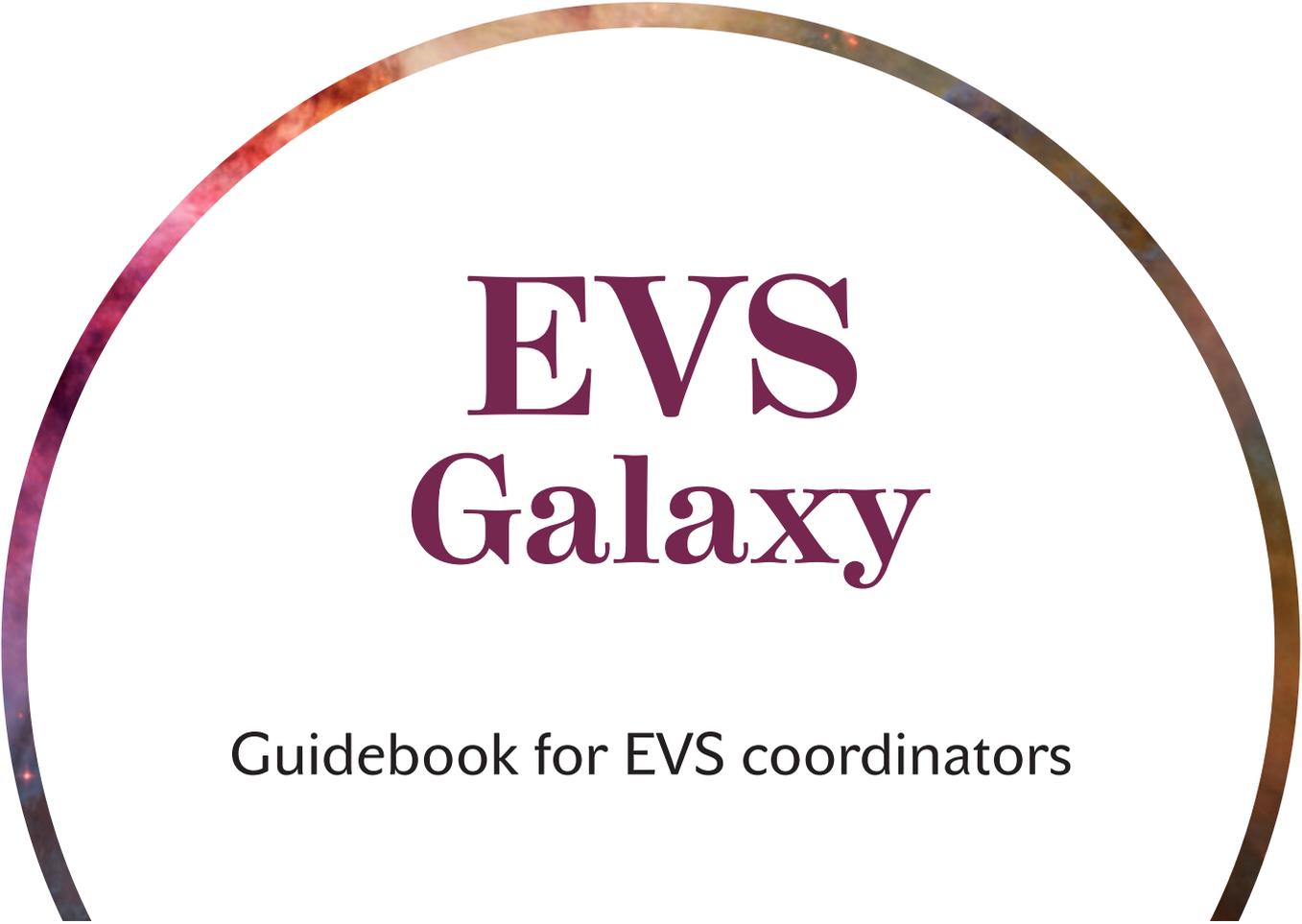


EVS Galaxy

Guidebook for EVS coordinators



EVS **Galaxy**

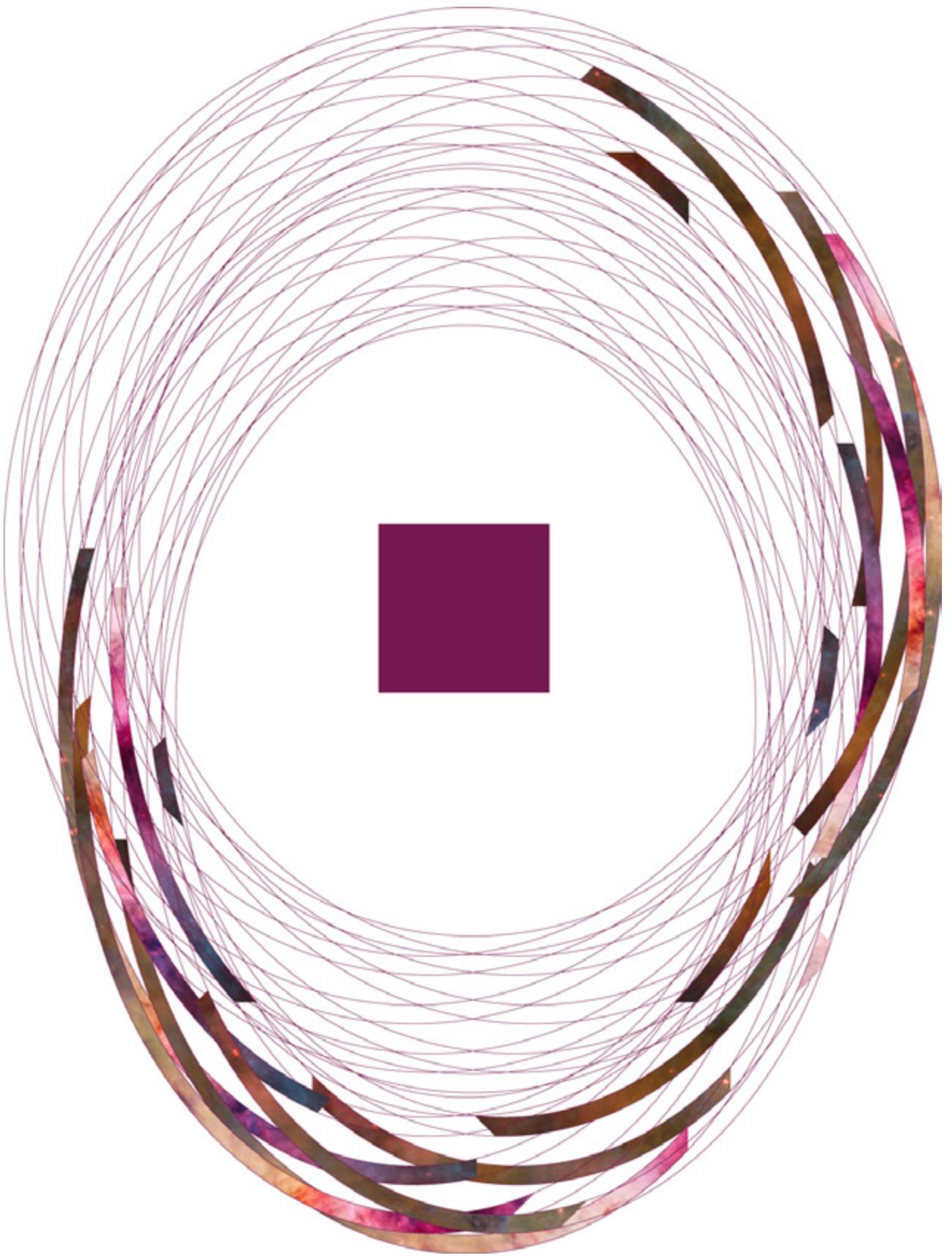
Guidebook for EVS coordinators



Acknowledgement

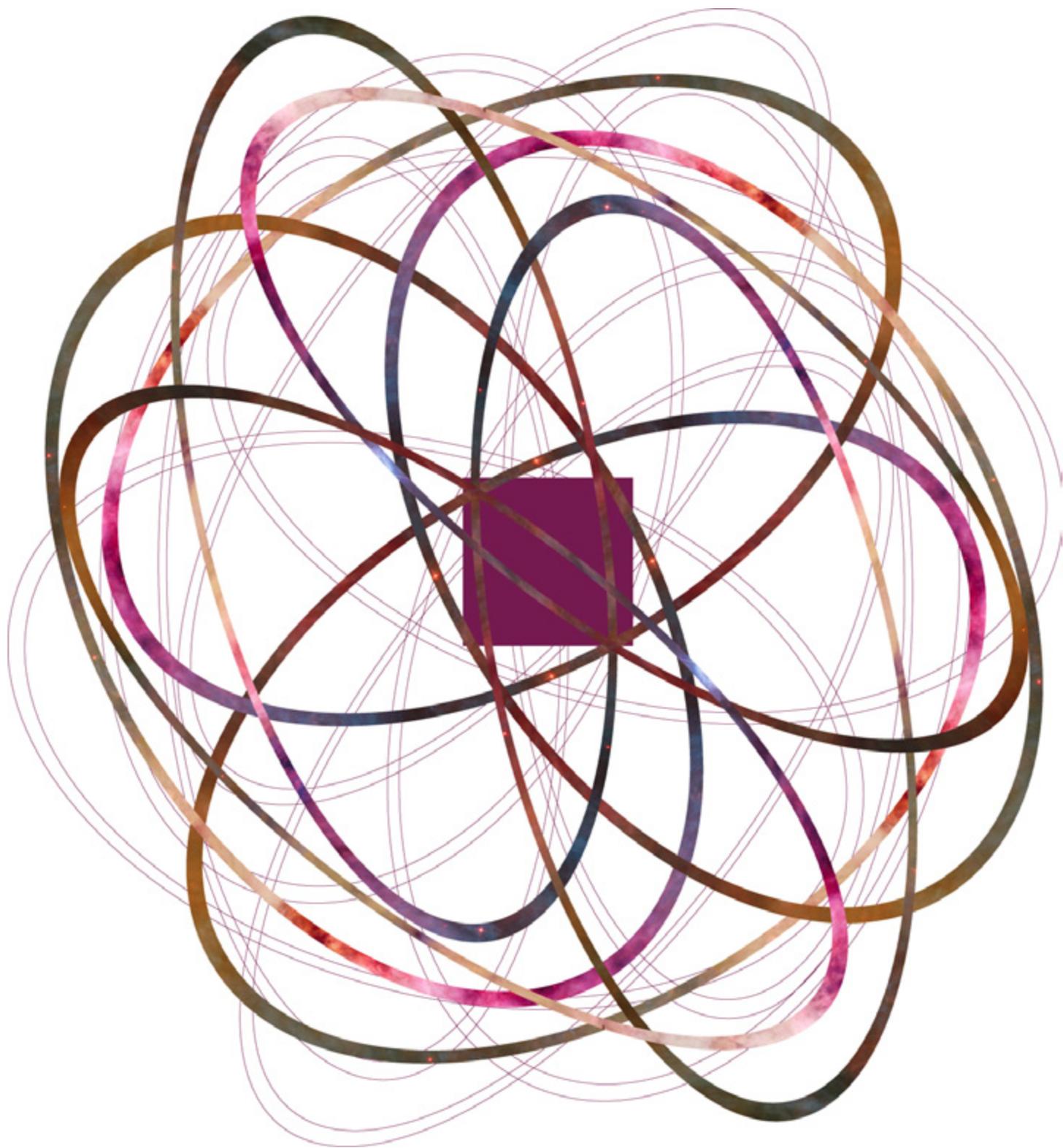
We would like to thank to all authors, who were willing to share their experience with EVS projects and contributed actively to the content of this brochure.

Many thanks to all of you!



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Introduction

This brochure was developed like the outcome (follow-up activity) of two International Training Courses (EVS in Our Hands – 2015, Prague, CZ; EVS Gathering-2016, Morávka, CZ), with the intention of offering various experience, good practice, concrete tools and methodologies of European Voluntary Service (EVS) projects. The brochure is aimed at organisations involved in EVS projects (acting like EVS sending and/or receiving and/or coordinating organisations), mainly for EVS coordinators – those who are already experienced in EVS projects, want to find new inspiration for their further work, but also for those who start with EVS, need support and concrete examples. At the same time, the brochure is a practical tool for mentors of EVS volunteers as well those, who are directly or indirectly involved in EVS projects.

The brochure collects various topics related to EVS agenda, which are important in different stages of EVS project (in preparation, realisation and evaluation of EVS project), including aims/objectives of EVS projects, roles of various partners in EVS project (sending, receiving, coordinating organisations, EVS volunteers, mentors...), their rights and responsibilities, specific important topics closely related to EVS (learning process and support of EVS volunteers, youthpass, intercultural learning, non-formal education, how to deal with problematic and conflict situations, tools and methodologies how to develop EVS projects in good quality, tips for arranging practicalities, how to support motivation of EVS coordinators, specifics of EVS in SEE/Western Balkans and EECA regions...).

We really appreciate number of contributions, articles as well number of authors, with various professional, cultural background and experience with EVS, who were open to share all those topics, tips and good practice with EVS projects with us – participants of both training courses (EVS coordinators and mentors), EVS trainers, EVS accreditors, mentors, experts working in EVS and voluntarism. In parallel, authors are coming from different countries (EU as well SEE/Western Balkans and EECA regions), this ensures also a variety of point of view on EVS topics.

We believe that this brochure will bring inspiration for EVS coordinators and will provide useful information about EVS, methodological approaches, tools and examples of good practice needed for work of EVS coordinators. At the same time, we hope that the brochure enables a better understanding of the EVS in its complexity among EVS actors and will motivate EVS coordinators for further development and improve the quality of EVS projects.

**On behalf of the team
of international training
courses „EVS in Our Hands“
and „EVS Gathering“**

Magda Wagenknechtová Svobodová



How can the National agency support the beneficiaries in European Voluntary Service (EVS)?

The NA provides ongoing support for the applicants. Apart from the ongoing offer to consult with the representatives of the National agency projects or applications by email, phone or personal visit, representatives of the organisations applying for funding can visit the info days for applicants, the info seminars for beneficiaries and the so-called „Roundtables for sending and receiving organisations of EVS“. In each of the sessions is a concrete programme based on the needs of target group prepared. Info days are focused on getting to know the Erasmus+ programme and the application for funding. Info seminars are focused on successful applicants, e.g. on the project as such, project agreement and the rights and responsibilities of beneficiaries. Roundtables are focused on experienced EVS coordinators, provide space for news in EVS, for the „hot“ topics and themes, partly defined by the organisers and partly by participants before and during the Roundtable. Also, there is usually space for sharing experience and good practice with EVS projects among participants during Roundtables (possibility to get new ideas/ inspiration for improving EVS projects in the NGOs). In each of above-mentioned activities, there is a space dedicated for a personal consultation.

Each of the EVS coordinators is supposed to take part in „Accreditation training for new coming EVS organisations“. During this four-day training the beginning coordinators will get to know all necessary information on EVS: from such technicalities as filling the application for accreditation, getting to know EVS project life cycle and rules/ responsibilities of each actor involved in the project to personal development of the volunteer, building up the educational plan of the volunteer and the intercultural dimension of the project. The goal is to have EVS coordinators ready for their first EVS project.

During the process of the accreditation, usually, two accreditors (internal or external) from the National agency do on-site visit the organisation and provide counselling on building up the project and filling in the application for accreditation in order to ensure its highest possible quality for the volunteer and for the organisation.

In order to ensure the high quality of mentoring, we are working on refreshment of „Mentorna“ – a brochure on mentoring providing all the basic information, practicalities and advice for new mentors of EVS volunteers.

Regarding the change in the organisation of Pre-departure training – the responsibility for providing Pre-departure training moves from NA to Sending organisations – we are preparing a comprehensive methodological brochure on Pre-departure training, which should facilitate organisation of Pre-departure preparation for Sending organisations.

Petr Syrůček,

The Centre for International Cooperation in Education

(Erasmus+ National agency in the Czech Republic), Czech Republic

Volunteering

Collecting rubbish in the city park, leading theatre club for children from elementary school every Friday, tutoring children from socially excluded communities, organizing football matches for teenagers, visiting patients in a hospital, translating articles about human rights violation, renovating a ruin of old castle, organizing conferences about public space, contributing to a collection for flood victims, assisting a girl on a wheelchair, building schools in Africa ... all that and more are examples of volunteering.

Volunteering has many faces and many forms how it can be organised. Parallel to that, there are as well many definitions that try to describe it. Some of the definitions are very broad and almost any activity that is beneficial for others can fit in them. Other definitions determine the conditions under which an activity can be considered as volunteering very strictly (like there has to be a written agreement between an organisation and the volunteer).

What are the most common fields of volunteering?

- Administrative and supporting tasks;
- Helping or working directly with people;
- Preparing and supporting voluntary activities;
- Managerial and coordination tasks;
- Campaigning and lobbying;
- The organisation of events.

Why volunteering?

Let us find the answer in the following quotations:

“Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” – *Margaret Mead*

“It is one of the beautiful compensations of life, that no man can sincerely help another without helping himself.” – *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.” – *Marjorie Moore*

Volunteering is letting people influence their surroundings, enables them to contribute to tackling the problems they see around themselves (everyone has a different radius in which he/she looks around themselves), gives them an opportunity to gain something may it be new skills, new contacts or the feeling of being useful.

Volunteering and EVS

Council of the European Union distinguished in its resolution regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field between voluntary activities and voluntary service.

Voluntary activities are all kinds of voluntary engagement. They are characterised by the following aspects: open to all, unpaid, undertaken by own free will, educational (non-formal learning aspect) and added social value.

Voluntary service is part of voluntary activities and is characterised by the following additional aspects: fixed period; clear objectives, contents, tasks, structure and framework; appropriate support and legal and social protection.

Already by the name European Voluntary Service (EVS), it is clear in which one of the two our programs belongs to.

What is typical for volunteering within the EVS frame when we compare it to other types of volunteering? EVS is:

- Long term
- Full time
- Happening abroad
- Based on a written agreement
- With financial support
- Open to all (within a given age limit)

History of volunteering

The very beginning of volunteering is connected to the religion. In the European space (as in other parts of the world influenced by medieval European civilisation), volunteering is connected to the Christian faith. In most of the places, the development of volunteering went a similar path – from orphanages and hospitals to today's situation where the variety of areas in which people are engaged in volunteering is immense.

The situation concerning volunteering is very different in various parts of the world. It is noticeably diverse even between countries that have a common cultural background. Volunteerism is strongly influenced by culture, history, politics, social arrangements in the country. Among European countries, we find both: those with a long history of volunteering and a well-developed NGO sector (such as the Netherlands, Ireland and the United Kingdom) and those where volunteering still has to fight for its enforcement and recognition (Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Lithuania). It might be handy to reflect upon this in the frame of EVS since the volunteers may come from a place where the culture of volunteering is very different to their EVS receiving organisation/country.

According to a study named "Volunteering in the European Union," there are two important historical milestones in the modern history of volunteering in Europe.

The first is the period of communism, which in countries where communism came to power, stopped the development of the nonprofit sector. NGOs were banned and those that might exist and were nationalised, managed and controlled by the state. This was the case in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and other countries.

The second milestone is the so-called crisis of the welfare state in 80 and 90 years. This milestone has affected the development of volunteering rather positively. At that time NGOs had to take over some of the areas which were previously taken care of by state – eg. The Netherlands and France.

The reality that we see, is the logical consequence of these two milestones. Countries with more developed economies and democratic traditions have a better developed non-profit sector, a more NGOs and a bigger share of its population are involved in voluntary activities.

Recognition of volunteering

Volunteering is not a new phenomenon, but it is rather recently that it is being officially recognised and paid attention to. Around the turn of the millennium strengthened the calls for social recognition of volunteering.

1985 – the UN declared December 5th as the official International Day of Volunteers

2001 – declared the Year of Volunteering by the United Nations and subsequently, some countries and declared its own year of volunteering. (ex. the UK in 2005)

2011 – European Commission launched the European Year of Volunteering

There is still a lot to be done in this field, but based on a growing number of volunteers as well as on the political support for volunteering we can see that the call is successful.

Recognition of volunteering is not only about the big events – it is much more about how is volunteering commonly spoken about. What happens when I say “I am a volunteer” or “I plan to go for a year abroad as a volunteer”? What is the reaction? Do people understand it as something beneficial for me? Do people understand it as beneficial for others or for the society? Do the potential future employers value an experience like that? The number of “YES” answers on these questions is growing. It is also our task in EVS to support it to grow faster. To engage more people and let them understand how enriching volunteering can be.

Resources

Educational, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency (EAC-EA) Directorate General Education and Culture (DG EAC), VOLUNTEERING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2010 http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/doc1018_en.pdf

Jana Randa,

*free-lance trainer, long-term experience with topic of EVS
and with EVS accreditations, Czech Republic/Slovakia*

Specifics and peculiarities of EVS

A tiny map for adventurers to an unexplored territory

Each EVS project is a bunch of unexpected forms of things we expect before it starts. EVS can enable us to become more experienced and more accomplished persons. It can bring new perspectives, new relations, new plans and new opportunities to our organisations, our volunteers, our communities and everyone involved.

To make this possible it may be really important for volunteers as well as for other parties in EVS projects (and especially for EVS coordinators) **to understand basic concepts of EVS** as well as clearly communicate with other parties about **its specifics and peculiarities** (whether related to EVS in general, or to a particular EVS project). This is key for helping volunteer-candidates gain a realistic image of the project and prevent misunderstandings or unrealistic expectations. And even more, it is important for EVS coordinator's professional preparation *of* the project and *for* the project.

It is best for each new EVS-coordinator to start their EVS journey by properly learning the basics, meaning what EVS is and is not. Official EU documents (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, EVS Charter, EVS Info-Kit, EVS database, etc.) belong to the first recommended sources of information for that. However, after studying those you may still be missing a more practical guide for your and your organisation's EVS – preparation. In this section, we will try to reduce this gap.

Nobody has to be perfect, to have a perfect EVS experience. Typically, and almost necessarily during EVS, project everyone involved will be exposed to a lot of new situations and influences. These can be both stimulating and challenging. Your personal EVS-experience will probably be different from "standard" conditions to which you are accustomed. And the same applies to your future volunteers. No one is likely to expect that EVS is the same as their usual "domestic" life. However, it is also **different from studying abroad and different from professional work life or common "in-land" volunteering**.

So, what are the differences? A good example to start with is **climate difference**. Many volunteer-candidates, when responding to published EVS-vacancies, don't realise how big this issue can be on a long-term EVS project. However, in practice, it belongs to the most difficult parts of EVS, simply because it can be demanding to get used to a big difference. Especially if you have interested candidates from a distant location. The length of daylight, proportions of year seasons, common temperatures and proportion of sunny and rainy days in your country can be even very different from what they take for granted. Even if they already have some experience with staying abroad. As an example, it might not be enough to inform your volunteers to "bring warm clothes for wintertime" if they can have a completely different idea of warm clothes and of wintertime than your reality is.

Another big group of differences can be labelled **cultural difference**, which includes **mentality and emotionality**. Both you and your volunteers will have to repeatedly realise that some of your natural expectations from the other party can be unexpected, strange, or even unacceptable due to a different cultural background. This may apply to specific mentality, but also to **local habits, cuisine or fashion**. All of these aspects can really bring a lot of funny, enriching, but also unpleasant moments to everyone involved, whilst their intensity can be influenced by the length and stage of the project. Many times, even very basic things have to be gently and carefully discussed and explained. Therefore it is really good if all actors involved are somehow being prepared, or at least informed ahead about "the unexpected element" in this field.

Next example is another crucial moment in EVS: **language**. Firstly, you have to realise, that on EVS project you will not be able to communicate with volunteers in your native language. Although studying local language is always an integral part of EVS, the level volunteers reach during their EVS placement is rarely comparable with locals. Similarly, volunteers might not be able to communicate with anyone in their mother tongue. (For practising their own language and keeping contacts with family, they will have to use the internet or a phone.) This can bring amusing situations, but also a strong sense of solitude and isolation (especially to the volunteers), misunderstandings and frustration until volunteers become sufficiently integrated into the local community. To be able to discuss most of the topics (especially during first months), you will usually really need to use a third language. And this again brings a huge potential for fun, but also for possible troubles. (Imagine how many misunderstandings happen even amongst locals with no language barrier.) The grant scheme wants project partners to select volunteers regardless of their language skills. But here are some questions for you: Can you afford to accept a volunteer with whom you don't have a mutually spoken language? Will there be someone else in your organisation to interact and speak to the volunteers when you are not available? Will you be able to provide sufficient language training to the volunteers during (and possibly before) the EVS project?

All of the differences discussed until now may seem to bring more problems than benefits to you and your organisation. In fact, these aspects are often really demanding, especially if you (or your organisation) underestimate them. On the other hand, this real international experience **can really help you (and your volunteers) develop highly valuable qualities like empathy, intuition, estimation, respect to differences and tolerance. As well, everyone involved may gain a special „competitive edge“** for the labour market just thanks to the language (or even thanks to "the culture") they have learned thanks to EVS.

And this brings us to the next specific aspect of EVS. Let's call it **working conditions**. EVS as such is a program of **non-formal education** of young people. And it works on a grant basis. This can sometimes bring challenges for traceability and sustainability of your organisation's activities and plans. In other words, you can rarely fully rely on your plans on grant approvals and instant help from volunteers. Yes, EVS volunteers can and should bring added value to your organisation (and surrounding community), whilst gaining new experience and skills. But they should not (and usually even cannot) substitute employees of your organisation. EVS volunteers usually need a lot of various forms of support and attention for their successful integration in your community. Not only because a day has 24 hours and a volunteer's working hours 6 or so.

A decision to start receiving volunteers always brings a new long-term set of specific responsibilities to a new Receiving Organisation (RO). These cannot be delegated only to one person called EVS coordinator, but have to be recognised and accepted by the whole organisation, with a long-term support of its management. This is because apart from their needs, RO's have to be well aware of their portion of responsibility for the educational part of each EVS project and for personal development of volunteers. If all of the above is realised, planned and implemented properly, then your organisation will already have done a lot to successfully harvest specific fruits of EVS.

Resources

www.dobrovolnici.eu

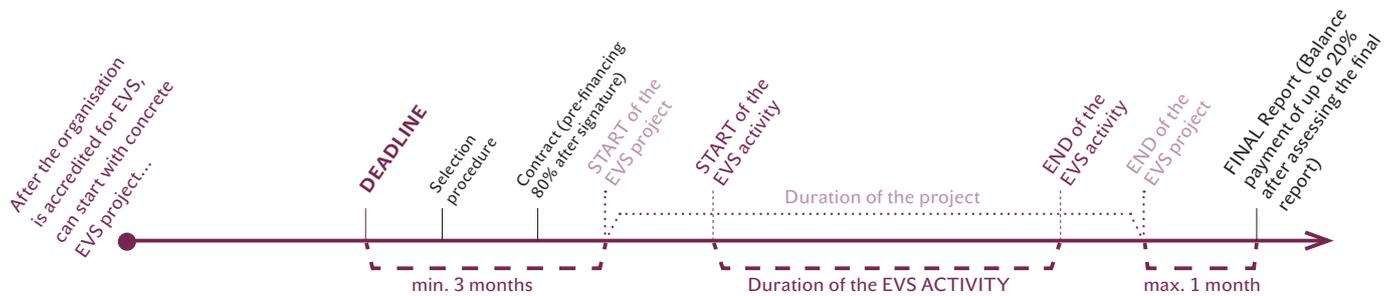
<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/see/resources/seepublications/hopscotch/evs/>

Ondrej Strnád,

Centrum voľného času – JUNIOR / Banská Bystrica, EVS coordinator,

long-term experience with topic of EVS, Slovakia

EVS Project Life Cycle – what the EVS coordinator should think about?



	I. Before DEADLINE-before submitting of the application form	II. Before DEPARTURE of volunteer for EVS	III. During EVS	IV. After RETURN of EVS volunteer to home country
SENDING ORGANISATION (SO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to EVS volunteer with finding suitable receiving organisation for EVS project • Communication with receiving organisation (sharing expectations of SO, RO and volunteer from EVS, creating of the EVS project together with RO) • Signing the partnership – mandate contract (in case the SO has the role of partner organisation in the project) • Submitting of the application form to NA/ EACEA (in case the SO is also in the role of the „coordinating organisation“). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure the „pre-departure training“ for EVS volunteer in needed quality • Help with ensuring travel to/ from RO to EVS volunteer • Help with ensuring visa if needed • Ensuring of insurance of EVS volunteers – through centrally chosen insurance company (CIGNA-www.cigna-healthbenefits.com) • Continuous communication with EVS volunteer and his/her support • Continuous communication with RO about content of the project and practicalities (accommodation, boarding, special needs of EVS volunteer if needed) • Signing the Volunteering Agreement EVS with EVS volunteer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with EVS volunteer on regular basis (weekly/ monthly...) • Continuous support of EVS volunteer (motivation, learning process, sharing experience...) • Help in crisis situations / with solving possible problems to EVS volunteer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support of EVS volunteer with re-integration in the home country • Support of EVS volunteer in the motivation to share experience from EVS • Offering possibilities for further involvement of EVS volunteer into activities of the SO (promoting EVS among youth, sharing experiences from EVS etc.) • Sharing experience of EVS volunteer within employees of the NGO – to discuss benefits/ limits of EVS for the SO and how to do EVS project in higher quality in the future • Communication with the RO – sharing experience with EVS (benefits/ limits of EVS and how to do EVS project in higher quality in the future) • Informing the EVS volunteer about „Evaluation Meeting of ex-EVS volunteers“ and motivate EVS volunteer to participate in • Submitting of the Final report of the project (in case the SO is also in the role of the CO)

	I. Before DEADLINE-before submitting of the applica- tion form	II. Before DEPARTURE of volunteer for EVS	III. During EVS	IV. After RETURN of EVS volunteer to home country
RECEIVING ORGANISATION (RO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with possible candidates for EVS • Selection of EVS volunteer • Communication with SO (sharing expectations of SO, RO and volunteer from EVS, creating of the EVS project together with SO) • Signing the partnership – mandate contract (in case the RO has the role of partner organisation in the project) • Submitting of the application form to NA/ EACEA (in case the RO is also in the role of „coordinating organisation“) • Preparation of practicalities for receiving an EVS volunteer (communication with staff of the RO about the intention to receive EVS volunteers, to find out possibilities for accommodation, mentor for EVS volunteer, suitable language support...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring suitable accommodation for EVS volunteer • Ensuring mentor for EVS volunteer • Intensive communication with EVS volunteer as well with SO about content of the project/ activities-expectations of EVS volunteer and about practicalities (accommodation, boarding, special needs of EVS volunteer if needed) • Signing the Volunteering Agreement EVS with EVS volunteer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring clear long-term plan of various activities • Setting and following of educational aims of the project (EVS volunteer as well RO) • Evaluation and planning meetings with EVS volunteer and project coordinator on regular basis • Long-term support of EVS volunteers, including help with integration into local community and culture • Help in crisis situations / with solving possible problems to EVS volunteer • Ensuring mentor (setting of regular meetings of EVS volunteer with mentor) • Regular communication with SO • Ensuring practicalities: accommodation, boarding, language support, pocket-money, local transport (if necessary), days off (2 consecutive free days per week) and holiday (2 days of holiday per month) • Ensuring of participation of EVS volunteer on „On-arrival“ training course and „Mid-term Evaluation“ • Set up the Youthpass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with the SO – sharing experience with EVS (benefits/ limits of EVS and how to do EVS project in higher quality in the future) • Sharing experience with EVS within employees of the RO – to discuss benefits/ limits of EVS for the RO and how to do EVS project in higher quality in the future • Support of EVS volunteers (follow-up activities and possible cooperation with the RO) • Submitting of the Final report of the project (in case the RO is also in the role of the CO)

Explanatory text (shortcuts used in the text):

SO – sending organisation / RO – receiving organisation / CO – coordinating organisation/ EVS – European Voluntary Service

Resources

Erasmus + Programme Guide, European Commission-DG EAC, 2017.

