

# Valorisation of the Value of Volunteering



## Guidelines for the valorisation of the of European Voluntary Service projects



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# **Guide lines for the valorisation of the European Voluntary Service projects**

**Implemented within the project  
"VVV – Valorisation of the Value of Volunteering"**

*Co-financed by the programme "Youth in Action", Action 4.3*

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The present document is the result of the work of the 17 participants to the seminar “VVV - Valorisation of the Value of Volunteering”, held in **Penicina (PV)** and it reflects their previous experiences within **EVS** projects.

In this way we don't propose an exhaustive document, but only hints and examples that came to light during the work in the seminar.

Whoever uses these guidelines should be aware that this is not an exhaustive document, but it is potentially helpful if applied to the own context.

We invite the reader to go through it with a **critical spirit** and to adapt it to the own context.

## **INTRODUCTION**

These guidelines are the final outcome of the European seminar project “VVV – Valorisation of the Value of Volunteering” (co-financed by Action 4.3 of the Youth in Action programme) which involved 17 participants from 11 different countries. The seminar was held in Penicina (PV), 9 – 14 March 2010.

The project was born from the reflection among partner organisations that have been managing the European Voluntary Service (EVS) for several years. Experience has brought out the need to identify themselves with a common practice, aiming to enhance quality of the EVS projects and creating the basis to value the volunteers’ experience and give more visibility to the projects<sup>1</sup>.

Gathered together for a five days seminar, the partners compared their own experiences. According to these practices, they reasoned on the elements which before, during and after EVS can valorise its impact and its the added value in terms of skills acquired, both social and professional ones, and the contribution to a better, more tolerant and more aware society. Furthermore, these elements could help European volunteers to be more aware of their own volunteering experience in order to enhance the impact on a local level and at the same time to keep a bond with their home country, where, once returned, they could participate in activities that could give the maximum value to their EVS experience.

The results of these reflexions aim at being suggestions, and if wanted, a practical tool for the organisations that work within EVS and want to improve the conditions to valorise EVS, both from the point of view of the volunteer and the other involved actors, organisations, local community, other volunteers and citizens. The first need is to give quality to the different EVS phases, meaning the preparation, the service, and the return from EVS<sup>2</sup>. This quality occurs in the cooperation with partners, but it regards mostly the effectiveness of the voluntary service towards the volunteer’s growth and personal training and towards the benefits for third parties (partners, associations, services, target groups and other involved volunteers) triggered by the project.

Furthermore, quality reflects not only on the change, but also in continuity. Often the actors involved, mainly the volunteers, identify the period of the EVS project only with the time of the effective service, giving less importance to the preparation and evaluation, and rarely considering the possibility to follow-up the experience.

These guidelines aims, therefore, at being a tool for valorising the EVS projects in every phase. They will be tested by the partner organisations for a year. Organisations will be able to use the present work with other partners that didn’t participate to the project, but with which they will follow EVS projects during the upcoming year.

After a one year try-out, the guidelines will be updated and modified wherever needed, published and distributed at European level, with the hope that they will be used by the greatest amount possible of organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> See Highlight 1. The triangle volunteer/community/project.

<sup>2</sup> See Highlight 2. The quality of EVS projects.

Developing methods that valorise the personal and social impact of the EVS experience is even more meaningful considering the attention that the European Union is giving to volunteering and its growing acknowledgement of the role of volunteering in creating a more cohesive and democratic society.

In order to endorse this conviction, the European Union has declared 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering.

## **HOW TO READ THESE GUIDELINES**

These guidelines have been elaborated following a chronological model of the EVS project:

- Before the start of the EVS project
- During the EVS project
- After the EVS project

Furthermore, the EVS project is analysed from three different perspectives: Sending Organisation (SO), Hosting Organisation (HO) and volunteer. We have not included particular references to the Coordinating Organisations (CO), since their work is resumed in most of the usual tasks of the Hosting Organisation.

