



COMBER Volunteer Policy

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Volunteer Policy

1. About Comber

Comber is an Irish registered NGO which was established in 1990 to work with children and adults in Romania.

Comber acknowledges the vital contribution made by volunteers to our history and our ongoing work. Comber relies extensively on volunteer support in Ireland and facilitates occasional overseas volunteer placements and programmes.

2. Volunteer Policy

- Volunteers are regarded as a valuable resource and are encouraged to get involved in all levels of the organisation and in appropriate activities.
- Comber aims to train, support and supervise its volunteers to the best of its abilities, and to act quickly and fairly if difficulties arise.
- This policy will be reviewed every three years or as appropriate.

2. Volunteering with Comber

Volunteering Ireland describes volunteering as ‘the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, communities, individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person’s own free will, without payment, except for the reimbursement of out –of-pocket expenses’.

Volunteers are a necessary and very valuable part of the structure of Comber and exist at all levels of the organisation, including fundraising, operations and board roles. Comber has a policy of appropriately recognising and actively encouraging volunteerism.

Volunteers with Comber are entitled to:

- Be treated as equals alongside paid staff
- Challenge, question and contribute to how Comber operates
- Ask for and be given information relating to any area of Comber’s work
- Have their personal safety and personal information protected
- Recognition for their contribution to Comber
- Supervision and ongoing support

Volunteers are expected to be responsible for:

- Informing themselves about Comber’s ethos and goals
- Acting in accordance with Comber’s values
- Carrying out their role to the best of their abilities
- Adhering to Comber’s policies and procedures

3. Volunteer Management Procedures

Volunteer Relations

Volunteers are respected as full members of the Comber team. However, volunteer agreements do not constitute contracts of employment and there is no specific legislation underpinning volunteering in Ireland.

Working Conditions

Where needed, volunteers will be provided with appropriate space, equipment and facilities to volunteer effectively.

Confidentiality

Volunteer records will be kept in the confidence by Comber and in accordance with data protection legislation. All volunteers, upon request, can inspect any information held relating to them in accordance with the policy. Volunteers must respect the confidentiality of any information they gain access to in their role with the organisation.

Messaging and Images

Volunteers are expected to portray a positive image of Comber and our partners to the outside world. Volunteers also should familiarise themselves with Dochas' 'Code of Conduct on Images and Messages (see www.dochas.ie) and comply with its standards.

4. Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

Volunteering with Us

Before applying to Comber perspective volunteers should first familiarise themselves with our website (www.comber.ie) and organisation literature. It is a good idea to look general volunteering information also, such as Comhlámh's Volunteering Options website about overseas opportunities (www.volunteeringoptions.ie) and Volunteering Ireland www.volunteeringireland.ie.

Role descriptions and person specifications

Like paid staff, volunteers require clear and accurate description of the tasks and responsibilities they are expected to undertake. It is therefore desirable that prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a written role description and person specification is developed for each volunteering opportunity.

Recruitment

Volunteers for Comber are recruited using publicity avenues that are suitable for the roles that need to be filled. Volunteers are recruited in line with Comber's Equality Policy and procedures.

Selection

Comber will select volunteers based on their suitability for the role available. Checks for volunteer suitability may include:

- CV
- Interview
- References
- Garda Vetting
- Evidence of professional qualifications

Placements

Volunteers will be informed without undue delay whether their application was successful. Placements are subject to an initial trial period of one month.

5. Volunteer Training and Development

Induction

All volunteers receive induction when they begin voluntary work with Comber. This consists of a general introduction of the organisation, as well as a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of their volunteering role.

Training and Support

Where possible, Comber will support volunteers to obtain additional training which will help them perform their roles better and enhance personal development. Volunteers are encouraged to identify any such training and discuss the issue with their relevant manager. Comber may request a written report on the content and usefulness of any volunteer training paid for by the organisation.

6. Volunteer Supervision and Evaluation

Line Management

Each volunteer working with Comber will be assigned a line manager who is responsible for the day-to-day management of that volunteer.

Corrective Action and Dismissal

If volunteers do not perform their tasks in a way that is beneficial to the organisation, Comber may take corrective action, such as re-assignment to a different role or further training.

Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisations policies and ethos or who continue to fail to perform their duties satisfactorily may be subject to dismissal. No volunteer's involvement will be terminated in writing until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with their line manager. Grounds for dismissal include, but are not limited to: being under the influence of drugs (including alcohol), theft, misuse of equipment, abuse of co-workers, breaches of confidentiality, failure to comply with Comber policies and procedures, failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

Complaints

Volunteers with Comber are encouraged to share any concerns they may have with their line manager. If the issue cannot be resolved through the line manager,

volunteers should bring their complaints to the Chairperson of the Board of Directors.

Exit Interviews

Where possible, exit interviews are held with volunteers who are leaving the organisation. Interviews should be held with the volunteers' line manager and a written record kept. Volunteers will be asked how they found the volunteer placement and asked for suggestions to help improve the way the organisation operates.

References

All volunteers may request a written or verbal reference from their line manager upon successful completion of their placement.

7. Volunteer Support and Recognition

Comber endeavours to make its volunteers feel appreciated and valued for their contribution to the organisation. This includes informal thanks on a regular basis and more formal recognition where possible.

Volunteers may be featured on the Comber website and asked to write an account of their experiences.

Volunteers may be asked to be available to meet with and relate their experiences to other prospective volunteers

Comber welcomes the further involvement of volunteers in the organisation's development and encourages volunteers to stay in touch

Volunteers are welcome to re-apply for further volunteer placements in the future.

8. Overseas placements

Comber may organise overseas placements in Romania. Volunteers on placements overseas generally fundraise to cover their costs and are supported in this by Comber.

Comber is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of volunteers overseas. The following are some Guidelines on overseas placements.

Code of Conduct

- Your responsibility as a volunteer is: to fulfil your commitment to the placement, to be creative and independent, to look after your health and wellbeing and to think 'locally' about how you approach challenges and opportunities.
- Treat your fellow volunteers/local staff in the same way you would wish to be treated. Be considerate, compromise when necessary and seek to resolve conflict quickly.

- Respect the environment you are in. Behave responsibly and appropriately. This applies to the way you behave around children and vulnerable adults (including your language) and demonstrating religious and political beliefs.
- Respect your accommodation and be willing to help with household tasks.
- Consider the consequences of entering into arguments over local or national customs. Consider where you are, and who is listening. Do not put yourself, or other Comber volunteers or staff, into disrepute or danger.
- Comber volunteers should respect the laws of Romania while in the country.
- Remember that Comber staff and partners are there to support you if you are having difficulties during your placement for whatever reason. Don't be afraid to say how you feel or ask for help.
- Communication, team work and enthusiasm are the keys to enjoying a productive volunteer placement.

Health & Safety Guidelines

The key to an effective health, safety and security programme is an individual and collective sense of awareness and responsibility, as well as preparedness in case of an incident. Each individual is ultimately responsible for his or her own safety and security. We are also responsible for each other. It is essential that each individual act in a manner that does not increase risk to other volunteers or other people in Romania.

- Volunteers are advised to talk to their doctor in advance of travelling for advice on vaccinations or medication. Comber does not require you to receive any compulsory vaccinations for travel to Romania.
- Deal with any medical complaints promptly. Contact the your manager for advice and seek medical attention.
- Remember to drink plenty of water, eat regular meals and generally maintain your usual level of fitness.
- Whilst in Romania, like all countries, use your common sense as regards personal safety. Avoid walking alone after dark, counting money in public and don't accept lifts.
- Vehicle accidents are the main cause of injury and fatality among overseas workers. Volunteers who drive in Romania do so at their own risk.
- For general health and safety advice and recommendations on overseas travel please see the recent *International Travel and Health* guide published by the World Health Organisation, which is available to download from <http://www.who.int/ith/en/>.

Alcohol & Drugs Policy

Comber requests all volunteers to respect your colleagues and local community and only consume alcohol responsibly. Irish volunteers are representing Comber and their country whilst aboard and your actions reflect on all of us. In Romania, excessive drinking, especially by women, is frowned on. The use of illegal drugs

and substances whilst on placement in Romania is strictly prohibited and puts you and those with who you work, at risk. Comber reserves the right to arrange for the immediate return to Ireland of any volunteer using illegal drugs and/or abusing alcohol.