Experiences of EVS coordinators from “Accreditation training courses for new sending and hosting organisations” (organized by the CZ NA within 2004–2013).

Magda Wagenknechtová Svobodová,

*Association of Non-formal Education z.s. (ANEV z.s.), long-term experience
with topic of EVS and with EVS accreditations, Czech Republic*

The Hero's Journey – a bit different project life cycle of EVS

The Hero's Journey is a pattern of personal growth and transformation, which was introduced by Joseph Campbell, an American **mythologist**, writer and lecturer, best known for his work in **comparative mythology** and **comparative religion**. He has studied myths and fairy tales of different cultures from all over the world and discovered, that they all follow the same pattern – which we call today The Hero's Journey or The Monomyth.

What more, we can apply the same pattern to many situations in our lives, it is being used by moviemakers to create successful stories and... it can be also very well used as a map of going through the experience of EVS. The word Hero might seem to refer to men only... but it applies also to women, Heroines. We were using now this concept for many years while working on reflection and planning process with EVS volunteers and also to educate EVS coordinators and mentors about the possible steps of volunteer's inner and outer journey. And, of course, also coordinators, mentors and other actors are going through their own Hero's Journeys. The concept was widely accepted and appreciated in EVS world, especially because:

- It is archetypal – it touches something which most of us can understand and relate to
- It is universal – it applies to all the different cultures
- It is simple – you can easily and in short time explain it to anybody
- It brings understanding, acceptance and empowerment – as a map of life situation

So how does The Hero's Journey go...

1. The ordinary World, „sleeping“

The Hero is living his or her conventional life, sometimes comfortable, sometimes not...

2. Call to adventure

At some point, there is a call for adventure, inner push that something has to be changed, or a message from outside. A person learns about the possibility of EVS, get's inspired by friends example, is kicked out of a job, feels need to do something new, wants to become independent from parents, receives an invitation from beloved person – coordinator of EVS in a different country. Or any other way.

3. Refusal of the call

Very often the Hero hesitates at the beginning, doubts own abilities, fears to leave the comfort and the well known world, deny the adventure.

A potential volunteer might be lost in offers, fear to leave the job, underestimate own ability to handle one year abroad or just feel lazy.

4. Meeting the mentor, guide; receiving special item, tool

If the hero decides to accept the call, usually a guide, wise person, appears to support the hero. He or she brings some wisdom and also some special item, like the magic sword, which will be very useful later. While now, we don't know yet...

In EVS world this could be EVS coordinator, ex-volunteer, friend,... or attending predeparture training. Time to collect pieces of wisdom, which we maybe don't understand so well yet, but we will value them later.

5. Crossing the threshold

There is a clear moment when the Hero crosses the threshold and steps from the known reality into the unknown world. The adventure can start.

EVS volunteer is entering the new country, new organisation, a new culture.

6. Unknown World. Test allies and enemies; trials. Preparation.

The hero is learning to live in new reality, finding out who are the allies and who are enemies – beings or symbolical ones, overcoming first obstacles, going through challenges. It is a time of training and discipline, getting ready for the "real" challenge.

EVS volunteer is getting to know the organisation and its culture, new environment, colleagues, co-volunteers... learning the language, how to handle with pocket money, how to be useful, how to co-live with other strangers in a flat,... Partly honeymoon time of discovering many new things, partly the hard time of learning. Good time for on arrival training, good time for small reachable goals and easier tasks, which can be fulfilled. Here the role of EVS mentor is important, to help with the orientation, and also EVS coordinator is in this period may be giving more than receiving for the organisation/community.

7. Big ordeal

Time of a big ordeal, fatal challenge, that has to be solved by the hero. Beating the dragon, visiting the dark cave, symbolical death. The moment, when the hero is left alone and has to prove his or her abilities. Time to remember magical sword or piece of wisdom from a guide and use it.

EVS volunteer is working on the own mini-project, on a difficult task from the organisation, solving the critical interpersonal situation. It can be anything, what is the real challenge for volunteer – whether it is connected with work or personal life. In this moment, it is necessary to leave him or her the space for acting and responsibility, for facing the challenge. Time of preparations, of "parenting" the volunteer is over. He or she is stepping into adulthood of the EVS time. As it is important to be of support and accompany volunteer step by step, so that he or she can integrate well, now it is time to step back and let the volunteer fly. While, somewhere around, there is still midterm evaluation meeting, to give the injection of motivation and empowerment.

8. Getting the treasure, change, new insights, reward

When the hero beats the dragon, there is a reward. Sometimes princess and half of the kingdom, but always a symbolical rebirth, the hero is never the same as before. He or she is transformed – wiser, stronger, adult, more responsible,... richer with new powers.

EVS volunteer has grown, gained new competencies – skills, knowledge and attitudes. Youthpass can be the guide, which helps to see and acknowledge these new superpowers. And there is the community to recognise them and appreciate them, celebrate with the volunteer.

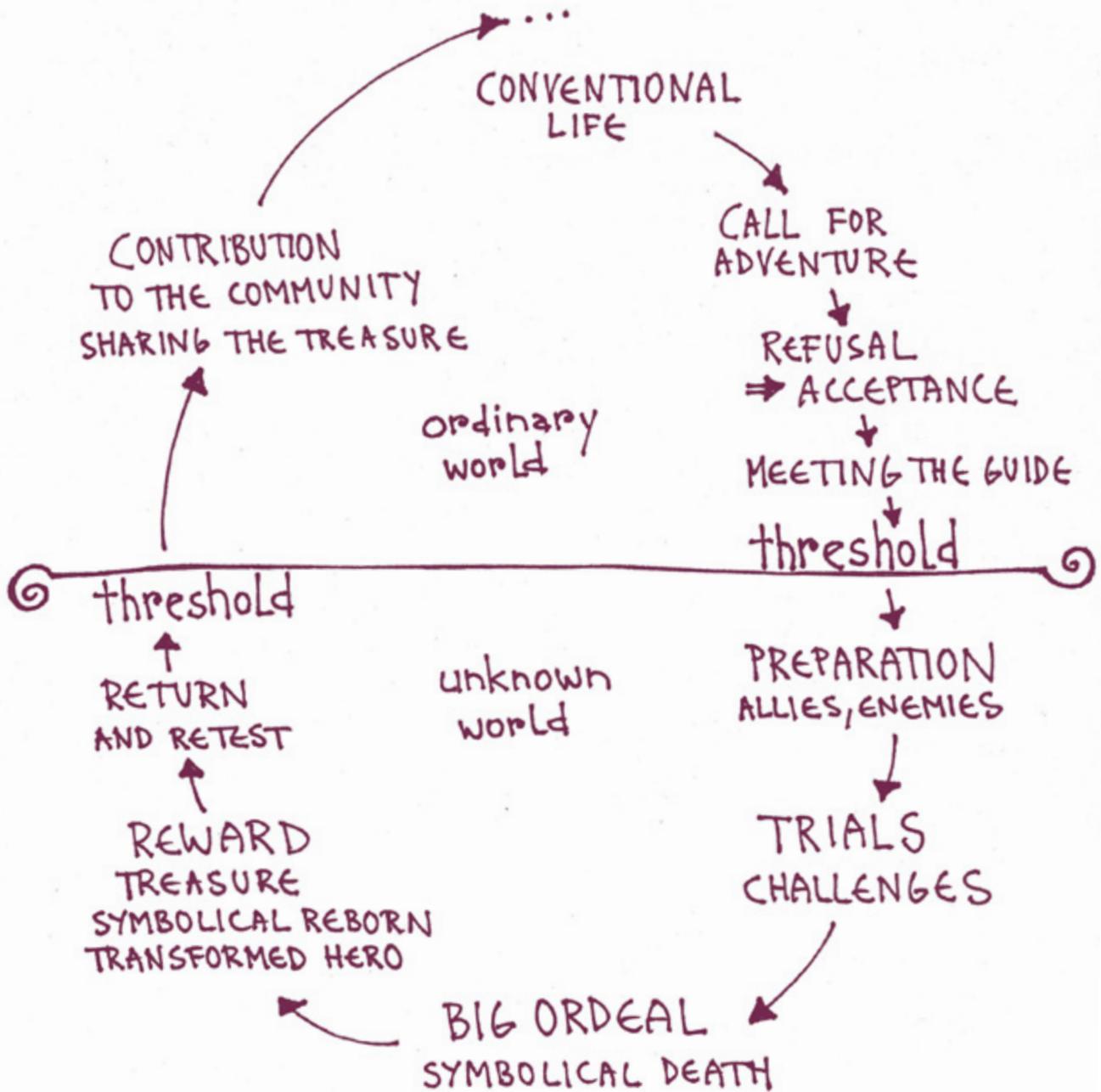
9. The way back, retest

The hero starts the returning journey. There is usually a re-test on the way, which proves, that the new superpowers are actual and stable, that the hero is able to use them.

EVS volunteer is slowly turning his or her head towards home. It is the difficult part often. Should I stay or should I go? How to close well the experience? How to leave a good footprint? How to come back and handle again new situation? Cultural shock after coming back home can be sometimes stronger, than the when coming for EVS.

The Hero's Journey / Monomyth

BY JOSEPH CAMPBELL



10. Crossing the return threshold

The hero is crossing the threshold once again, leaving the unknown (not anymore J) world, stepping into the everyday life – of different quality.

EVS volunteer is finishing the service. Mostly leaving back home, sometimes staying in the hosting country, sometimes continuing somewhere else.

11. Bringing the treasure back to the community

Here is the crucial part, when the hero comes back home and uses his or her new superpowers in the service for the community. Suddenly the whole adventure starts to make a sense.

EVS volunteer is using his or her new competencies after EVS. EVS annual meeting and support of sending organisation can be useful in finding good ways to do so. Time to act, time for follow-up activities and dissemination. And here we are touching the aim of the whole EVS programme, to raise responsible adults who are contributing to their communities.

Can you see the links between the Hero's Journey and EVS? Where in the cycle is your volunteer? What does it mean for you? – What kind of support, the leadership he or she needs at the moment so that it serves to him or her and the organisation/clients/community as well? And where do you see yourself?

Usually, we are in life on many parallel Hero's Journeys, in different stages. Seeing where we already have the treasures and how we are useful for the community can help us to overcome the challenges in topics, where we are still on the way, or support us not to refuse the call and step into the adventure once more. Have a good journey!

Resources

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hhk4N9A0oCA> – Matthew Winkler, video explaining Hero's Journey

*Helena Kosková,
free-lance trainer, long-term experience
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The „rights“ and „responsibilities“ of EVS actors

Before the EVS activity?

In European Voluntary Service there are several actors involved, each of them having their rights, but also responsibilities. It is important for each actor to be aware of both of these aspects, as keeping up to them can ensure a smooth and pleasant experience for all parties involved. The main stakeholders in EVS are following: The EVS Volunteer, a Sending organisation (SO – represented by an appointed coordinator), a Receiving organisation (RO – represented by a coordinator), sometimes a Coordinating organisation (CO – in case neither SO or RO apply for a grant) and a Mentor. These are the stakeholders who are in direct contact with one EVS project. The more distant (but nevertheless important) are the National Agencies (NA) of both countries (or Salto offices there where NAs are not represented).

As there are several phases during the Service, there are also different rights and responsibilities one needs to be aware of during each of the phases. The general recommendations concerning the division of responsibilities can be found in the **EVS Charter**.

Before the EVS activity — preparation Volunteer

Right

- To know concrete details of the project (description of work, living arrangements, food money, coordinator, mentor, ...)
- To receive help with the travel arrangements if needed

Responsibility

- To communicate and confirm the participation in the project in case he/she was selected and is interested

Coordinating organisation (if involved, otherwise the grant applicant)

Right

- To be informed about any changes from any other actors

Responsibility

- To coordinate the project
- To divide granting between Sending and Receiving organisation
- To arrange insurance and visa for the volunteer

Sending organisation

Right

- To be informed about any changes from any other actors
- To have complete information about the project

Responsibility

- To help the volunteers to find and contact suitable receiving organisation
- To prepare the volunteer for the EVS experience
- To ensure, in cooperation with the receiving organisation, that the volunteer receives support in carrying out language preparation (if applicable, support to carry out the online language course and assessments provided by the Commission)
- To ensure pre-departure training course (pre-departure support). In case the pre-departure training course is organised by the National Agency or SALTO, the sending organisation ensures the participation of the EVS volunteers in the pre-departure session.

Receiving organisation

Right

- To be informed about any changes from any other actors
- To have complete information about the project

Responsibility

- To prepare the environment for the arrival of the Volunteer
- To communicate with the Volunteer regularly

During the EVS activity – implementation Volunteer

Right

- To have a work that is not substituted for the regularly paid job and that is ideally described before in a contract between the Volunteer, the Sending and the Receiving organisation (and the Coordination organisation, if involved).
- To be informed about learning opportunities for EVS volunteer(s) – identification of clear learning opportunities (goals) of the EVS project.
- To receive a relevant training/ education connected to work if needed
- To attend On-arrival Training Course and Mid-term Evaluation
- To arrange language learning opportunities and support to volunteers undertaking language courses (online course offered by the EC, individual/ group language course etc.)
- To have a suitable accommodation according to his/her needs. To ensure needed privacy (for example in the case of shared flat/apartment, it is highly recommended to ensure for each EVS volunteer own room).
- To receive food money (or to be provided food),
- To receive pocket money regularly (on a weekly or monthly basis)
- To ensure that means of local transport are available for the volunteer(s).
- To have a functional mentor
- To have two subsequent days per week off
- To have two days per month off (can be cumulated, depends on the agreement with the receiving organisation)
- To have a coordinator responsible for the volunteer at work who explains the tasks
- To not be left alone with work he/she doesn't feel confident/competent in
- To get help and support when needed
- To get proper equipment / tools for work
- To evaluate and plan progress of work together with the coordinator
- To be informed how the grant money is concretely spend

Responsibility

- To follow the instructions of the coordinator
- To keep to agreed dates and promises
- To take part in the On-arrival training and Mid-term meeting
- To keep confidentiality about the organisation, the clients

Sending organisation

Right

- To be informed of development of EVS project and of all bigger project changes

Responsibility

- To communicate with the Volunteer regularly and to be in contact with the receiving organisation(s) during the project.

Receiving organisation

Right

- In short: to have Volunteer fulfil his/her responsibilities

Responsibility

- In short: to provide Volunteer with his/her rights

Mentor

Right

- To be informed of all major changes in the project concerning the Volunteer

Responsibility

- To be in regular touch with the Volunteer

After the EVS activity – follow up Volunteer

Right

- To receive Youthpass

Responsibility

- To fill in final report
- To attend the Evaluation Meeting of ex-EVS volunteers (annual EVS event), organised by NAs.

Coordinating + Sending + Receiving organisation

Right

- In case all formal requirements are fulfilled, to receive the rest of the grant money

Responsibility

- To finalise and submit the final report
- To implement any follow-up activity mentioned in the grant

Sending organisation

- provides support to volunteer(s) to help reintegrate them into their home community;
- gives volunteers the opportunity to exchange and share experiences and learning outcomes;
- encourages the involvement of the volunteer(s) in dissemination and exploitation of results and learning outcomes;
- provides guidance regarding further education, training or employment opportunities;
- ensures the participation of the volunteers in the annual EVS event organised by the NA (Evaluation Meeting for ex-EVS volunteers).

What are rights of EVS volunteer, are responsibilities of the receiving and/or sending organisation and vice-versa. All actors involved in concrete EVS project should most importantly stay in regular contact from the very beginning of the project – already within the planning phase. It is very recommendable to create and agree upon a partnership agreement describing concrete tasks and responsibilities of all included actors. Clear communication during whole EVS project can prevent misunderstandings and unnecessary complications.

Resources

EVS Charter: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/library//evs-charter_en.pdf

Hopscotch to Quality in EVS 2.0: practical handbook for enhancing quality in European Voluntary Service:
<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/see/resources/hopscotch/hopscotch2.0/>

The European Voluntary Service Info Kit: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents-for-applicants/evs-info-kit_en

European Commission, "Erasmus+ Programme Guide":

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf

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EVS

Galaxy

As you can see from the picture bellow, there is ensured clear systematic support of EVS volunteers from various EVS actors (SO, RO, M, CO, NAs, SALTOs, EACEA, EC...) during all phases of the EVS project. This support is useful for EVS volunteers for the successful realisation of EVS and is helpful especially in the case of misunderstandings and conflict situations. Diagram also presents a sequence of solving possible problems by various EVS actors.

In the preparation phase, it is usually the sending organisation (SO), which is often in direct personal contact with EVS volunteer (clarification of motivation of volunteer for EVS, his/her expectations, helping with contacting foreign receiving organisations, choosing right EVS project...). Later, before departure to EVS project, the sending organisation helps to EVS volunteer with preparation (sharing content of EVS projects/ ensuring pre-departure training, preparing for living in other culture...) and with ensuring practicalities (insurance, visa if needed...).

During the EVS activity, the EVS volunteer is supported mainly by the receiving organisation (RO) and mentor (M). Receiving organisation ensures support for EVS volunteers mainly in following areas: support for involvement of EVS volunteer to prepared activities/work, support with leading of educational process of EVS volunteers, support with integration in the local community and in hosting culture (together with mentor), ensuring practicalities like language support, suitable accommodation and boarding... Mentor supports EVS volunteers mainly in personal and social life, with adaptation process in hosting country, his/her integration in local community, helps to reflect learning process, including intercultural aspects of EVS experience and gives support to EVS volunteer in case of conflict/crisis situations. There are usually several people around EVS volunteers, who give him/her concrete support. Usually, mentor and EVS coordinator (task related support, supervisor...person who is responsible for planning tasks/flow of EVS projects) of receiving organisation are very important and the closest in relation to EVS volunteer. At the same, those can help usually effectively by solving problems, misunderstandings or possible conflict situations of EVS volunteer while being in hosting country. Open clear communication, often sharing of impressions, feelings of EVS volunteer and building of trust between EVS volunteer, mentor and staff of receiving organisation help significantly like prevention of conflicts.

In some EVS projects, there is involved separately coordinating organisation. In those cases, the coordinating organisation supports methodologically whole EVS process in receiving organisation(s), including giving support to EVS volunteers. Division of tasks, leading of EVS project, support and ensuring practicalities is a common agreement between coordinating and receiving organisation(s) in this case. For better understanding, it is highly recommended to share division of tasks between coordinating organisation and receiving organisation with EVS volunteers before coming to EVS volunteer to the receiving organisation (or just after the arrival of EVS volunteer to the receiving organisation). This can also help in the prevention of possible misunderstandings and problems in EVS projects.

Besides close contact with mentor and receiving organisation, the EVS volunteer as well receiving organisation should be in regular contact with sending organisation during the realisation of EVS in hosting country. The sending organisation is playing important role in case of solving serious problems/ conflict situations and can influence the decision-making process in case the EVS volunteer, mentor and receiving organisation are not able to find enough suitable solving of problems/ conflicts between themselves.

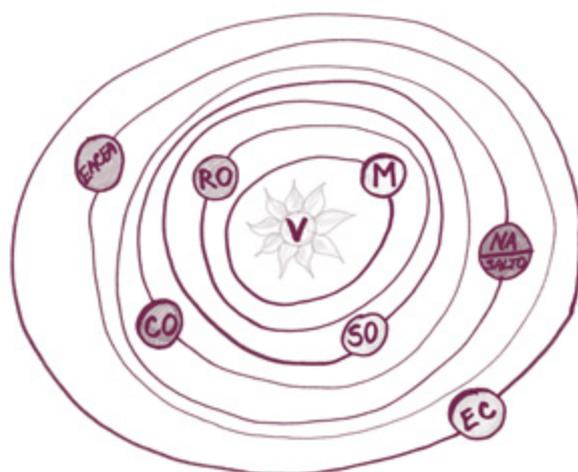
In case of very serious problems, when the EVS volunteer, mentor, receiving, coordinating (if it is involved in the project) and sending organisations are not able to find common suitable solution or give necessary support to EVS volunteer, it is possible to contact national and European authorities – National Agency (NA of hosting coun-

try, eventually sending country), SALTO centres, EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency), eventually EC (European Commission). Those can help by analysing the case, giving feedback and official recommendations for solving the situation.

After returning of EVS volunteers home, the role of sending organisation is again very important. It is up to the sending organisation to evaluate the EVS project with ex-volunteer, to give him/ her support with re-integration process and to motivate him/her to further steps, how to use gained EVS experience. Apart from possibility to attend annual evaluation EVS event (organised by sending NAs or SALTO centres) it is usually both-site useful (for EVS volunteer as well for sending organisation) if the sending organisation offers involvement to its various activities, eventually, supports EVS volunteer in his/her own follow-up activity.

Having in mind this systematically approach, the EVS is a unique safe opportunity, how to support volunteering in a foreign country, with the strong educational both-sites process (for EVS volunteers as well for receiving organisations and local community), including intercultural learning and with enough safe project environment.

Explanatory text (shortcuts used in the text and in diagram)



- SO – sending organisation
- RO – receiving organisation
- CO – coordinating organisation
- M – mentor
- SO-NA – National Agency in sending country
- RO- NA – National Agency in receiving country
- SALTO RC – Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities for Youth Resource Centres
- EACEA – Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
- EC – European Commission

Resources

Erasmus + Programme Guide, European Commission-DG EAC, 2017.

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf

Hopscotch to Quality in EVS 2.0 (A practical Handbook for enhancing quality in European Voluntary Service) – <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/see/resources/hopscotch/hopscotch2.0/>

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Roles and partnership

Although it seems that EVS project is only a matter of sending and receiving organisations and a volunteer, we can distinguish many different subjects that can help us improve the impact of our project to our local communities. In every EVS projects we can identify following roles:

Receiving organisation (RO) – the responsibility of receiving organisation is first of all in assuring of safety working environment of the volunteer. It is necessary to identify the real need why the receiving organisation needs a volunteer and consider not only the amount of the working tasks but also the learning opportunities that can receive organisation offer to volunteer. Organisation environment should be well prepared for accepting a volunteer because it can cause a lot of changes and misunderstanding. It is necessary to speak with all employees of the organisation about aims/ objectives of EVS, what EVS projects can bring and also where can be any potential risks, even during accreditation procedure and before EVS volunteer come to the receiving organisation.

Sending organisation (SO) – sending organisation is first of all responsible for all the process of sending. It means helping a young person to find a suitable project, speaking with him/her about the motivation and expectations and also explaining the opportunities that EVS project can bring for improving the future position in a labour market. Sending organisation should prepare a volunteer also for a culture shock and speak with the volunteer about his/her worries. In the process of starting the cooperation between sending and receiving organisation we strongly recommend to be in touch regularly and set up ways of solving potential problems. The partnership is one of the most important issues of EVS project and if it works well it can be very helpful for both organisations and also for a volunteer.

Coordinator – coordinator is a person of sending and receiving organisation that is necessary for the EVS project. In sending organisations coordinator is a person that is in touch with the young person in the process of choosing the project and preparing for his/her stay in foreign country. During the stay of volunteer abroad coordinator of sending organisation should be in regular touch not only with the volunteer but also with the coordinator of receiving organisation. As soon as the project is over sending organisation should be again in touch with a volunteer and help him/her exploit gained knowledge and skills as much as possible. Also at this time, it is very important that the sending organisation supports an EVS volunteer in re-integration process in the home country. Coordinator of receiving organisation is first of all responsible for direct work with the volunteer, planning and monitoring of learning outcomes, managing all necessary practical issues and solving all problems that may appear. The coordinator is pretty important for a volunteer because it is just the first person that volunteer meets in a new country. The coordinator should meet the volunteer regularly and speak with him about his work, successes, development or troubles as much as possible. During common meetings, there should be space for feedback of EVS volunteer as well coordinator mapping involvement of EVS volunteer in previous activities as well space for planning activities for next period, including the topic of learning aims/ process of EVS volunteer as well summarisation related to the whole long-term EVS project. The coordinator is also responsible for ensuring of long-term coherence of the whole EVS project (setting and evaluation long-term aims of EVS in the receiving organisation/ educational aims, how those aims are reflected in concrete activities the EVS volunteer is involved in).

Mentor – mentor is a young person who is in touch with a volunteer and helps him with integration to the local community. It can be a person at the same age as the volunteer but we also know some organisations where the mentor is much older than volunteer and it works very well. The mentor shouldn't be an employee of the receiving organisation although it is an advantage if s/he knows the organisation surrounding. The mentor is more a friend that can speak with a volunteer about all troubles and help him solve it. It is very important if the communication between coordinator of receiving organisation and volunteer doesn't work well. It is necessary that the EVS coordinator respects the role of the mentor and is open to his/ her inputs/feedback/ sharing the information about running of EVS project. The mentor should be active in touch with the volunteer, introduce him/her to members of local community and help him find new friends and new contacts.

Activity leaders – during EVS project volunteer can cooperate also with other employees of receiving organisation – leaders of activities where volunteer helps. It is important for a volunteer to know all the responsibilities within receiving organisation, what he can solve with whom. In the beginning of EVS project, it is necessary to introduce all leaders to volunteer and set up mutual meetings and ways of cooperation. Also, it is important that activity leaders are well informed about aims of EVS project in the RO, educational aims of EVS volunteer and rights and responsibilities of the RO and EVS volunteer, still before EVS volunteer come to the receiving organisation. It is also very useful if at least once a month volunteer can participate in a meeting with his/her coordinator and activity leaders and speak about their mutual cooperation.

Coordinating organisation – Coordinating organisation is responsible for managing the awarded grant and deliver it throughout all project partners. There are three different possibilities.

- Coordinating organisation as a receiving organisation – the most common situation we can meet. For receiving organisation, it is much easier to deal with the grant amount if they also have the capacity to be coordinating organisation.
- Coordinating organisation as sending organisation – especially for projects receiving volunteer in Partner countries. Partner countries cannot apply for grants, so if volunteers want to participate in some projects in partner countries, usually sending organisation take responsibility.
- Coordinating organisation as an umbrella organisation for other partners – sometimes coordinating organisation can also be an organisation that is not sending or receiving in the project, but is just experienced enough in the field of Erasmus+ project and managing grants and take the responsibility of project coordination.

Local community – during the EVS project volunteer must be in touch with the local community. The volunteer shouldn't be closed only inside the receiving organisation, it is important for him to find new contacts and new friends within the local community. Integration of volunteer to the local community can be also a great opportunity for the receiving organisation to be more visible and to attract new people for various activities. If volunteers aren't integrated into the local community, there is a big risk of losing motivation. Volunteer needs somebody who can help him overcome his/her homesick, especially during weekends. Meeting other members of the local community also enable him to get to know the lifestyle and culture of receiving country better.

Other organisation – it is a big advantage of an organisation if there are more organisations within the city with EVS projects. A volunteer can meet other volunteers who have more than less the same experience with staying in a foreign country. Other volunteers can also help him integrate into local community easily. For coordinators it can be great opportunity to share best practice, to help each other and also to organise international events together.

Receiving organisation can also in EVS project cooperate with other organisations, for example schools, kindergartens, youth centres, other NGOs etc. Many of them don't have the opportunity to receive own volunteer but can be very grateful if volunteer comes to visit their activities and prepares some presentation about him/herself and country where s/he is from. It can also bring new contacts for receiving organisation and start new cooperation. For volunteers, it is great opportunity to develop new skills and learn also from good practice of other organisations.

Before the EVS projects start we recommend the receiving organisation to make a plan of potential cooperation in the project, not only with receiving organisation but also with other organisations within the local community.

Romana Michaela Michalíková,

Trendum, o.p.s., long-term experience with topic of EVS

and with EVS accreditations, Czech Republic

Coordinating organisation

As we already mentioned there are many different roles in EVS project. We need sending organisation that is responsible for preparation of the volunteer before sending him/her to the project and receiving organisation that works with volunteer within his/her service in the foreign country and support him/her. But let's speak about coordinating organisation as an important part of EVS projects.

Generally, we can say that coordinating organisation is the organisation responsible for submitting the application and administrating the entire projects. It means the organisation that is writing the application, budgeting all the project and writing the final report at the end of the project. Very often we can meet the situation that coordinating organisation is at the same time receiving organisation or sending organisation. For the project it means that there is always somebody who must be an applicant, it doesn't matter how many partners are involved. But sometimes it can happen that there are also receiving organisations in EVS project that are not well experienced or that are afraid of administrative burden connected with the project. In this field coordinating organisation can be very helpful for all the EVS process. Coordinating organisation doesn't need to be always sending or receiving, it can be just the organisation that solves all the things connected with the project and it is also an applicant. It means that coordinating organisation must have enough experience with EVS project to be able to support other partners and help them reach great impact.

Let's look how can a coordinating organisation be useful during all phases of EVS project:

Preparation

The first step is always accreditation. It means filling up Application Form for Accreditation where the organisation describes details about mission and objectives, activities, experience, staff and describes also all details about the future EVS project. Especially for receiving organisation it means that all practical arrangements including weekly timetable, accommodation, food, support and monitoring must be already known. It is necessary for receiving organisation to set up all details together with coordinating organisation – how the project is going to be administrated and funded and how the responsibilities will be divided. Coordinating organisation can also help with solving the accommodation or setting up the system of monitoring and learning process of the volunteer. As soon as the Application Form for Accreditation is ready and the accreditors come for a visit, representatives of receiving organisation as well as a representative of coordinating organisation should be present to answer all unclear issues in the application form.

When receiving organisation gains the accreditation number, coordinating organisation can start to prepare a project for concrete EVS volunteers. About the choice of possible volunteers, it depends on arrangements between receiving and coordinating organisation. Usually coordinating organisation makes a first choice of possible volunteers and send them to receiving organisation for a final decision or receiving organisation makes a choice of possible volunteers on its own. Coordinating organisation is then in touch with sending organisations and communicate about all issues that are necessary for accepting the volunteer in the project.

As soon as the project is approved coordinating organisation starts to communicate with sending and receiving organisation and prepare everything needed to start the project. Coordinating organisation can also help with insurance of the volunteer or visa if needed.

During EVS

During EVS coordinating organisation is looking after distribution of the grant between sending and receiving organisation and solving all administrative issues. The coordinating organisation also ensures that volunteer will attend all necessary training. Very often coordinating organisation arranges meetings with the coordinator of receiving organisation and speak about all the process of EVS and also meetings with a volunteer to speak about their service and about possible troubles. Coordinating organisation should also provide the support in case of any unexpected situation that may appear. Coordinating organisation can also help with the learning process and is responsible for the work with Youthpass certificate. It always depends on specific offer what you can use from your coordinating organisation's experience. It is necessary to set up the ways of communication between all partners. The coordinating organisation also shouldn't forget to inform sending organisation about the process and about all important events.

