

## Pro Bono Lab & Beijing Huizeren Volunteer Center

### Report on EU-China NGO Twinning program

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*Pro Bono Lab and Huizeren share the mission of building NGO capacities through community involvement in so-called pro bono consulting missions. These missions help the non-profit to strengthen their management and practices in support functions such as HR, marketing, strategy, web, design, etc. Pro Bono Lab and Huizeren's leaders met for the first time in 2011 in San Francisco to gain inspiration from Taproot Foundation, at a time where pro bono was unknown both in France and in China. From this time, they have met several times and when they discovered Stiftung Asienhaus Twinning program, they decided to seize this opportunity to strengthen their relationship as social innovators in the pro bono field in their respective countries.*

### Antoine Colonna d'Istria, Pro Bono Lab, France

Between September 9<sup>th</sup> and October 5<sup>th</sup> 2014, I was working with Beijing Huizeren Volunteer Center (China) as part of the EU-China NGO-Twinning-Program.

#### **Objectives**

My objectives for this exchange, as agreed with Huizeren were the following :

- Share knowledge as we think cultural differences are a great source of wealth.
- Communicate on social innovation models in the pro bono field to raise awareness
- Structure an international network to spread models and share knowledge globally

There were several themes we wanted to explore together :

- Probono as a Social Innovation Model : which social needs can be solved by pro bono ?
- Organizational Management and Team Development : how can we build our own internal capacities to better serve our beneficiary organizations as a capacity builder ?
- The Business Model and Operation Management of Probono : how can we find sustainable fundings for our actions, and how can we organize pro bono missions to deliver more value ?
- Network Building with international NGOs and intermediaries: how to cooperate globally ?

### ***The journey in China: overview***

The first week was dedicated to activities on the field. We went to Shandong Province to perform a Pro Bono Marathon for a social incubator based in Jinan, then went to Binzhou to attend the I-Leadership Summit where 100+ non-profit leaders were gathered by Huizeren to share practices and knowledge.

The second and third week were dedicated to obtain a better insight into the internal structure and functioning at Huizeren and to plan common actions such as the Pro Bono Week 2014 on a short run, and staff exchange and others ideas for the long run.

The last week was dedicated to cultural experiences with several visits (Forbidden City, Great Wall, museums and gardens in Beijing...), and interviews with young and experienced Beijingers to understand their approach to volunteering and NGOs.

### ***Outcomes and actions taken***

To find solutions and ideas to answer our questions, we have taken actions relatively to the three goals mentioned above. As we already knew more or less our organizations activities and programs, I tried to focus on structure and culture of the organization to see the differences and the common roots.

#### **Knowledge sharing :**

- 5 team meetings with the teams of Huizeren in Beijing to better understand organizational management: I participated in weekly meetings and in other internal meetings to see how the information exchanges were structured and to learn on the human resources and the projects of Huizeren. I took part in a day on the field with UN Development Program officers.
- 8 interviews: I conducted interviews with several individuals from the Huizeren team or from their network, or other “random” people, to introduce our work, to get feedback on how it resonated with them, and to gain a better understanding of cultural differences through key questions and broader discussions. Most of these interviews would take place around a dinner.
- 1 training : at the Chaoyang Hub, Huizeren had mobilized a dozen non-profits leaders with who I could share our process to deliver pro bono missions and the best practices we use at each step

#### **Communication & awareness :**

- 4 interventions: I could explain what is pro bono and share knowledge on non-profit management in public in Jinan at a social incubator, in Binzhou at the I-leadership summit, and in Beijing thanks to Asienhaus
- Publications : 2 blog articles on pro-bono.fr and several posts on the trip to China on social networks as Pro Bono lab (2500 followers).

### **Network building**

- Pro Bono Week: coordination of the Pro Bono Week campaign on [probonoweek.org](http://probonoweek.org) : 35 events pro bono in 12 countries. Many communications with other pro bono fellows through emails and to global public on social networks. On Pro Bono Lab's facebook page, 12 posts that gathered 500 views on average.
- Program design : we studied two kind of projects together: first, our first steps to develop local pro bono alliances and marathons pro bono in France and in China, and second the opportunities to develop a global program based on staff exchanges
- Asian Pro Bono Summit : we recorded a video for the Asian Pro Bono Summit and I could share ideas with Zhai Yan to prepare the gathering in Osaka with other Asian pro bono intermediaries.

### ***Impact of the exchange***

On the knowledge sharing part, the impact is strong. I have learned a huge amount of things during the month spent in China, and I have been able to share a part of it with a lot of people. The five posts during the trip in China on facebook have had our best audiences in September with 900 views on average per post. The two articles have been read by more than 1.000 people. I could present our work to the whole team of Pro Bono Lab during an afternoon in October. Obviously I hope that the interventions in China have maybe inspired individuals who could feel my passion for what we do, or just find one or two good advices for their practices.

