different communication needs. Someone who doesn't speak your language well may prefer to have information written down to be translated at home. Keep your language simple and avoid jargon and slang. Remember to focus on the ability, not the disability! Don't assume you've been understood – remember, smiles and nods may indicate politeness, discomfort or embarrassment at not understanding you.

Inform volunteers of your organisation's rules and policies. Explain to your volunteers the cultural rules and policies that apply within your organisation and what is expected of them as members and leaders.

Offer training and documentary support to your staff and volunteers to help them deal better with their differences. Check out the training and how it is conducted; is it suited to the tasks that volunteers undertake? Some people have had bad experiences of formal learning so consider coffee mornings and presentations as a way of getting the information across. Don't forget to do a skills check on all your volunteers – you may be surprised at the range of skills they have. Do they capitalise on their specific skills and experience?

Receiving recognition and feeling that they belong is very important to volunteers. Don't forget to reward and recognise your volunteers for their contribution to your organisation. You may choose a significant day in another culture to show appreciation for the work done. Do not forget to give instant feedback for job well done.



### **How do you confront different situations?**

If a volunteer has a disability, always direct your conversation to the individual, not to their support person. Speak in normal tones and avoid condescending or patronising language. Never pretend to understand – ask for clarification. Do not assume that a person with a physical disability also has difficulty hearing or that their mental capacity is diminished in any way.

Don't assume that all cultures are the same especially with regard to what's expected of men and women. Remember that there may be different customs for men or women from other cultures. In some cultures, a woman might need permission from her husband, father or son to do a particular task – don't make her feel inferior if she needs to seek this permission.

Be flexible in the hours that you offer to volunteers. Many volunteers may be juggling work and study, have more than one job, or be looking for employment. Adapt the work to the needs of your volunteers especially if they have other commitments. Bear in mind that girls and women in some cultures have a family role which is caring for children and all the tasks associated with domestic work and the maintenance of the household. The work is mostly invisible and unpaid, however big a burden it is.

## Conclusions

As we see, diversity is both interesting and challenging. It shouldn't be experienced as 'extra work' but should be included in the regular Scout work. Diversity is fun! But there has to be the awareness and the will, as well as a plan and allocated resources to ensure effective implementation. When recruiting new volunteers, one way of thinking it is to consider diverse recruitment. If we find a good way to recruit a diverse range of leaders we can maintain a good level of recruitment.

We have presented just a few examples to show the different ways to work on diversity. The most important thing is that Scouting becomes as accessible as possible for everybody. When diversity is an active part of an association it will naturally become part of everything that Association does.



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