After EVS

When the volunteer's service is over, coordinating organisation starts preparing the final report together with sending and receiving organisation. Before that, it is also necessary to make an evaluation of the process at the end with the volunteer and also with sending and receiving organisation. This evaluation should be focused not only on the impact and results of the project and on learning process but also on mutual cooperation. It is necessary to speak about things that don't work well and look for the solution for future projects. Coordinating organisation then works with Mobility tool, ensures the final reports from volunteers, and sends the final report to the National Agency.

Few recommendation if you decide to become a partner of the project with coordinating organisation:

- 1. Get to know your coordinating organisation well** – you will cooperate in the project that can last more than a year. Ask the representatives about their experience with projects and also with European volunteer service. Make sure they want to help you in the process and they will have enough time to do it.
- 2 Set up your mutual cooperation** – speak about ways of communication, about your responsibilities, set up regular meetings between you and a representative of coordinating organisation. If you use your time before the project to do it, it will make your cooperation easier during the projects. Don't forget to speak about how the grant is being transferred, divided between coordinating, receiving and sending organisation and what kind of documents will your coordinating organisation need.
- 3. Try to use the experience of your coordinating organisation as much as possible** – in case that you don't have enough experience, use the experience of your coordinating organisation. If your coordinating organisation is well experienced, it can have some useful solutions that will make your life with volunteer easier. It is useless to look for solutions that have already been discovered before.
- 4. Ask your coordinating organisation for help** – if you have any troubles with accreditation, in preparation or during the volunteer's stay in your organisation, ask for help if needed. Your coordinating organisation should be prepared to look together with you for solutions that are useful for you as well as for the volunteer.

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Role of coordinating organisation

'Coordinator/Coordinating organisation – a participating organisation applying for an Erasmus+ grant on behalf of a consortium of partner organisations.'
Erasmus+ Programme Guide, Version 1 (2016): 20/10/2015

Starting with a quote is a cliché but in some cases it is useful. If you think about the definition above and if you already have some EVS experience, it is clear that a coordinating organisation (CO) can work in many ways and have many roles. These will vary in various contexts and realities of the given CO. However, the core stays the same and in a certain sense, a CO can be seen as a cornerstone of a project. And as any other cornerstone's role, CO's main role is to take care that the whole structure (project) will not collapse.

You should know that following lines were written under influence of my (our) own experience – that is a 10-year long experience of a CO that currently coordinates 30 international volunteers who came for a long-term EVS from 6 SOs and are received at 20 ROs that are scattered around Moravian-Silesian region of the Czech Republic. My (our) main experience is with a coordination of volunteers in our country of residence, our experience with coordinating volunteers that are sent abroad is much shorter.

Now that you know the context, let us get to the roles of a CO. I do not name them in the order of importance because I think that this can be different depending on an organisation. I describe the individual roles as I see them and try to list whatever may seem connected or relevant to them. I also try to list all the hints, tips, and tricks come to my mind in connection to them.

Administrative role

The role that comes first to my mind and maybe to minds of other coordinators is something I would call an administrative role. My understanding is that this role makes CO responsible for setting up a system of processes that will secure the administration of a project. This can include a large variety of things such as writing the project application, securing all of project's 'paper and electronic' necessities (ECAS, Mobility Tool, Grant Agreement, notification of changes to an NA, contracts with receiving organisations, sending organisations, and volunteers, etc.) as well as setting up proper communication channels, handling accreditations of ROs, financing (self-financing included), budgeting, and money-flow, rules of conduct of volunteers, oversight and monitoring of a project, promotion and PR, not mentioning any legal requirements of the hosting country (such as registration of foreign nationals, visa requirements, and various costs and fees connected with residence), and many others.

The minimum extent of activities connected with this role (and other roles as well) and their division between partners is defined by the Erasmus+ guide, EVS Charter, and Grant Agreement. A CO can decide to a certain degree which responsibilities it will take for its own and which it will delegate to other partners (all however in accordance with the above-mentioned 'documents'). The responsibilities that a CO will take will depend on its core activities, size, personnel, vision for the future, and others. It does not have to be stressed that the extent of COs activities in this role and its understanding of itself should be reflected in the project itself.

Now, how can it look like in reality? What can be all the options and possibilities?

Starting from the financial side of the project, I think that a good cooperation with the accounting department (or a gifted coordinator/accountant) is a necessity, especially if you receive more volunteers. If you have a higher

number of volunteers, it is worth thinking about leaving some responsibility to them and having them prepare documents for reimbursements. This applies especially if you need itinerary of their journey, information who travelled on the tickets, and maybe other information. A good idea can also be to set up some rules for reimbursements e.g. deadlines for delivering tickets to you, requirements on the form of documents, deadlines connected with the closing of the books, etc. These can save you a lot of time that can be invested for example in support of volunteers.

As for the 'paper and electronic' necessities of the project, there is not much to say. It is good to use check-lists for the important contracts and documents you need from other parties. It is easy to lose track of what you need from whom, especially if you have a higher number of volunteers. A proper filing system is also a must-have. What should be also mentioned is the necessity to keep track of difficult situations and changes. You never know how the things will turn out and later on you might need to consult with your notes. For the similar reason, it can also be a good idea to keep a communication log where you will write down all the important communication that happens over the phone or in person.

Focusing on the rules of conduct of volunteers, these are to a certain degree included in contracts. However, it can be proof beneficial to have something in addition to that. We really liked the idea of 10 Commandments of a Volunteer. They are not (and could not be) forced by the contract however they represent certain morals/pieces of advice which if followed can make things easier. Some of the commandments can be *No question is a bad question, Never put yourself or others at risk, or Use your words well.*

Talking about monitoring and oversight, this can be quite connected with the support role which we will cover next. It is necessary to have awareness of what is going on. However better than going to 'inspect' or 'monitor' the project can sound too scrupulous. But if you connect the monitoring and oversight with evaluation and reflection, things get a bit different flavour and will not seem so violent. Having regular reflections and evaluations with volunteers made both by you and the task-related support personnel is a good way to cover these.

There would be many other things that could help you with the administration of a project (various databases, HR programmes, conscientious use of social media, etc.) but we will have to settle with those that were mentioned.

Supportive role

If the administration role is defined by setting up processes to secure the administration of the project, the supportive role is defined by supporting these processes and supporting people involved in the project. To a certain degree, the supportive role is connected with the oversight and monitoring of the project, meaning that if the support provided is adequate, the oversight and monitoring do not have to be solicitous. However, you should always meet the basic requirements.

As was already mentioned, the support is provided to various people involved in a project. I decided to focus on three areas and that is development and well-being of a volunteer, support of ROs, and crisis management, emergency situations, and mediation.

Development and well-being of volunteer – Regular reflection of experience, learning, and observations of volunteers is crucial for their development. The word reflection is quite suiting for this context. Imagine you would not look at yourself in a mirror in one year. After the year, it could be difficult for you to recognise yourself. Now imagine it being applied for changes inside of a person. Through this support you can be a mirror to volunteer, helping him/her to keep up with all the changes, understanding them and what they mean. This reflection is also important when it comes to checking on the well-being of volunteer and her/his participation in the project. Coaching skills can be quite useful for this type of support.

Support of ROs – As was written about reflection with a volunteer, the similar support is needed for the RO and the personnel that works with the volunteer most often (task-related support). It is important to reflect their experience, the way they work with a volunteer, and how they see their participation in general. A crucial top-

ic is also motivation, especially in the case of volunteers that need additional support or face bigger challenges than others. Support to ROs can be also in form of facilitation of accreditation process, help with administration, help with securing accommodation for volunteer, and others.

Crisis management, emergency situations, and conflict resolution – Crisis and emergency situations are something that occurs and usually requires the attention of you as a CO. It is good to stress both to volunteers and ROs that they can count on you in the case of crisis/emergency situations. The type of the support provided in such situations varies but usually, it is helping with translation and interpreting, communication with other parties, securing medical help (in more serious cases), and others. The special case could be settling conflicts between volunteers and RO or between volunteers. In these cases, knowing the basics of mediation, non-violent communication, and other various communication and conflict solving strategies is very useful.

There are many ways, tools, and methods how to provide a support in the above-mentioned areas. I will outline only some of them.

If you want to reflect the development of a volunteer or an RO, it is best to do it through dialogue, various coaching (or supervision) techniques, or experience activities. This would be suitable also for the reflection of ROs. However, from my experience, the support that I give to ROs most often is connected with practical questions and issues like accommodation, allowable costs, insurance, etc. It is good to provide them with a guide or support material similar to the one you are reading right now.

As for crisis management and emergency situations, these can be sometimes solved with a simple phone call and personal follow-up later on, and sometimes they require more attention. It is important to distinguish the proper approach but it does not have to be easy. If it is possible, it is good to have crisis management plans/outlines to follow when such situations occur.

As far as conflict resolution is concerned, you could use similar techniques as for reflection if it will suit the purpose. Some of the more important things that I try to keep in mind while helping to settle conflicts are: 1. It is not good to take sides and it is good to stay impartial if it is possible 2. The resolution should lead to the well-being of all parties involved, 3. 'Mediation' in bigger groups is tricky and it is good to measure one's own capabilities because there is a higher possibility of losing tracks of the purpose of the meeting.

One more tool or possibility concerning support are seminars (training courses) for volunteers and task-related support personnel. National agencies provide volunteers with their own seminars but if your budget allows it, it is a good idea to organise your own, especially if you receive a bigger number of volunteers. This can be very beneficial because depending on the structure and number of seminars, you can better prepare your volunteers, help them to bond at the beginning of their service, reflect and motivate in the middle of their service, and evaluate and give feedback at the end of their service. As for seminars for the task-related support personnel, you can use them to share your knowledge of work with volunteers and in a multicultural context, support and empower them in their shortcomings, and as well motivate them.

Networking role

This role has much to do with establishing, keeping, and fortifying partnerships, as well as selection and matching of volunteers. Good and reliable partners are a crucial part of a successful project. If you receive volunteers from more organisations and place them to more ROs, it will be most probably your responsibility to secure all the work connected with it. Your knowledge of potential candidates and knowledge of your ROs will help you to make the selection and matching process rewarding in the long term.

Back to SOs, you should pick your sending partners carefully. You can achieve this through conversation, explaining how your project works, what are your expectations from your partner and the partnership in general, how the SO will prepare the volunteers for the experience, and how you will support the volunteers in the host country. In some cases, especially if you want to be sure about all the details of the partnership, you can make

a cooperation agreement. If you already have a good partner, work on the relationship and be a good partner to them as well, it will reward both of you in the future. In my opinion, it is riskier to send volunteers to new partners rather than receive volunteers from new partners.

So if you have a sending partner already, you need volunteers. SOs usually place calls for volunteering positions and here it is very important that the offered positions are described as precise as possible. Very important thing is, to be honest. Sugar-coating and glamorising the positions you are offering are not a good idea because the subsequent clash between the expectations of a volunteer and reality can have very negative consequences. The same applies for presenting potential candidates to ROs.

The selection process of volunteers is very important and you should require some 'documents' to back it up. A good procedure is to require an application that will answer all the questions you could have, reference letters, CV, and a motivation letter. After you receive these, an interview is in order. During the interview, be open, honest, and welcoming. Some of the candidates may be stressed, try to calm them down. It is a good idea to prepare some outline of the interview that will come from your requirements as well as from the information stated in the candidate's documents. A good idea is to ask about candidate's health condition. Some of the volunteers decide for the service even when suffering from serious maladies – you should be aware of these because they can play a big role during the realisation phase of the project. If you want to ask the volunteer about any illnesses, disorders, and such, do it considerately and tell them why you are asking that. The goal is not to discriminate but to be prepared for the eventualities and to measure your own capabilities. You should be able to provide a safe environment for everyone. From my own experience, the most important thing that volunteer has to possess is motivation.

Usually, volunteers apply for specific positions. If you think that they are suitable for the position, offer them to the RO and vice versa. If you think that they would do better somewhere else, do not be afraid to offer a different position. To successfully match volunteers to ROs needs very good observation skills and knowledge of both ROs and volunteers. A good intuition is also quite useful. Do not forget that you are matching not only a volunteer with a specific RO but also with people. If you think that the personnel at the RO and volunteer have 'incompatible' personalities, think twice before finishing the matching. If a volunteer and an RO are able to communicate in a common language, it is not a bad idea to arrange them an interview during which they can clarify their expectations and see if their cooperation would be suitable for them.

Conclusion

I believe that previous lines proved that the role or roles of a CO can be quite diverse. They depend on many variables and they can also change depending on a project you are carrying out. I think that I have covered only a small part of all the possibilities but I hope that you will find it useful nonetheless and that you will find the right balance of roles of your CO.

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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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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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Motivation of EVS Coordinator

Motivation is not only an important aspect for EVS volunteers, but also for EVS coordinators. Working with people, no matter if they are clients, patients, customers or EVS volunteers can be very rewarding and also a lot of fun. On the other hand, especially these jobs that are connected with working with people can also be very exhausting and stressful. Sometimes you might also feel torn by all the things you need to do, by upcoming deadlines, organisation and administration and all the forms that you need to fill.

Even though you might have started your work with a lot of enthusiasm, aspects like these can make it quite hard to stay motivated. First of all, there is good news! Motivation requires a meaningful task and what can be more meaningful than your work? By coordinating an EVS project you make it possible that a young person gets the opportunity of his or her lifetime to explore another country and maybe even another culture, to learn and to grow! Thanks to your effort an organisation gets the support of a motivated volunteer who brings in his or her personality, creativity and international flair. If you look at the big picture your work fosters friendship, tolerance and peace among people in all over Europe. That's quite cool, isn't it? But of course, motivation requires more than meaning alone.

Have you just started your work as a coordinator and want to stay motivated?

- First of all: Don't carry the world upon your shoulders. Find a colleague who also knows about EVS and who can support you or fill in for you! Shared responsibility makes a lot of things easier.
- Talk about it. Talk with your colleagues, share your experiences. If possible, ask for regular supervision.
- Build a network! Find other EVS coordinators; share your experiences with them! Support each other!
- Think about your own needs. Make breaks, eat and drink enough, relax between two exhausting tasks.
- Find your own working style. Working as an EVS coordinator gives you a lot of freedom of choosing how and when you fulfil which kind of task. This can be overwhelming in the beginning, but it can also be a great opportunity to adjust your work to your preferred working style.
- Use your external memory: No matter if you prefer pen and paper or the cloud, simple To Do lists or electronic agendas, write things down! As an EVS coordinator, you have to take care of many things. Writing down your next steps will help you to keep an overview and also to relax.
- Identify single activities that help you reaching your bigger goals. It's easier to finish one single small task after another than working on one super big task for a very long time.
- Identify your own point of view. As an EVS coordinator, you might have the impression that it is your responsibility to make a lot of other people happy. The volunteer should have a great time, the colleagues and partners in the receiving organisation should be happy and the mentor as well! And there is also the National Agency that needs to be content with your work. Sometimes these demands seem to be incompatible and you might just feel torn. If this is the case, relax a little bit and form your own opinion! Then it will be much easier for you to act and to react.
- Your work does not need to be perfect! Sometimes there are periods where it is just not possible to give 100 %. Don't worry! 80 % often are good enough and mistakes are great opportunities for learning!
- Make your work fun! Celebrate your success and reward yourself! If your application gets granted, find some colleagues and celebrate together! Reward yourself when you finish a project! Be proud of yourself!

- Attend an EVS training! There you will get a lot of inputs that will make your work easier and you will meet a lot of other EVS coordinators who can give you tips and share their experiences.
- Keeping motivated does not only have to do with the job itself but also with your free-time. Try to find a balance. Go on holidays, if needed! Don't work too many extra hours if that makes you feel exhausted. Find a free-time activity that makes you feel more activated or relaxed, depending on your needs.

You are EVS coordinator and you want to recharge your motivation?

- Ask yourself why you have started to work as an EVS coordinator. What were the reasons why you decided to become EVS coordinator? Are they still valid?
- Can you identify certain aspects that reduce your motivation?
 - Can you change them?
 - Can you deal with them?
 - Is there somebody who can support you?
- Identify the aspects of your work that you really like doing. Maybe it is possible to do a little more of these and a little less of the things that you do not like to do so much? If you like personal contact with volunteers, do something nice with them from time to time! If you prefer organisational and administration tasks instead, put your emphasis on that!

You are EVS coordinator and you just want to run away?

- It's time for vacation! Three weeks minimum can help you to recharge your batteries. You worry about your colleagues and volunteers and all the work that needs to be done? Think about it: If you leave for three weeks you will come back with a lot more energy and motivation! If you go on working and you are so exhausted that you will need to leave for good, it will take much longer until somebody can resume your work.
- Talk with your colleagues; try to identify the problem(s) together! Ask for their support!
- Think about changing career. What kind of job would make you feel more comfortable? Why? Are there aspects of this other dream job that you could integrate into your work?

Maybe you do not hear it so often, therefore, we would like to tell you at last: Thank you! Thank you for your great job you do! Thank you for making EVS possible!

***Silvia Leitner,**
Akzente Salzburg, EVS coordinator,
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Motivation of EVS coordinator

I remember few year ago I was asked to run a workshop on the motivation of volunteers at one of the statutory meetings of big international youth NGO.

I dived myself into what can be done around motivation, to figure out, that this one of the most tricky topics I was ever invited to work on.

We started openly with research in SOLE¹ style, where everybody has to bring some new findings, do a small research or anything else around the topic of motivation. I learned that time that sometimes the most important step is to start to think about some topic, donate a little focused time, open it with curiosity, being perfectly open, that you don't know, how to approach such topic.

And then magic happen. We collected so much stuff, I felt the motivation in the group (including my one) raised just by focusing on understanding what motivation means for me, for you, for every single person in that group, what clever books and famous speakers say about motivation... Nowadays I understand that way of working way better, as it is actually one of the first steps of Design Thinking² process or Human Centred Design³ (HCD) approach – To discover.

There is a lot what we can take from HCD into our daily practice. Learn to take the time to discover and understand – your motivation, motivation of the others. The need for EVS in your organisation. The needs of volunteers.

There is nothing more frustrating than creating things, investing time and energy into projects and people and then figuring out, you are alone in that. The sense you see, the others don't see. The frustration of not being appreciated for the hard work you do. So often this frustration rises from creating assumptions instead of making assurance. My former colleague and a good friend used to say, 'assumption is the mother of fuckups...'

Yes, it is! It is actually very liberating to allow ourselves to put it that way!

Especially in that special case when the subject and object of your work is the same – people. Those people.

What can be seen as time-consuming process (taking steps according to HCD) can be actually time and energy saver, a fresh shift of thinking about things.

Don't do it all alone and the motivation will rise just thought taking such process together.

Some other motivation factors and inspirations

Good partnerships – work on good and stable partnerships, they are essential for not wasting your energy and preventing burnouts in a long-term run of EVS sending and receiving. Finding "your people" who will be sharing the same basics you can build on, even they might be physically far away, from different cultures etc. If it is possible to plan some (at least some) physical meetings with the other coordinators you work with.

Seeing the sense – I will repeat myself often, but from practise speaking so often the core issue is having same vision and mission. Not just written somewhere, but understood and lived. Spoken, though. That is motivation booster, time saver and sense of belonging spark – 3in1. It is a pain to step into defining these, re-open the written ones, and give a time for reconfirmation. But it really is this 3in1 once you give it a chance. Part of it is allowing the others to understand my own ones.

Personal mission – in the bad times or in times of hard decisions, when uncertainty is rising, having your very own personal mission (statement) might help a lot. You can imagine it as an answer on why uniquely I am here, what is my purpose, what I am contributing to and how I do it. If you do your daily tasks, small things as well

as a big project in line with such mission, motivation is usually present. It just all makes perfect sense, at least in long-term vision if not at the actual moment.

Priceless Art of Appreciation – I think this should be a life-long training for many of us, to learn to appreciate yourself, the others, volunteers, to be appreciated – it is the ultimate reward that only costs your attention. I heard that so many times from different frustrated volunteers and employees, that the only thing they were longing for was some sort of recognition and appreciation. I think that is one of the few things we really have available towards fighting the de-motivation. The motivation of volunteers would be whole another chapter in this publication but appreciation can be applied anywhere.

The four agreements⁴ – and the fifth one.

1. Be Impeccable With Your Word.
2. Don't Take Anything Personally.
3. Don't Make Assumptions.
4. Always Do Your Best.
5. Be Sceptical but Learn to Listen.

Where motivation comes from? – in literature, we might talk about internal and external factors of motivation. I am not going to spend a time on it here.

One of my friends, colleagues and as well my great inspiration Tomáš Hajzler⁵ is often claiming that you can't motivate people from outside. The context is coming from working environment. An example to this can be all sort of benefits, which only work as motivator once, they are given, but as soon as that happens, they are not motivating anymore, they are just taken for granted, on the other hand, their cancellation serves well as a demotivating factor. The long-term motivation arises from the inside of an individual and has to be fed by the proper nutrition cocktail.

Some of the ingredients needed for proper EVS coordinator motivation cocktail (no virgin versions!) can be hopefully found in this article.

¹ *SOLE* alias *Self-Organised Learning Environment* concept based on field experiments of Sugata Mitra, <https://www.theschoolinthecloud.org/>

² *Design thinking for educators basic kit* available online: <http://www.designthinkingforeducators.com/>

³ For example here: <https://www.ideo.com/by-ideo/human-centered-design-toolkit/>; <http://www.designkit.org/human-centered-design>

⁴ Book from Don Miguel Ruiz; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Miguel_Ruiz

⁵ <http://www.tomashajzler.com/>, *Freedom at work* concept

Lucie Schubert,

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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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Benefits and goals for the organisation in EVS

When you receive a volunteer

Volunteers as workforce

The scenario is seen all too often: Your organisation is driven by lofty goals but struggles with both financial and personal resources, so you receive a volunteer (ideally an experienced, educated and skilled young person) as a “cheap” human resource for your operations. While this seems logical at first sight, this approach is not only in conflict with the aims of the EVS program, but also hurts both you and the volunteer.

The EVS Charter states that “Activities must not replace any employment” and “neither can they require qualifications or a certain educational level in order to select the volunteer(s)”. Instead, you commit to “identifying clear learning opportunities for the volunteer(s)” to further develop their skills during the whole project while “ensuring universal accessibility to EVS”, including those with fewer opportunities.

This usually presents a large obstacle to organisations, but nothing can be further from truth. Organisations who run EVS long term show that cooperation with volunteers who have little or no work experience is much more interesting and mutually beneficial. There’s indeed a risk that such volunteers struggle with elementary working habits (reliability, punctuality), but if you invest in them from the beginning, the volunteers are more malleable, open, and grateful. To the contrary, overqualified volunteers are more demanding as to their job level, and often complain that they can’t learn anything new, which is, in fact, the single most common issue they report. Highly skilled volunteers are in the end better catered to by other European programs (e.g. Erasmus, internships).

Volunteers as “view from outside”

Another common pitfall you should avoid is to ask the volunteer to evaluate your organisation, thinking that he or she can bring some best practices from abroad. This can very quickly go awry, leading to endless criticism and comparisons like “in my country, it works better”. Instead, the volunteer should be encouraged to practical help in improving the functioning of your organisation.

Volunteers as part of your team

It is seen as good practice to have regular meetings with your volunteers, both with all of them together and individually, in order to handle their specific issues and needs.

Even though organisations often don’t do it, you should also include your volunteers in your actual team meetings. Yes, language can be an issue, but only at the beginning and it is in fact a good incentive for volunteers to learn it. The volunteer will realise his/her role in the team, understand better what is happening, and your other co-workers will see them as an integral part of the organisation.

Phasing

Many large organisations, in good faith, let the volunteer choose amongst a large variety of activities at the beginning. However, a volunteer overwhelmed with specific tasks is as big a risk as a volunteer who spends too much time orienting and jumping indecisively from one task to another. You’ll do well to plan in advance and structure the first few weeks, and give more flexibility to the volunteer over time.

Impact on the local community

Organisations often forget that EVS has an indirect influence on their local environment. It may sound as cliché, but volunteers' primary motivation for EVS is usually to get to know new people and culture. You should leverage that, and expose them to your larger community as much as possible. You will benefit by raising awareness about your activities, while local young people will be inspired to start their own projects, communicate in a foreign language, and perhaps travel abroad as well. This effect is even more significant when you work with disadvantaged youth, for whom it is eye-opening to see how well someone can fare in a foreign environment.

When you send a volunteer

You should not underestimate your role as a sending organisation. The energy you invest in your volunteer early on will pay back. A well-trained volunteer will know what to expect from the project and will better be able to cope with possible problems. Also, if you stay in touch, the volunteer's reintegration back into your organisation will go smoother and you will be able to use his or her newly gained experience more readily.

As in many other areas, you will gain most from EVS not when you focus on your own goals, but when you ensure that your volunteers flourish. The benefits for your organisation will come almost automatically. In the end, when the project goes well for both you and the volunteer, there's a high chance that you will unwittingly also meet the program goals of EVS: to build a diverse network of organisations and people, who in the end form the glue of our European society.

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Activities within EVS project

Volunteering can be added value to the organisation, if the project is reasonably maintained, with regard to cultural shock, volunteer's needs, the needs of the organisation and the local community.

Activities taking place during the project are connected to the working placement, as well as the team members and volunteer's spare time.

Coordinator, supervisor and mentor are crucial figures in volunteer's life, so the success of the activities depends largely on their motivation and commitment to the project.

Activities with users

What is the role of an EVS volunteer in your organisation? What are their daily tasks? How can he/she be involved in the organisation? How much freedom and initiative can he/she have? Every organisation is different and has different working model according to which volunteer's tasks should be assigned.

The first few weeks of a project are the hardest ones. Volunteer arrives not just to an unknown working place, but also to a completely new, unknown environment. For the first few weeks, he/she will live in information overload and confusion. I will share the way we do it in NGO Öökull first we let the volunteers observe for a few days how we work, try to get in touch with team members and with the users. After few days we sit down and talk about what they noticed, what they think about our working system and where they see their place in the organisation.

First few weeks are usually filled with simple, daily tasks and a lot of talks: about volunteer's thoughts, ideas, sense of initiative. After a while, we start to give tasks with more responsibility. Usually, there are some failures at this stage and tendency to lose self-confidence. We analyse the failures together and find motivation for the future. At this point, the idea of Footprint/Mini/project is introduced.

Before the volunteer starts to plan and deliver his/her own activities, he/she gets familiarised with the NAOMIE plan:

N – needs

A – aim

O – objectives

M – methods

I – implementation

E – evaluation

Let's focus on two aspects from above – needs and evaluation.

Determining needs has a significant meaning for the success of an activity. The activity should respond to the needs of the organisation/users, of the volunteer and the local community.

Example 1 – volunteer might be interested in cooking and wants to make a meal for children that he works with. But looking from the angle of children's needs (they don't know how to prepare a meal), would be more effective to cook together with them.

Example 2 – volunteer likes music and he/she wants to organise a local music festival. At the same time, there is a local organisation who are making one already and are searching for volunteers. Why not join forces with the locals?

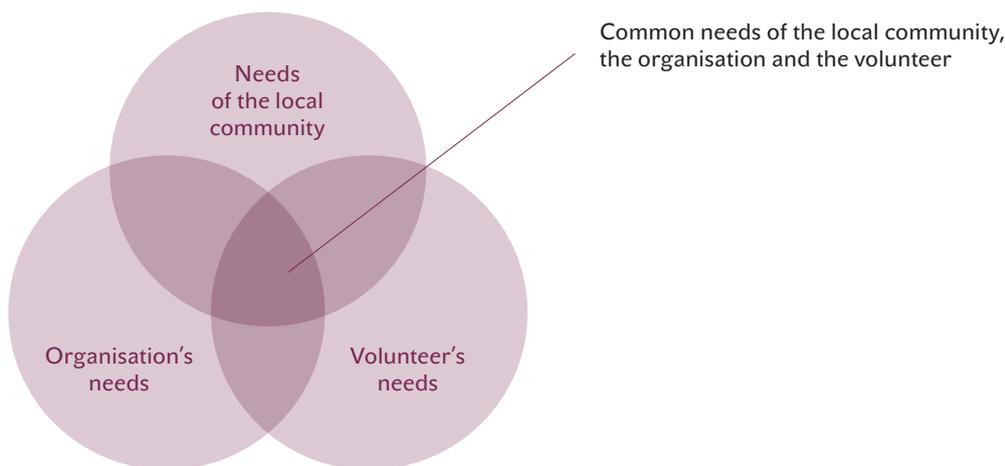
Evaluation should be made regularly during the duration of the project with coordinator, supervisor or mentor (sometimes with all of them) depending on the character of the organisation and needs of a volunteer. Evaluation helps volunteers to take a look their actions and see what came of them. Well-led evaluation helps to

draw conclusions and motivates for the future. If you don't know how to undertake the evaluation, the internet is full of interesting tools.

There is usually space for evaluation of learning process of EVS volunteer during evaluation meetings. The combination with Youthpass is recommended as noticing learning outcomes during the evaluation meetings are later on useful for preparing the Youthpass.

Helpful tools

1. Needs model for planning activities



2. Activity report

In NGO Öökull we ask a volunteer to fill the activity report. At the beginning, it's a weekly report, later on, a monthly one. The report is followed by questions that are used during the evaluation session.

Example

Date	What did I do? My daily tasks, responsibilities and activities	Comments, observations, thoughts, questions

Sample questions: What happened during this time? What was the easiest and the hardest thing? How would you describe your role in the organisation during the previous month? What is my sense of initiative? How do I present my ideas and thoughts? Was I successful so far with delivering my own ideas and activities? What could I have done differently? What can I do differently in the future? What did I learn during this time? What would I like to learn in the future?

Activities with mentor and team members

Some coordinators work directly with volunteers, some don't. Some of us have a chance to spend time with volunteers outside of service environment and some don't. Whichever is your case, try to make sure that the volunteer gets a chance to meet his/her team members outside the working environment. Invite him/her to the Christmas party, tea on Sunday evening, weekend outside of town, organise a movie or cooking evening for

co-workers. The activity of this kind will not only bring your team together but lets people understand what is the purpose of EVS and that we all learn from each other (especially if your co-workers do not exactly know what is EVS and how does it work). If you don't work directly with a volunteer, suggest team's activities to a volunteer's supervisor.

Activities in free time

Volunteers also need to do something in free time. There are some volunteers, who come to their host country already signed to the nearby sports centre or the local choir. But there are much more who need help to find free time activities or find places where they can continue their hobbies. Ask a volunteer if there is anything they would like to do or learn and help them to find places where it's possible to develop their interests (gym, swimming pool, book club, cooking classes, youth centre, choir, animal shelter etc.). You, as a local, know better. How to find those places If you don't work directly with a volunteer, suggest it to a mentor or supervisor.

Resources

Graph „Needs model for planned activities”, author Agnieszka Hanna Kunz

„Activity report”, author: Agnieszka Hanna Kunz

*Agnieszka Hanna Kunz,
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Learning process in EVS projects

There will always be some learning happening. The question is; would you like to take an active part in it and put your hands into that process?