On the communication and awareness part, from my perspective, the impact is quite low, especially in China. In France we had several thousand readers thanks to social networks, but these people already knew pro bono. In Beijing I have met only two journalists in one month, and could not make use of local networks and media with the language barrier. In total, my interventions and meetings have probably made 300 to 500 people aware of pro bono in China.

It is maybe on the network part that the impact is the greatest. We have been able to share ideas and on the future of the network and to organize Pro Bono Week which was a success. We want to plan a "staff sharing program" by 2015, and to reproduce it annually after. We are now designing the program with Pro Bono Lab, to see if we can do it from France with several countries. We will talk about a pilot project with Huizeren at the Pro Bono Summit in February 2015. We are now preparing the summit and exchanging on skype every two weeks on our alliances projects for instance. During all of the second semester 2014, I have been able to strengthen the relationship with Huizeren and foresee more common actions to come.

### ***Personal feedback and comments***

I have never doubted that participating in the twinning program would be worth the cost. On

a personal basis, it is certain. On an organizational basis, the short-term feedbacks are very positive, however it will take more time to know how much this program has impacted our organizations. For Pro Bono Lab, it has already had an impact on our image and confirmed that we have an international perspective, but this is mostly immaterial. Next year we will see if we are able to implement all the ideas we had thanks to the program.

If there is something I would do differently, it would be to have more clear and feasible expectations to prepare more my stay in Beijing. I invested time to prepare the trip for everything basic (accommodations, etc...) and with the help of Asienhaus I could feel comfortable enough during the month though it was my first time in Asia, but I am not sure I had made my goals clear enough to Huizeren before I arrive in Beijing. The communication and awareness part was the clearest goal but after this experience I am not sure it was the most relevant one. The knowledge sharing part went very well and probably would not have benefitted a lot from further preparation. Maybe I should have invested more time in preparing the co-creation and design of programs with Huizeren. Especially, I wonder how much my help on the marathon model will be useful. I had not identified clearly the key collaborators before my arrival in Beijing and I think this would have helped a lot; though it was not so easy to see it clearly from Paris. Lastly, I had to spend quite some time to manage the team in France during my stay in Beijing, and though I already delegated a lot, maybe I could have saved even more time on this with more anticipation.

### ***Follow-up***

Our next meeting with Huizeren teams will take place at the Global Pro Bono Summit in Berlin, 25th-27th February 2015. Zhai Yan a.k.a “Robin”, CEO of Huizeren, will be there and we should be able to validate our common projects for 2015 after other exchanges previous to the Summit. Despite our busy agendas, I have been able to exchange several times on Skype with Huizeren team in November to talk about their “Pro Bono Chinese Alliance” project and about our “Pro Bono Foundation for France” project. In the following weeks, we will have more opportunities to talk, and I will work on a “marketed” presentation for our common projects and seek opportunities for financial and in-kind partners.

## **Ye Ying, Beijing Huizeren Volunteering Development Center,**

### **Beijing**

Between the 16<sup>th</sup> of October and 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2014, I was working with Probonolab, Paris, as part of the EU-China NGO-Twinning-Program.

### ***Objectives for the exchange***

Probono is a new concept for China, however, we think of it as a big opportunity for a positive social impact. It has experienced a fast growth, and becomes more and more popular in the country. Probono is an efficient way to help NGOs gain capacity. As China is

experiencing social reforming, the number of NGOs is growing dramatically. However most of them are grassroot NGOs and lack resources as well as professional skills. Cross-sector cooperation, which is the key of Probono, is a good way to help NGOs grow and increase their capabilities.

During my stay in France I wanted to learn more about the civil society development in Europe, the charity environment and policy. Moreover I wanted to study the Probono Business model and Operational management, cases of social innovation model, team development of intermedia social organizations, as well as get to know the Grid Work Model

I also planned on exploring more French charity partners, and do some pre-research for Chinese NGO leaders communication activities in the next year. During these five weeks I worked with Antoine and his workmates at Probonolab and learned a lot from the people I worked with .

### ***At the Probonolab office***

Most of the time, I worked at Probonolab office with colleagues, where I liked the friendly environment. Probonolab seems to me both institutionally organized and flexible operationalized, with clear rules, procedures, tasks and responsibility set for different positions on one hand, combined with freedom and space for staff's creative thinking on the other. This impressed me from the first day I joined, which I believe can be learnt by Beijing Huizeren Volunteering Development Center.

Another impressive activity at Probonolab office is the weekly staff meeting on Monday from 10 Am to 12 Am. The process is as following :

1. round table for good news
2. planning for next 6 months
3. key score cards/indicators of the week
4. projects and especially the challenge in projects
5. day to day informations

The meeting goal is to give an oversight to every member of the team of what's happening , share about the work done, plan future activities, create team feeling and identify operational risks. From these meetings I learned how to communicate with other workmates efficiency.

On 25<sup>th</sup> of Oct, we had a Probono Marathon in the office of Probonolab, which includes three topics. Moreover, we had several team building activities.