We therefore propose guidelines divided into these three phases and on the basis of the actors involved in the EVS project. This structure offers several ways of reading and deepening: the project can be followed in its timing, and analysed from the perspective of the actor involved or by collecting hints from the highlights and the subsections. This choice has come from the organisation of the seminar in Penicina itself, but also from the need to offer the reader a simple and user's friendly document.

## FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS

When drafting the Guidelines we felt was important to emphasize three elements that underpin the European Voluntary Service: Volunteering, Non-formal Learning and Europe.

### 1. Volunteering

In the Manifesto for Volunteering in Europe, published by the European Volunteer Centre (CEV), it is emphasized that, although volunteering manifests itself in many forms throughout Europe, this variety is just a reflection of the different approaches and different traditions of Member States of the European Union. However, some common characteristics may be identified.

Volunteering is an activity undertaken:

- Under people's free will, choice and motivation;
- Without profit interests;
- In an organized setting (within organisations, volunteer centres, more or less organised groups, etc.).

The voluntary service is also a result of free and independent choice of the individual who chooses and gives his availability for a fixed period of time to implement a project of an organisation under a formalised pact (or contract), which sets out rights and obligations of both parties. Unlike a voluntary activity, the voluntary service is more structured, in which the training opportunities offered to the volunteer are an integral part of the overall project of the voluntary service<sup>3</sup>.

### 2. Non-formal Learning

EVS projects can give young volunteers the opportunity to develop skills and competencies outside formal education and training. Every participant in the Youth in Action Programme, Action 2 (EVS) are entitled to receive the certificate Youthpass, which describes and validates the non-formal learning experience gained during the project.

Following, the definitions of non-formal and informal learning provided by the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission.

"Non-formal learning is taking place outside the formal education curriculum. Non-formal learning activities take place on a voluntary basis and are carefully designed to encourage the personal and social development of participants.

Instead, informal learning takes place during activities of daily life, work, family, leisure, etc. Essentially, it consists in learning by doing. In the youth sector, informal learning generally takes place during the youth initiatives and the leisure activities of peer groups, volunteer work, etc.

The non-formal and informal learning enables young people to acquire essential skills and contributes to their personal development, social inclusion and active citizenship, thus increasing employment prospects. Learning activities in youth is an important added value for young people, the economy and society as a whole. Learning activities are complementary non-formal and informal school education and training system:

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<sup>3</sup> See: "Servizio Volontario Europeo: guida per il volontario" CSV Verona – [www.gioinvolo.it](http://www.gioinvolo.it)

they adopt a participatory approach and focuses on the person, taking place on a voluntary basis and are therefore directly related to the needs, aspirations and interests of young people. Providing an additional source of learning and a path which directs to formal education and training, these activities are particularly important for young people with fewer opportunities. Here are summarized the basic principles:

Non-formal learning is intentional and voluntary;

Education takes place in a range of environments and situations in which training and learning are not necessarily the sole or principal activity;

Activities can be handled by learning facilitators, both professionals (such as trainers and socio-educational workers) and volunteers (youth workers or youth trainers);

Activities are planned, but only occasionally articulated according to the conventional rhythms or school subjects;

Normally, the activities are aimed at specific target groups and set the learning in a specific way and focused in a sector. "

### 3. Europe and volunteering

Following, we put some pieces about volunteering extracted from European Union and Italian documents.