European Voluntary Service is not just another voluntary service. It has a long history; it has been one of the first funding programmes within “Youth programme” supported by The European Commission. It has its own strong philosophy and it is part of the non-formal education programme.

The last one is the guiding point in the process of setting your own understanding of EVS project within your organisational culture and while keeping in mind the workload you face.

Work with European volunteers has its specific pace that might not be always fitting to all the needs of the organisation.

Such as

- It is a non-formal and informal education process.
- There is a self-evaluation and learning documentation tool involved – The Youthpass.
- There is a set of training involved for EVS volunteers – Pre-departure training, on-arrival training, mid-term an evaluation, annual meeting of EVS (meeting after EVS is finished), as well as for coordinators of EVS projects in the organisations, like for example International SOHO training for sending and receiving organisations and others.
- There is several quality assurance systems implemented – accreditation process of organisations, mentor support system, sending and receiving organisation, in some cases the role of coordinating organisation as the one being more experienced and giving support for other receiving organisations.
- The learning is happening not only on the side of the volunteer, but very often having an EVS volunteer in the organisation means a pile of learning for the whole organisation and its staff – such as dealing with the language barrier, cultural differences, feeling of ambiguity, or simply working with volunteers and their sometimes fragile motivation.
- One of the Key competencies tackled in Youthpass and the one that is often evaluated as important one among EVS volunteers is *Learning to Learn competence*. For those youngsters who for different reasons drop out from educational system, or are in some way with fewer opportunities, EVS can be very first working experience and more importantly first moment when they become mindful, conscious about their own learning process happening, needs they have in order to learn, motivation and goals they would like to reach. That is a lot to digest!

This all reminds us that EVS is an educational programme including learning, rather planned, structured and reflected one in the ideal case, plus with international recognition of that kind of learning experience gained.

What can help to set up and maintain a learning process in EVS?

Create open learning environment – if it is needed, dump your language to a level where everybody can understand, set regular meetings, implement work Youthpass and key competencies from beginning. Get enthusiastic (but not over-enthusiastic!:) about the process itself, it is very empowering, enriching and energetic process to support somebody else’s learning process, it is often the motivation boost to start your own one too.

“We are a learning organisation”¹, “stupidly is good” and “How fascinating”² should become **part of your core principles**; go into the veins of the organisation.

Back and forth – it always goes both ways, to stay with the learning process, includes all stakeholders in it, listens to the other side, makes time and space for evaluation, feedback, coaching, mentoring, peer support. Make sure you ask volunteers, often they might have the right answer or, sometimes, unrealistic expectations – this all can be cleared out once it is spoken out. And if you are for any reason, not the right one, delegate it, get mentor involved etc.

Heritage or treasure – A lot of knowledge and learning by doing can be nicely transferred from one generation of EVS to another. There are many things where failure is the first step, so avoid the same for next generations, the nice task can be to make some collections and hand them over to next one(s) coming. For the current or soon leaving volunteer, this can be a nice way to collect his or her own learnings and findings and make a wrap up of own experience. Such process gives time to slow down, reflect, and feel important and useful.

For the newbie volunteer, such collection (whatever it is, a chronicle passed on, online blog, an old map of the city with all important spots and hints....) can be a nice welcome present, warm item to not feel completely lost or simply really useful thing to use.

In the nick of time – Time and time management is often a topic to work on with EVS volunteers, it is part of the experience for many of them, to be alone, plan your own time at work but as well all the spare time. To keep certain work-life balance, make sure your hobbies, sports and a healthy lifestyle still are included. To do stuff before it is too later. EVS is going to finish one day. So time management, prioritisation, structured planning and realistic estimation of how long things takes, critical review of own planning, all of these can be nice development topics to tackle and work on with volunteers and they will be essential for making space for learning to come.

What would I do if I were not afraid? What is the worst thing to happen? What would you do if you would have a magic stick? Sometimes the best tool is to ask a right (magic, open...) question at a right time. The important part is to be completely natural, truly yours and authentic with putting such questions. Otherwise, they will not make their way, though.

Resources or actually a little exercise

I suggest you visit the official website of Youthpass and read through the description of Learning to Learn competence and especially the critical guiding questions to ask a volunteer.

And put these questions not only in front of volunteers but as well in front of you as coordinator and your colleagues, other involved staff in the organisation receiving or sending volunteers. It might first helpful step to proceed to a status of "learning organisation".

Here is the promised link: <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/documentation/action-2/key-competence-learning-to-learn/>

¹ *What does it mean to be a learning organisation for your organisation? Some inspiration can be seen on websites of two international youth organisations (there has been a long path to be walked in organisational development in both cases that led to these living and lived principles/values):*

IYNF core principles (scroll down the page) – <http://www.iynf.org/about/structure/>

YEE values – http://yeenet.eu/images/stories/YEE_PROJECTS/Annual_Meetings/Annual_Meeting_2015/YEE_VALUES.pdf

² *Just watch this video till the end. Benjamin Zander, conductor of Boston Philharmonic orchestra talking to teachers: <http://archive.teachfind.com/ttv/www.teachers.tv/videos/benjamin-zander.html>*

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Youthpass and how to use it in EVS projects

Youthpass¹. Is it really more than an obligation? What is there for me? Why should EVS volunteers desire to have one? Youthpass (YP) has several functions we could foresee through practising using it:

It is:

- a) Document, certificate, a confirmation of participation in youth non-formal education activity. Reporting not only the participation in the event itself, but as well the learning process that the participant in such activity undertook and description of competencies, which has been developed via that learning process.
- b) Self-evaluation tool working with 8 Key competencies for lifelong learning (European Reference Framework for the European Union countries and the Commission²).
- c) Recognition tool helping with recognition of non-formal education as valuable part of the lifelong learning educational mix (formal, non-formal and informal education).

These functions define the YP pretty well.

Responsibility X (E)S(s)ense

In EVS the coordinating organisation (usually the receiving organisation) has a responsibility to inform volunteer about the possibility to receive Youthpass in the end of his/her project and if there is interest to support the volunteer with filling it in.

(Again make a lot of sense that it is the receiving organisation who is doing that as they spent most of the Voluntary Service time with the volunteer.)

It might feel as an obligation and burden...so how to see more behind the whole YP thing?

Here what we mentioned in point a) and b) applies well. It is a tool, a service and methodology given to you to use in order to support volunteers learning process and self-development.

Isn't that actually awesome, that you don't need to work on it hard on your own but you can use all the support available, lean into a framework which has been set and experimented thought?

At the bottom of this article, you find several useful links for materials and activities, which can help you to implement work with the Youthpass into your EVS cycle.

Now let's have closer look what is the essence of the Youthpass as a self-evaluation tool.

The essence is working with Key competencies framework.

Key competencies in the YP are eight:

Communication in the mother tongue

Communication in foreign languages

Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology

Digital competence

Learning to learn

Social and civic competence

Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship

Cultural awareness and expression

You can find a very nice description of each of them with guiding questions especially regarding EVS at the Youthpass official website (<https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/for/evs/keycompetences/>) – click for each of them to find guiding questions.

It is important to have understanding what competence means and share this understanding with volunteers before actual working with this framework.

For clarification, each competence consists of knowledge, skills and attitude.

Developing competencies are never ending process and therefore we talk about lifelong learning. Much more can find in link under this article for you to read and get inspired.

When a volunteer is mourning: But honestly, why it is useful for me?

Very often as a coordinator you might face the situation that volunteer doesn't see any sense in receiving the Youthpass and they might be asking you why it is important to have one.

Well, it is definitely not be forced, but offered. Sometimes, unfortunately volunteers start to see sense in having the Youthpass only later after they finished. It is good to give them some motivation to finish it and some idea how they can use it further.

The two main reasons why it is useful are:

- It is the only official document, which describes and confirms participation in European Voluntary Service – such kind of document might be needed to proof that participation towards different institutions, university of the (future) employer.
- It is collective written self-evaluation and proof of undertaking education (not only volunteering and free-time) programme, it commits ability to learn and self-reflect. All done in a structured and understandable way. So even after several months or years, while reading it you can re-construct easily the experience that has been gained. That can be useful once somebody is asking you about your competences and how you can proof their development etc.

Europass X Youthpass – How many passes we need to pass to another level?

Often the question what is the relation between Europass and Youthpass is set.

There is, until now, no clear connection.

Europass is way more used and know. But is not serving needs of proofing non-formal education experience.

There is, however, a nice complementarity in those two, and when creating your own Europass portfolio you can include Youthpass(es) into it as attachments of the portfolio and you can easily relate to them in several sections of the Europass CV format.

Few tips and ideas how to implement work with Youthpass into an EVS project

- Don't start in the end, start with the end at the beginning instead – try to set and plan some **learning goals** with a volunteer, some checkpoints, regular **meetings**, achievements to be reached – How would you like to find yourself in the end of your EVS project? Too far? How would like to... in 3 months? ...
- Try to propose some system of **recording of the learning outcomes**. Make sense to work more on and with competence Learning to Learn and Sense of Initiative from the beginning to develop the skill of self-reflection. It can anything like **LAB** (learning achievement book), **Learning Journal** or even some gamification using badges etc.

- If you for some reason don't see yourself in that role of support person for learning (you might have many other things to do, you are the responsible for work division etc.) you can try to delegate that task to somebody else in the team – to find some Learning process buddy or coach or even better, if you have capable EVS Mentor, it can be a very nice role for them – but in that case it is always necessary to provide Mentor with sufficient introduction and training into such role and keep a continuous cooperation. In any case, it is always useful if the mentor is somehow involved in Youthpass process.
- Get inspired by the materials bellow, by your colleague coordinators in other organisations or just be open for experiments. Try to ask directly volunteers what would be helpful for them in the process. They might have wonderful suggestions.



Resources and links

Official Youthpass website –

Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, European Reference Framework; official brochure with nice explanation of each of the eight Key Competences -<http://www.alfa-trall.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/EU2007-keyCompetencesL3-brochure.pdf>

Youthpass unfolded; very nice methodology books with several activities how to work with YP – <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/for/evs/keycompetences/>

Youthpass in the EVS cycle; brochure with explanations of YP in EVS and methods especially for EVS project, we really tried to repeat much which has been written in this already – https://www.youthpass.eu/downloads/13-62-57/Publication_YP_EVS.pdf

The story of Youthpass video; can be very helpful to explain your colleagues and volunteers why to spend time on Youthpass – <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/downloads/video/>

Youthpass statistics and Impact Study; little statistics party never killed somebody...for those who like it numbered! – <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/statistics/>, <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/downloads/youthpass-impact-study/>

¹ *„Youthpass is a European recognition tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth work. Youthpass is for projects funded by Erasmus+ Youth in Action and Youth in Action programmes. With Youthpass the participants of these projects can describe what they have done and show what they have learnt.“ Resource:* <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/>

² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3Ac11090>

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How to deal with individual mini-projects of EVS volunteers

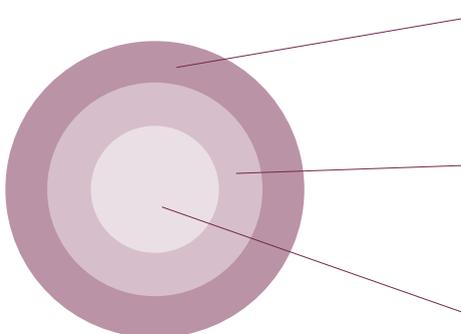
In natural cycle of EVS there is a time, when after adaptation to new place and situation, absorbing elements of new culture and mastering working tasks given by the organisation, volunteer feels orientated, successful... and after some time may be a bit bored by new routine and called to do something new, bigger, with own input and unique personal footprint. And as EVS is an educational programme, blessing and support for making this step should be provided by the superhero coordinator. Time for mini project is here.

For many volunteers, this time comes after 3–4 months, but it is, of course, very individual. Timing can be different and also the whole reality can be different – maybe the volunteer doesn't like the project activities or is not able to contribute/be useful in satisfying way, maybe he or she is bringing own ideas and being very independent already from the beginning, maybe he or she is happy in the routine... nevertheless, the opportunity of creating own mini project should be offered to every volunteer and is very often bringing great and unexpected results on many levels.

Mini project is an activity out of the usual volunteer's everyday tasks and out of the usual organisation's activities. It is a new idea integrating interests of volunteer, receiving organisation and local community. It is an important part of EVS learning cycle, stepping out of the comfort zone, initiation to „EVS adulthood“.

Tips for meaningful mini project management:

- The volunteer should be the main actor and mover of the activity, having full responsibility for it. Do it from own will and motivation – coordinator should offer this possibility and can accompany volunteer on the way, but should not push or demand it.
- It should happen in volunteer's challenge zone – place of learning. Situations from challenge zone will after some practise move to his or her comfort zone... which is becoming bigger and bigger. In this way volunteer is becoming stronger and more confident, ready to take new challenges:



Comfort zone – situations that are familiar to you, you feel safe and confident. It is kind of routine, it is comfortable.

Stretch/challenge zone – new challenging situations. They are difficult, can be even frustrating. But you are able to handle them and learn from them.

Panic zone – new situations, you feel unsafe, it is too much for you, you are in panic, paralysed to do whatever.

- There is no too small or too big project. Make a balance between „challenging“ and „realistic“. Don't stay in comfort zone, but don't go to the panic one as well.
- It is helpful when volunteer knows already from the beginning that time for the mini project will come, it is included in the long-term action plan.
- Usual project logics is useful – creating aim based on actual needs, SMART objectives, fighting actions and evaluation. And celebration with an element of recognition by the organisation and the community.
- The mini project should be developed or at least agreed in dialogue and ideally, should be beneficial for all actors involved – volunteer, organisation and local community.
- Reasonable support should be provided by receiving/coordinating organisation (time, people, know-how, material, space, money...)

Bonus tips

- The mini project can be done in cooperation with other EVS volunteers from the receiving organisation or/ and from other EVS projects.
- It can be a good opportunity for involving mentor to volunteer's activities. Also, involving of ex-EVS volunteers in the mini project can be useful, supportive and inspirational.
- Challenge of finding own financing/support in the community and managing the mini project in a sustainable way can also bring surprising results and useful experience.

Examples of personal mini projects: Juggling workshop for local children. A photo exhibition about the life of volunteers. Youth Exchange. Cooking own national dinner with/for seniors. Charitable football match. Research about the attitude towards different cultures. Presentation of own experience. Realisation of a new design for the youth club. Presentation of volunteer's culture for youth/ people from local community. Conversation club of the native language of volunteer for interested people from local community.

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with topic of EVS, Czech Republic

Intercultural learning

Intercultural learning is not just about learning from books, it's a mixture of informal, non-formal and formal learning. In that sense the European Voluntary Service is a long-term comprehensive program containing a lot of tools to support intercultural learning such as: living in international environment, often with people from different country/countries; learning and speaking foreign languages; getting to know customs, traditions, good and bad sides of host country; presenting home country to others and facing stereotypes that people have about it; providing mentoring and supervision to a volunteer. All of them allow a young person to develop competencies and skills that in the future help them to become more open-minded, tolerant, respectable and comprehensive member of the society.

How does a volunteer learn?

One might say that EVS is an on-going learning process and a cultural process. Every day a volunteer learns something new about the host country, about the language, mentality of the people, food, customs and traditions. Every day he/she learns how to communicate, respect and live with people from different countries and cultures, as well as explain to others where is he/she coming from. What's more – every day he/she learns something about himself/herself, gets new knowledge, develops competencies and skills.

- But the process itself is a bumpy ride for most. European Volunteers, as any people moving abroad for different reasons, experience of CULTURAL SHOCK. It has four stages:
- Honeymoon – fascination by the new culture, seeing what is new and old in a romantic light. Usually, lasts for few weeks and like every honeymoon eventually ends.
- Negotiation – differences between the old and new culture start to cause frustration and anxiety, it's hard to communicate and make relationships with people on the same level as in home country; the individual gets homesick. This stage usually starts after 3 months.
- Adjustment – the individual grows accustomed to the new culture and develops a routine. Starts to consider things as 'normal' and has a positive attitude towards them. Usually after 6 to 12 months.
- Adaptation/Mastery – the individual is able to fully and comfortably participate in the host culture

How does a RO/CO learn?

Many EVS coordinators know the feeling in the end of August when new volunteers are coming in few days. First few weeks are about explaining how things work in the organisation, answering questions about the host country and mentality of the people. During the next few months, it becomes visible that the volunteer understands more about the culture, becomes more open to differences. Of course, somewhere there is the aforementioned negotiations stage of cultural shock when a volunteer needs the support of CO/RO/mentor to go through it. Later he/she adapts and just when it happens, it's time to finish the project. And the whole process starts over again. Organisations experience their own cultural shock stages and go through their own learning process. We learn from volunteers as they learn from us. Let's not forget that and try to see those young people knocking on the door of our office every few months not just as someone that we have to support and teach, but as someone with whom we culturally exchange and become more tolerant and open-minded ourselves.

What do locals get from it?

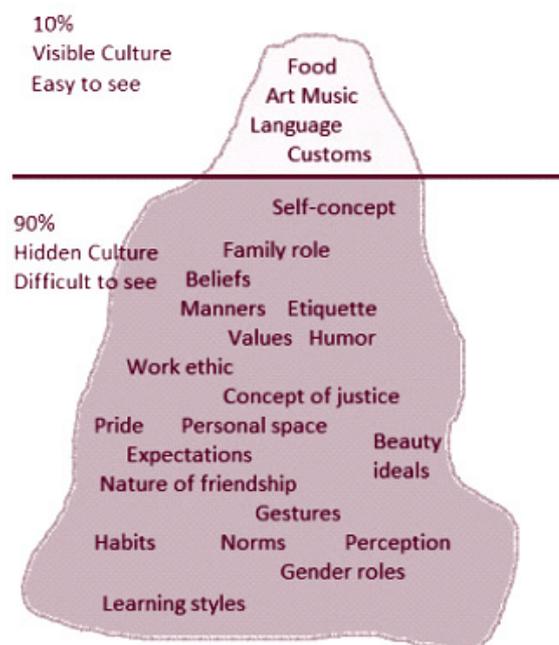
When I moved to Estonia more than 4 years ago to do EVS in a children centre in Tartu, I was the first foreigner some children had ever seen and had the chance to talk to. In the beginning, they didn't want to sit next to me or play with me, but after a while, their curiosity took over. We have hosted 8 EVS volunteers since and invited many guests from other countries. Children got used to it and became more tolerant towards foreigners. The example of NGO Öökull shows how much good and changes a volunteer can bring to users and local community. This works the other way around too – they exchange with each other. It's highly possible that there will be misunderstandings and conflict between those two, but this is the place where a coordinator, supervisor and mentor step in.

Iceberg theory by Edward T. Hall

Culture is like an iceberg. What is seen on the surface is just 10% of the actual culture. The 10% are what's seen and experienced by tourists or visitors such as food, language, holiday customs, flag, the way that people dress, art, festivals, literature.

The remaining 90% is under the water and people need time and effort to make it visible for themselves. Here we can mention values, religious beliefs, gender roles, assumptions, body language, expectations, learning styles, perception, norms, etiquette, nature of friendship, family role models and much more.

When we meet a volunteer, first we just see how he/she looks like, how he/she speaks, how is he/she dressed. We see the 10% that a volunteer also sees about us. It takes time and effort on both sides to understand each other more. Introduce your volunteer and co-workers to this model.



Few tips how to make intercultural learning easier for the CO/RO organisation and for the volunteer

- prepare the volunteer before the project – send them some links about your country, videos etc.
- obvious things to you are not obvious to a volunteer – explain a lot, answer questions
- take the volunteer for a walk to the city, show important places for locals, take him/her for a traditional meal
- inform the volunteer about local and national events

- suggest where they can meet the locals
- organise a language course as soon as possible (not an online one and not just a book)
- find a good mentor
- try to accommodate an EVS with other volunteers or locals (living in a dormitory or alone will not open a volunteer as much as living in apartment with other people)
- let the volunteer introduce their own country, traditions, food etc.
- be aware of the cultural shock curve and explain it to the volunteer
- don't push too hard, some people need time to adjust
- don't be afraid of misunderstandings and possible conflicts on a cultural level – they will take place anyway

Resources

Graph „Iceberg Theory“ based on Edward T. Hall theory, author Agnieszka Hanna Kunz

*Agnieszka Hanna Kunz,
NGO Öökull, long-term experience with topic
of EVS, Estonia/Poland*

The potential of conflicts in EVS

Conflict is a wonderful mystery. We all have some, we speak about them, study various strategies for dealing with them, we try to solve our conflicts in the best way, we even take part in training courses about conflicts without really knowing what they are, what are their roots and essence. We are somehow able to recognise when there is one. Once it appears it is very present, it grows, occupies all our thoughts and emotions and influences strongly our decisions, relationships and many aspects of our everyday life. While being involved in a conflict it is difficult to see things clearly. The usual tendency is to think: "You always put the toothbrush in the wrong place, it makes me angry!", or: "The coordinator is so ignorant, everyone in this organisation is the same, I hate this country!". But then, in a moment of insight, we feel that the truth is not so black and white.

One very reliable indicator of conflicts is our emotions. They appear mostly because of our expectations that are not met and because of our attachment to ideas, places, things and people that don't play our game. While leaving for an EVS project there can be many expectations, hopes and dreams. Some of the things we imagine will happen, some not. But the country's language or the cook in a local restaurant are not responsible for our expectations and so are not for our emotions if the reality is different from what we've pictured. We basically create our conflicts for ourselves in the moment when we allow harmful emotions to appear. No one else is involved in it. Objectively there can be situations where the food is really not so good, or where someone makes a real mess in the shared room still, it doesn't mean there has to be a conflict. We are the directors of our movies, conductors of our symphony.

EVS is a long-term learning project full of situations that can possibly shake our patterns, challenge our values, play with our attachments and thus create strong emotions. Because of being in an unknown environment, in a new culture among new people speaking a strange language there is a big chance of meeting aspect of ourselves, discovering our stereotypes, learning about our reactions, seeing ourselves clearly in a mirror with a new background. The shape of our personality becomes much sharper in the contrast of the new culture. EVS in this sense is extreme, somehow artificial and it is designed to be so for the best learning outcomes. With this in mind, we can be able to better recognise our demons when they appear and to tame them, make friends with them and turn them into helpers. The time spent in a new place is a great chance to transform weaknesses into strengths and to return with new skills.

Training the ability to recognise the seeds of possible conflicts and not letting ourselves being trapped in useless emotions is the real potential which EVS offers for learning from conflicts. Having this in mind we will be gradually able to better accept the natural flow of things, understand constant change as the nature of things and impermanence as the ultimate fact. Trying to fight the universe with our anger is a lost battle. It doesn't mean that we should ignore injustice or become insensitive. The difference is in the personal emotional investment. It is possible to have a conversation about the right place for a toothbrush with a lightness and grace. Being frustrated or angry doesn't help anyone of the involved. It only makes both weaker and the whole situation worse. And if the other person is really difficult and doesn't react at all it gives us the chance to be really fully enlightened.

EVS is a great time to experiment with such approaches, it has tools to support the volunteers in their personal development and is a safe place to explore and grow in various areas. What is needed is the awareness and insight. Having these it becomes easy to be aware of our shadows and thus becoming stronger, flexible and more resilient. Potential conflicts offer a beautiful area to become better people and to learn swimming in the river of life with grace and dignity while showing a good example and being useful for others.

Jan Látal,

free-lance trainer, long-term experience

with topic of EVS, Czech Republic

Language course

As many languages, you know, as many times you are a human being. This chapter can hardly start with other words, and this should also be the case of EVS projects. Knowledge of the native country language where the EVS project takes place should be a clear challenge to every volunteer who takes this experience as a comprehensive opportunity and expects to learn from it as much as possible. Only a few moments open arms of local residents as much as attempts of foreigners to speak your language. In the EVS project, it works double and multiple times more, since it is a long coexistence process between a volunteer and local community, and the more the volunteer is able to break the barriers of the local language, the more opportunities the project and the host country offer. The aim of a coordinator, a mentor and others who are taking care of foreign volunteers is not to force them to difficult linguistic forms, but motivate them and gradually uncover places and activities in EVS projects, which due to an improvement in their language skills become a great asset not only for themselves but also for the actual host organisation and the local community.

The approaches vary and it depends on the possibilities of the place or the region where the project is taking place, the financial situation of the organisation, the volunteer's individuality and **very often on the ability of choosing unconventional and creative way to learn the language**, to attract the volunteer and to save our project budget at the same time. In the case of long-term projects, it is often good to provide to volunteers intensive language course (e.g. two to three weeks) right from the beginning. Volunteers will learn a basic vocabulary in a few days. Later on, this will be followed by less intensive lessons. Therefore they can engage in the activities which could be quite limited to them from the very beginning without the knowledge of fundamentals.

The language courses which are set in a lower intensity since the beginning of the EVS projects are chosen more often. This can lead us to more risky factors, such as lack of motivation to learn a language that is too difficult for a volunteer, or a fact that a lesson or two per week is not enough. Volunteers sometimes choose to select another «universal» language, which is spoken in the organisation, but it does not give them the opportunity to integrate themselves into the local community, or get deeper understanding of the hosting country culture. There are volunteers who can impress by their ability and diligence to learn foreign language in a few months, but there are also those who are barely able to order in a restaurant in the local language after one year in the EVS. For volunteers who **will not feel like learning a foreign language and will struggle in the long term or reject this possibility** we should accept this reality and try to use their potential in other areas.

For the EVS project it is important to have a good quality language course from the beginning. Whether it is an individual, group or reciprocal way of teaching, it is often very important for the volunteers to attend language course especially in the first few weeks and months. This will help them to connect with the locals and understand the culture of the country from the very beginning. Time will show how it works and whether it is necessary to change anything. As it was mentioned earlier, the question of language course in EVS projects is often very individual. It depends on the conditions of the project, the type of activities, the target group, the volunteer's individuality and possibilities of the location to ensure proper language course.

There are projects where the volunteers focus on learning English with regards to an international team in the organisation and the choice of local language is offered as a second and individual alternative. The important thing is to agree with volunteers on the choice of language and the way of learning in advance, before they appear on the threshold of your organisation. It will give you enough space to ensure a high quality language course. Finally, take your time; ask a volunteer and a teacher how the lessons are progressing. That will often save you time and money. Anyway, in the case of international team in the organisation we recommend to combine universal working language (e.g. English, German) with conversation in local language. This will remind volunteers to keep in mind that local language opens the gate to local souls and better cultural understanding. Here the assistance of mentor can be very helpful.

Do not underestimate the benefits of the language course. The beginnings may be difficult, but the overall contribution for the entire project will be crucial.

Start on time with all the language course preparations. Find out what volunteers expect, whether they are satisfied with the course, or they need a slower pace etc.

With regards to what you find out and to project activities, consider whether you start with an intensive course or choose less regular classes from beginning.

Quality vs. finances. It is not often easy to find the appropriate balance. Start with intense language course and then slow down. Ask local students to become volunteer teachers for individual language courses. Combine group language courses and mix volunteers from several different organisations, maybe they will like it and make new friends. Be open to more possibilities, and if one does not work, feel free to move on to another.

There are creative and motivating online language courses, which are often in some form free. Share them with volunteers, but rather as a supplement teaching.

Motivate volunteers, but do not force them.

Our tips for on-line language courses

www.duolingo.com

www.michelthomas.com

<http://erasmusplusols.eu/online-language-courses/> – this course was design by EU as a supplementary language learning support. Do not consider it as substitution for main language course.

Dan Janauer,

Association of Non-formal Education z.s. (ANEV z.s.), long-term experience with topic of EVS and with EVS accreditations, Czech Republic



Boy at the airport on his arrival to EVS calls for taxi "Haló, taxi!" – Quite sure that the taxi would stop and hang him on. The taxi driver laughing at him answers "Hallo, Fußgänger!" (Hallo in German does not mean a call, but a greeting – Hello walker)

Accommodation of EVS volunteers

Once the application form for concrete EVS volunteer is approved, it is time to think seriously about what accommodation to ensure for EVS volunteer. Usually, it is up to the receiving organisation to ensure the accommodation for EVS volunteer. In some cases, the umbrella coordinating organisation can help with ensuring the accommodation if the local receiving organisation, where the EVS volunteer will work later on, has such a cooperation. All EVS partners involved in a project have usually idea about the way of the accommodation already from the description in the on-line database, from the accreditation procedure (information about practicalities, including accommodation, are mentioned in the Application form for accreditation and checked by accreditors).

By choosing suitable accommodation, it is good to communicate intensively with EVS volunteer as well with the sending organisation still in the preparation phase of the project (before an EVS volunteer comes to the receiving organisation). It is important to share his/ her expectations, needs and wishes how to be accommodated and to be open to it. In parallel, it is practical to ask an EVS volunteer for needs of boarding, especially if he/ she has some specific needs (for example dietary, allergies, religion aspects...). This can help also by searching right tip of the accommodation. Also, it is useful to discuss equipment of the flat/ room/ space where the EVS volunteer will live, prior departure on EVS. In the other hand, it is necessary to take into consideration the local situation of the receiving organisation, including often limited budget for the accommodation (even there is financial support for accommodation in the budget in application form) and sometimes other obstacles, which can influence the choice (specificities related to big towns/ rural areas, local villages; urban areas/ natural type of EVS projects/ community projects etc.).

From mentioned information above, EVS volunteers can be accommodated in various ways. The final type of the accommodation depends on a common agreement between EVS volunteer and receiving organisation (eventually coordinating organisation if there is some involved in the project). Anyway, there are minimum requirements which should be respected: an EVS volunteer should have own room, for ensuring needed privacy during the long-term stay in receiving country. The space of accommodation should be clean and should have at least basic equipment (electricity, cold/ hot water, heating available; bed, wardrobe, table, chair are recommended in the room).

Prior the departure of EVS volunteer, the receiving organisation should clarify to EVS volunteer, how planned accommodation is equipped and what the EVS volunteer should bring with him/ her (are in the flat pillows and covers, bed-clothes, towels, flatwares, knives, pots, cook-range, fridge, washing- machine etc.?). Also, the receiving organisation should share all specificity of accommodation with the EVS volunteer (for example electricity/cold- hot water/ heating is available only in some parts of the day, accommodation is placed in specific locality/ subculture...).

Let's present some tips for accommodation for EVS volunteers and which advantages/ disadvantages usually have:

Apartment – studio for each EVS volunteer

- + enough space and privacy for EVS volunteer
- + no misunderstanding between EVS volunteers concerning cleaning, keeping household and sharing common space

- + clear responsibility for a flat and keeping household- possible isolation of EVS volunteer (living alone) from social life, local community, culture
- too much expensive in some cases (usually in bigger cities)

Sharing flat between several EVS volunteers/ other young people

- + separate room for each EVS volunteer ensures relatively enough space/privacy for EVS volunteer, sharing other parts of flat ensures enough social life at the same time (communication/ getting to know each other, sharing experience from EVS, getting to know cultures of other EVS volunteers...).
- + in case the EVS volunteer lives with other young people from receiving country – space for getting to know better local habits, traditions, culture and having somebody who can help in a non-formal way with adaptation/ integration into the local community.
- + possible to share one flat for EVS volunteers between 2 or more local receiving organisations (after common agreement) – this is an advantage for organisations in bigger cities, where renting an apartment is usually expensive.
- + this type of accommodation is usually well evaluated by EVS volunteers according to experience from the Czech Republic
- common misunderstandings between EVS volunteers, usually also because of cleaning and keeping household – need to involve project coordinator in such a case (to help with solving the problem – to discuss the situation with EVS volunteers and to agree on rules of common living, including concrete steps – for example a monthly plan of cleaning with balanced division of housework.
- lack of privacy and space for EVS volunteers
- possible cultural misunderstandings between EVS volunteers (for example in the case of different religions...). Again, the role of the project coordinator and mentor is important during solving problems if needed.
- after leaving of EVS volunteers the flat can be in worse statement than on the beginning of EVS project (possible recommendation for this type of the accommodation: to rent rather an older apartment than the new one and to specify the clearly text of the agreement for renting the apartment).

