

BEST PRACTICE

Home for elderly Maksimir from Zagreb represents a best practice social institution in Croatia in the field of development and management of a volunteer programme. The volunteer programme in the Home for elderly Maksimir was established in 1977, following the founding of the Home and deinstitutionalization process, in order to enhance job-creative activities at the Home.

The main reasons the Home decided to involve volunteers in their work were: a) **improvement of the quality of life of beneficiaries** (each beneficiary has a long-term volunteer who accompanies him – they go more often out of the housing units, prevent social exclusion, it develops/improves human relations and social contacts); b) **improvement of the work of the Home** - expand the network of volunteering, develop generational and inter-generational solidarity among citizens of District Maksimir; c) **stronger contribution to solving specific problems in the community and wider** - for example, participation in the actions of "Neighbor helping neighbor", collecting aid for the refugees, sewing dolls for UNICEF etc.; d) **motivatisation of the wider community to solve specific problems**; e) **give ideas and inspiration to others**.

The Home has a trained **volunteer manager (social worker)** dealing with the volunteer programme and its specific tasks. Additional help is provided through a volunteer position **Assistant to the volunteer manager**, which deals mostly with administrative tasks.

In the process of involving volunteers the Home is led by a **volunteer management cycle**, putting special emphasis on **orientation and training of volunteers** to ensure the quality implementation of different volunteer positions. Trainings of volunteers are organized once a month as part of regular volunteers meetings and are delivered by professional workers of the Home and external experts. Training cover topics such as: communication skills, hospital infections, operating wheelchairs, integrative validation and basal stimulation, understanding the needs of the elderly, the most common diseases of older people. Volunteers are very satisfied with the training courses, they are looking forward to them and state that they make it easier to work with beneficiaries. The Home welcomes volunteer ideas for further education for which they are in need and tries to be responsive to their needs.