

iPrepare: Online preparation for international volunteering

A support tool for supporting organizations and outgoing volunteers

The Training and Evaluation Cycle including the General Online Training established by the European Solidarity Corps put a great emphasis on supporting engagement in quality solidarity activities and contribute to the development of the ESC community. The participating organizations are responsible for providing proper and comprehensive support during all stages of the project.

This includes a mandatory **pre-departure training** (only for cross-border

activities) which should be organized by the supporting organization at least a month before departure. It has to be tailored to the individual needs of the participant and the specifics of the project. It should include at least information on:

- the content of the [Info-Kit](#) to be provided to the volunteer and the ESC framework
- the roles involved in the project (volunteer, HO, SO, mentor, tutor, NA, etc.)
- personal goals, motivations, expectations and fears
- intercultural learning competence
- conflict prevention and crisis management
- practicalities on visa (if required), health insurance, pocket money, working hours, etc.
- recognition of individual learning outcomes and Youthpass.

Besides a shift of the role from a sending organization within European Voluntary Service to an ESC “**supporting**” role, another innovation brought by the Programme is the [ESC Portal](#), which now allows a direct connection between the host organization and potential candidates. The implementation of this supporting tool has been very successful, as more than 175,000 young people have enrolled in the portal (data as of October 2019) and are now able to apply for projects, even if not previously in contact with a supporting organization. On one hand, this allows young people to become even more aware of their own educational, professional and personal development, fostering their entrepreneurship and personal branding from the very beginning. On the other hand, the possible lack of a proper preparation path, which includes a framework introduction and motivational paths promoted by sending organizations even before the application procedure, may result in a more challenging selection and preparation procedure afterwards.

Also, in some cases, selection from the portal may result in two possible scenarios:

- the selected volunteer indicates a supporting organization he or she is in contact with, which the applicant may not have worked with before, leading to new possible fruitful partnerships, but also potential risks of difficult cooperation;
- if the project partnership is planned already, the volunteer may be prepared by an organization he or she is not familiar with and which can be far away, leading to multiple online/virtual meetings rather than face to face pre-departure training.

Besides these possible scenarios, the supporting organizations have always taken a significantly different approach to the delicate process of pre-departure training, impacting the level of preparation of volunteers (see the [research report](#) drawn up by the iPrepare team on this issue). These aspects drove the need for a **unified specific pre-departure**



support tool which would complement – but not substitute – offline preparation offered by supporting organizations and improve the quality of volunteering projects. For this reason, the iPrepare team of experts developed an online platform which could combine typical e-learning elements with non-formal education methods; moreover, the team aimed to offer a tool that could be used by the users for self-study but that could also stimulate them to seek further offline preparation and support for their volunteering experience abroad from participating organizations.



The iPrepare tool has been designed to help the **pre-departure preparation of volunteers** leaving for long-term international projects (especially EVS/E+/**ESC** volunteers).

Using iPrepare you can get information, engage in interactive tasks and reflect about issues that are relevant for a future volunteer.

iPrepare is an interactive online platform allowing volunteers to engage in an online learning process while ensuring that they receive all the necessary information and have an opportunity to reflect on relevant issues prior to their departure. It also provides a wide range of content for the supporting organizations to aid the volunteers' learning process and to organize their preparation, making their work more effective and cost-efficient. The tool is freely accessible online to all volunteers and supporting organizations and is available both on PCs and mobile devices. It includes many **different types of interactive activities** (such as tests, quizzes, videos, drag&drop,

Try to match the contents of the Modules to their titles!

Content themes	What is the framework?
the framework and context of my volunteering project, info on the ESC programme	Drop here...
motivations, expectations, emotions about going abroad for the project	What is my motivation?
reflecting on meeting a new culture, intercultural learning, identity, stereotypes, culture shock and adaptation	Drop here...
practical advice from ex-volunteers	How to be useful?
experimenting with conflicts and tips about how to handle them	Drop here...
the role of the organisations, coordinator, mentor, supervisor and tips for my personal well-being	What can I learn?
the service aspect of my project, the concept of volunteering, connection to the local community	Drop here...
possible learnings at each phase of my project, the Hero's journey, non-formal learning, Youthpass	Who can support me?
a lot of questions to discover my hosting place and to elaborate project specific info	Drop here...
	How to deal with conflicts?
	Drop here...
	Where will I go?
	Drop here...



etc.), catering to different learning needs and styles. It offers a set of topics organized in nine modules which include the previously mentioned minimum general information indicated by the ESC Training and Evaluation Cycle, alongside other activities and resources based on years of experience and best practices in this field. The modules cover the ESC framework, the philosophy of volunteering, motivation and expectation, non-formal learning, roles and responsibilities of the actors involved, conflict management and problem solving, general support on how to compile project-specific information, intercultural learning, and practical tips and hints.

The **supplementary nature** of this tool allows supporting organizations to better identify and meets individual needs of the participants and to focus on aspects which cannot be addressed online, such as: trust-building and emotional support, project specific details, practical task-oriented preparation, and additional information based on the volunteers' needs and doubts which might arise while using the tool.

iPrepare can therefore be adapted to any context. Supporting organizations may suggest the volunteers use it autonomously and subsequently discuss their questions and concerns in the offline preparation stage. Alternatively, the organization may prepare an individualized program covering the most relevant topics and activities from the on-line tool. More suggestions on how to use the tool can be found in the "Note for supporting organizations".



About

The iPrepare tool was created under the Erasmus+ KA2 "i-Prepare" project (2017-2-HU01-KA205-036198), a collaborative effort of 3 organizations: Egyesek Youth Association from Hungary, Xena Centro Scambi e Dinamiche Interculturali from Italy, and Cia Cekija from the Czech Republic.

<https://www.iprepare.eu>

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