*"Voluntary service is a form of social participation, an educational experience and a factor in employability and integration, and as such it meets the expectations of young people and society alike.*

*[...] The positive experiences of the European Voluntary Service will be useful for making voluntary service standard practice among young people (type of supervision, methods of funding, etc.). At European level it is important to ensure that voluntary service is recognised as an educational experience and a period of non-formal*

*learning. The European Voluntary Service scheme for young people could be widened to include a partnership with the worldwide bodies which organise and support voluntary action. The Member States should take immediate action to remove obstacles to mobility for young volunteers".*

*(White Paper on Youth policy, European Commission, 2001)*

*"[...] volunteering is a major force nurturing civil society and strengthening solidarity – one of the core values of the EU [...]"*

*(On the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion, Resolution of the European Parliament, 22 April 2008)*

*"Our starting point is that Italian as well as European volunteering are crucial factors for both the development of civil society and the strengthening of democratic life. The very basis of volunteering is the gift of self – an unpaid activity in the spirit of solidarity or for common good.*

*Volunteering is based on the culture of freely giving one's own time and on unpaid work, and can therefore help everybody discover a new culture, guided by principles of solidarity, sustainable development, non-violence, mutual respect and responsible citizenship.*

*In relation to the challenges for European society posed by the new demographic profile, volunteering, through its daily practice and projects for active ageing and intergenerational relations, opens important perspectives and stands out as a*

*significant way of involving citizens, who thus become the protagonists of their own time by promoting social inclusion and common welfare.”*  
(Manifesto of volunteering for Europe, CSVnet, 2009)

## **BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF THE EVS PROJECT**

### Hints for Sending Organisations

#### a. INFORMATION/ORIENTATION<sup>4</sup>

- Meet the candidate volunteer
- Give a presentation about EVS and volunteering in general (its meaning and value):
  - To individuals (personal interview)
  - To groups (promotional meetings in schools, at the SO, etc.)
  - Through the internet (website)
  - Through events (for example, during the volunteering Day)
- Give a presentation to the candidate volunteer about the activities and work of the SO
- Provide also information and orientation about other opportunities (local volunteer organisations, other voluntary programmes etc.), understanding the candidate volunteer's interests, needs (explicit and implicit) and background
- Provide information about the actors implementing the EVS project and their role:
  - Sending Organisation (SO)
  - Hosting Organisation (HO) / Coordinating Organisation (CO)
  - National Agencies (NA)
  - Audiovisual, Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
- Provide clear information about the step-by-step timeline of EVS process:
  - Candidature: provide details about the candidature process, support the volunteer in drafting the CSV and the motivation letter and clarify the volunteer that being selected doesn't mean that the project will automatically be approved)<sup>5</sup>
  - Average duration of project preparation
  - Project beginning and end
  - Service beginning and end
  - Training cycle
  - Possibility of not being selected
- Introduce and show how to use the available tools to search/find projects:
  - The European database on EVS accredited organisations <sup>6</sup>
  - Dedicated mailing list and newsletters
  - Useful websites

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<sup>4</sup> See Highlight 8. Orientation for volunteers.

<sup>5</sup> See Highlight 4. Volunteer's motivation letter.

<sup>6</sup> See Highlight 3. The available project database.

- Provide the volunteer with ex-EVS volunteers contacts that can give feedback about the project framework
- If the candidate volunteer's family needs to be involved, avoid conflict situations and provide extra information specifically for the parents, through:
  - Websites, movies or other promotional material
  - Specific meetings or explaining sessions

***In general:***

- ❖ *Be honest with the candidate volunteer on each issue concerning the EVS*
- ❖ *Ensure that the candidate volunteer can really correspond to the projects he/she shows motivation for*
- ❖ *Introduce the candidate volunteer with what EVS really is, differentiating it from an usual experience in a foreign country*
- ❖ *Take in consideration that EVS could be for the candidate volunteer the first life experience in a foreign country and community*
- ❖ *Provide information about the opportunities of volunteering offered by the community where the SO operates, in order to foster the future engagement of the candidate in volunteering locally<sup>7</sup>*