Living in flat/ room directly in the receiving organisation

- + EVS volunteer is fully involved in the life of the receiving organisation and local community. Through this can get to know the work as well functioning of the organisation in detail.
- + usually a financial advantage for receiving organisations (no need to pay rent as well travel costs for EVS volunteer to/ from the receiving organisation) as well possibility to ask for a help the EVS volunteer for unexpected tasks/ situations which have to be solved.
- lack of privacy and space for EVS volunteers
- the risk of involvement of the EVS volunteer in various unexpected tasks/ situations in his/ her free time (risk of overloading of EVS volunteer as well as the lack of respect of free time of EVS volunteer from the side of receiving organisation)
- relatively isolation of other social life in the local community/ town/region (risk of „living in a bubble of receiving organisation“ – lack of possibilities for meeting young people from outside which can help to EVS volunteer also with integration and get to know the culture of the country)
- according to our experience, this type of accommodation does not seem to be enough comfortable for EVS volunteers- it causes usually more risky situations, misunderstandings and sometimes problems.

Living in student's hostel or school hostel

- + enough space and privacy for EVS volunteer (separate room for EVS volunteer)
- + sharing other parts of student's hostel/school (usually the kitchen, bathroom/WC) can support social life (communication/ motivation for getting to know each other and local culture...)

- + enough young people around the EVS volunteer, with the various background (not only coming on EVS project). This can be inspiration for EVS volunteer.
- common misunderstandings between EVS volunteer and other young people living in the hostel (usually because of cleaning common spaces). In this case, the role of project coordinator/ mentor is important (help with solving possible problems and with finding suitable solution)
- lack of privacy and space for EVS volunteers (need to share some space-kitchen, bathroom/ WC...)
- in case the EVS volunteer has accommodated alone in the hostel, he/ she can feel a bit isolated from other young people living there, who are usually students (they are living in „other reality“ than EVS volunteers).
- possible cultural misunderstandings between EVS volunteer and other students living in the hostel (for example in case students are coming from different cultures, have a different religion...). Again, the role of the project coordinator and mentor is important during solving problems if needed.

Living in family

- + great opportunity and space for an understanding of the culture of the country, including local specificities, habits, traditions, patterns, a way of thinking. At the same time, intensive communication with a local family can be good motivation for improving the language. Also, living in the family can help in a non-formal way with adaptation/ integration into local community
- + interesting experience as well challenge for EVS volunteer as well for the family
- + separate room for each EVS volunteer ensures relatively enough space/privacy for EVS volunteer, sharing other parts of flat ensures enough social life at the same time
- lack of privacy and space for EVS volunteers (especially in case the EVS volunteer comes with the expectation of getting independence from his/ her family during EVS project)



- common misunderstandings between EVS volunteer and local family, usually because of cleaning/ keeping household, a different way of the daily regime, different characters of persons – need to involve project coordinator/mentor in such a case (to help with solving possible problems)
- possible cultural misunderstandings between EVS volunteers (for example in the case of different religions...). Again, the role of the project coordinator and mentor is important during solving problems if needed. For prevention, we recommend to have a common meeting together with EVS coordinator and local family where an EVS volunteer will be accommodated before the arrival of the EVS volunteer and to discuss with them aims of EVS, rights and responsibilities of EVS volunteer and their expectations towards EVS volunteer.
- according to our experience, this type of accommodation does not seem to be enough comfortable for EVS volunteers- it causes usually riskier situations, misunderstandings and sometimes problems.

Mentioned possibilities of accommodation for EVS volunteers are usually more or less used, depending on country and reality of the receiving organisation. Of course, the receiving organisation can decide for other option of accommodation for EVS volunteers, according to needs of EVS actors and specificities of the environment. Based on our experience we may recommend a shared a flat with separate rooms for each of the volunteer, plus one or two local young people as flatmates. This may be more demanding for a coordinator to manage but is surely beneficial to volunteers in terms of socialisation. The proximity of the workplace and/or city/town centre is upon volunteer`s preferences and limited by budget, but is usually welcome.

Resources

Petr Kačena: «Accommodation of EVS volunteers» (sent personally); freelance trainer and EVS trainer, Czech Republic.

***Magda Wagenknechtová Svobodová,**
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Feedback and Evaluation

Feedback and evaluation are important aspects of running and improving an EVS project. It can also be useful for measuring the success of a project.

Even though feedback and evaluation have a similar purpose they are not exactly the same.

Feedback

Feedback means that one person gives another person information about his or her impressions, thoughts and feelings related to a concrete action. The goal of feedback can be an improvement, but it can also be acknowledgement. Receiving feedback can help a person to find out how he or she is doing and how to improve.

Feedback can be made face to face or written; it can happen in pairs or in groups. Feedback is no one-way street, so it should also happen vice versa. Feedback can take place during but also after a project and it can happen more than once! It can be formal by making appointments but it can also be informal whenever something needs to be said. Feedback isn't anything one needs to wait for, you can also ask for it.

Giving and receiving feedback should follow some rules, so it can be constructive and helpful. It might be helpful to agree on common rules before the first feedback session.

How to give feedback

- The goal of feedback is acknowledgement and/or improvement (not: getting rid of frustration)
- Talk about your own impressions, thoughts, feelings
- Talk about specific actions and behaviour (not about personality)
- Talk in private (not in front of the whole team)
- Give suggestions for improvement, encourage the other person to try something new or to do something in a different way
- Give positive feedback as well
- Ask the other person for his or her view

A bad example would be

"You are always late to our meetings! We cannot rely on you! The other volunteer before you was much more responsible than you are!"

Better example

"You have been late at our last two meetings. It was important to us that you are there from the beginning so you would receive all important information. Please try to be on time next time!"

How to receive feedback

- Be open to the feedback and listen actively.
- Ask questions for better understanding
- Evaluate the feedback. Is it justified?
- Give feedback (see above)

Bad example

You are always so unfair! I'm a volunteer, not your slave! You don't even know what EVS means!

Better example

Thank you for your feedback. You are right, I have been late at the last meetings and I will make sure to be on time next time. I did not feel very motivated to go there because I cannot understand properly what you are talking about. Would it be possible for you to summarise important points in English at the next meetings?

Evaluation

Evaluation has not so much to do with sharing impressions, feelings and thoughts but more with assessment and rating. It can be used for the improvement of a project but also for measuring the success. To evaluate your EVS project will also help you to write the final report at the end.

Before starting with the evaluation process, it might help to answer following questions

- What would you like to evaluate? If you would like to evaluate one big topic like "our current EVS project", try to split it into several smaller topics. Like: tasks, learning, accommodation, mentoring, etc.
- Who will do the evaluation? It might help to evaluate the project together with others. The volunteer will have another impression of different aspects than a colleague in the receiving organisation or the mentor.
- Why are you going to evaluate? How do you want to use the results of the evaluation? Would you like to use it for further improvement, for the final report or maybe for other reasons?
- Which methods will you use for the evaluation?

There are different methods that can be used for the evaluation of a project and you can also combine them, depending on your goals and needs.

- Written evaluation: using a questionnaire (yes/no; rating from 1-5; open questions) or maybe also creative writing
- Oral evaluation: in person or in a group, structured conversation or open questions, interviews or group discussion, etc.
- Observation: What have you/others seen, heard, noticed?
- Collecting and analysing material: pictures, protocols, reports, etc.

Now you can start evaluating

- Describe: What is or was going on? How is something? What has happened?
- What is the quality of this action or topic?
 - How is the overall satisfaction?
 - Were the initial goals reached?
- What are/were the reasons why it is/was going like this?
- How can you use the results of the evaluation for your future work?

Even though you might decide for an oral or another kind of non-written evaluation, it might help to write down the most important outcomes. You can use this information for future EVS projects and it can also help you to finish the final report at the end of the project. Also, it is useful to think about what from planned evaluation is usable for creating the Youthpass for EVS volunteer. If the outcomes of your project have not been as good as expected, don't worry. Identify the reasons, maybe get some support and make it better next time.

Remember: There are no mistakes, only learning opportunities!

*Silvia Leitner,
Akzente Salzburg, EVS coordinator,
long-term experience with topic of EVS, Austria*

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.mladezvacki.cz/fileadmin/user_upload/publikace/Brozura_COME.pdf

Dan Janauer,

Association of Non-formal Education z.s. (ANEV z.s.),

long-term experience with topic of EVS

and with EVS accreditations, Czech Republic

EVS projects in Eastern Europe and Caucasus countries (EECA)

What the regions (EU and EECA countries) have in common?

The volunteering culture in EECA countries, especially in Armenia, is highly appreciated. EVS volunteers are the “eyes” for Armenian youth to discover the World, different cultures and realities especially taking into account the fact that Armenia is blocked by two neighbouring countries and the youth of Armenia have different problems with mobility.

What aspects the regions (EU and EECA countries) differ?

The most prominent difference is connected with the culture, traditions and daily lifestyle of people. Being a nation of high culture the people, family members are very closely connected to each other and very often it causes problems with having their privacy and confidentiality.

Potential benefits: What are the positive outcomes of ongoing projects?

As a positive outcome of the projects first of all the cultural aspect should be mentioned. There is also a huge need for such kind of projects, foreigners with different mentality, techniques, approaches and perspectives for the development of youth and community. The society in the Caucasus region is very open and accepting for foreigners.

Potential risks: What are the most common pitfalls and difficulties of ongoing projects?

One of the risky factors is the integration of the volunteers in a different culture, values and traditions they live in. In the case of the Caucasus region also the existence of conflict situation (no war, no peace) can be considered as a risk factor.

What 's about the selection process of EVS volunteers?

The statistics of our region shows that mainly the volunteers are coming from Eastern Europe. The selection of the volunteers is often complicated because the youth from EU countries have a lack of information about EECA countries and they avoid doing voluntary work there. The majority of volunteers in Armenia are involved in youth work and social work that is why during the selection process of the participants the main stress is put on them leaving out youth from other fields. The organisations mainly avoid receiving volunteers with disabilities which is also the result of the absence of the necessary infrastructures in the country.

How does work preparation of EVS volunteers?

There is a big problem with the preparation of EVS volunteers coming from EU countries because the organisations very often don't organise pre-departure and orientation meetings for them. The main support from sending organisations the volunteers get during their service.

What about activity plan for EVS volunteers?

In some cases, the organisations don't have an activity plan which is a big problem as there are no exact tasks designed for the volunteers and they think the volunteers are responsible for designing tasks themselves. Another problem is that the organisations receive the volunteers with the thought that they are going to replace their staff members. I would mention also the fact that after the changes in the Erasmus + Programme, when there is no coordination status for Partner countries anymore, the volunteers don't have the opportunity to implement some activities in other organisations/institutions as well.

Managing the learning process within the EVS project /some specific attitudes, methods used etc./?

The learning process of EVS volunteers is generally organised in a proper way by the receiving organisations which are in the form of learning days related to the culture, traditions, history, cuisine, stereotypes and other things. The volunteers have the chance to participate in various kinds of cultural events, exhibitions and so on. Also for the better integration and learning of volunteers for the first month they are usually living in host families.

What is the role of mentors in EVS projects?

The role of mentors is very important for the receiving organisations. Many of them have structured plans and different mechanisms of the recruitment of mentors and for that reason, a number of local and international trainings are organised for their development. The mentor also has a vital role in the learning process of the volunteer. As a rule, ex-EVS volunteers are selected as mentors (it is not preferable for staff members to be mentors).

How are ensured practicalities in EVS projects /accommodation, food, visa, insurance etc./?

Separate flats/houses are rented for volunteers which they share with other EVS volunteers (sometimes there are two people of the same sex in the bedroom). The flats/houses are fully equipped and have all the facilities and means of communication. **The visa process is quite simple as there is a free visa system for EU citizens. The volunteers are supposed to stay not more than 180 days after which they should get a residence permit. But when the volunteers participate in On-Arrival Training course and Mid-term Evaluation (the volunteers hosted in Armenia have On-Arrival Training course and Mid-term Evaluation in Georgia) and they cross the border these 180 days are renewed again.**

What can be surprising to EVS volunteers?

- The family relations (in many families even 3 generations live together),
- Transportation system (public transport is not so good organised and there are no buses to some parts of city after 18:00),
- Living style of people (you can see both very open-minded and very conservative people in the same society at the same time),
- Religion (the majority of volunteers think that Armenia is a Muslim country but on spot, they even find out that 99 % of Armenian population are Christians and Armenia is the first country in the world which adopted Christianity as a state religion).

What about way of communication?

The main population in Armenia speaks Russian and the new generation knows English, French and German which makes the communication easier. The society is very hospitable and open to the foreigners which make the integration process faster. The volunteers get language course during their whole service (in most cases).

Resources

EVS with Youth Initiative Centre (YIC), Gyumri: <https://web.facebook.com/groups/yic.evs/>

SALTO EECA Resource Centre: <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/eeca/>

EVS Manual: https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-975/EVS%20Manual%20-%20KEKS.pdf

EVS coordinators in/with EECA region: <https://web.facebook.com/groups/evseeca/>

Artur Najaryan,

President of Gyumri Youth Initiative Centre (YIC),

EVS accreditor, long-term experience with topic of EVS, Armenia

EVS projects in the South East Europe countries (SEE)

SEE 1.1. – Historical overview

In the context of the previous YOUTH and Youth in Action Programmes, the region of South East Europe – SEE has included the countries which were established from the former Yugoslavia's Republics except for Slovenia and including Albania. These countries were the first group of the so-called Partner Countries which became eligible to get involved in the previous YOUTH Programme in 2002 when actually the first receiving and sending EVS projects involving volunteers and organisations from Macedonia and Croatia were implemented. That year the SALTO South East Europe Resource Center – SALTO SEE RC organized the first Contact Making Seminar for so-called Action 2 – EVS projects, which enabled about 15 organisations from the region to find out more about the EVS Programme, to meet already active EVS organisations from the EU and to plan the first joint EVS projects.

At the beginning, the SEE organisations could only be partners to the projects, until the beginning of 2006, when the Education Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency – EACEA was established in Brussels in order to implement a number of strands of more than 15 Community funded programmes and actions, including centralised Youth in Action projects. In that sense, the organisations from Partner countries where no National Agencies – NAs existed became eligible to apply directly for their own projects. This possibility enabled EVS active organisations to be applicants, therefore to plan better their EVS projects, the dynamics, the partners, the number of volunteers etc.

At the same time, the accreditation of EVS organisations from the SEE region became obligatory for the SEE organisations and accordingly the SALTO SEE RC created its Pool of Accreditors from representatives of already active EVS organisations from the region and mainly from the NAs current or former EVS officers from several countries. This procedure supposed to influence the quality of projects, especially to ensure the support to EVS volunteers from both sides – sending and receiving organisations.

At that period the SALTO SEE RC also established its own Pool of EVS trainers, as a responsible institution for the provision of regular EVS training cycles for all volunteers coming to the SEE region. The annual schedule of EVS trainings was established, where on arrival training sessions are always organised in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, while mid-term trainings are organised in Belgrade, Serbia. These training sessions sometimes gathered together more than 70 EVS volunteers and always have been an opportunity for the volunteers to find out more about the project's reality not only in their hosting country but also in the other countries of the region. Beside the other important inputs, these training sessions have also enabled development of different informal volunteer's **networks, which have often been used by the EVS volunteers to have free accommodation and guidance while travelling around the countries of the region during their free days.**

An interesting specific related to the EVS trainings was an organisation of one-to-one on-arrival training sessions or training sessions for small groups of 2–5 volunteers – targeting the short-term EVS volunteers, whose project dates could not fit into the regularly scheduled and organised on arrival training sessions.

Important changes related to the implementation of the whole Youth in Action Programme, therefore of the EVS, as well, have appeared with the formal establishment of the National Agencies in Croatia and Macedonia. The respective organisations have started to represent Program instead of Partner countries, which enabled

them to be involved as partners in more projects. On the other side, the budgets that these NAs had available were much smaller, compared to the budgets that were available for the whole SEE region at the EACEA at a centralised level. This problem was especially influencing the organisations from Macedonia: for comparison, there were always between 10 and 15 Macedonian organisations being granted per call (three times per year) by the EACEA, while the Macedonian NA was delivering 3–4 grants per call during the first years of operation. Recently the Serbian NA has entered in its pilot phase and it is expected that soon the organisations from this country will also get the status Program instead of Partner, which would probably influence the quantity and types of EVS projects implemented, similar to the processes experienced in Croatia and Macedonia. For the implementation of accreditation procedure and training delivery, the SALTO SEE RC still remains a responsible institution.

SEE 1.2. – EVS at Glance – Characteristics, specifics, issues

I have tried to sum-up several specifics of the EVS projects and organisations in few countries of the SEE, based on my personal engagement in EVS receiving and sending organisation in Macedonia, my experience as an accreditor of the SALTO SEE RC (from 2006 till 2013 in Macedonia, Serbia, Albania and Kosovo, then from 2013 in Albania, Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and my experience as an EVS trainer for the SALTO SEE RC (from 2007 till 2013).

I have also used some information from the latest organisational survey implemented among the currently accredited organisations in the SEE region by the SALTO SEE RC in 2016.

SEE 1.2.1. – EVS organisations

The general situation in most of the countries in the SEE, except Croatia and partly Serbia, is that there is no regular support from the state (central or local government) for the work of youth organisations. Therefore, according to the type, source and sustainability of funding, there are mainly two types of organisations:

- Project-based, without permanent employees, tasks performed by volunteers or project-paid temporary engaged staff, usually without their own premises and lots of equipment. Often happens that such organisations apply for many Erasmus+ projects, including EVS projects, because those projects are the only income for them and the only way to ensure (or save) certain budget for their activities, for the people involved and for their regular running costs. Such organisations usually do not have regular activities, but aim to organize and propose different short-term or periodical local activities (quite often in collaboration with other local organisations or institutions, that are actually not accredited, such as primary or secondary schools, centres for young people with disabilities, sport clubs etc.) in order to provide placements and develop tasks and responsibilities for the receiving EVS volunteers. As there is not paid staff, usually there is no regular working time and activities are organised on an on-going basis, week by week. There may be frequent change of people who are active, influenced by the personal needs, interest and motivation of the local volunteers or temporary paid employees.
- An organisation with long-term foreign support, which enables them to have solid, guaranteed annual budget. This type of organisation mainly exists in the multi-ethnic communities, in the post-war countries of the region. For example, there are many organisations in Kosovo or Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are supported by various German foundation or charities, aimed to support the re-integration of Serbian, Croatian or Roma minority into the newly built society. There are also many cases in Kosovo and Albania, supported by Italian or Maltese churches or catholic organisations, aimed to support the life of minor catholic population surrounded by Muslim communities. Usually, these organisations have their own premises, completely new built or adopted, have a permanent staff, which beside program and administrative employees sometimes includes a driver(s), guardian(s) and cleaning staff. There is all necessary equipment, there are working procedures, exact working hours and regular activities with clearly defined target group(s). I see different motivation among the

representatives of these organisations, which is clearly not the financial one, but the opportunity for intercultural experience for their employees and beneficiaries.

SEE 1.2.2. – Receiving EU volunteers coming to the SEE region

In terms of this division, there are different opportunities for the hosted EVS volunteers. I believe that it is important for every sending organisation and/or volunteer interesting to come to the region and be aware of different working conditions, working procedures, working styles and potential contacts with the local beneficiaries/community, according to the profile of the organisation and proposed short-term or long-term activities. The volunteer can sometimes end up working alone or with other EVS volunteers, without proper supervision or regular support from the local volunteers.

Few general tips on the expectations would be:

- You do not need visa to come to the countries, you can even enter only with your ID, but you would definitely need visa if your project is longer than 90 days and you should be prepared for (sometimes) long bureaucratic procedure;
- Expect very close relations with the locals, especially if you don't apply for a project in a capital! Every other city or town is 'a kind of a village' where 'everybody knows everybody' and everybody will know about you in one-two days, where people have usual daily routines, according to the part of the year, everybody is interested why you have come there and would like to speak with you, even without any English, and expect people to call you sometimes for a free coffee, local wine or rakia. And don't miss the preparation of 'Ajvar' if you happen to be there in September!
- Many organisations in smaller towns offer to stay with a host family – try it, at least for the first month of your stay! It can be very valuable experience and can help you a lot for your involvement into the local community and for your better understanding and acceptance of the local culture.
- The type/level of accommodation is often one of the most positive aspects stressed by the hosted EVS volunteers. The same feeling is for the amount of pocket/food money, which sometimes is close to the average net-to salary in Albania or Macedonia.
- Whichever country you choose – there are few others at 150–200 km distance. Experience the local/regional transport possibilities (including hitch-hiking!), experience the borders, experience similar, but different cultures in different countries. And try to learn and practice the stereotypes of each of them!

SEE 1.2.3. – Receiving EVS volunteers coming from the SEE region

The main division for me relates to the practice for selection/preparation of volunteers before their departure and adequately the support and opportunities offered by the sending organisations after their arrival back home. Actually it depends on the links between the volunteer(s) and the organisation before and after the EVS project abroad.

In this sense, I group the organisations in this way:

- Organisations that apply/get involved into projects with a clear perspective about the potential volunteer(s) who may be sent. These organisations send only (or mainly, or give priority to) volunteers who come from/live in their community, who have been/are already active or become active in the organisation during the preparation period. Usually, those volunteers continue to be active in the sending organisation, try to transfer and adopt the learning skills and experience and the sending organisation actually builds its capacity by implemented EVS projects. These volunteers often come with certain experience and skills and have a very clear motivation and expectations from their EVS project, which is foreseen as a part of their personal education and future professional career. Therefore, it should be expected that such volunteers would require clear tasks, a division of responsibilities, opportunities for intercultural and technical learning and complete integration into the work of the receiving organisation and the life of the hosting community. There are often cases of establishing

strong links between the receiving and sending organisation, which can result in development and implementation of future EVS projects, but also other mutual projects. On the other side, these volunteers may face a certain level of frustration, if there are not enough tasks or activities where they will be involved.

- Organisations that apply/get into a partnership without a clear idea or plans at the application stage. These organisations usually open a public call (in case nobody from their close friends or relatives is interested) and quite often select young people from other towns, whom they do not know at all and even without a personal interview. Of course, it happens sometimes that nobody applies and there is no selected volunteer, but what is more dangerous (from my perspective) is that there is not a proper information and preparation of the volunteer, there are no clear analyses of his/her motivation and expectations and there are bigger possibilities to face problematic situations later during the implementation of the EVS project.

Regarding the profile of EVS volunteers coming from the SEE region, they are mainly graduate students at various universities, who would like to have international experience after the successful end of their formal education or who have waited few years as unemployed and are interested in trying something else in their life. There are fewer cases of graduated high-school students who want to explore international volunteering prior to their further formal education.

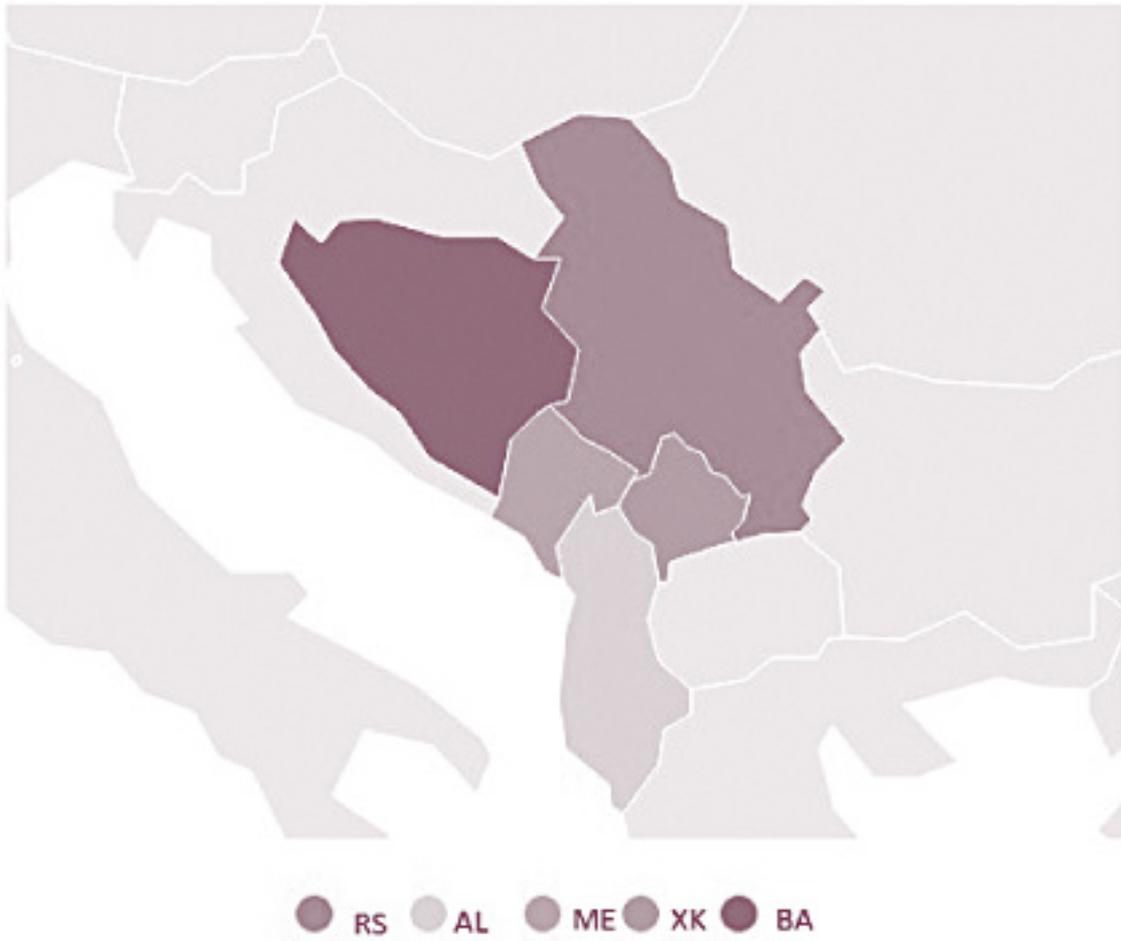
Of course, there are also cases of active volunteers or even more experienced youth workers, who are interested in building on their current experience and to make their first steps into the possible international carrier. Those would be the most requiring and involved EVS volunteers.

Few general recommendations on the expectations/procedures would be:

- Young people from Albania usually know very good Italian;
- Young people from former Yugoslavian countries are usually good in English (or German eventually) and they very easily get other Slavic languages;
- Always try to have direct contact with the volunteer. Even if you have big respect, trust and nice relations with the sending organisation, it would still help you to better understand the real motivation, interest and expectations of your future volunteer and would help you to prepare yourselves better;
- Be prepared for long bureaucratic procedure for visa and consider that often the volunteers pay all the documents and travel themselves, which is not easy for them;
- The normal entry visa is still required for young people from Kosovo and there are different consulates where they should apply for it, depending if they are Albanian or Serbian. All the other countries do not need a visa for short stay till 90 days.
- 100 Euro for you does not mean the same for an average young unemployed person coming from a small town from Albania or Macedonia! Please, reimburse them immediately for the costs that they have done before their arrival or during the project activities and pay them their pocket and food money regularly.
- Respect their culture and traditions! They are interested in learning and adopt to the new cultures, but also, deep inside their hearts, they keep the fire of their home and their values!

Country	Number of accredited organisations
AL	19
BA	18
ME	3
RS	39
XK	11
HR	63
MK	41

Number of currently accredited organisations per country (April 2017)



Countries of SEE currently directly supported by the SALTO SEE RC

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EVS accreditor and trainer, long-term experience with topic of EVS, Macedonia



Good Practice in EVS Projects

Outcomes of participant's workshops "Service and Care", TC "EVS in Our Hands", 28. 9.–3. 10.2015, Prague, CZ

The aim of this chapter is to collect good practice, tips, ideas and experience with preparing, running and evaluating of EVS projects of participants of the training course – EVS coordinators. This experience we would like to share with others involved in EVS projects (accredited sending, receiving and coordination organisations, mentors, volunteers...), for giving them ideas and inspiration for their real and further work within EVS and to help them to improve their EVS projects.

Participants were divided into smaller groups (about 4–5 people) and their task was to think about and to write their tips, ideas, good practice as well as potential risks for following topics (they had about 45 min. – 1 hour for discussion and summarization). At the same time, the group, solving concrete topics, was responsible for receiving also the feedback, tips and ideas from other participants from other groups during the day. The idea behind, was to collect good practice as well as to identify potential risks of each important step in the EVS project, in the chronological way (preparation-realisation-evaluation-follow-up activities of an EVS project):

1. Preparation phase

I. Selection of an EVS volunteer (by CO or RO)

Good practice

- Look for motivation/ interested volunteers
- Send a questionnaire to applicants – e.g. *Why do you want an EVS volunteer? What do you want to learn?*
- Use simple/ understandable language
- Speak on Skype or on the phone
- Keep in touch with volunteers during selection and give precise information about the project to EVS volunteers/ get precise info from volunteers about their motivation/ needs/ expectations from the EVS.
- To have good a sending partner organisations
- Use on-line databases of EVS opportunities/ youth networks
- Share as many information as possible about the receiving organisation/ country/ culture (it helps self-selection)
- Exchange wanted detail of former/ present/ future EVS volunteers (first-hand information)

Potential Risks

- Different expectations
- Too little communication before start or during selection of volunteers
- Cultural differences

II. Communication between partners (RO-SO, SO-EVS volunteers, RO-EVS volunteers, RO-CO-SO) before the arrival of EVS volunteer in the receiving organisation and support of EVS volunteer before EVS (SO-RO-CO, others...)

Good practice

- Get a detailed description of tasks/ activities/ conditions for EVS volunteers from RO/ CO and explain it to the volunteer if it is necessary
- Keep in touch (at least one email a month)
- Meet with all participants personally if possible, intensive communication
- Work on common standards with partners (preparation, support during EVS activity-supervisions with EVS volunteers and task-related support)
- Be open, honest, clear – everyone benefits

Potential risks

- Saying YES to a new partnership without knowing details and duality of the project and without making sure that the volunteer is well informed
- No communication between receiving organisation and the EVS volunteer, because of the receiving organisation (not because of an EVS volunteer)!

2. During EVS activity I. – after arrival EVS volunteer to the receiving organisation

I. Adaptation process within EVS projects – How to plan activities for EVS volunteers in relation to needs of the receiving organisation, EVS volunteers and local community?

