

Support of coordinators in and out of the organisation

Coordinator of EVS volunteers, superhero with very complex range of knowledge, skills and attitudes – administrating European projects, supervising everyday work of volunteers, guiding volunteers through their learning process, understanding intercultural and personal differences and seeing them as advantages and potential, dealing with health insurance, cooking welcoming dinner, mediating conflicts between volunteers, helping volunteers to paint their flat. All (or some) of these next to his or her „usual“ working tasks, often with not much social and financial recognition. Alongside with satisfaction from meaningful work, this can result in frustration and eventually burn out, if we don't take good care of ourselves.

It is our responsibility and chance to create such a living and working conditions, that are sustainable, healthy and satisfying for us.

Few guiding questions to reflect on your working situation:

- Do you believe the work you do is useful?
- Do you feel the projects you are working on do have a chance to continue for some more years, develop,...?
- Are you competent for your work – do you have needed knowledge, skills and attitude?
- Do you feel appreciated for the work you do?
- Do you enjoy the work you do?
- Do you have a good working place/space/environment?
- Do you feel comfortable with tempo, the rhythm of your work?
- Do you eat and drink healthy? (quantity, quality, environment, „culture“)
- Do you feel well, healthy in your body? Is there space for movement and exercises in your work/life?
- Can you freely live and express your spirituality? Does it have space in your work/life?
- Do you have a reliable team of people to work with?
- Is there somebody to do your job when you are ill, going for holidays or a training course?
- Are you satisfied with the salary you get for work you do?
- Do you know where are your limits? And do you and the others respect them?

You can take an appreciation and gratitude moment with all the „yes“ questions and a little critical thinking moment with all the „no“ questions – is it ok like this? Is it possible to change it? What could be the possible ways, steps towards the change? Who/what can support you? And so on... This is only a beginning, a little hint on how to reflect your situation and encouragement to influence it in the favour of yourself, the others and the wider good.

Few tips on where to find support in and out of your organisation:

- Involve your colleagues (including management of the organisation) in EVS, share with them, speak about the benefits of receiving a volunteer as well about the risks and shadows. Involve whole organisation in deciding if to receive a volunteer and choosing who is it going to be. A good sign is when your colleagues speak about „our volunteer“, alarming when they speak about „your volunteer“. The weight should lie on more shoulders, you should be fungible.

- Encourage your colleagues (again including management) to learn about Erasmus+ and EVS in particular, join a training course, become part of the Erasmus+ world and culture to have a deeper understanding of what is going on.
- If you have a chance, get regular supervision – it is standard in social services nowadays and very helpful everywhere, where you work with other people and relationships are involved.
- Go for a training course from time to time, you will get new motivation and inspiration, chance to share and exchange with other coordinators, space for your questions and situations to solve. Training offers can be found on web page or your National Agency or in European Training Calendar here: <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/european-training-calendar/>
- Create a support network with other EVS coordinators (on regional, national, international level – each has its benefits), be in regular contact, share, organise events together...
- Also, EVS volunteers themselves can be part of your support system! Be open and authentic with them. Ask them how are they doing and share also how are you doing, which topics occupy your mind and heart. Build the culture of offering feedback to each other and supporting each other. Also, it is useful to involve your ex-EVS volunteers (if you are at the same time in the role of sending organisation) in work of your organisation, especially connected to the topic of EVS (offering activities, support of receiving EVS volunteers like for example mentors, promotion of EVS etc.). Creating a strategy for involving ex-EVS volunteers in the organisation is recommended. Those can give useful feedback and new ideas for developing of your EVS projects in your organisation.
- Coaching – if you want to have support in the transformation of your situation (and yourself), find a coach (ideally, who has praxis in youth work), who will help you to find answers and actions inside you.
- Focus on the topic of psycho-hygiene and life/work balance. If you need an inspiration for that, you can find many articles and books on the internet, as well as invitations for workshops and training.
- Use your inner support system. Be conscious of your beliefs and values. They can hold you in times of crisis.

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