**b. PREPARATION**

- Explain to the candidate volunteer what you mean by being a volunteer for the SO, and establish the specific conditions of collaboration and work between SO and the candidate volunteer<sup>8</sup>
- Provide with and explain the candidate volunteer the elements to take into consideration during the search for a project<sup>9</sup>
- Introduce the non-formal learning aspects of EVS and, in general, of the Youth in Action Programme<sup>10</sup>
- Help finding a project fitting the candidate volunteer's expectations taking in consideration the interests, needs and characteristics he/she expressed (*it's however important to let the candidate volunteer search for the project on his/her own, discussing eventually his/her choices – why did you choose this project? which skills can you offer/develop? etc.*)
- Check the real value and effectiveness of the chosen project's activities
- Point out the specific candidate volunteer's needs in terms of personal preparation (language, culture and/or other issues)
- Assist the candidate volunteer, if needed, on writing his/her CV, motivation letter, giving suggestions providing templates, models, questionnaires etc.<sup>11</sup>. It's

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<sup>7</sup> See Highlight 8. Orientation for volunteers.

<sup>8</sup> See Highlight 10. The link between the volunteer and the community.

<sup>9</sup> See Highlight 9. Checklist for the volunteer.

<sup>10</sup> See Highlight 6. The eight competencies for the lifelong learning.

<sup>11</sup> See Highlight 4. Volunteer's motivation letter.

however important that the SO workers do not intervene directly on the candidate volunteer's papers, if not differently agreed with the CO and HO, in order to provide a clear and transparent

- Assist the candidate volunteer in reading and understanding the chosen projects, helping him/her in raising questions
- Put the candidate volunteer in touch with the CO and HO, suggesting direct forms of contacts (telephone, Skype etc.)
- Provide, with the help of the CO and HO, contacts of ex-EVS volunteers that can give detailed information and feedback about their projects
- Support the candidate volunteer in acquiring extra information about the HO, the tasks, the city/village where the activities take place, the country, the culture etc.
- Offer the candidate volunteer opportunities:
  - In the SO
  - In a project (i.e. in a local volunteer organisation) with similar activities of the chosen EVS project<sup>12</sup>
- Inform and prepare the candidate volunteer to other volunteer experiences after the EVS<sup>13</sup>
- Provide with and explain the candidate volunteer the elements to take into consideration before leaving for the EVS project<sup>14</sup>
- If the volunteer is not selected ensure that he
- Ensure further support to the candidate volunteer if not selected, by:
  - Ensuring he/she understood receives enough information from the CO and HO, so that he/she can decide how to proceed
  - Ensuring he/she has understood the reasons why he/she has not been selected
  - Helping him/her with further orientation if needed<sup>15</sup>
  - Helping him/her in not losing motivation
  - Helping him/her with other applications
  - Helping him/her finding other projects

***In general:***

- ❖ *Ensure that the candidate volunteer benefit of a wide range preparation, in addition to the pre-departure training (more personal and specific for the project)*
- ❖ *Focus the attention of the candidate volunteer on the learning process; all the parts involved in the EVS should be aware of the learning expectations*

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<sup>12</sup> See Highlight 10. The link between the volunteer and the community.

<sup>13</sup> See Highlight 10. The link between the volunteer and the community.

<sup>14</sup> See Highlight 9. Checklist for the volunteer.

<sup>15</sup> See Highlight 8. Orientation for volunteers.

*and achievements and of the concrete opportunities to give them value and future<sup>16</sup>.*