Good practice

- Before and during EVS: in-depth information sparring (characteristics of the RO and activities)
- Prepare INFOPACK (free time activities, emergency numbers, practicalities...)
- The first month: smooth introduction, a lot of observation (and translation) then ask the volunteer how he/ she can contribute
- The monthly report used for joint evaluation and adaptation of the activities
- Define tasks and timing clearly
- Inform about the possibility to implement own ideas in the project
- Good preparation of the mentor

Potential risks

- Staff is not (and does not get) involved
- Different expectations of the receiving organisation and an EVS volunteer
- Isolation in small communities
- „EVS bubble“ or „Erasmus bubble“ and no interaction with locals

II. Support of EVS volunteers during the EVS (personal, intercultural, others...):

Good practice

- Organise a WELCOME Party for the new EVS (invite local community, staff, former EVS volunteers, local youth...)
- Facilitate integration to the local community according to the volunteer's interests: sport, animal shelter, theatre, community centre...)
- Get in touch with other EVS volunteers in the same city

- Organise regular meetings of receiving organisation and EVS volunteer
- Find suitable mentors and trained/ supervise mentors
- Let the volunteer organise the presentation of his/ her culture (music, dance, food...cooking classes)
- Organise a goodbye party
- Be aware of the cultural shock
- Don't get into the routine: every volunteer has his/ her own story

Potential risks

- The language barrier
- The cultural gap: different habits, different needs, different ways of giving meanings to actions (physical distance can be interpreted like „dislike“) – different communication styles
- Not clicking between volunteer-volunteer and/ or receiving organisation-volunteer
- Lack of motivation/ dis-motivation

3. During the EVS activity II.

I. Support of learning process in EVS project (to EVS volunteer, EVS coordinator, receiving and sending organisation):

Good practice

- Explaining the Youthpass at the very beginning of EVS activity and then repeatedly thought the project
- Regular feedback sessions analysing learning process and framing towards Youthpass competencies /other soft skills (helping volunteers to realise the utility of their new skills/ competencies)
- Recognising learning styles and adapting activities and support of it
- Training courses, networking, forums (for EVS support start)
- Group evaluation with volunteers from different receiving organisations (2–5 times during the EVS project)

Potential risks

- Unexpected volunteers unable to recognise their learning process
- Incompatibility of learning styles (formal, non-formal, informal)
- Cultural differences/ obstacles to learning

II. How do you support EVS volunteers within their „Individual Action Plan (mini-project)“?

Good practice

- „Footprint“
- Motivation
- Work with concept from the very begin
- Project management (NAOMIE)
- Open for new ideas
- Limits – time, money, resources
- Simple, clear, fair
- Even small project can be a big step for a volunteer
- To learn from EVS volunteers
- Accurate support (example: music project- music teacher...)

Potential risks

- Lack of motivation
- Losing the structure

- Too high expectations of a volunteer
- Bad feedback from the community
- Competition between volunteers (in the case more EVS volunteers in the receiving organisation)

4. Before departure from the receiving organisation/ after return back to the home country

I. Support of EVS volunteer with evaluation before departure from EVS home (from receiving organisation, sending organisation,...):

Good practice

- Session/ seminar/ meeting of the receiving organisation and the EVS volunteer (eventually involving also coordinating organisation if there is involved in the project), possible to involve mentor who gives feedback
- Using non-formal tools/ methods to evaluation and tests from psychology/ language/ etc.
- Evaluation of logistics by coordinating organisation and learning and activities by receiving organisation – both according to the reality of the organisation
- Clarify the goals of evaluation for individual participants
- Clarify who will get the outcomes of the evaluation (receiving, sending, coordinating organisation, volunteer, mentor, national agency,...)
- Minutes from the evaluation to use in the project final report
- Erasmus plus final report of participants in print-filling out (original to you, copy to them)

Potential risks

- Not getting the final report from EVS volunteers
- Clarifying who will get outcomes of evaluation – less sharing and openness
- Balance in evaluation – can get too negative
- Not measurable outcomes

II. Support of EVS volunteer after return from EVS at home (from receiving organisation, sending organisation, mentor..) and follow-up activities:

Good practice

- From the receiving organisation and the coordination organisation (depends on the context) include them in ongoing projects
- Suggest partnership or cooperation (CO/RO)
- RO/CO connection with previous EVS volunteers to the new ones (supporting network)
- Sending organisation: help with (inner) evaluation – how to continue
 - share local/ internal possibilities to continue
 - Selection with alumni
 - A network of former EVS volunteers (possible to involve them in mentoring, buddies...)

Potential risks

- Just taking, not giving any outcome to local/ regional community – more participation than supporting community
- Contact between current and previous volunteers can be discouraging
- Come back to the previous community and come back to old habits (no development and change).

Presentations of projects

EVS in our Hands

28.9.–3.10.2015

Toulcův Dvůr, Prague (Czechia)

Organised by

ANEV z.s. – Association of Non-formal Education z.s., Czech Republic

Partner organisations

Akzente Salzburg (Austria)

Alter Nativa (Slovakia)

CS Muovimente (Italy)

CVČ Junior (Slovakia)

Sempre a frente (Poland)

Steinbeis Innovation GmbH (Germany)

EVS in our hands was a training course focusing on European Voluntary Service coordinator's potential and competencies needed to manage their projects successfully and to guide volunteers well through their learning process.

Main aim and methodology

This course was basically a deepening for experienced EVS coordinators and support persons. We wanted to explore the full potential of EVS project and to discover ways of improving relevant aspects of it. Important was to understand the EVS learning process and to set up a long term plan of it. Next to it we worked on developing competencies in communication, feedback and conflict solving. One part of the course was dedicated to sharing experience and getting inspiration by exploring real cases and comparing solutions of difficult situations in various EVS project environments.

Objectives of the course

To understand the role of EVS coordinator and supporting actors in the project

To define the contribution of EVS projects for the organisation;

To learn how to communicate effectively, how to give feedback and solve possible conflicts in EVS projects

To explore ways of long-term support and motivation of EVS coordinators

To share and learn about learning process support systems in EVS projects

To gain inspiration for further work in the EVS by sharing good examples, learning tools and methodologies

More about the project

Presentation

Collection of pictures (PDF document): <https://goo.gl/W9Noa4>

Participants speak about the project

<https://youtu.be/yP7Z-74rCL4>

Photos

<https://goo.gl/uovvyT>



EVS Gathering

21.–27. 11. 2016

Hotel Lipový, Morávka, Silesian Region (Czechia)

Organised by

ANEV z.s. – Association of Non-formal Education z.s., Czech Republic

Partner organisations

Gyumri "Youth Initiative Centre" (Armenia)

Akzente Salzburg (Austria)

Azerbaijan Students' Union (Azerbaijan)

Slezská Diakonie (Czech Republic)

Olemisen Balanssia ry (Finland)

Youth Association DRONI (Georgia)

Council for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (SPPMD) (Macedonia)

Associação Erasmus Student Network Minho (Portugal)

Scientific Advisory Center «Consciousness» - Falcogroup (Russia)

Mladiinfo (Slovakia)

Ágora Culutral (Spain)

Youth Eurasia (Turkey)

Kharkiv association for active youth «Stella» (Ukraine)

EVS Gathering was a training course with study visit elements for EVS coordinators and mentors. It was a chance to meet, learn, share and inspire each other in all aspects of EVS projects. Special focus was put on the similarity between an EVS story and life stories of mythological heroes. Participants visited different hosting organisations, share good practices and learned new approaches, tools and tricks. It was a direct follow-up activity of the "EVS in our hands course" from 2015.

Main aim and methodology

This course aimed in general at personal development of participants and their inspiration from different examples, approaches and from visited hosting places. Also there was an aspect of sharing and networking for the improvement of EVS projects and for the most effective and smooth learning process of all actors. The methodology was a combination of training inputs, sharing sessions, experiential moments and excursions. The content included theoretical elements, experiential parts and practical tools and methods. The training course was designed for participants with some previous experience in the field, offered wider context and targeted those who conduct EVS as an organic part of a life story.

Objectives of the course

To learn methods for supporting learning, motivation and reflection during EVS projects

To get inspiration from variety of visited organisations and diversity of participants

To understand EVS as an integral part of one's life by comparing it to tales and myths

To share, network and start cooperation with other participants

To get motivation for designing a smooth and natural EVS learning story

More about the project

Articles

EVS Gathering E+ TC, Czechia / Nov 2016, by Tuğçe Kurşun (Youth Eurasia, Turkey)

<https://merictahan.wordpress.com/2017/01/01/evs-gathering-e-tc-czechia-nov-2016/>

EVS Gathering, tréningový kurz, Morávka, Beskydy 2016, by Helena Hájková (YMCA, Slovakia)

<http://www.ymca.sk/2016/12/evs-gathering-treningovy-kurz-moravka-beskydy-2016/>

Photos

Majka Horníková: <https://goo.gl/Esz9T8>

Jan Látal: <https://goo.gl/UrGuQB>



About the Trainers team



Jan Látal

Freelance Trainer, Nature guide, Youth Worker, Musician, Performer, Webmaster

After studying at the University of South Bohemia (the topic of Leisure time education) started to cooperate with Youth Information Centre in České Budějovice (2001–2010). Since then he's been active in organising various local youth activities, initiatives and international projects in the frame of Youth in Action/ Erasmus + and other contexts. He worked for the Czech National Agency for Youth in Action Programme (2005–2014) as a freelancer in different roles. Recently, he also works for the Austrian NA as EVS trainer and coordinates various local and international training and educational activities (workshops, seminars, training courses...). Has his own nature-based coaching and wilderness guiding practice. In his work, he combines art, nature and spiritual elements in educational activities.



Helena Kosková

Freelance Trainer, Nature Guide, Pesso-Boyden Therapist, Gardener

With an educational background in sociology, social work and psychotherapy she has 14 years of experience as a freelance trainer focused on personal and organisational /community development and long-term programmes of non-formal education. She is involved in international Youth in Action / Erasmus+ programmes and runs own educational organisation Natural Spirit (www.naturalspirit.cz), which is focused on meaningful education in harmony with inner and outer nature. She works with individuals and groups also as a psychotherapist using body and emotions based method Pesso-Boyden System Psychomotor. Her third working focus and passion is gardening. You can often find her walking, exploring pilgrimage as a tool for learning, development and change. In connection with EVS, she was coordinator of sending and hosting projects in YMCA, did 9 months voluntary service in shelter home for children in Lithuania, and since 2003 is trainer of EVS volunteers, mentors and coordinators – both on national and international level, working for different National Agencies and in frame of projects granted by Erasmus +.



Dan Janauer

Freelance outdoor guide, Instructor of skiing and snowboarding, Vegetarian Cook

Studied human resources management at the ČVUT University in Prague (2011–2013). Worked more than 10 years for the Youth / Youth in Action Czech National Agency (2001–2013). Coordinating several activities and agendas within Youth, Youth in Action and Erasmus+ programmes. In 2006 he felt in love with EVS and since then he was working as a project consultant, accreditor and project evaluator. Coordinator of several EVS national and international training courses focused on self-development of volunteers, coordinators and mentors. Since 2014 member of Association of non-formal education (www.anev.cz) and still faithful to the EVS topic. Currently is socialising with people through sports, outdoor activities/education, cooking and travelling.



Magda Wagenknechtová Svobodová

Coordinator of educational activities, Trainer, EVS accreditor for SEE/Western Balkans countries, creative mother

After studying at the Charles University (the topic of cultural studies/ social and cultural anthropology) and working for the children theatre Minor decided for going abroad like EVS volunteer (region PACA, France). Has long-term experience (2001–2013) with work for the Czech National Agency of Youth/Youth in Action programme, in different roles. From 2003 started to work more on the topic of EVS, like coordinator of EVS in the Czech Republic, EVS accreditor, trainer, project consultant. At the same time, coordinator of various educational activities for youth and youth workers on regional, national as well international level (training, seminars, events, workshops...), often aimed at the topic of EVS and non-formal education. One of founder and member of Society of František Tröster z.s., presenting personality and work of famous stage designer. Since 2006, working for the SALTO SEE RC like EVS accreditor for SEE/Western Balkans countries. Since 2014, a member of Association of non-formal education (www.anev.cz), active in various international training courses aimed at non-formal education and EVS. Regarding work experience, she is getting inspired by meeting and working with other culture realities. She likes art and creative activities, sport, travelling, walking in nature and gardening.

Glossary of Terms

- AA – Activity Agreement** – The document includes all details of the proposed EVS project (for example title and project's dates, identification of the volunteer, role and tasks of the volunteer, rights of the partners, financial details, practical arrangements, planned learning outcomes) and is signed by EVS partners (EVS volunteers, receiving organisations...).
- CIGNA** – Life/health insurance for all EVS volunteers in frame of the E+ programme. This insurance is mandatory and free of cost for the EVS volunteer (system of reimbursements – firstly the EVS volunteer/NGO pays for the doctor, then costs are reimbursed by the CIGNA, after the presentation of bills/invoices). The insurance covers, in general, all needed health issues, including dental care, regular doctor's visits, doctor's visits in case of injuries etc.
- E+** – Erasmus + programme. An educational programme offering international cooperation and wide possibilities of learning processes for different target – groups (youth, students, youth workers, teachers, schools, researchers...).
- EACEA** – Education Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency.
- EC** – European Commission.
- EECA/ Eastern Partnership countries and Russian Federation** – Eastern Europe and Caucasus countries/ Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) and Russian Federation.
- EI** – Expression of interest. The first step for the organisation, how to be involved in EVS projects (like sending and/or receiving and/or coordinating organisation).
- EVS** – European voluntary service. International long-term educational activity (in some cases can be also short-term), ensuring learning experience for young people between 18–30 years (people with fewer opportunities also from 16–17 years old), by involving in work in some of accredited receiving organisations.
- EVS coordinator** – leader of EVS project in sending and/or receiving organisation and/or coordinating organisation. In sending organisation, the coordinator is responsible mainly for support of EVS volunteer in preparation phase (being in touch with EVS volunteer, help with choosing right EVS project, communication with receiving organisation, support before departure for EVS project), then during realisation of EVS project (being in regular contact with EVS volunteer as well with receiving organisation) and after return home from EVS (support during re-integration phase). In receiving organisation, this person is usually responsible mainly for preparation, realisation and evaluation of project's activities (content of the project), support of educational process of EVS volunteer during the stay in the receiving organisation, ensuring practicalities, support of EVS volunteer (within work, with integration in the local community,...).
- CO** – coordinating organisation. The organisation which has the coordinating role in name of all project's partners in the EVS project. After approving of the concrete project, this organisation signed the contract between National Agency and coordinating organisation. Takes full responsibility, together with project's partners, in running the whole project in needed quality.
- SO** – sending organisation. The organisation accredited for sending EVS volunteers abroad.
- SEE / Western Balkans** – South East Europe countries / Western Balkan countries (**Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia**).
- RO** – receiving organisation. The organisation is accredited for receiving EVS volunteers from various countries. Can offer set of various activities for EVS volunteer as well is able to design clear learning outcomes of EVS – for EVS volunteer as well the organisation/ local community. At the same time, is fully responsible for support

of EVS volunteer during the realisation of activity, is able to ensure all practical issues related to staying of EVS volunteer in the host country and has enough personal and technical capacity to receive EVS volunteer.

Mentor – person who personally supports the EVS volunteer during his/her stay in foreign country and help him/her with integration in the local community (support by finding friends, meeting of people from the local community, understanding local habits, traditions and culture.

NA – National agency. The National Agencies are responsible for coordination of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action in the Programme Countries.

SALTO – Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities for Youth. It works within the Erasmus+ Youth programme (EU programme for education, training, youth and sport). SALTO-YOUTH is a network of 8 Resource Centres working on European priority areas within the youth field, provides **non-formal learning resources for youth workers and youth leaders** and organises **training and contact-making activities** to support organisations and National Agencies (NAs) within the Erasmus+ Youth programme.

TC – Training Course. One of possible educational activity for youth and youth workers, how to support general/specific aims of the Erasmus +: Youth in Action Programme.

YiA – **Youth In Action Programme** – previous phase (2007–2013) of the educational programme of Erasmus + Youth Programme, aimed at youth field.

Useful links and resources

European Commission, "Erasmus+ Programme Guide"

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf

Database of EVS accredited organisations

http://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/evs-organisation_en

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm

Database of Volunteering Opportunities

http://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/project_en

OTLAS partner finding tool

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/otlas-partner-finding/>

EVS Charter

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/library//evs-charter_en.pdf

The European Voluntary Service Info Kit

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents-for-applicants/evs-info-kit_en

Youthpass certificate

www.youthpass.eu

European Youth Portal

<http://europa.eu/youth/EU/voluntary-activities/european-voluntary-service>

European Solidarity Corps

<https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/>

CV Europass format

<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/documents/curriculum-vitae>

European Commission Youth

<http://ec.europa.eu/youth/>

EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency)

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/homepage_en

Salto Resource Centers

<http://www.salto-youth.net/>

SALTO EECA, promoting cooperation between Programme and Eastern Partnership countries and Russian Federation within Erasmus+ Youth

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/eeca/>

SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre, promoting cooperation between Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme Countries and the Programme's neighbouring partner countries in the Western Balkan region

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

SALTO EuroMed, promoting cooperation between Programme and Mediterranean Partner countries

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/>

Hopscotch to Quality in EVS 2.0, practical handbook for enhancing quality in European Voluntary Service

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/see/resources/hopscotch/hopscotch2.0/>

Eurodesk network

www.eurodesk.eu

Youth Partnership, Council of Europe

<http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership>

YouthforEurope.eu (platform for young people, youth organisations, people working with youth)

<http://www.youthforeurope.eu/>

Meant to be a mentor (practical guide for EVS mentors)

https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-1300/2015%20EVS%20Meant%20%20be%20a%20Mentor.pdf

Conflict

What an Opportunity! (practical booklet with outcomes of the International Training Courses „COME“ Conflict Management for Actors of EVS projects)

http://www.mladezvakci.cz/fileadmin/user_upload/publikace/Brozura_COME.pdf

Conflict management and Conflict Transformation, YEE Handbook, published by YEE, Prague, 2010

http://www.yeenet.eu/images/stories/documets/Publications/General_Publications/Conflict_management.pdf

Information on Czech Republic for EVS volunteers (practical brochure for EVS volunteers coming for EVS to the Czech Republic)

http://www.mladezvakci.cz/fileadmin/user_upload/publikace/Information_Czech_republic.pdf

Me the citizen of Europe (How to deal with European citizenship and European dimension in non-formal education projects; practical brochure)

http://www.mladezvakci.cz/fileadmin/user_upload/publikace/Me_the_citizen_of_EU_web.pdf

Intercultural Communication Resource Pack (practical booklet about topic of culture and intercultural communication; SALTO Youth Cultural Diversity)

<https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-1789/Booklet%20Intercultural%20Communication%20Resource%20Pack.pdf>

Summary of the program of the international TC „EVS in Our Hands“ (28. 9.–3. 10. 2015, Prague, Czech Republic)

<https://goo.gl/W9Noa4>

Video with experience of participants of the international TC „EVS in Our Hands“ (28. 9.–3. 10. 2015, Prague, Czech Republic)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yP7Z-74rCL4>

Useful and inspiring information for EVS coordinators, mentors and EVS accredited organisations

www.evsgalaxy.net

Contacts

do you have more questions about the European Voluntary Service or the Erasmus + programme (Youth in Action)?
Don't hesitate to contact us :-)

The Association of Non-formal Education (ANEV z.s.) – coordinating organisation of both international projects „EVS in Our Hands“ (2015) and „EVS Gathering“ (2016).

Contact

evs.gathering@gmail.com

www.anev.cz

www.evsgalaxy.net

Disclaimer

This brochure was created like the outcome of two International Training Courses „EVS in Our Hands“ (Prague, 2015) and „EVS Gathering“ (Morávka, 2016) and has been funded with support from the European Commission, through the Erasmus+ Programme.

This brochure reflects the views and opinions only of the authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

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Photos used: *Private trainer's and participant's archives. Pictures taken during the "EVS in Our Hands" and "EVS Gathering" training courses.*

Published by:

Association of Non-formal Education (ANEV z.s.), IČO: 01317610

U Kloubových domů 330/8, 190 00 Praha 9, Czech Republic

April 2017

Motto

**„A ship in the harbour
is safe, but that
is not what ships
are built for.“**

John A. Shedd



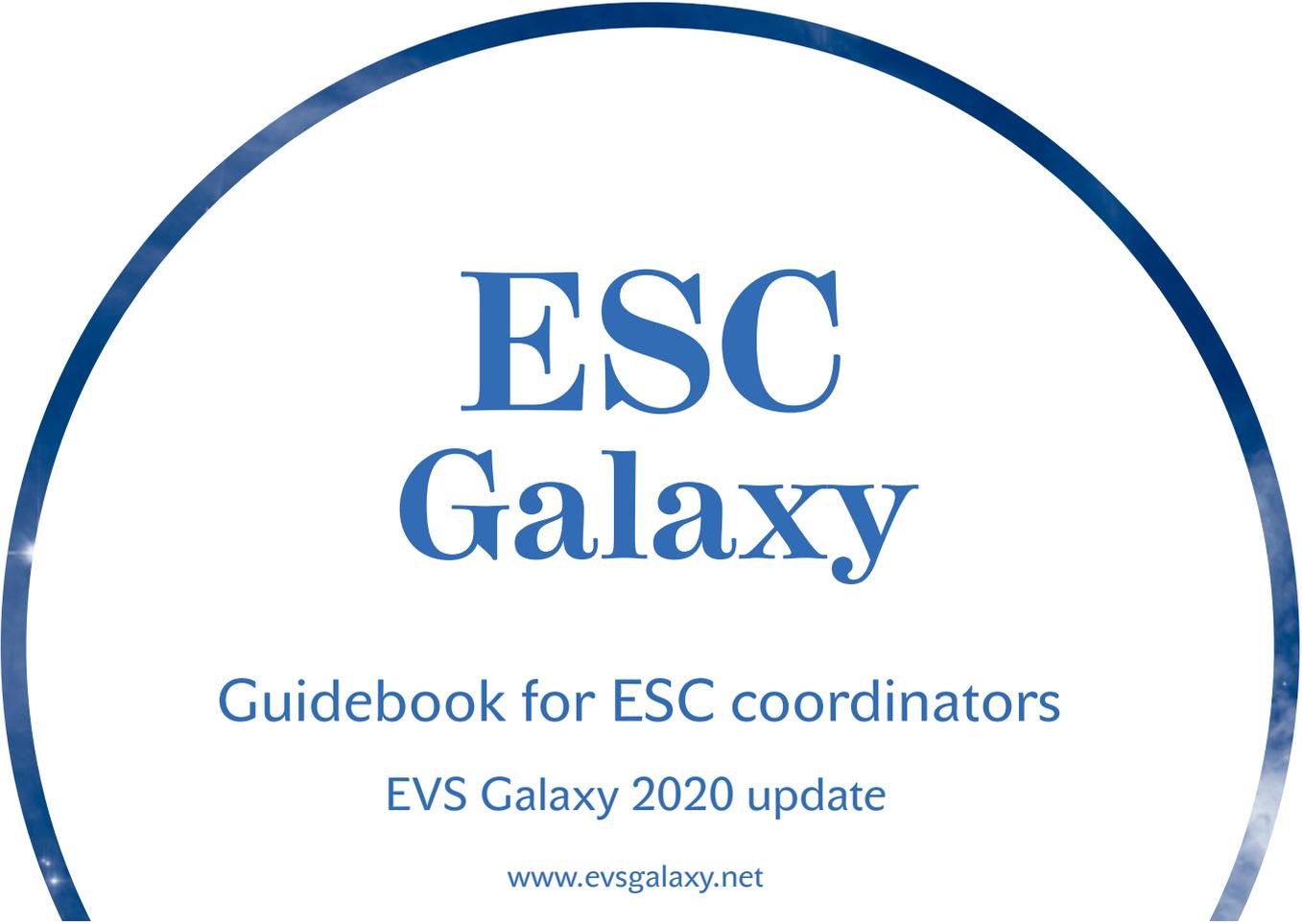


ESC Galaxy

Guidebook for ESC coordinators

EVS Galaxy 2020 update

www.evsgalaxy.net



ESC Galaxy

Guidebook for ESC coordinators

EVS Galaxy 2020 update

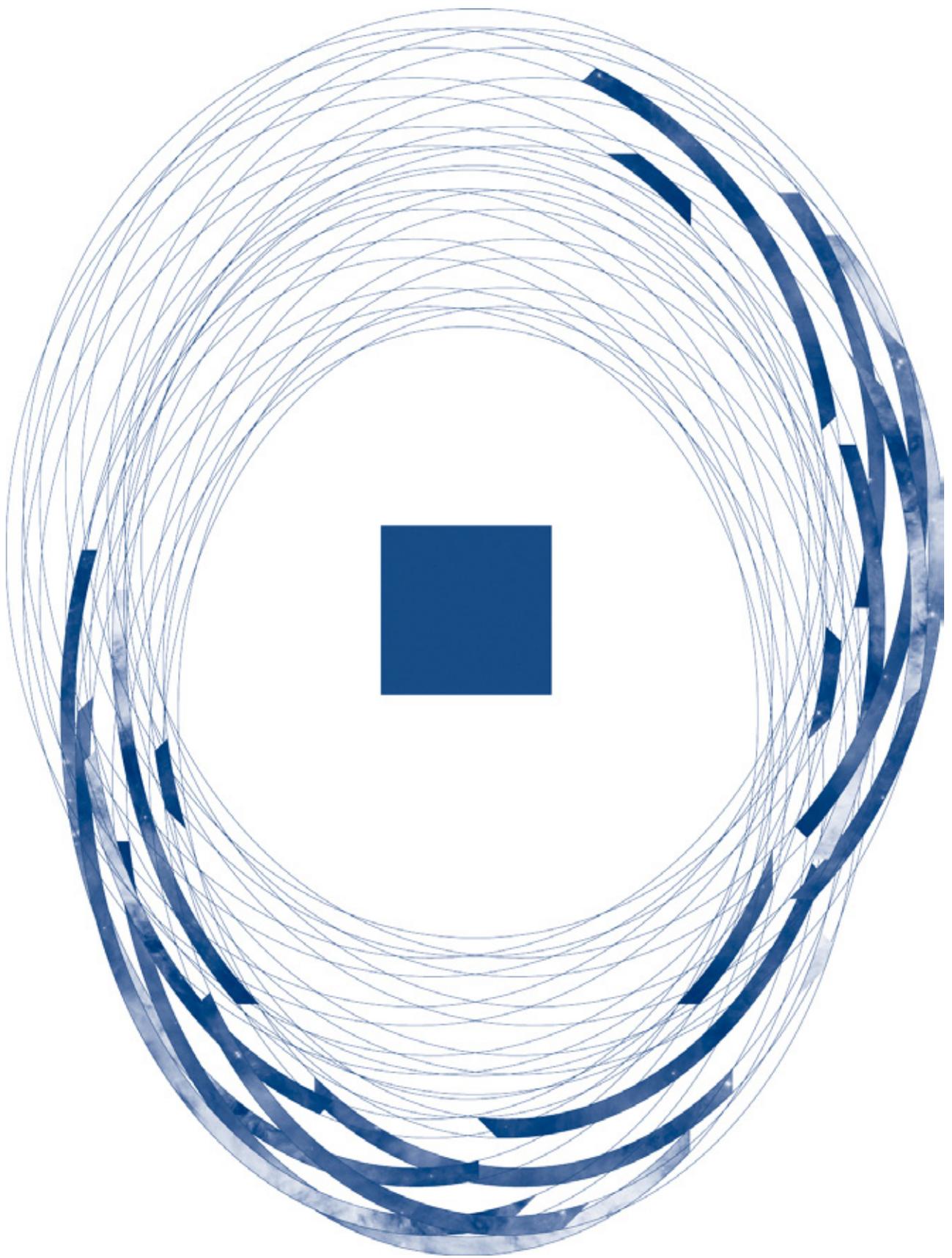
www.evsgalaxy.net



Acknowledgement

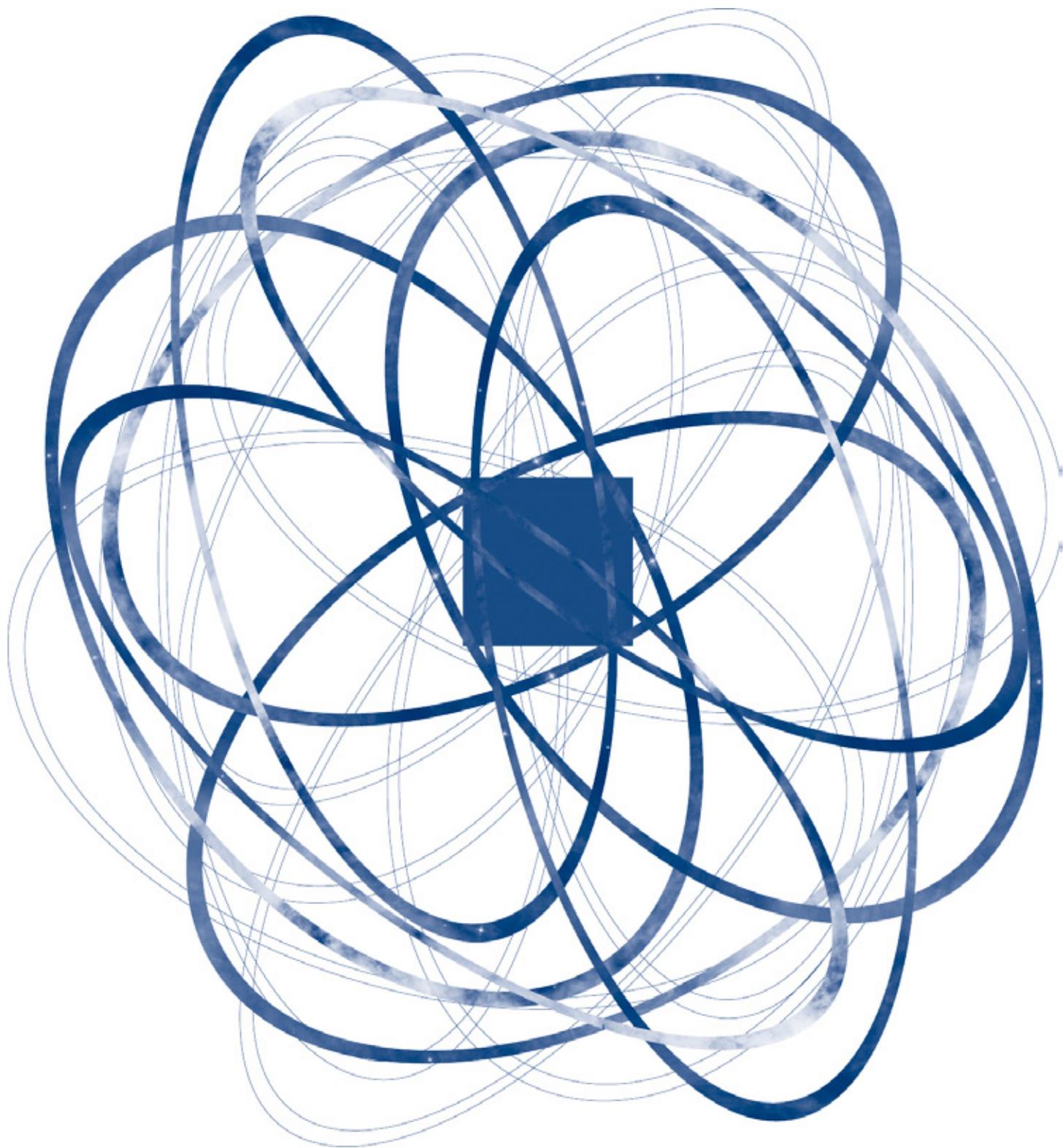
We would like to thank to all authors, who were willing to share their experience with EVS projects and contributed actively to the content of this brochure.

