

The end is a new beginning

You are almost at the end of the EVS project and perhaps you say to yourself:

“It was great, we go on, and we want another volunteer”

“One volunteer is not enough, next time we will include at least three and some of them from non-EU countries”

Or you are full of scepticism and you are thinking about:

“Is it worth for me to work so hard to include volunteers here and no one is appreciating it?”

“Foreigners simply do not fit in our organisation and the locals do not understand them anyway.”

In this part of the project, when everything is coming to the end of the cooperation and volunteer are in their minds already back in their home country, it is important to discuss and conclude everything what happened during the project. Your project is perfect or everything you have touched failed? Nevertheless, it is essential that the volunteer, coordinator, mentor and other important actors involved in EVS, at the end of the project were clear about the following things:

What we managed to implement in the project from what we had set at the beginning or during the EVS?

Ex.: We have started a new club for children with the help of volunteer.

Was there something extra that has enriched our project?

Ex.: Volunteer organized regular hiking tours for retirement home.

What do we want to establish in the next EVS projects?

Ex.: Develop further cooperation with the retirement home.

What positively affected EVS project and common cooperation?

Ex.: Proactive volunteer approach, interaction of sending organisation and interest about what is happening in the project, and cooperation with the director of the retirement home.

What has volunteer learned during the project?

Ex.: Volunteer prepared and led drawing and modelling club for children. He learnt effective team cooperation and time management while completing different tasks. He can speak fluently our language now.

What has brought the project contrary to the receiving organisation?

Ex.: Diversification of our activities, seniors had the opportunity to engage in new activities (interactive games that support memory, sharing their life stories, cultural differences etc.). This cooperation generally brought more interest of seniors from local community to our organisation (new clients, children, sponsors, and partners).

Was there something what could be done better next time?

Ex.: Mentor was proactive just the first month. Although volunteer did not missed mentorship, for the future project there is a need to ensure regular meetings (at least once a month) for the whole duration of the project.

Is there something new, extra, innovative, we would like to add to the future projects?

Ex.: Volunteer can also participate in multi-day activities of our organisation, not only to the regular weekly clubs. Volunteer should have a chance to try extra assistance in preparation of the program and lead various activities together. This could be refreshing and motivating for the target group to interact with somebody from another cultural reality.

Is there something we could not repeatedly manage or we did not manage to realize at all?

Ex.: Summer holiday activities did not took place according to our plans. No enough activities for the volunteer (lower attendance of our clients, several city camp were cancelled).

Are there cases in the EVS project we fail repeatedly?

Ex.: We are repeatedly not able to provide good quality language course. The project takes place in a small town and there are no or few options of language lessons.

What are the negative influences that have affected the cooperation during the project?

Ex.: Volunteer's health situation, few friends, general mood of the volunteer.

Of course, there might be more and more questions and the more you go into depth of it (e.g. in the form of sub-questions), the more you will discover.

Then you can have questioned the above asked questions as follows:

Why did it turn out?

Ex.: We planned too much summer activities for the volunteer, even though we knew from the previous years that this is the off season. Activities are random and it is almost impossible to predetermine whether enough children will participate to open the clubs.

In our small town, there is no institution that provides Czech language courses and with private lecturers we have a bad experience.

We have not discussed with the partner organisation and the volunteer specific needs (health situation, social background of a volunteer, religion and related needs).

How to prevent these situations and how to be ready for them in the future projects (create action plan)?

Ex.: Plan the EVS project activities only for the period out of the summer holidays. Inform volunteer that for the summer holidays will be attending only a few events, and that there will be more time for their private activities.

To ensure the quality of foreign language course, combine multiple options, see chapter "Language Course".

Be informed not only about the health situation of a volunteer, communicate clearly for whom the project is or is not intended to and why. Is there wheelchair access, are the activities physically demanding or requires openness and respect to other religions, etc.

Where in the project are risk factors that we can prevent, or be ready for them in the future projects?

Ex.: Divide your EVS project into several phases and in each of them. In each phase determine what do you want to achieve. Include as well a list of possible fears for which try to find solution. Be inspired by experienced.

What are the risk factors that we cannot get ready for? There are not such factors! Good preparation can react to any possible situation. Share on-going experiences with other organisations that work with EVS volunteers.

How do they solve different problematic situations? How do they prevent them? What does surprise them?

During evaluation of just ended EVS projects and reflection on how to deal with future projects, keep in mind that the European Voluntary Service is an important balance between the following aspects:

Service – Learning and Education – Voluntariness

Resources

T-Kit 3: Project management, Published by the Council of Europe and the European Commission. <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kit-3-project-management?inheritRedirect=true>

Conflict – What an Opportunity! (practical booklet with outcomes of the International Training Courses „COME“ – Conflict Management for Actors of EVS projects) – http://www.mladezvaki.cz/fileadmin/user_upload/publikace/Brozura_COME.pdf

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