

Short-term Missions Team Member Guide



INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This 'Guide' may seem long, but it contains a wealth of information to help you prepare effectively for your short-term mission trip. The information is an accumulation of the many years experience of NLI staff. Please read it thoroughly. If you have any questions, please contact your team leader.

ABOUT NEXT LEVEL INTERNATIONAL

Next Level International (NLI) is a registered charity in the UK, Canada, USA and New Zealand. We are a mission organization that connects local churches around the world with different ministry projects in Europe. We partner with churches from all over the globe. Our mission is to *"Empower a whole new generation of radical leaders to equip, transform and expand the Church in Europe."* This is accomplished through three main areas of ministry - leadership development, church planting and mobilising mission teams.

Since 1991, NLI has been involved in developing leaders across Europe, including Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine, Bulgaria and Spain. Church Planting initiatives have been launched in many of these nations, with a strategic plan to have church planting movements erupt in Europe over the next decade. Our short-term mission and prayer teams have mobilised between 500 - 800 people into Europe each year since 1999. We are passionate to see a new generation of 21st century missionaries rise up as a result.

We are firmly committed to the local church and our dream is to help train and empower national church planters to reach their towns and cities with the life-changing message of the Gospel.

SHORT-TERM MISSION

WHAT IS A SHORT-TERM MISSION?

The aim of NLI church planting initiatives is to help establish new church plants in strategic locations. This is done mainly through the sponsorship and training of national workers. To this extent, partnering churches become a resource base in the area of teaching and training workers, serving the national vision for church planting, and providing some financial help for the national workers. Short-term mission (STM) teams and Prayer teams are mobilised to assist these church plants.

Europe is diverse: most is classified as post-Christian and unreached, and the younger generations have no knowledge of their rich religious heritage, believing the gospel has no relevance to their life. Post Communism, many Eastern and Central European nations hope to usher in prosperity by joining the European Union. This roaring common market is accelerating in growth, often developing in just a few years what took decades to attain in the West. The massive exchange of technology, information and ideas is astonishing, but no amount of mere ideological achievement can repair Europe's decaying moral foundation.

STM's are all about helping people find faith in God. There are countless millions in Europe who do not have a relationship with God or even know this is possible. On mission you and your team will be challenged and stretched through personal and public ministry. Our prayer is that you will see God at work in you and through you, reaching out to the people of Europe with God's love and compassion.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SHORT-TERM MISSION?

A natural result of going on STM is a greater understanding of God's heart for the world and an increased passion to play a part in reaching this world with His Gospel. Many people who have been on STM have gone on to become missionaries or taken some kind of role within mission.

The church plant gains from receiving a mission team. Their profile in the community is enhanced, good contacts are made, the church community is encouraged, and most importantly, many people in their community have an opportunity to respond to the Gospel message.

The sending church also reaps immense benefits. After seeing God's power at work on mission, those returning from STM will be more passionate about reaching out to people in their own community. It is vital that the sending church capitalizes on the impact of the mission on the team, through an appropriate debriefing process.

WHAT ARE THE KEY INGREDIENTS OF SHORT-TERM MISSION?

In general, missions will incorporate the following elements of ministry: -

Social Activities

Aimed to help raise the profile of the church plant within the local community, and to create long-term opportunities for evangelism. Activities may include visiting hospitals, orphanages, rehab centres or practical manual work. You go to serve, not to be served!

Street Evangelism

Street evangelism enables you to be seen by the community as you share the Gospel, and gives you the opportunity to invite people to outreach meetings and other special events.

Various Outreach Events

Outreach events/meetings, of different styles and nature, allow you and church planter to connect with different people groups in the community and local church.

Schools/Kids/Youth Work

You may be involved in schools work depending on the time of year and opportunities available. Even if the authorities don't allow overt sharing of faith, you may be able to take English or culture lessons and thereby bring a positive influence into the schools. This can open doors for other outreach opportunities, for both you and church planter. During local school holidays you may be involved in running kids/youth activities.