### c. PARTNERSHIP

- Establish good contacts with CO and HO, introducing, if needed, the activities and work of the SO; for example:
  - Work with partners or networks you already know and from which you have positive feedback
  - Prepare a questionnaire for the HO concerning:
    - The mentor<sup>17</sup>
    - The position and role of the contact person
    - Previous partners and volunteers' experiences
  - Fill, if requested, the questionnaire given by the HO concerning:
    - The preparation process
    - The position and role of the contact person
    - Previous experiences
  - Ask for references about the HO from its previous partners
- Explain to the HO the process of orientation of the candidate volunteer, his/her motivation and how the choice was made
- Once the candidate volunteer is selected and the project approved, collaborate with CO, HO and candidate volunteer in the preparation of the Activity Agreement, pointing out all the details and questions<sup>18</sup>
- Ensure that the candidate volunteer has read, understood and agreed on the terms of the Activity Agreement, by:
  - Translating the Activity Agreement in the candidate's mother tongue if needed
  - Having the candidate volunteer sign a declaration of having read and understood the agreement
- Provide with and explain the candidate volunteer the elements to take into consideration before leaving for the EVS project<sup>19</sup>
- Help the volunteer with the needed support, such as:
  - Language training in case the candidate volunteer doesn't speak English, or provide him/her with appropriate information to study English
  - Travel planning according to the Activity Agreement and to CO, HO and volunteer
- If the project is rejected stay in touch with the CO, HO and the candidate volunteer for the next decisions

#### ***In generale:***

- ❖ *Be honest with the CO and HO on every information concerning the candidate volunteer*

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<sup>16</sup> See Highlight 6. The eight competencies for the lifelong learning.

<sup>17</sup> See Highlight 7. II The mentor.

<sup>18</sup> See Highlight 5. The Activity Agreement.

<sup>19</sup> See Highlight 9. Checklist for the volunteer.

- ❖ *Foster the collaboration between all the parts involved in the EVS to ensure that the volunteer will have concrete chances to continue his/her engagement after the EVS*

## Hints for Hosting Organisations

### a. INFORMATION

- Send calls for volunteers to the SOs partners with clear information about the selection process:
  - The Youth in Action application deadline chosen for applying for the EVS project
  - The volunteers' candidacy deadline
  - How the selection will be run
  - What the candidate volunteers need to prepare and send
  - The number of vacant places
- Use appropriate tools to send the calls for volunteers:
  - [www.youthnetworks.eu](http://www.youthnetworks.eu)
  - [www.youthforeurope.eu](http://www.youthforeurope.eu)
  - Eurodesk
  - National Agencies
  - SALTO Youth
  - Yahoo groups
  - Previous partners, etc.
- Provide clear, relevant, updated and accurate information about the project, pointing out:
  - Project beginning and end
  - Service beginning and end
  - Tasks
  - HO's activities and work
  - Language issues
  - Country, culture and local community information
  - Specific issues

### b. PREPARATION

- Give the candidate volunteer a questionnaire to help him/her understand the project and test his/her own motivation
- Use Skype or telephone interviews to get in touch with the SO and the candidate volunteer
- Be "open minded" and inclusive in the selection process
- Give to the candidate volunteer contacts of ex-EVS volunteers in the HO and the mentor<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See Highlight 7. II The mentor.

## c. PARTNERSHIP

- Establish good contacts with the SO, introducing, if needed, the activities and work of the HO; for example:
  - Work with partners or networks you already know and from which you have positive feedback
  - Prepare a questionnaire for the SO concerning:
    - The preparation process
    - The position and role of the contact person
    - Previous experiences
  - Answer, if requested, the questionnaire given by the SO concerning:
    - The mentor<sup>21</sup>
    - The position and role of the contact person
    - Previous partners and volunteers' experiences
  - Ask for references about the SO from its previous partners
- After the selection encourage the candidate volunteer in bringing his/her own personal ideas in the project
- After the selection send to the candidate volunteer welcome guides concerning the project, the country etc. to ease the integration in the local context and community<sup>22</sup>
- Once the project is approved, prepare a draft Activity Agreement (AA) and collaborate with SO, HO and candidate volunteer in the preparation of the final version, pointing out all the details and questions (*a suggested process could be: a draft AA proposed by the HO/CO and sent to the SO, the SO meets the volunteer and ensures he/she understands and agrees with the terms, the SO gives feedback on the draft AA to the HO/CO that prepares the final version and sends it to everyone*)<sup>23</sup>
- If a candidate volunteer is not selected provide clear and punctual information about the reasons for the exclusions, proposing alternatives/options
- If the project is rejected stay in touch with the SO, HO and the candidate volunteer for the next decisions

### ***In general:***

- ❖ *Be honest with the SO and the candidate volunteer on every information concerning the project*
- ❖ *Foster the collaboration between all the parts involved in the EVS*

## **DURING THE EVS PROJECT**

### Hints for Sending Organisations

- Keep in touch with the volunteer during his/her activity abroad

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<sup>21</sup> See Highlight 7. II The mentor.