Many thanks to all of you!



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Introduction

After almost three years, we are revisiting “EVS Galaxy”, an on-line guide for EVS coordinators of volunteering projects, which was originally developed as an outcome of two International Training Courses (“EVS in Our Hands” in 2015, Prague, CZ; “EVS Gathering” in 2016, Morávka, CZ) with the aim to share experience, good practices, tools and methodologies for international volunteering projects. The brochure is designed primarily for organisations that have been involved in EVS and have recently started or intend to start new volunteering projects within the European Solidarity Corps programme (acting as supporting and/or hosting organisations). It should be useful mainly for coordinators of volunteering projects who are eager to explore new inspirations and motivations in order to improve the quality of their work. At the same time, the brochure intends to provide practical tools for mentors of volunteers and anyone else who may be directly or indirectly involved in volunteering projects.

In December 2016, the European Commission decided to launch a new youth programme, the “European Solidarity Corps”, supporting volunteering, local youth initiatives, jobs and traineeships. The programme has specific aims, objectives, rules and conditions and builds on the previous EVS Programme and the experience collected over its 20 years of existence. That is why there are many similarities but also many innovations. The team, aware of potential issues and the need for clarification and sharing of the latest experience, has committed to supporting coordinators in this transition phase from the previous EVS to the new programme by implementing the 3rd Edition of the International Training Course for EVS/ESC coordinators – “ESCalator – new levels of European volunteering”. Besides supporting coordinators in their role, providing examples of good practice in supporting the learning process of volunteers and other soft skills of the coordinators, we also foster networking – strengthening of cooperation between EU members, non EU participating countries and Western Balkans countries. We have expanded the existing brochure for EVS-ESC coordinators with new topics and experience of various ESC coordinators from different countries in response to the new European Solidarity Corps programme and its specific topics. At the same time, we present new tools for ESC coordinators which have been developed by different organisations across Europe over the past few years. The expanded brochure covers various recent topics and new tools related to the work of ESC coordinators, which may inspire and foster higher quality in volunteering, jobs and traineeships projects. Besides the vast amount of information collected in the previous EVS Galaxy Edition of 2017, we have included experience with international volunteering from additional countries (Turkey, Montenegro, Kosovo...) and we are also introducing new tools that may help improve effectiveness of working with international volunteers (I-prepare platform to support volunteers before they leave, Im-prove Application, Organisational Learning etc.).

We would like to thank all the authors hailing from different countries and backgrounds for their willingness to share their experience with the previous EVS and recent European Solidarity Corps projects, good practice and tools used in the daily work with volunteers as well as for their time and effort they put in their articles. We also appreciate the wide range of authors – from ESCalator participants to seasoned EVS – ESC coordinators, accreditors and Quality Label Experts, to trainers and mentors who tend to the volunteers. All of them bring in different types of experience and expertise in volunteering within the frame of the European Solidarity Corps.

We hope that you will find the latest supportive tools and methodological approaches to voluntary work as well as the experience with ESC voluntary projects from different countries across Europe helpful and inspiring in the transition phase to the European Solidarity Corps programme. We also believe that this brochure will motivate ESC coordinators to pursue further professional development and will contribute to improving the quality of volunteering projects in the frame of the European Solidarity Corps programme.

*On behalf of the ESCalator team
Magda Wagenknechtová Svobodová*

About the project

ESCalator – new levels of European volunteering

10.–16. 9. 2019

Trkmanka ecocentre, Velké Pavlovice (Czechia)

Organised by

ANEV z.s. – Association of Non-formal Education z.s., Czech Republic

Partner organisations

Verein Generationen und Gesellschaft (Austria)

Klub za osnaživanje mladih 018 (Serbia)

Qendra Per Progres Rinor (Albania)

Asocijacija za demokratski prosperitet – ZID (Montenegro)

Aventura Marao Clube (Portugal)

Xena – Centro Scambi e Dinamiche Interculturali (Italy)

Mladinski center BIT (Slovenia)

Fundacja Europejski Instytut Outsourcingu (Poland)

Initiative Christen für Europa e.V. (Germany)

Qendra për Zhvillim Ekonomik dhe Social (Kosovo)

Council for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency – SPPMD (North Macedonia)

Eğitim Programları ve Evrensel ve Kültürel Aktiviteler Derneği (Turkey)

About the course

Training course with networking and study visit elements for ESC coordinators from the EU and Western Balkan/SEE. The main aim was to increase the quality of ESC projects through personal development of coordinators and building long term partnerships of organisations.

Main content elements

ESC quality related themes

Excursions to different types of ESC projects

Learning and service in ESC projects

Roles, needs and competencies of ESC actors

Space for personal reflection and feedback

Networking and partnership building sessions

Intercultural experience – local wine harvest festival

Team

Trainers

Helena Kosková, Magda Wagenknechtová Svobodová, Jan Látal, Petre Mrkev

Support

Dan Janauer, Lenka Polcerová

More about the project

Articles

<https://breclavsky.denik.cz/ctenar-reporter/v-trkmance-se-skolili-dobrovolnici-z-cele-evropy-20191013.html>

Photos

Jan Látal: <https://bit.ly/ESCalator-album>



Solidarity as an important aspect of the European Solidarity Corps Programme

In December 2016, the European Commission launched a new EU youth programme: the European Solidarity Corps.

The programme focuses on solidarity as one of the core European values. Involvement of young people and organisations in solidarity activities, such as volunteering, local projects, jobs and traineeships and their active participation in society and local communities as well as willingness to help vulnerable people, significantly strengthen solidarity, open-minded attitudes, tolerance, democracy and citizenship in Europe. At the same time, one of the objectives of the new programme is to respond to new social challenges, including the need for social inclusion of young people in the majority society and the development of long-term cooperation among youth organisations across Europe.

What does “solidarity” mean in terms of European Solidarity Corps, though? Is there a common notion of solidarity across Europe? How to understand this aspect in our daily life and in the activities of organisations that work with young people? How to express “solidarity” in everyday situations? What are the benefits and limitations of solidarity? How to weave solidarity into the fabric of European Solidarity Corps projects?

Solidarity is the core idea behind the European Solidarity Corps Programme. Yet, there is a strong need for a better understanding of the concept of solidarity and its meaning in the context of youth work in Europe. The European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre in Vienna (Austria) responded to this need and commissioned a study to come up with a common narrative on the concept of solidarity from the perspective of research, practice, policy, and young people.

The study “4 thoughts for Solidarity” has clearly shown that many factors influence the perception of solidarity in our society. Different backgrounds create different perspectives. Nonetheless, the study describes 4 fundamental concepts that all target groups involved in the study agreed on: these **4 cornerstones** form the basis of a common understanding of solidarity:

- Human Rights;
- Active Citizenship;
- Inclusion;
- Empathy.

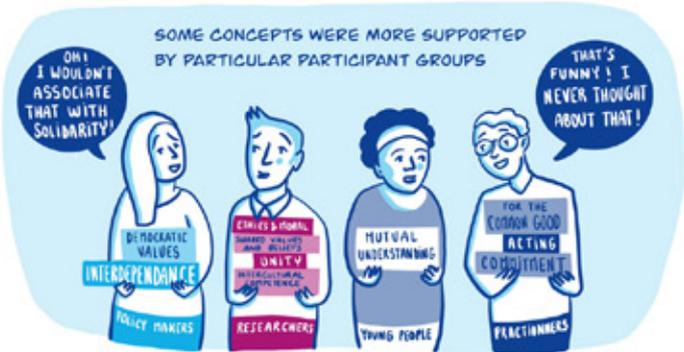
The ‘4 cornerstones’ are supported by **7 supporting concepts**, which were also highlighted to a lesser extent by people from the four participating groups. Nonetheless, they influence the broader perspective of a common understanding of solidarity in Europe:

- Social justice;
- Equality of opportunity;
- Support;
- Strengthening of communities;
- Active participation;
- Volunteering;
- Responsibility.

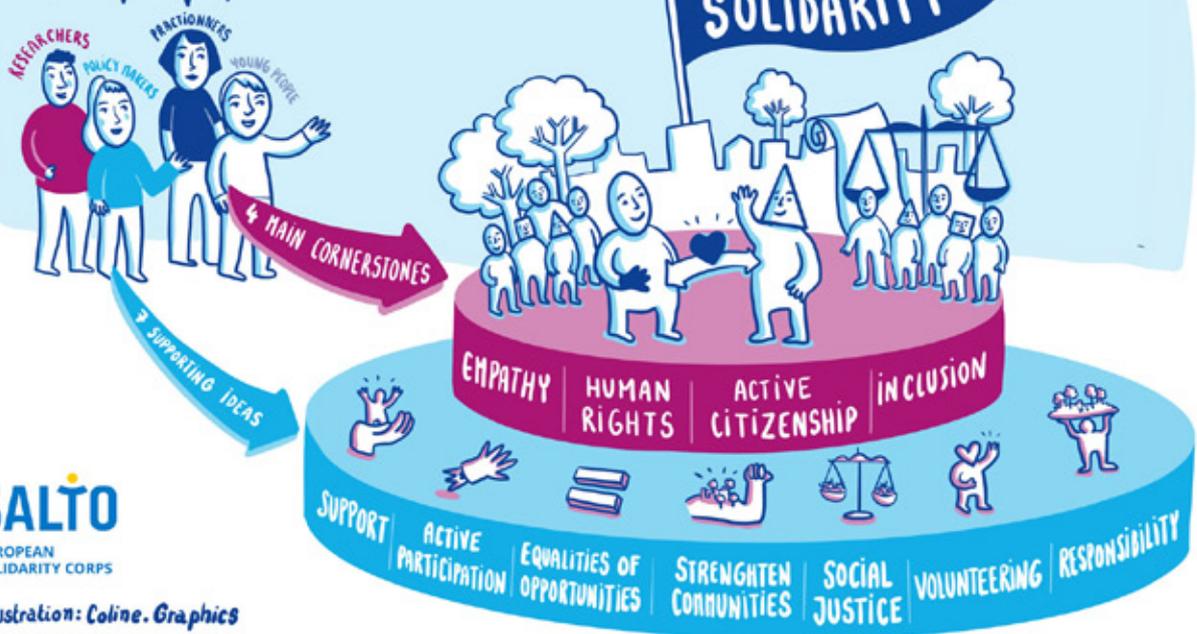
We should also note that the differences in the perception of the concept of solidarity also reflects each respondent’s reality. The study therefore aims to encourage dialogue and stimulate further discussion.

As you can see in [this picture](#), many other values and concepts were discussed throughout the process, some being more controversial than others.

WHAT IS SOLIDARITY?



ALTHOUGH WE MAY HAVE DIFFERENT OPINIONS, WE COULD AGREE ON THE COMMON GROUND!



SALTO
EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY CORPS

Illustration: Coline. Graphics

For more information about the process and outcomes of the research, please refer to [this infographic](#). If you wish to read the full report, you can access it at <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/solidarity/>

The common narrative on solidarity should be helpful for a better understanding of what solidarity means in the context of the European Solidarity Corps programme. It brings further inspiration for organisations that are involved in the European Solidarity Corps projects and hold the Quality Label.

Resources

Infographic with outcomes of both research initiatives: [Coline.Graphics](#), European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre, Vienna, 2019.

European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/solidarity/>

European Solidarity Corps Guide 2020

https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/european-solidarity-corps-guide_2020_en.pdf

Publication „Solidarity in Europe“, authors: Philipp Genschel and Anton Hemerijck. European University Institute, 2018

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/db3d580c-b248-11e8-99ee-01aa75ed71a1>

4Thoughts for solidarity – “a research, a study, a thinking exercise, a thought-provoking resource”

<https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-4062/4TDS%20Study%2020200501.pdf>

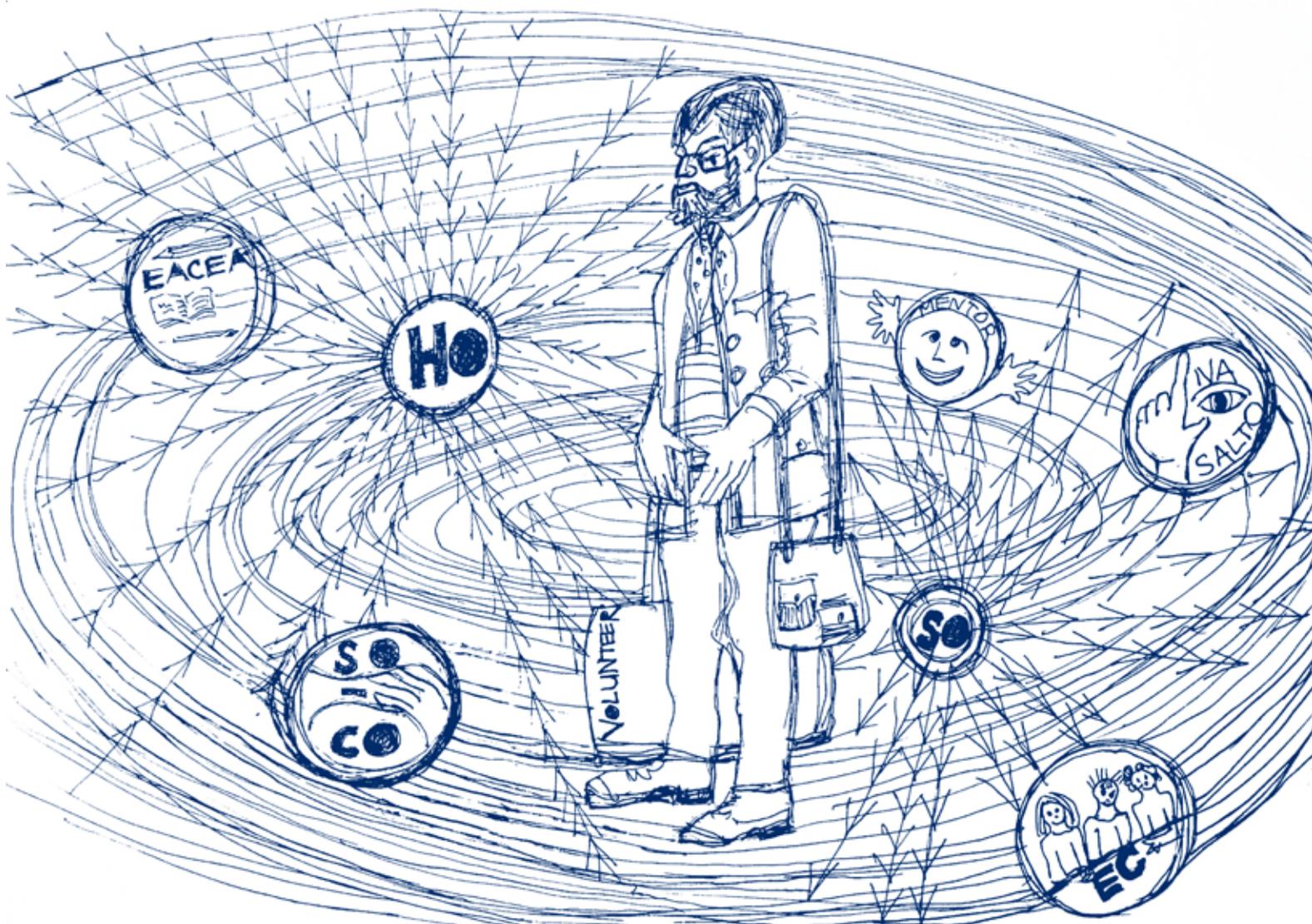
Magda Wagenknechtová Svobodová,
Association of Non-formal Education z.s. (ANEV z.s.),
long-term experience with topic of EVS/ESC
and with EVS accreditations/ESC Quality Label, Czech Republic

Many thanks to Mrs. Christine Keplinger (European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre, Austria)
for sharing background and outcomes of this research in the study “4thoughts for Solidarity”
(sent personally).

European Solidarity Corps Galaxy

As you can see in the picture bellow, European Solidarity Corps (ESC) volunteers enjoy systematic support from various actors (supporting organisations, hosting organisations, mentors, National Agencies, SALTO Resource Centres, EACEA, European Commission...) during all phases of an ESC project. Such support helps ESC volunteers successfully participate in their projects and has proved to be beneficial whenever there is a need to clarify misunderstandings or resolve conflict situations. The diagram also shows a possible problem resolution procedure involving various ESC actors.

In the preparatory phase, it is usually the supporting organisation (SO) that is in direct personal contact with the ESC volunteer (clarification of the volunteer's motivation to take part in an ESC project, his or her expectations, help with contacting foreign receiving organisations, choosing the right ESC project...). Later, before departure for the ESC project, the supporting organisation helps the volunteer with preparations (sharing ESC project content / ensuring pre-departure training support, preparing for life in a different culture, assistance with arranging travel to the hosting organisation...) and with practicalities (insurance, visa, if required, etc.).



During the ESC activity, the ESC volunteer is supported primarily by the hosting organisation (HO) and a mentor (M). The hosting organisation provides support to ESC volunteers mainly in the following areas: involvement of the volunteer in the planned activities/work, education, integration in the local community and in the host culture (in collaboration with the mentor), practicalities like language support, finding appropriate boarding, etc. The mentor supports ESC volunteers mainly in personal and social life, helps with the adaptation process in the hosting country, with his or her integration in the local community, with reflecting on the learning process including intercultural aspects of the ESC experience, and provides support to the volunteer in conflict/crisis situations. There are usually several people around ESC volunteers who provide hands-on support. The key and closest people from the hosting organisation typically include the mentor and an ESC coordinator (task-related support, main contact, supervisor... someone who is responsible for planning tasks/flow of ESC projects). At the same time, these people can usually effectively help resolve various issues, misunderstandings or possible conflict situations the ESC volunteer may run into in the host country. Open and clear communication and sharing of impressions and feelings of the ESC volunteer as well as building trust between the volunteer, mentor and staff of the hosting organisation have proved to lower the risk of conflicts significantly.

A separate "supporting organisation in the coordination role" is involved in some ESC projects. In such cases, this organisation provides methodological support throughout the ESC process in the local hosting organisation(s), including provision of continuous support to ESC volunteers. The "supporting organisation in the coordination role" and the local hosting organisation(s) usually make an agreement on the division of tasks, leadership of the ESC project, support and practicalities. It is highly recommended to share such agreement on the roles of these organisations with the ESC volunteers before or immediately upon their arrival to the hosting organisation. This can also help prevent possible misunderstandings and problems in ESC projects.

Besides a close contact with the mentor and the hosting organisation, the ESC volunteer as well as the hosting organisation should be in regular contact with the supporting organisation during the ESC project in the host country. The supporting organisation plays an important role in solving serious problems or conflict situations that may arise and can intervene if the ESC volunteer, mentor and hosting organisation are unable to find a solution acceptable for all parties involved.

Should very serious problems occur, when the ESC volunteer, mentor, hosting organisation, "supporting organisation in coordinating role" (if involved in the project) and the supporting organisation are not able to find an acceptable solution or provide necessary support to the ESC volunteer, it is possible to contact national and European authorities – the National Agency (NA of the host country or the sending country), SALTO Resource Centres, Executive Agency (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency), or representatives of the European Commission (EC). Those organizations can help by analysing the case and providing feedback and official recommendations to resolve the situation.

The supporting organisation continues to play a very important role even after the ESC volunteer returns home. The organisation is expected to evaluate the ESC project with the ex-volunteer, provide support with his or her re-integration process and to motivate him or her to make use of the ESC experience. Besides the possibility to attend an annual European Solidarity Corps evaluation event (held by sending NAs or SALTO centres), it is usually beneficial for both the ESC volunteer and the supporting organisation if the supporting organisation offers involvement in its various activities or supports the ex-ESC volunteer in his or her own follow-up activity.

With this systematic approach, the European Solidarity Corps programme represents a unique, safe opportunity for young people to volunteer in a foreign country, with a strong educational process on the part of ESC volunteers as well as the hosting organisations and local communities, including intercultural learning within a safe project environment.

Resources

European Solidarity Corps Guide 2020

https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/european-solidarity-corps-guide_2020_en.pdf

Hopscotch to Quality in EVS 2.0 (A practical Handbook for enhancing quality in European Voluntary Service)

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/see/resources/hopscotch/hopscotch2.0/>

European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/solidarity/>

Abbreviations

SO – supporting organisation

HO – hosting organisation

SO-CO – supporting organisation in the coordination role

M – mentor

SO-NA – National Agency in sending country

HO-NA – National Agency in hosting country

SALTO RC – Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities for Youth Resource Centres

EACEA – Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (Executive Agency)

EC – European Commission

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Traineeships and Jobs in the European Solidarity Corps programme

Besides well-known international volunteering, which was long supported by previous EU programmes (Youth, Youth in Action, Erasmus+), European Solidarity Corps programme now offers a new type of activities, “Traineeships and Jobs”.

These activities expand the options for young people to engage in international volunteering and offer an opportunity to acquire new skills, competencies and work experience on both the national and international level. Such experience will improve their employability and position on the labour market and will provide a unique opportunity for personal as well as professional growth.

Participating organizations from EU member states involved in the programme will receive support in finding and integrating trainees from their home country and other EU member states, while benefiting from new motivation, new insights and innovative approaches brought in by the young person involved. If they choose to hire someone from another country, they will also have a chance to try working with an international team and develop communication skills. At the same time, involvement of young people in traineeships and jobs is likely to raise various social challenges and should observe the principle of solidarity (regardless of the sector/topic/type of activity).

Traineeships

This type of activity represents a full-time job (40 hours per week) for 2 to 6 months with a possible extension to up to 12 months. The young trainee should receive compensation under applicable laws of the host country. The traineeship has strong teaching and training elements, helps the trainee to acquire relevant experience for personal, educational, social and professional growth and develop his or her competences in the field of active citizenship. A traineeship should never substitute a regular job and should be clearly separated from volunteering.

The project can take place in the trainee’s home country, at the national level. Such so-called “in-country” projects are intended primarily for young people with fewer opportunities, with the aim to encourage their active participation and motivate them to be active in a familiar environment, society and culture. Such EU-backed projects offer participation even in countries without their own national schemes.

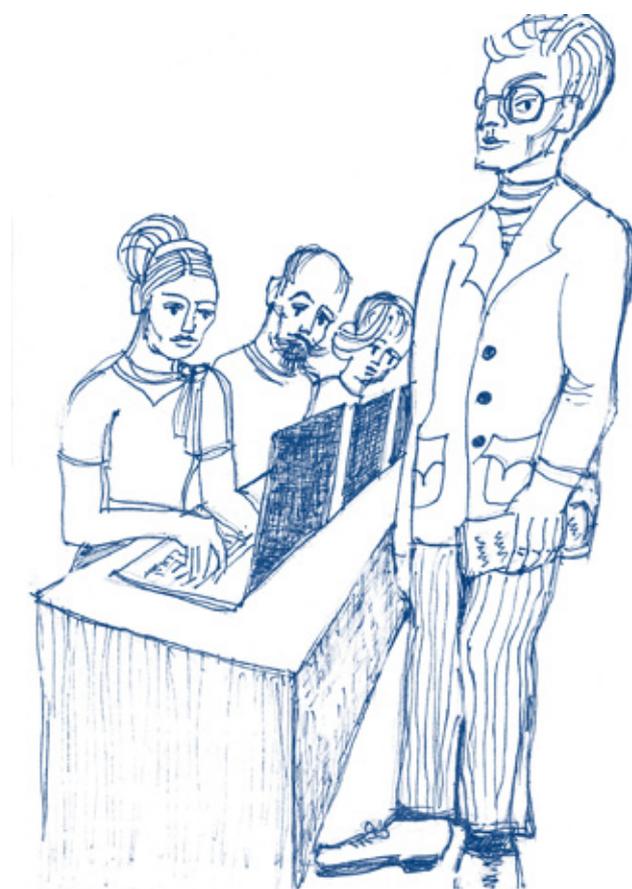


Traineeship projects at the international level taking place in other EU countries are called “cross-border” projects. If an organization wants to send or receive trainees within the home country (“in-country” projects), it is necessary to clearly and comprehensively describe the European added value, the European dimension and the aspect of solidarity in the project idea (in the Quality Label form and subsequently in the Application form). Similarly, it is necessary to justify the benefits of the project for the existing national schemes that support traineeships and volunteering (if existent). For “cross-border” traineeships, the vision of the organization must be clearly and comprehensively associated with the principle of solidarity. This must be clearly explained in both the Quality Label application and in a grant application within a specified deadline.

It is also necessary to specify the educational level of all actors involved in the planned activities, with a clear link to the principle of non-formal education (knowledge of the concept of non-formal education and how non-formal education will be implemented in the activities, methodology, and approach to trainees and the organization’s team; specific approach at the local and regional level...).

Jobs

The European Solidarity Corps programme also offers young people an opportunity to engage in long-term “jobs”. This type of activity lasts at least 3 months and is open to all young people who reside in the EU, including those with fewer opportunities. If necessary or desirable, this type of activity can last longer than 12 months (with no upper limit). However, the European Solidarity Corps programme will provide support only for 12 months. It is full-time work experience, fully paid according to labour laws and regulations applicable in the hosting country, with strong and well-planned teaching and training elements. An important aspect of the activity is gaining new experience, competencies and background in various fields according to the needs and interests of the young people, which will support their professional growth. Such a project can take place “in-country” (if young people with fewer opportunities are involved) or in other EU countries. The hosting organization is responsible for arranging for an employment contract and appropriate remuneration for the young person engaged in a “jobs” project.



Ensuring support in Traineeships and Jobs

Young people going to participate in Traineeships and Jobs, like volunteers of the Solidarity Corps, need to receive continuous support in education, personal and professional development, and practicalities throughout the project. Specifically, participants should take part in training courses organized by the National Agencies and SALTOs Regional Centres (“On-Arrival” and “Mid-Term”), attend the “Annual Meeting” after returning home and receive further educational support. In particular, traineeships are expected to support trainees in developing expertise, skills and competences (e.g. by participation in a training course, seminar, long-term education in

a given field/ topic) arranged for by the hosting organisation. One of the key objectives of traineeship is to provide an opportunity to learn as much as possible – both personally and professionally – in a relatively short time span. While bringing their own experience, new ideas, innovative approaches and inspiration to the host organization, they take away new practices, inspirations, ideas, knowledge and skills when they return to their home country. At the same time, the host organization should ensure appropriate ongoing support in the work environment (job supervision, mentoring) and help the Traineeships and Jobs program participants integrate into the culture and local community (in particular, as regards deeper understanding of the culture and language of the country). Last but not least, the host organization is expected to handle the logistics of the project activity and support the trainee with practical arrangements (e.g. a residence permit, board and lodging, etc.).

Traineeships and Jobs funding

The European Solidarity Corps programme will finance the following: travel costs, organizational support (participant support, project management costs), relocation allowance for participants, language support, inclusion support, insurance, additional costs (if applicable and needed). In order to be able to participate in these projects, the applicant organization must have an appropriate “Quality Label for Traineeships or Jobs” accreditation from the European Solidarity Corps programme. If an organisation already accredited for volunteering in the frame of European Solidarity Corps wishes to start offering Jobs and/or Traineeships to young people, it has to extend its accreditation to include these activities (through National Agencies/ SALTOs Resource Centres).

Young people express their willingness and interest to participate in a volunteer, trainee or job activity by registering in the [European Youth Portal](#), where registered organizations select suitable candidates for their activities and projects.

Selection of candidates for Traineeships and Jobs

The organization is required to be open to all potential candidates, including those with fewer opportunities, and ensure transparency of the selection process (based on a clearly defined strategy for choosing suitable participants and an open internal and external communication about the procedure, selection criteria and the results including explanation of rejections). As opposed to Volunteering where the criteria must be open without any preference regarding language skills and/or professional or other expertise, the rules for Traineeships and Jobs allow to consider language proficiency, professional background and other skills and experience of potential candidates in the selection process.

When deciding on the type of activity to offer (Volunteering, Job or Traineeship), an organization needs to carefully consider the different requirements and characteristics:

- level of initial knowledge / skills / competencies,
- scope of responsibility and independence,
- level of knowledge / skills / competencies necessary to carry out the duties,
- types of contracts / financing mechanism,
- duration of activities (Traineeships: 2–6 months vs. Jobs: 3–12 months covered by the European Solidarity Corps programme vs. volunteering “LT-Term” 2–12 months, ST-Term for young people with fewer opportunities or groups of young people 2 weeks to 2 months).

We believe that organizations from across the EU will find the new perspectives and innovative methods that these new types of activities offer as attractive and inspiring.

Resources

European Solidarity Corps Guide 2020

https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/european-solidarity-corps-guide_2020_en.pdf

European Solidarity Corps webpage of the Czech National Agency (DZS)

<https://www.dzs.cz/cz/evropsky-sbor-solidarity/staze-a-pracovni-mista/>

European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/solidarity/>

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European Solidarity Corps Programme – new opportunities and challenges for organizations in Western Balkans

The potential for implementation of ESC projects in South Eastern Europe (or the Western Balkans, as the region has been called lately) is determined by the number of accredited organizations in each country. The table below compares the current situation (spring 2020) with the same period three years ago:

Country	Number of accredited organizations (2017)	Number of accredited organizations (2020)
AL	19	16
BA	18	27
ME	3	5
RS	39	36
XK ¹	11	15
HR	63	74
MK	41	59

The table shows that there have not been any major changes in the number of organizations that held a valid Quality Label at the beginning of the last year of the ongoing Programme (except for Bosnia and Herzegovina which has seen a significant increase of exactly 50 percent). However, it is not apparent if they still keep their active accreditation from the EVS Programme or have been granted a new Quality Label from the ESC Programme. The transition of the European Voluntary Service (EVS) as an integral part of Erasmus+ to a separate programme led to some challenges for this study. EVS projects were called Erasmus+ Volunteering projects for a transitional period after the launch of the European Solidarity Corps at the end of 2016, until it became an independent programme in 2018. During this period, the beneficiaries in the Western Balkans region were often confused about the name of the programme to refer to.

In order to address the opportunities and challenges of these organizations, I would initially like to refer to the findings and recommendations of a recent study compiled by the SALTO SEE Resource Center in Ljubljana, Slovenia – *“IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ERASMUS+: YOUTH IN ACTION PROGRAMME IN THE PROGRAMME’S PARTNER COUNTRIES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS”*² which aims to serve as a basis for further development of cooperation with Western Balkan partner countries within the new generation of EU youth programmes, including the European Solidarity Corps Programme. It is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, including desk research, a survey and focus groups. The collected data used in the study refer only

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

² <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/see/resources/erasmus-study/>

to the period until 2018 (and therefore only to Erasmus+), but the survey respondents and participants in the focus groups refer to their experience with and expectations of both programmes.