INITIAL MISSION PLANNING

Passports

Make sure that you have a valid passport. If you need to renew your passport or apply for a new one, do so promptly as it can take up to 6 weeks for these to be processed by customs/immigration departments.

Visas

Please check with the embassy of the country you are visiting to see if you need a visa. If you do you will need to contact NLI to obtain a letter of invitation from the host church. Again, visa applications can take up to 6 weeks so you should begin the process in good time.

Fundraising

Give careful attention to individual and team fundraising. This is a great faith-building opportunity for everyone. NLI provides a 'Recruitment Toolkit' if you would like help you with this.

Age Requirement

The usual minimum age requirement for team members is 16 years. However, we will consider applications from those under 16 years as long as suitable supervision, usually a parent, is present and the demands of mission are understood by those involved.

Working with children

The STM Team Member Application form contains information about the NLI policy for working with children. Each team member must sign a form and return it to NLI. For STM missions (not Prayer Teams/iTeams) it is the responsibility of the STM team leader and sending church to ensure all team members are fit and proper persons to be working with children and young people on mission.

Travel Insurance

NLI does not cover you with any type of travel insurance. We advise that each team member ensures they are suitably covered by some kind of travel insurance and carry the details with them. If you are bringing any musical instruments or technical equipment, please ensure these are fully insured.

Travel Injections

We recommend every team member has an up-to-date tetanus vaccination prior to travelling. Please check with your own health provider to see if there are other required vaccinations before travelling to certain countries in Europe.

Research

Plan well for your trip: Take some time to research topics such as the culture, church, dominant faiths and history of the country you are visiting. You will find travel 'hotsheets' and project guides for most countries on the STM resource pages of the NLI website (www.nlieurope.com).

Team building

Be intentional about building the team before you go on mission. The most effective teams on mission are already a 'team' before they leave their home nation. Have times of worship and prayer together, practice songs and dramas, discuss skills and gifts, socialise and have fun. Please be committed to the mission preparation process. Ensure you attend all mission team meetings organised by your team leader and come prepared to participate.

Prayer support

Being on mission is like being on the frontline during battle. Attack will come! It is vital to have good prayer support for your trip - before, during and after the mission. We suggest each team member finds 10 prayer partners to pray for them and the team during this time. You can keep the prayer partners up to date with progress as you prepare for the mission, and let them have a copy of your mission itinerary so they can pray for you whilst you are away.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Packing Information and mission conduct guidelines

A suggested packing list and the mission conduct guidelines are found further on in this Guide.

Power adaptors

Will be needed: non UK teams will need a plug changer and may also need a voltage converter (these are sometimes built into video or camera chargers – check first). Hairdryers etc will need a voltage converter.

Arrival/immigration

Most EU countries are relatively straightforward, but some countries still require visas and will issue boarding cards to those entering their country. Your team leader will help you with this process if it's required.

Money Exchange

You should have an early opportunity to exchange money whilst on mission. The church planter or local project staff will help you with this. It is often better to exchange money in one lump sum, or several larger amounts, as this makes it easier and more economical. Exchange bureaus are not always in plentiful supply so you don't want to be wasting time looking for one every day. We would not advise changing money at airports as you may not get the best rate. Another option is to use your ATM/debit card at cash points, which can be found in larger towns but not in rural areas. Please check with your bank for any charges. We advise against bringing travellers cheques as these can be hard to exchange in some countries. When bringing foreign currency please ensure that notes are as new as possible and unmarked. Some banks/exchanges will not accept torn notes or notes with handwriting on them.

Interpreters

You will have a number of interpreters working with you during the mission. Our goal is to have 1 interpreter per every 4-5 team members. If you have never worked with an interpreter before, don't worry, your team leader will help you with this. Interpreters' costs are covered in the mission budget. However, some interpreters might've given up a week's work to be with the team so it's always nice to bless them at the end of the mission. You could also bring a gift(s) from your own country.