<sup>22</sup> See Highlight 9. Checklist for the volunteer.

<sup>23</sup> See Highlight 5. The Activity Agreement.

- Get in touch with your volunteer shortly after his/her arrival. Ask him/her if the trip went well, if he/she has met his/her referents in the HO, etc.
- Keep regular contact with the volunteer, at least once a month. In this way, you can monitor the learning process, and make short on-going evaluations of the project<sup>24</sup>. It can also help prevent problems, or solve them in the right time. Contacts can be both formal and informal: a simple e-mail asking how he/she is doing, or a small questionnaire to monitor the activity on a more formal way
- If the volunteer goes back home for holidays, try to set up a brief appointment with him/her
- Motivate your volunteer to keep a forum, a blog or a diary. If it is an online file, it is useful to read it regularly. This will give the SO an idea on how the project is going
- You can monitor your volunteer's learning progress by sending some questions related to the 8 key competences for life long learning. For example, ask him/her to tell you some words in the hosting language, or if he/she has made any friends in the local community<sup>25</sup>
- As with the volunteer, get in contact with the HO shortly after arrival, to make sure there were no, and in order to get the HO's first impression on the volunteer
- It is advisable to get in touch with the HO monthly, to monitor the volunteers progress and prevent possible problems
- Keep in touch with the HO and the CO will also allow to be updated on how to deal with financial issues: reimbursement, invoices and other necessary documents<sup>26</sup>
- Contact the HO shortly before the end of the project in order to find out if volunteer has received a Youthpass and to find out if the final report has been written, possibly asking the HO to send you a copy; it is also important to make sure the travel details for the trip back home are arranged or if the trip has still to be arranged
- By keeping constant contact both with the volunteers and the HO can also help prevent some problems, or intervene before the problem is too big. In case a problem arises, remember the SO is the "home support" for the volunteer
- If some problems arise, suggest the volunteer to talk to his/her mentor about it<sup>27</sup>. If this doesn't work, contact the HO to hear their version of the story, and try to enhance an agreement between HO and the volunteer. Only if the problem is too big, try contacting your NA. If the problem is solved without the SO, you can contact in any case your volunteer to know how they found a solution and to make sure it is the right solution for all actors involved.

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<sup>24</sup> See Highlight 6. The eight competencies for the lifelong learning.

<sup>25</sup> See Highlight 6. The eight competencies for the lifelong learning.

<sup>26</sup> See Highlight 5. The Activity Agreement.

<sup>27</sup> See Highlight 7. II The mentor.

## Hints for the Hosting Organisations

### CONNECTION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

In order to enhance the volunteer's connection with the local community:

- Help the volunteer with all necessary paper work: stay permit if needed, arrival declaration to the city council, local phone numbers, etc.
- Organise a formal introduction meeting with the involved people in the HO. In this meeting, the volunteer should be explained what are the rules, the working methods, practicalities (such as working time schedule and holidays), what the HO, and who are the volunteer's main reference people. It is important to present the volunteer's responsible and mentor<sup>28</sup> and highlight their different roles
- Prepare an introduction to the local community and to the HO. It can be a formal or informal meeting: intercultural evening, a meeting in the office, a welcome dinner, etc. In this activity you can also get ex-EVS volunteers involved
- Show the volunteer the city: it is important that from the beginning the volunteer starts identifying the important places in the city, such as the train station, the post office, the supermarket or groceries store, etc.
- During the whole project, keep the volunteer involved in the life of the HO. Invite him/her to staff meetings, get him/her involved in the decision process, invite him/her to staff lunches or dinners, etc.
- If the volunteer is interested, suggest other local associations in which he/she can do other voluntary activities; get the volunteer involved in local volunteering events; stimulate the curiosity of the volunteers to the local community
- Invite volunteers to events in order to stimulate the curiosity of local organisation on the project and the volunteer
- If possible, organize activities in schools or public events where the volunteers can present themselves and the EVS programme. This can also help promote EVS in the local community
- Invite your local staff or friends to go out with the volunteer in the evening, and involve him/her in other recreation activities
- Keep the volunteer informed about cultural events in the city or surroundings (concerts, festivals, art shows, etc). If it is possible for your organization, you can pay or find free tickets for some clue cultural events, such as the opera, theatre, town party, etc.