In the Western Balkan partner countries, around 70% of the beneficiaries of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme are youth organisations and NGOs working predominantly with young people. More than a half of them are small organisations or organisations working only with volunteers, and the vast majority of them is to a small or very small extent (under 25%) dependent on the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme.

One of the main findings of the study related to volunteering projects (EVS/ESC) is that these projects have been less demanded by organisations in the Western Balkan partner countries. The main reasons for the comparatively low demand seem to stem from a generally rather low interest and limited capacity of local organizations to host or send volunteers. The focus groups confirmed these challenges, in particular the lack of financial and human resources of many organisations needed for a long-term engagement, while they also highlighted the issue of the long timeframe between accreditation/Quality Label and the actual project implementation. As regards benefits of the programmes, volunteer exchange projects received the lowest scores in the survey. However, organisations run primarily by volunteers still mentioned them as relevant and beneficial. Besides, projects of this type tend to be significantly more successful in receiving grants than others. Accessibility of funding is therefore not perceived as a main obstacle by the beneficiaries.

The conclusion of the study indicates that the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme has become more accessible over the years. However, this does not apply to all types of organisations equally. In fact, the programmes have become increasingly more accessible for organisations with greater resources than for smaller organizations with lesser capacities, which constitute the majority of beneficiaries. To counter this trend, in addition to increasing the success rate of applications, it is highly recommended to simplify the procedures and requirements related to project applications and implementation, and, in particular for the European Solidarity Corps to simplify and shorten the procedures and the timeframe between the Quality Label application and the actual project implementation.

In order to improve the accessibility of the EU youth programmes (including the ESC Programme) for organisations in Western Balkan partner countries, it is recommended to facilitate more networking & partnership-building activities at two levels:

- for organisations at the national and regional (Western Balkan) level, in order to facilitate networking and peer-learning, and
- for organisations involved in the Programme and Western Balkan partner countries to overcome the experienced difficulties in finding suitable partners, especially for Western Balkan organisations that do not belong to international networks.

Furthermore, it would be desirable to introduce specific support measures that would be available within the European Solidarity Corps to support organisations that are already (or are planning to become) active and, most importantly, to reach out to potential new beneficiaries.

There is an environment where youth organizations and the organizations which target young people manage to address only a very small number of young people. Quite often, those are young people who are already involved in non-formal education and volunteering. Unfortunately, those whom the programme would benefit the most often remain without appropriate access to information about the opportunities, as the organizations lack the necessary resources and/or skills to engage them effectively. In addition, the influence of current technological developments and the use of internet, smart phones and social media create new types of role models among young people, while an increasing number of young people become egoistic and interested primarily in the personal profit. On top of this, the programme priorities are changing too frequently because of the evolving problems and needs of the European society. However, organizations find it difficult to respond to these priorities appropriately. They need to change the themes and methodology of their work with young people accordingly

in order to be eligible for funding. Unfortunately, allocating resources to implement the changes affects the quality of projects, which fail to meet real expectations of the young people, support them in their needs, and drive their interest in getting involved.

From my personal experience and observations and according to the opinion of my colleagues from the WB region, organisations face multiple challenges:

There is only one application round for the Balkan window with capped funds, which limits the number of approved projects and organizations that can implement a project. As a result, many organizations are disappointed. The next application round takes place the following year. Organizations are hardly motivated to work on preparations of projects that may be implemented in a year and a half.

The European Commission has introduced a concept of reduced bureaucracy in the application process together with an intention to grant greater amounts of money to the projects. This directly decreases the number of projects and indirectly prioritizes bigger and more experienced organizations, so smaller youth organisations have yet smaller chances to receive support.

The program priorities are often created top-down to address global issues, but are not necessarily based on the real needs of local communities and local NGOs. For example, there is a priority to fight growing unemployment and to improve employability of young people. However, many young people who participate in the program do not mention this as the main motivation for their involvement.

Local, grassroots organizations lack resources, experience, connections and opportunities to be able to plan their specific involvement in the program.

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Council for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency – SPPMD,

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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.

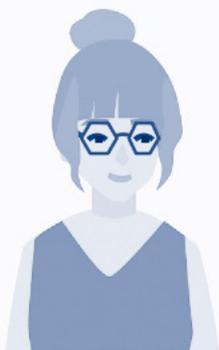
Also, in some cases, selection from the portal may result in two possible scenarios:

- 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

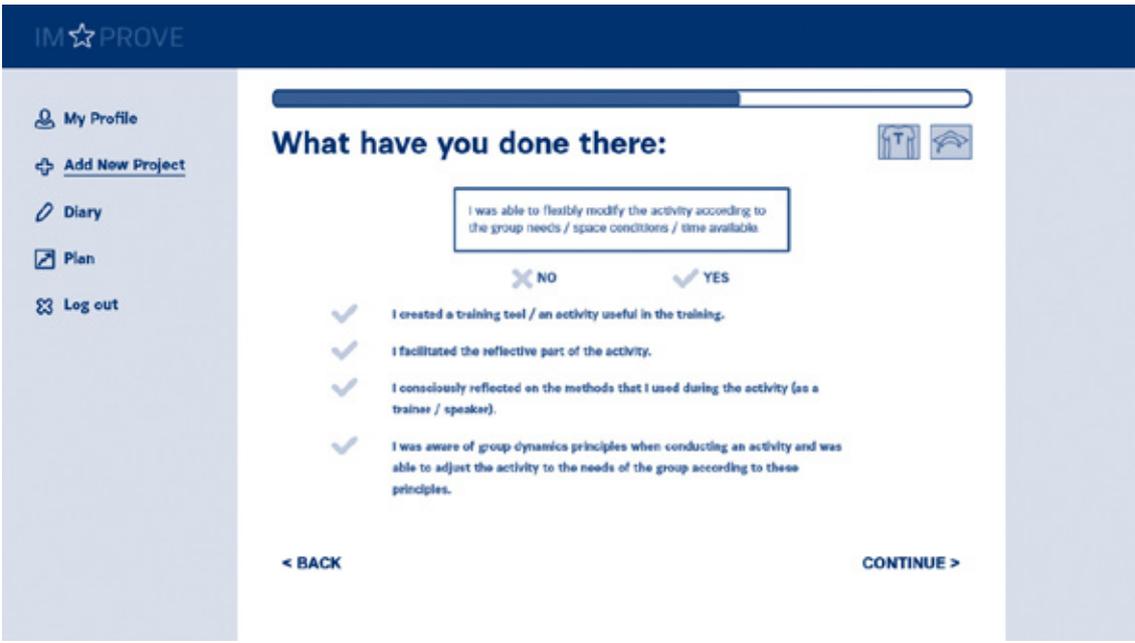
The iPrepare tool was created under the Erasmus+ KA2 "i-Prepare" project (2017-2-HU01-KA205-036198), a collaborative effort of 3 organizations: Egyesek Youth Association from Hungary, Xena Centro Scambi e Dinamiche Interculturali from Italy, and Cia Cekija from the Czech Republic.

<https://www.iprepare.eu>

*Anna Di Muro,
Xena Centro scambi e dinamiche interculturali, Italy*

IM-PROVE – an easy way to reflect on learning in volunteering

During and after a volunteering project, coordinators and mentors should support the volunteers in reflecting on their learning experience. Which situations were instructive or inspiring? When did they learn something important for their personal or professional life? How did they change their behavior, habits or methods? Which competences did they develop and how? There are so many questions with unclear answers! There are also many ways to support volunteers in answering them – learning diaries, Youthpass, personal discussions, buddy support, reflection groups, various activities to support individual or peer reflection. However, none of these is easy or straightforward to use – learning diaries and Youthpass require awareness of what “competence” means and how to concisely describe lessons learned in a way that others (e.g. future employers) will understand and appreciate. Personal meetings and buddy systems are awesome, but insufficient to document the complexity of learning progress. And workshops require money and resources to organize. All this made us look for a way to simplify the process for both the volunteers and project organizers.



The screenshot displays the IM-PROVE app interface. On the left is a navigation menu with options: My Profile, Add New Project, Diary, Plan, and Log out. The main content area is titled "What have you done there:" and features a progress bar at the top. Below the title, there is a text box containing the statement: "I was able to flexibly modify the activity according to the group needs / space conditions / time available." Below this, there are two radio buttons labeled "NO" and "YES", with "YES" selected. A list of four statements follows, each with a checkmark indicating it has been completed:

- I created a training tool / an activity useful in the training.
- I facilitated the reflective part of the activity.
- I consciously reflected on the methods that I used during the activity (as a trainer / speaker).
- I was aware of group dynamics principles when conducting an activity and was able to adjust the activity to the needs of the group according to these principles.

At the bottom of the screen, there are two buttons: "< BACK" and "CONTINUE >".

We designed an app that works as a “translator” of volunteers’ experience into the language of competences (knowledge + skills + attitudes). The app called IM-PROVE contains more than 160 situations that volunteers typically experience in various volunteering projects (from short-term workcamps to long-term European Solidarity Corps projects). Users select the situations they have experienced, and the app tells them which competences they have developed as a result. As simple as that. It doesn’t require the user to know exactly what competence means, but it shows their progress and motivates them to learn more by volunteering.

Volunteers have been satisfied with the simple, easy to use and addictive app that offers a convenient way to record all their volunteering experience in a single place. This aspect is appreciated especially by long-term volunteers who need to reflect on their progress continuously, because at the end of a year of voluntary service, it’s impossible to remember what happened in the early days. They no longer need to remember as everything is recorded in IM-PROVE. Also, when people go through 4 short-term volunteering projects (e.g. workcamps, youth exchanges) in 4 years,

it tends to be hard to recall who they had been before they started their first project. The learning process is incremental, which makes it hard to realize the enormous progress volunteers usually make during such 4 years. IM-PROVE is an effective tool to remind them.

Try it out: you can find the full version at improve.inexsda.cz (INEX-SDA organization is the main creator of the app). After registering with just an e-mail address (no other personal data are collected), your profile is created, and you can start entering data into the app. All your data are treated as private, available only to yourself, unless you decide to share your public profile with someone else (otherwise it remains invisible). Besides the online version, you can also use the app on an Android or iOS smart phone.



Let's take a closer look at the capabilities of the IM-PROVE app. First and foremost, users can enter information about their projects and assign relevant situations to them. They can evaluate each situation (on a scale from one to five stars based on their satisfaction and on how they handled the situation) and enter a description, which facilitates detailed personal reflection on what happened and the lessons learned. The more situations with a high rating, the higher level of competences the user achieves.

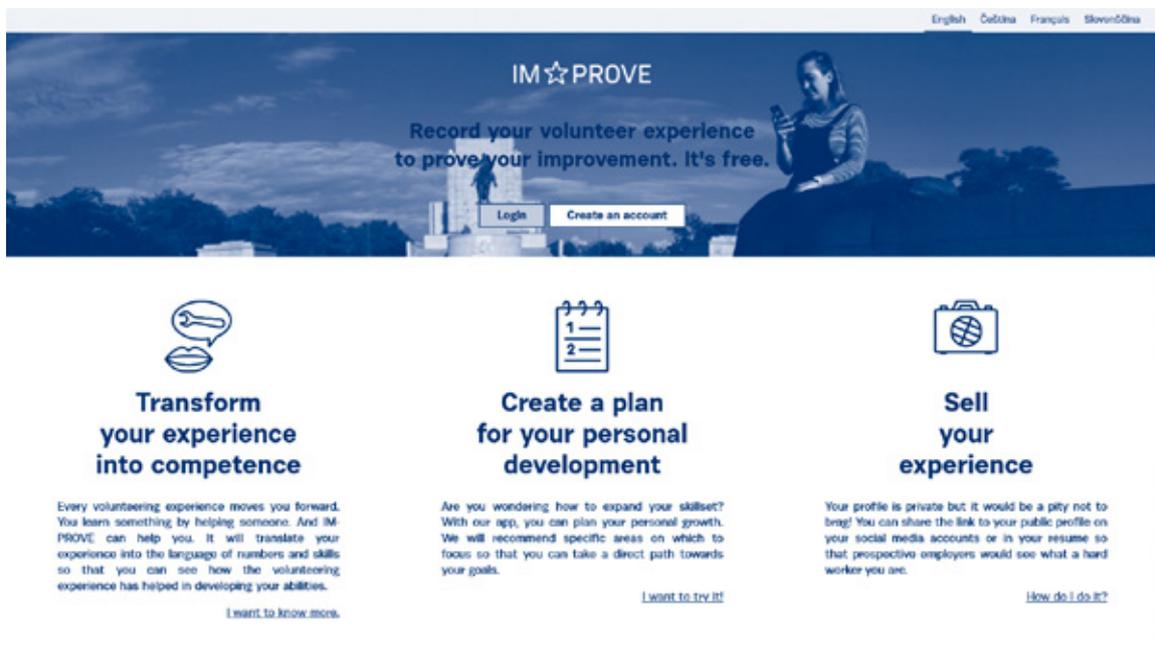
In the Profile, users can see the number of points they have collected and their progress in achieving a bronze, silver and gold medal in each of the 14 competences (flexibility, communication, promotion, work with information, teamwork, creativity and problem solving, independence, self-management, leadership, effectivity, intercultural communication, project management, computer literacy, foreign language). The purpose is to motivate the volunteers to aim higher and go through new volunteering experience.

Users can also activate their public profile where they let the "outside world" know about the competences they have developed during volunteering. The public profile can easily serve as an attachment to their LinkedIn profile or a CV when they apply for a job or for a university. To increase credibility, there is a feature called "badges" for each project – volunteers can ask the respective organizers to confirm the experience they claim to have. The confirmation will activate a badge on the profile. Clicking the badge will reveal details about the project. This third-party confirmation is meant to help those who view the profile to trust that the volunteers have actually developed the competences they declare.

In the Diary, users can revisit their entries, edit and add information. They can browse their volunteering history and reflect on any project again after several weeks, months or even years to see how it impacted them in the long run. And note down their thoughts and impressions. In the Diary, they can see their entire "volunteering career" in a single place. :-)

The Section Plan allows to set goals and work towards them. The feature helps volunteers plan their learning efforts and select appropriate volunteering activities.

With all these options, IM-PROVE might become a highly valuable tool for your volunteers to track their progress and show it to other people. It is available in English, Czech, Slovene and French.



The IM-PROVE app has been developed by expert teams and volunteers of INEX-SDA (Czech Republic, www.inexsda.cz) and Zavod Voluntariat (www.zavod-voluntariat.si) within the projects “Improve Yourself” and “Employability via Volunteering” supported by Erasmus +. The mobile app was created in collaboration with InventiLabs (<https://ilabs.cz/>) and badges confirmation is powered by badgecraft (www.badgecraft.eu).

Good luck :-)

*Lenka Polcerová,
INEX – Sdružení dobrovolných aktivit, z.s., Czech Republic*

Organizational learning in European Solidarity Corps project (ESC)

Imagine your organization as a human being that adopts its own values and behavior, interacts with others, creates its daily routines and develops an organizational brain.

Let's say that the organizational brain is a "breathing mechanism" which creates its own values and behaviors based on its daily routine. The way we handle all processes every single day will define the behavior of our organization. The values of the organization are defined by the most frequently repeated patterns. Therefore, it is really important **to be aware** which values and what kind of behavior each organization is developing in its day to day activities. In this article, we examine how to **increase behavior awareness** of organizations involved in ESC Projects in order to help such organizations increase their learning capabilities and improve their work.

Organizational learning represents a relatively new field of study which has been attracting much attention over the past few decades. Knowledge is now considered as a valuable asset and the way organizations gather, create and manage knowledge is a crucial factor for achieving their goals. Barbara Levitt and James G. March provide three different observations related to organizational learning:

- "Behavior of an organization is based on routines"
- "An organization's actions are history-dependent"
- "Organizations are target-oriented" – their behavior depends on the alignment between their aspirations and actual outcomes.

In this respect, project management and coordination of tens of projects would benefit from certain steps, including:

- Development of an organizational memory policy
- Identification of knowledge-related processes and implementation of evaluation mechanisms
- Enabling people to communicate and share knowledge, ideas and record them
- Leveraging technology to support these processes and finding effective tools
- Taking actions

Organizational memory policy: Most NGOs understand the importance of this and focus on creating, gathering, managing, sharing and using knowledge. Good knowledge management supports growth and fosters innovation.

Organizations that underestimate the importance of this step may face serious difficulties in the future as they will not be able to leverage their full learning potential. For each process within an ESC project and for each project, an organization should have an easy and effective process of keeping and sharing knowledge. This will prove invaluable to preserve knowledge when people leave the organization, to accelerate onboarding of newcomers, as well as to foster continuous learning within the organization.

Each ECS project comprises multiple processes. What really helps is to formally describe all the processes to **identify the current routines, assess** each process and seek potential improvements in collaboration with all NGO members. Here are two common initial processes:

1. Development of an ESC project idea

The new ESC program calls for a greater impact of volunteer projects on communities. Try to brainstorm with local and international partners and NGO staff to see what initiative you could pursue. Our organization reached out to the community to identify issues where we could provide assistance. We held meetings with school directors, youth workers and sport clubs to find opportunities to organize community based projects while supporting volunteer learning outcomes. We **discussed our needs** with the partners who were subsequently

able to join, support and guide us. Obviously, communication with the right people helps a lot in this process and expressing the need helps even more.

2. Finding partners and developing the project

Do you have your own database of contacts with websites and profiles of potential partners? We do. Once we had an idea for the project, it was easy to identify the most suitable partners in our database. We were looking for sports organizations that could help with children sports trainings, since our ESC community project will be focused on supporting volunteers teaching children play rugby, which is a new sport in Kosovo. Without the database that we had built over the time, we would have had to use the ESC database. However, it makes everything easier if you know your partners and they know you. Preparing the application form and developing the project will be much easier once you have defined your objectives and know who and what you can rely on.

There are some other processes to carry out after the project has been approved:

- finding and selecting volunteers;
- finding and selecting mentors;
- finding and booking accommodation;
- definition of tasks and responsibilities among ESC actors;
- defining a method to assess if the desired impact on the society has been achieved;
- providing room and support for the volunteers' own initiative;
- resolving conflicts and difficulties;
- supporting volunteer integration into the local community;
- helping the volunteer with practicalities, such as local medical care;
- mentoring and provision of necessary materials;
- communication with ESC volunteers and stakeholders;
- project promotion;
- evaluation and feedback etc.

Every organization should feel free to add or remove any process based on its specific needs. Nevertheless, it is really helpful to create a list of applicable processes, analyze them and brainstorm over them with your team and stakeholders.

As you can see, everything is about managing processes, **and once you have a process, there is always a possibility to improve and create better routines**. Make sure you have specified and implemented rules for each process as well as evaluation methods that will help you improve the process.

Each process involves interaction among **different people**. That is why it is very important to understand their respective roles in the processes. The organization also needs to make sure that relevant knowledge has been transmitted to other people in the organization, including local volunteers. This will stimulate creation of new knowledge and help everyone to be included in the processes and better understand their role in the project.

In order to facilitate sharing of information and knowledge, it is necessary to create conditions that will support interactions among the stakeholders:

There are many different options to facilitate sharing of knowledge, from creating a common coffee space in the office to organizing common lunch breaks and free-time activities with people within and outside the organization to staying actively in touch with partners. Such activities deliver multiple significant benefits.

Learning occurs on different levels and interaction among people in the organization supports sharing of knowledge. Common activities and interactions can help reduce stress, overcome obstacles and understand what is going well and where there are issues that need to be addressed. You will also be able to receive informal feedback from different sides, which will provide valuable insight and improve your awareness of the situation.

Structuring daily activities in an ESC project properly is crucial for its successful implementation. Pay attention to the fundamentals – if all members of the team know their roles and responsibilities and if they attend daily meetings. Think what you can do to bring positive energy throughout the work schedule, how to motivate volunteers and how to enable them to actively contribute. Also, be aware of what may kill their motivation. All aspects matter: how long or short coffee breaks are, how you assign tasks and responsibilities, how you respond when someone reports a problem or concern, how you determine the needs of volunteers and your organization in ESC projects, how you translate them into specific activities etc. Basically, the structure of the activities should be aligned with the needs of both the volunteer and the organization. If the volunteers wish to learn how to promote the activities on social media and this is in line with the needs of the hosting organization, then a common plan should be developed. A good plan will specify tasks, responsibilities, expected outcomes, learning objectives, reporting including timing and structure, etc.

Defining organizational values and setting the priorities facilitate the development of a great organizational behavior. In our organization, we observe several fundamental values, such as: “family comes first”, “people matter more than anything else”, “do at least one good deed every day”, “if you are stuck, there is always someone who will help you proceed”, “there are no problems, only issues to resolve”.

It is your approach and daily routines that will define your organizational behavior at the end of the day. Knowing your volunteers and staff better and increasing their awareness of the routine will boost your organization’s learning capabilities.

However, nothing will improve by itself. **You need to take action** and make your way forward step by step. No feedback or lesson learned can be beneficial unless appropriate action is taken. Your ability to apply available knowledge in day-to-day operations will determine the pace of your progress and the success of your projects.

Evzi Hani,

Center for Economic and Social Development/CESD, Kosovo

Our organisation's experience with EVS and European Solidarity Corps projects

As someone who has been involved with volunteering for a long time, I should first note that I started gaining my volunteering experience at the age of 17. ADP-Zid is the contact point for EVS (now for European Solidarity Corps) for Montenegro and as such we have had great many EVS volunteers from different countries, such as Turkey, Spain, Italy, Lithuania, Estonia, Germany and elsewhere.

The direct beneficiaries of this program are young people up to 30 years of age who are willing to spend their time volunteering in a European country, regardless of their national, religious or social background. Young people can apply for this program only for projects in EU countries.

What are the requirements for applying?

From my point of view, the only condition for people between 18 and 30 years of age is to have the will and desire to volunteer in an EU country. All lodging, food, travel and visa costs are covered and there is some pocket money paid out on a monthly basis in an amount varying from country to country.

This is also a great opportunity for volunteers to improve their knowledge of foreign languages, because in addition to English, which is usually the working language, they can develop their local language skills while working on the project.

What are the possible activities?

The volunteers' jobs usually do not involve hard labour. Volunteers in Zid on EVS have usually been engaged in activities related to youth education, office support, kindergartens, schools, organization and promotion of certain prevention and protection programs, implementation of programs of the organization in which they reside, etc. The important thing is that every volunteer has an opportunity to choose preferred activities, as each project provides a detailed description of his/her responsibilities.

With the arrival of EVS volunteers, we made a work plan and program. The volunteers spent up to 6 hours a day in the office and were involved in activities that the project required and that the volunteers found interesting. Prior to their arrival, the EVS Coordinator at the ADP-Wall talked to each volunteer over Skype and had a brief conference call with all of them.

The transition from EVS to European Solidarity Corps has, obviously, brought us some limitations, but I hope that volunteers will still find our projects interesting and will share their experience with potential future candidates in the best possible way.

*Milena Šćepanović,
ADP-Zid, Montenegro*

EVS / European Solidarity Corps – experience of young Turks

For young people in Turkey, participating in EVS / European Solidarity Corps (ESC) projects is a way to find a job as well as to gain some status in their respective communities. Since the youth unemployment rate stands at 26.10 %, many young people suffer from severe depression. They think that they are useless. They see that having a university diploma after studying for many years means nothing. They encounter EVS / ESC and they dream about participating in one of the volunteering activities abroad.

However, it is not an easy goal to accomplish as they encounter many challenges. First, a big advantage is to have at least medium-level English skills, alongside a higher education degree. In our experience, many hosting organisations require a certain level of English even before the volunteer joins his or her project. However, most young people do not speak or understand spoken English very well. This is because the education system requires them only to pass tests. They therefore lack practical skills, which causes them to fail in interviews for the volunteering activities.

Second, there are fewer projects than the number of applicants. They must therefore compete with many other candidates for the positions. Most of them are rejected or even do not receive an email about their rejection without being invited for an interview. People should not be surprised to see hundreds of applications from Turkey because there are 17 million young Turks between 18 and 30 years, which is incomparably more than in European countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Czech Republic, etc. From the population perspective, Turkey is like a “China of Europe”.

Those who overcome all the challenges and get a volunteer job, feel as if they have travelled to another planet in the Universe. First they experience a cultural shock. There may not be a huge difference for a Spanish volunteer to engage in a volunteering activity in France, for instance. But there is an enormous cultural difference between Turkey and European countries. So, the Turkish volunteers will have to climb all the steps of Bennett’s Stages of Intercultural Sensitivity – denial, defence, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. In order to create something and work as if it were their own job in their hosting organisation, they need to achieve the integration level, which is an ability to stay true to yourself and your own worldview but also to move in and out of different cultures appropriately and easily. The volunteers should be able to adapt and take on multiple perspectives within the hosting culture with little to no stress to themselves or the people within these different cultures due to an atrophied self-identity.

Another priceless gain from EVS / ESC activities is the acquisition of multiple foreign language skills. The volunteers who already speak English improve their English skills and develop knowledge of the native language of the hosting country. They improve their foreign language skills along with the Bennett’s stages. They learn the language and the culture at the same time. They learn how to order a coffee in the coffee shop, read correctly the facial expression of the old lady waiting at the bus stop, etc.

They find an opportunity for introspection. They examine their thoughts and beliefs. They open their minds with contemplating all the information they receive. They feel more confident in interacting with people in the society. So, the activity they are engaged in fosters their self-growth. They become more aware of social issues and find solutions. They become more active citizens. They feel more European than before. Because feeling European is more unlikely in Turkey, which has been a candidate country devoid of many of the opportunities that EU citizens enjoy.

An improvement in occupational competences is another benefit of the volunteering activities. Volunteers gain work experience. They have office skills, they learn public relations, they have operational experience, they learn how to use hand tools, they develop their digital competences, they learn more about technology and science, etc. They also broaden their perspective of the traditional and contemporary art of the culture they live in. They discover the new World with all their senses. They stimulate their learning functions all the time.

At the end of their volunteering activity, they return as very different individuals – revived, skilled, mature, transformed and experienced in working abroad. Their CVs become so enticing that employers cannot decline their applications. That means that a wide range of attractive job opportunities opens to them. This also means added value for the national economy of the country they choose to live in.

Within the volunteering projects of my two organisations, we have seen many positive stories of the young people. Here are some of them:

- Berfu Yüksel participated in a volunteering activity in Tarrega, Spain, from 2013 to 2014, working with disabled people. Now she works in Zara headquarters in Istanbul.
- Şeyda Yalçın participated in a volunteering activity in Maribor, Slovenia, from 2015 to 2016. She worked in the field of arts & culture. Now she works for a company in Canada.
- Sündüs Öztürk participated in a volunteering activity in Warsaw, Poland, from 2015 to 2016. She worked with disabled kids as a nurse and a volunteer. Now she works in the American Hospital in Istanbul.
- Zeynep Akbaba participated in a volunteering activity in Tarrega, Spain, from 2017 to 2018. She worked with disabled people. Now she has a job as a flight attendant with Turkish Airlines.
- Nazlı Çelik participated in a volunteering activity in Maribor, Slovenia, from 2017 to 2018. She worked in the field of arts & culture. Now she works as a flight attendant with Turkish Airlines.

Volunteering is not only crucial for personal development of young people but also for the survival and sustainability of activities of the organizations involved. Small and medium-sized organisations in particular need staff and innovative ideas to meet the needs of their target groups / areas. Volunteers fill in this need. They bring fresh ideas, energy, enthusiasm and hope. Volunteering also sends a message of personal engagement and collaboration to the society. Once a few people engage in a collective effort, others start join in. The societies will grow stronger as long as civil contribution and volunteering persists.

*Irem Ebru Kuru,
Egitim Programlari ve Evrensel
ve Kulturel Aktviteler Dernegi, Turkey*

Useful Links and Publications

European Solidarity Corps – European Youth Portal

https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en

European Commission > Youth > European Solidarity Corps

https://ec.europa.eu/youth/solidarity-corps_en

European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/solidarity/>

European Solidarity Corps Czech website

<http://www.sborsolidarity.cz/>

Database of accredited volunteering organisations/ organisations awarded with Quality Label

https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisations_en

Salto South East Europe Resource Centre – SALTO SEE

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

Contact Points in Western Balkan region for the Programmes Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/see/contactpoints/>

Salto Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre – SALTO EECA

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/eeca/>

Contact Points in Eastern Partnership countries and Russia for the Programmes Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/eeca/infocentres/>

SALTO Calendar of Educational Events at International Level (trainings courses, contact-making seminars, excursions, seminars...)

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/european-training-calendar/>

Platform for sharing outcomes of European Solidarity Corps projects

https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/projects_en

Publications

Hopscotch to Quality in EVS 2.0

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

Erasmus+: Youth in Action – Opportunities for the Western Balkan Region

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/see/resources/brochure-western-balkans/>

Guidelines on residence permits procedures for volunteers being hosted in the countries of Western Balkans

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

Learning support within volunteering projects in Slovenia and the Western Balkans: practices, challenges and needs for development

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

Conflict – What an Opportunity!

<http://www.evsgalaxy.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COME-conflict-management-in-evs.pdf>

Conflict Management and Conflict Transformation

<https://yeenet.eu/conflict-management-conflict-transformation/>

Solidarity in Europe – publication of EU

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/db3d580c-b248-11e8-99ee-01aa75ed71a1>

Meant to be a Mentor. Workbook for EVS mentors

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/meant-to-be-a-mentor-workbook-for-evs-mentors.1766/>

Slabikář – e-learning Bloom's Taxonomy

<https://www.slabikarnfv.eu/cs/e-learning>

Mentorna – practical guidebook for mentors (Czech)

<https://www.dzs.cz/file/8238/mentorna2019-web-pdf/>

Technical documents, forms, guidelines

EU-login – personal identification entry to various electronic EU systems (Quality Label form, Application forms, ...)

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/cas/>

PASS Manual – version October 2019

https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/pass_user_guide_v2-0_-_2019-09-23_v17.pdf

European Solidarity Corps IT documentation

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/ESCITDOC/Welcome>

Guidelines Quality Label Form

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/ESCITDOC/Web+Forms+Add+Quality+Label+details>

Application forms – European Solidarity Corps

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/web-esc/screen/eforms/>

This document was created in cooperation with Salto South East Europe Resource Centre, Slovenia. Many thanks to Mr. Andrej Troha for sharing useful links and supportive publications (sent personally).

Contacts

Do you have more questions about the European Solidarity Corps or the Erasmus+ programme (Youth)? Don't hesitate to contact us. :-)

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Disclaimer

This brochure was created like the outcome of „ESCalator – new levels of European volunteering“ International Training Course (2019) and has been funded with support from the European Commission, through the Erasmus+ Programme. This brochure reflects the views and opinions only of the authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Credentials

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Photos used: Private trainer's and participant's archives. Pictures taken during the "EVS in Our Hands", "EVS Gathering" and "ESCalator – new levels of European volunteering" training courses.

Published by: Association of Non-formal Education (ANEV z.s.), IČO: 01317610

U Kloubových domů 330/8, 190 00 Praha 9, Czech Republic

June 2020

ISBN: 978-80-907579-3-6



Motto

**„Life isn't about waiting
for the storm to pass...
It's about learning to
dance in the rain.“**

Vivian Greene