Telephones

UK team members should be able to use their mobile phones, but check tariffs and coverage with provider before you travel. Non UK teams may not be able to use their mobile phones, but can buy international phone cards in most towns/cities or set up an International Phone before leaving home. Internet access is unlikely on mission, and unless they offer, please don't ask to use the pastor's internet (if they have it) as it may be very expensive. If you really can't manage without the Internet for a few days, we suggest you find an Internet café or McDonalds on your day off.

Day Off

On a 10-day mission you should have a complete day off. Plans and costs will be discussed with the team leader during the lead up to the mission, who can then follow this up with the church planter during the Orientation Meeting.

Orientation Meeting

Shortly after your arrival you will have an Orientation Meeting with the host church planter. This is a very important meeting and will give you a chance to ask any outstanding questions regarding the itinerary, ministry events, location, community etc. As a team you should also have time each day (usually in the morning) to pray and prepare for the coming day. We will ensure time is given in the itinerary.

Contact details

These will be supplied by the STM coordinator before your mission.

Security

Whilst on mission you should take extra care to look after your possessions. Criminals look for any opportunity to steal bags, phones, etc. Be watchful and do not leave equipment unattended whilst doing street outreach/drama etc.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Team members will need to fill in the contact details for the church planter (supplied by NLI). We have included these in case a team member gets separated from the team and needs to contact the pastor for help, for luggage labels, and also to give to relatives whilst you are away. (These details should only be used in emergencies.)

Next Level International (www.nlieurope.com) - UK (International Office) +44 2476 643 415

(Please fill in the following details yourself)

STM Coordinator email:

Church planter name:

Contact address (for luggage labels):

Emergency contact number:

TIMELINE

The following is a recommended timeline for you use whilst you prepare your team for mission.

Four to six months before your mission begins ... you should have:

- Confirmed your application to be part of your church mission team.
- Started your fundraising process.

Three months before your mission begins ... you should have:

- Completed your STM Team Member Application form and given it to your team leader.
- Checked and if needed, sent off visa/passport applications.
- Raised at least 80% of the funds needed. You will need to let your team leader have the full mission cost in good time so that they can send the money to NLI 10 weeks before the mission.
- Started working on your involvement in the ministry preparation (dramas, dance, musical items, testimonies, preaching, schools or kids programs, witnessing).

Ten weeks before your mission begins ... you should have:

- Arranged travel insurance.

Eight weeks before your mission begins ... you should have:

- Your team leader will receive the draft mission itinerary/program from NLI around 7-8 weeks before the mission, so you can now be more specific in your ministry preparation.
- Where appropriate, received passports/visas from Consulate/Embassy.

Four weeks before your mission begins ... you should have:

- Your team leader will have received the detailed mission itinerary/program from NLI.
- You will have received proposed accommodation, food, and internal transport details from NLI.
- Gathered props and costumes for the mission.
- Bought any souvenirs from your hometown for the people you will meet and gifts for church planter, host church, and interpreters.
- Practiced and refined dances, dramas, mimes, songs, testimonies and other activities.
- Begun packing preparation.

MISSION CONDUCT GUIDELINES

We have outlined some standards and guidelines to help you and your team stay focused and sharp during the mission. Our desire is for you to have a fantastic mission experience, and so we ask you to work together with your team leader to ensure these standards are both understood and followed.

- Your STM team leader should know where you are at all times. Don't wander off on your own.
- Be Punctual: If you are late, you not only make yourself late but your whole team suffers and you are communicating to people that you care more about yourself than their time.
- Have responsible eating habits. You will not have the energy necessary for a busy mission if you have not eaten well or kept your fluid level up. This also applies to eating too much; don't gorge yourself... you'll only make yourself sick!
- Restrict listening to secular music. We know teams use secular music for drama pieces but if team members listen to Britney Spears day and night, they may find it difficult tuning in spiritually!
- Report any illnesses to your team leader or NLI representative.

