

Role and support of sending organisations

How to be really helpful to volunteers, enabling successful EVS projects

Details of role and responsibilities of Sending Organisations (SO's) in EVS-cycle are in general described in **EVS Charter**, which is an official support document of EVS. It is highly recommended to transfer information included therein into your EVS-agreements and EVS practice. As a summary, SO is in charge of the preparation and support of the volunteers before, during and after the EVS activity. Within our limited space in this section, we will mainly focus on two crucial parts of SO responsibilities – preparation of volunteers before their departure to the project and support to the volunteers during their EVS-placement abroad.

It is important to note, that although vast majority of EVS volunteers are adult and able to manage most aspects of their lives on their own, many of them are still missing some parts of real experience in some fields of “adult life competencies”. Therefore, the success of many EVS projects can be strongly influenced by the fulfilment of competencies of EVS support staff.

In relation to the **preparation of volunteers for EVS project**, first, the important task of SO is to provide an EVS-candidate with sufficient and realistic information on what EVS is and is not. Information included in document **What to Expect from EVS** (included in **EVS Info Kit**), can be used as a guideline, although proper answering to all of the candidate's questions will be more relevant.

As a second major step, SO can have an important role in **facilitating volunteer candidates to find appropriate EVS project** for them. A good sending coordinator can be very helpful to young EVS-candidates in clarifying their goals and **directing them in their search**. (In some cases, this step can even mean directing some candidates to different possibilities, e.g. “inland” volunteering, further study, etc.) This can also include instructions and assistance with **CV and motivation letter preparations**. Equally, SO can be very helpful during (initial and further) **negotiations between a volunteer-candidate and a potential Receiving Organisations (RO's)**. To be able to fulfil these tasks SO needs to establish a **personal relationship with the EVS-candidate**, based on mutual trust. To enable this, SO's are highly recommended to organise **series of consultations** (in personal or via Skype, based on the possibilities of the volunteer). **Group activities, talks and various workshops** with other future, past and/or current EVS-volunteers are highly recommended. These can be organised into two stages: before and after finding a placement for a particular volunteer. Even in the case of “independent” candidates, who prefer to do most of “their stuff” individually, establishing a personal relationship is still important for future communication and support during the EVS placement.

The consultations, activities and materials recommended for the preparation of a volunteer for EVS should at least cover the following subjects:

- The spirit of EVS, its rules and operation
 - the system of receiving, sending and coordinating organisations
- EVS project preparation, application, cooperation and running
- Non-formal education and differences between formal and non-formal learning
- Youthpass as a certificate of volunteer's learning process

- Activity Agreement
 - EVS Charter
 - provisions and observance of EVS (Activity) Agreement
- Practical preparation for the project
 - what to prepare and arrange before departure to the project
 - how to deal with state agencies in relation to social and health insurance
 - compulsory EVS insurance financed by EU
 - ensuring visa if needed
 - what to expect at the beginning of EVS activities
 - standard EVS training cycle (Pre-departure, On-Arrival, Midterm and Final Evaluation)
 - parties to ask for help in case of difficulties (coordinator, mentor, SO, HO, CO, NA)
 - foreseen dissemination activities after the end of activities
- Intercultural preparation
 - most frequent issues in foreign environment and on EVS projects
 - adaptation phases on the project
 - possible personal and interpersonal issues, dealing with conflicts

As for **the ongoing support of the volunteers during their EVS-placement**, the above mentioned personal relationship, as well as certain **regularity of contact-keeping** during the project, are important. It is recommended to keep your contacts at least on monthly basis, and possibly more often in specific periods, like the beginning of EVS placement (first 1–2 months), ending of EVS placement (last 1–2 months) and any „turbulent“ period (when sending coordinator gets to know about problems on the project). This of course, may be customised to the needs of particular volunteers and EVS projects, as well as to your possibilities. It is important that the sending organisation is in regular contact with EVS volunteer as well with the coordinator in the receiving organisation (to have enough information about developing the project and to ensure „objective“ point of view – this is useful especially in the case of problems).

The reason of regular contact-keeping is this: You need to keep generally informed about the volunteer’s wellbeing and project development, in order to be able to help, if suddenly a problem occurs. Typically, you as a sending coordinator, might not be informed about minor issues on the project. But when a bigger problem occurs, you need to already be a trusted and informed person in order to be able to help instantly. Otherwise, you might finish up with high telephone charges, overloaded by 5-page long e-mails in the middle of your other work tasks and still not completely oriented in the situation. Or, in an even worse case, you may finish up untrusted and unhelpful, or perhaps even uninformed. And this is much less likely to happen if you keep regular contact with your sent volunteers when everything is just “OK”. Apart from being trusted, you will learn many interested things about developments on various projects and reactions of your volunteers to many new situations they experience during their EVS. This way you will be becoming more experienced and better prepared to fulfil your EVS-tasks.

The similar recommendation applies to keeping contacts with the receiving EVS coordinator (or another person in the Receiving or Coordinating organisation, responsible for the EVS project). With this person, you also need to keep a working and trusted relationship, for the same reasons as stated above.

The combination of offline and online communication is recommended. If you use email, we suggest you store received messages in a specific folder. This way you can quickly find older information that was written to you, or that you wrote. On the other hand, telephone or online chat might be more practical for some occasions as well as for keeping a „living“ contact, with the disadvantage of fewer possibilities of storing information.

In relation to the most frequent issues on EVS projects, we recommend you to especially focus on the following topics in your preparation as well as in your support to the volunteers: activities assigned to the volunteer on the project, volunteer's mentor and their relation, volunteer's coordinator (or task manager) and their relation, language course, accommodation on the project, pocket money and food money (or provisions), volunteer's free time, volunteer's possibilities of communication and access to the internet.

Resources

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/see/resources/seepublications/hopscotchEVS/>

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