I also worked with other Probonolab colleagues other than my Twinning partner Antoine. I interviewed 16 colleagues, and also held a presentation on HUIZEREN, after which

Probonolab colleagues shared their experience with me. Below is the comparison chart that we came up with:

	Pro Bono Lab	HUIRENZE
Aim	To develop professional volunteers	To create an environment willing to provide service
Leader	3 founders	1 founder
Member	12 staff +8 interns	7staff +5 part-time member +6 interns
Capital	450,000 euros in 2014	3 million RMB in 2014
Capital source	80% from company	50% from foundation
Relationship with company	The object of financing	One source of volunteers
Relationship with NGO	NGOs founded early, Serve for 80 NGOs every year	NGOs founded for 3-5 years 30 VSGs every year; Serve for over 1000 NGOs every year (Capacity building)
Conditions of each ProBono (Fees, Personnel allocation and time)	5000 euros for each Probono (Cost: 3000 euros. 80% of it is staff cost and 20% of it is running cost.) 1-2 our staff for each of the project;2-3 staff from NGO;8-10 volunteers	20,000 RMB for each VSG (travel and site fees mostly) 30 VSGs this year; 2-3volunteers, 2-3 staff, 6-10 personnel from NGO and others

Also, I visited a community children's activity center in CLICHY and enjoyed the activities there.

### ***Visit at the branch office of Probonolab in Grenoble***

On the 7th of November, Antoine and me went to ProBonolab's Southern office in Grenoble. We came to visit a social enterprise which is to help disabled young people to find work, also this social enterprise is one of the service objects of Probonolab.

In the afternoon, we had a small workshop with the staff there talking about their work there. After that I visited the incubator center there. There are more than 40 NGOS there .I was the first person from Chinese civil society appearing in this center.

### ***Visiting Madrid, Spain***

1st – 4th of November, I went to Madrid and participated in a public welfare activity on breast cancer. I Also visited the Lynde Foundation, as pre-research for Chinese NGO leaders communication activities in next year

### ***Reflection Workshop in Berlin***

This workshop organized by Stiftung Asienhaus was intensive but very informative. It was a precious chance for me to get to know how civil society functions in Germany in different fields, and also a great time to share with other Chinese and European participants about our harvests and difficulties working in different environment and with different workmates. Also we visited the project sponsor-Robert Bosch Stiftung. This trip was a great chance for me to extend Huizeren's contact and cooperation with European NGOs beyond Probonolab.

### ***Gains of the exchange***

I learned about social conditions in France through interviews, the interview contents included the following questions: understanding of local social environment, organization and projects involved in and personal basic condition. Questions were asked to each of them are: what do you most value? What do you think of French most value about? What is the meaning of people alive?

- Economy: Learned the French economy environment is not that good and has the trend of deterioration, which is the cause for a lot of complaints. According to interviewees, about two million French work abroad, nearly 1/35 of the French population.
- History and culture: It is a country that attaches great importance to art education with long history and culture. All of the museums are free for EU members under 26, which exposes all the children to an artistic atmosphere. What's more, many French are interested in Chinese culture, such as Lao-Tzu, Taiji and Qigong.
- Public welfare: there are one million NGOs in France and the ratio of public participation is about 20%. In contrast to France, only 500 thousand NGOs are established in China and 50% to 60% of the NGOs are organized by government with 6% of the population participate in.
- As to the meaning of alive, we got different answer from each of them, such as happiness, serving others, benefiting society or Find Your Way.

### ***Others (Interview)***

Chinese settled in France and Chinese students in France were also interviewed. The Chinese settled there live stably with common social status but can hardly integrate into local society

well. Most of them also have narrow and lagging view of China inland. While the difference is that the aim of studying abroad has been shifted to broaden mind and enrich life and most of the students there would like to go back to work after graduation.

### **Future Plans**

Long-term relationship with French Probonolab was established through this exchange of learning. There may be French volunteers coming to China to provide professional services in the next year. And exchange visits among professional volunteers will be common and Huizeren provides platform and service sites for the cooperation.

I felt so lucky to be part of the EU-China Program. It's like opening a window which helps me to learn the operation and management model from the developed international civil society working sector. By comparing, the civil society sector development in China is falling behind; meanwhile, it's also means there is a big space to improve. So many things need to be learnt and used for reference. The more people participate the EU-China Twinning Program, the more useful experiences and ideas this would bring to China; thus, the development of Chinese civil society sector must be improved dramatically and fast. Being part of the EU-China Program is a milestone experience in my life, I learn a lot in Europe , but also I love the civil society sector more.

But the opportunity likes the EU-China Program is still rare. Some of my knowledge and conceptions were re-corrected or I gained a deeper understanding. The development of Chinese civil society sector is on the early stage, lacking of talent people, training requirement for current employees, opening the mind and gaining communicating opportunity is highly demanded.

I found the EU-China Twinning Program very effective, I could learn a lot each day. I took so many book notes, and I would like to share them with all my colleagues.

**More detailed information is given in the long reports of the twinningers. Anyone interested can contact the Stiftung Asienhaus staff/China program to receive more information.**