- The following are prohibited on mission: alcohol, smoking, body-piercing, (nose, lip, eyebrow piercing), head-shaving or outrageous hair colouring while on or just before mission. This might seem strict, and your own church leaders might be ok with these things, but NLI is working within a number of different church cultures, and we do not want to jeopardize these relationships in any way.
- No romantic/dating relationships should be initiated during the mission. No guys in girls room and no girls in guys rooms unless you're using a bedroom for a team meeting and the team leader is present. Please keep the rooms clean and tidy.
- Commit to maintaining a positive attitude regardless of the circumstances.
- With regard to ministry situations, we advise that men minister to men, and women to women. When praying for people please be careful where you put your hands. Holding someone's hands or putting your hand on their shoulder is the best option. Monitor their response to ensure they are comfortable with the ministry.

PACKING INFORMATION

Please pack as lightly as possible for your mission. Most airlines will only allow you one suitcase (15-20kg) and a small carry-on, so everything you need will have to fit into these. Once you arrive on mission you may have to carry your luggage up stairs or over rough terrain so it helps to pack light. If you take it, you carry it!

You will need the following: -

- Toiletries.
- Sunscreen/Sunglasses.
- Camera/video camera.
- Water bottle: We will provide bottled water for you on mission, but it is more economical to buy bulk water containers and dispense these into your own personal water container.
- Clothes: smarter clothes, work clothes, everyday clothes and anything else the team leader feels is appropriate for the trip. Please respect the country you are going to. Women should not wear short skirts, bikinis, off the shoulder t-shirts, vests or cropped shirts. No short or tight shorts. Men should wear t-shirts/shirts at all times. Please do not wear clothing that advertises alcohol, tobacco, or secular bands.
- Shoes: Bring shoes that are comfortable. It is more than likely you will be walking reasonable distances during your mission.
- Passport & copy of your passport, (the team leader should have one as well).
- Electrical adaptors and transformers (Europe runs on 220V).
- Medicines you may currently be taking. Please keep them in the original container to avoid confusion at airports and customs.
- First-Aid Kit: a small kit with Band-Aids, blister kit, antiseptic wipes, tweezers, pain reliever/fever reducer, cold and diarrhoea remedies, eye drops, etc. We suggest you have 1 team member take responsibility for bringing a First-Aid Kit, preferably someone experience in administering treatment.
- Bible; journal; pen.
- You could also take some photos or postcards of your home town, family etc, to help you connect with local people on mission.

Please bring anything else you or your team members feel is necessary including equipment for the mission.

CONCLUSION

We understand there is a lot of information in this guide, and much to do before you are ready to go on mission into Europe. You don't have to do everything in the first week, but you must begin preparing now. Don't get so overwhelmed by all the things you need to do that you end up doing nothing. Preparing for mission can seem a daunting task, and sometimes the trip may start to look less exciting than it once seemed. Ask God to renew your vision for the people of Europe and your passion for mission. And remember, you don't have to do everything; delegate responsibilities to other team members where possible. A mission's trip is a great opportunity for everyone to grow in their gifts and experience.

The preparation period can be a time of hardship and frustration or a time of learning, growing and fulfilment. It all depends on your attitude. Check your attitude and your willingness to serve others daily during this time. These months will give you the opportunity to work together with your teammates and develop lifelong friendships.

Pay close attention to the culture and people of the European country where you are going on mission. Examine your own habits and behaviour: be observant and objective. You are putting a lot of effort into this trip and its effectiveness can be severely reduced if the people are offended by things you do. If you are normally a loud person, you will have to be especially careful. You don't need to change your personality, but look for ways you can more quietly express your thoughts and feelings. You will be representing your country, your church, and Christ. You may be the first Christian that many people have encountered, so be careful how you present yourself.

We encourage you to savour your experience on mission. Each day will produce new challenges and changes in and around you. Notice these developments and enjoy them. Be sure to keep a journal of your mission experience, both before, during and after the mission. Encourage your team members to do likewise, as this will increase the impact of mission. Look forward to the opportunities you will have to tell people about what happened to you in Europe. Write your entries frankly, and allow them to be an encouragement to you when your life seems dry and normal after you have returned from mission.

We are excited you have this opportunity to go on a Short Term Mission trip and look forward to the mission with you. We pray that God will use you mightily and prepare you for His service in the coming months.