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<sup>28</sup> See Highlight 7. II The mentor.

- If possible, link volunteers from different projects, invite EVS volunteers to meet other local volunteers or other EVS volunteers in the city (if any)
- Show your volunteer the local cultural places, such as museums and monuments
- Involve your volunteer in other activities, even if not directly related to the project, that you do with the local community
- If possible, organise a meeting among hosted EVS volunteers and future local EVS volunteers

## TRAINING AND SUPPORT

- The language training is not only compulsory in the EVS programme, but it is also an important aspect to enhance the volunteer's integration in the community. Beside the language course, you can enhance language learning by inviting the volunteer to other kinds of lessons, such as local cooking, music or art
- Point out with the volunteer that language learning and the integration in the hosting culture are a slow process and that patience is required – every abroad experience implies some frustration and tolerance towards ambiguous situations
- Discuss with the volunteer the prejudices he/she might have towards your local culture, and try to show the volunteer your culture, discussing it in a deeper way
- Provide the volunteers with task-related support in order to guarantee his/her safety and to make the activity more understandable, and therefore satisfactory, for the volunteer
- If you have different activities, you could let the volunteer experience different activities at the beginning of the project before writing the final schedule. Let the volunteer choose which activities he would like to be more involved in, or which activities he can do besides his main task/project
- Give your volunteer adequate training in order to perform specific tasks: how to use a specific computer programme, how to deal with the specific target group of the project, how to work with specific tools or machines, etc.
- Provide your volunteer with theoretical inputs about specific topics and target groups. For example, how does blood donation work, how is the children protection system, what is the framework law to run the activities in an association, etc.
- Offer the volunteer a personal support, for example, by organising a regular meeting with the mentor and the project responsible in order to monitor the volunteer's progress<sup>29</sup>
- Discuss with the volunteer his/her expectations, fears, frustrations, etc.

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<sup>29</sup> See Highlight 7. II The mentor.

## CONFLIC MANAGEMENT

- Follow an adequate conflict management practice, trying to find the best solution for all the parties involved
- If it is necessary you can also involve professional support for problem solving (ie. a psychologist)
- Encourage your volunteer to express him/her self about the experience, by writing a diary, a blog or a forum. Encourage him/her to keep regular contact with the SO
- Organise meetings with other EVS or ex-EVS volunteers. This might provide peer to peer support and allow them to share experiences. You can organise weekly or monthly discussion groups with other volunteers
- Leave some space to the volunteer for him/herself and his/her culture

## PROJECT EVALUATION

- The project's evaluation gives the HO and the volunteer a view of how the project went and what can be improved. It can be done also during the project, and not only at the end of it. It is advisable to do a monthly evaluation and later to use all the material produced during the process for the final evaluation
- What to evaluate?
  - The tasks: Do the tasks match the volunteer's needs and capacities?
  - Achievements: What have been achieved so far? What is still to be done?
  - Practical arrangements: accommodation, transport, language training, etc.
  - Volunteer's motivations and feelings: Have some expectations been already met? What is the level of satisfaction so far?
  - Association's evaluation: How has been the volunteer's progress? And the project development? Where he/she can improve? What can the association do better?
  - Learning process: What has the volunteer learned so far? What does he/she still want and needs to learn<sup>30</sup>?
- How to evaluate?
  - Contacting the SO to share information
  - Organising meetings with mentor and staff
  - Creating a specific questionnaire, with key questions and reflexion questions
  - Suggesting the volunteer to keep a diary or a blog
  - Using non formal methods during meetings, ie. role play, games, etc.
  - Using both individual and group evaluations
  - Start writing the Youthpass! This will make the volunteer aware of his/her own progress

