

Role and support of the sending organisation

The sending organisation has a special role in the system of European Voluntary Service (EVS). The crucial responsibility of the sending organisation is the complex preparation of the volunteer and keeping in touch with the volunteer during the entire period of voluntary service. The sending organisation's responsibility is to be accessible to the volunteer when he or she needs something, to support the volunteer before, during as well as after his or her EVS project.

There is a database of accredited sending organisations (http://europa.eu/youth/evs_database) for each country that a volunteer can search and find the most suitable one. Once the volunteer has contacted this organisation, the ideal situation is for the sending organisation to meet the prospective volunteer in person. If the volunteer has not yet found the most suitable receiving organisation, the sending organisation is there to help. The choice of the receiving organisation depends on the main goals to be fulfilled by the volunteer. That means he or she has to be absolutely sure what the main purpose of the voluntary service is. However, the active participation of the volunteer is required during the process of selecting the best receiving organisation. Moreover, in the first meeting with the volunteer, the sending organisation presents the volunteer with basic information about the Erasmus+ programme, especially about the EVS.

When the sending, receiving and coordinating organisation are agreed upon together with the volunteer, the project is written specifically for the particular volunteer and the application is submitted for funding under the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme. If the project is approved other preparations can start. The other option for choosing the most suitable project is that the volunteer searches the database with EVS projects and the volunteer himself or herself can apply for these positions. When applying for an offered position, the volunteer is invited to send a motivation letter and a CV. However, it is important that the volunteer informs his or her sending organisation about steps he or she undertakes.

The important fact for both cases is to find a project which fits the needs of the volunteer, receiving organisation and local communities.

In the next step the task of the sending organisation is to organise a meeting (pre-departure training) with the volunteer which will cover the following: EVS and its philosophy, aims, roles and responsibilities of partners and other actors in EVS project (e.g. a mentor or National Agencies) and the whole EVS project cycle; 'practical issues' such as visas, insurance, legal status of the volunteer (in terms of school system and employment centre); encounter with different cultures, cultural shock, prejudices etc.; volunteer's motivation, expectations and fears and last but not least non-formal learning during the project in terms of competencies, learning process reflection and evaluation and Youthpass.

The sending organisation's responsibility is also to present a so-called 'EVS Info-kit' to the volunteer. This booklet includes all the important information about EVS and thus the volunteer can get back to it regarding anything she or he needs to know anytime during the whole EVS.

After the project's approval, the sending organisation prepares, together with the receiving and coordinating organisation and the volunteer, an Activity Agreement. This Agreement should be as complex and detailed as possible: it should include the basic information about the project (dates, venue, proposed activities for the volunteer, project partners' information), roles and responsibilities of all partners including the volunteer, specific information about where the volunteer will live, eat and work, working hours, crisis management and grant budget and cost breakdown.

Once all the above-discussed matters are set and the volunteer is ready to leave, it is important to agree on a means of communication between the volunteer and the sending organisation. This can be an e-mail, Skype, Facebook, Whatsapp or many other ways of communication. The frequency of contacting each other has to be also set, together with a form of reflexion as a part of each session.

During the process of the voluntary service, the sending organisation is still here for the volunteer even though the volunteer is already a part of the receiving organisation, interacting with the mentor and working on the topic of the project. The sending organisation is there to support the volunteer with all the needs he or she has even if this would only mean talking to the volunteer in the native language, sending some positive energy to the volunteer through the Internet together with a new wave of motivation to complete the task. Every volunteer has a different personality, has different needs and requires a unique approach.

After the end of the voluntary service when the volunteer comes back to his or her native country, the representative of the sending organisation has a final meeting (post-return training) with the volunteer where there are several things to be discussed.

Most importantly, it is to find out if the set goals and aims of the project have been fulfilled, how this process was organised and finding out the reasons why something did not work. It is also important to ensure the visibility of the project by e.g. creating a report from the project or a blog summarising the whole voluntary service.

In case the volunteer has some difficulties with re-integrating to his or her home culture and society, the sending organisation provides him or her with help. It is ideal if a contact between the sending organisation and volunteer does not end with the post-return meeting – the sending organisation can e.g. offer a possibility to the volunteer to become its member or provide him or her with other opportunities how to use and further develop what the volunteer learned during the EVS (for example help with promotion of EVS within youth in local community, involving of ex-EVS volunteer in activities of the sending organisation, give him/ her space for sharing experience from EVS with others – employees and people around the SO, with youth from local community...).

Throughout the whole process, the cooperation among sending organisation, receiving organisation/coordinating organisation and National Agency are very important.

Thus, the magic aim of the sending organisation is to put a person in the right place at the right time and to create a unique once in a lifetime experience.

Sending organisation & volunteer – summary

- choice of the right organisation and position for the volunteer
- preparation of the volunteer (pre-departure training)
- travel documents, insurance, Activity Agreement
- communication with the volunteer and the receiving organisation during the service
- Final Evaluation meeting and support of the volunteer after returning of EVS to the home country.

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