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<sup>30</sup> See Highlight 6. The eight competencies for the lifelong learning.

## VISIBILITY AND DISSEMINATION

- Visibility and dissemination give added value to your project, since it can help you get the local community involved in your organisation
- How?
  - Creating communication tools. For example you could make a Youtube video, produce leaflets or posters with the help of the volunteer, write articles for local newspaper, involve the volunteer in the website's update and create a special section for EVS volunteers
  - Organising events with the local community

## AFTER THE EVS PROJECT

### Hints for Sending Organisations

- Meet the volunteer if this is possible and discuss the EVS experience, achievements and future plans
- Recognise the volunteer's role and share with him/her this information
- Get in touch with the HO to inform it that the volunteer is safe back home
- Remind the volunteer about the evaluation meeting included in the centralised training managed by the National Agency and get the information when it will be carried out
- Inform the volunteer about potential follow up activities, as it follows:
  - Contact ex-EVS volunteers associations
  - Start to volunteer in a local NGO
  - Keep volunteering in the SO, whenever possible<sup>31</sup>
- Help the volunteer to reintegrate in the community with concrete suggestions and by being there for him/her when needed
- Keep contacts with the HO to develop new partnerships and monitor the reintegration phase for each volunteer
- Involve the volunteer in the SO activities, in order to valorise his/her experience and learning; try to find activities volunteer would like to develop further. Some examples: involve the volunteer in promotion activities for EVS and in the pre-departure preparation of other volunteers<sup>32</sup>
- Support the volunteer in developing his/her own projects and ideas when he/she gets back from the EVS period; give him/her the useful information and help him/her to find an association where to develop these ideas
- When possible and included in the project, implement the foreseen follow-up initiatives. Some examples: meetings with young people interested in EVS,

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<sup>31</sup> See Highlight 10. The link between the volunteer and the community.

<sup>32</sup> See Highlight 6. The eight competencies for the lifelong learning.

specific activities for each volunteer, use new ICT (Information and Communication Technology)

- Valorise the volunteer and his/her experience as a resource, as he/she may provide useful information about language issues, intercultural learning, etc. The volunteer who has just finished the EVS project may be a good "advisor" for other volunteers in their EVS preparation phase
- Analyse what learnt from the EVS experience: mistakes, needs (for example, there should have been further training needs to be faced by the SO during the EVS project), useful discovered issues, etc.
- Get the volunteer's feedback about his/her impression on SO and HO acting during the EVS project (this feedback may be very important in relation to further EVS project improvements)
- Keep in contacts of the HOs you worked with – they may be useful to develop future projects

#### Hints for the Hosting Organisation

- Before the volunteer leaves, ask him/her about concrete suggestions on how to improve the project
- Evaluate good tools and methodology that you used during the EVS project in order to use them again in further projects
- Use the tools created and used by the volunteer during the EVS project (website, presentations, Newsletter, etc.)
- If needed and possible, continue the collaboration with the volunteer after the EVS project (in loco or at distance): future project, volunteering, specific projects, translations, etc.
- Whether possible, continue the collaboration with local organisations involved in the project (helping them to become HO, working on different projects)
- Try to continue the cooperation with the SO also in other projects, not only related to EVS: seminars, training courses, youth exchanges, informal meetings, etc.
- Ask the ex-EVS to get in contact with future volunteers to give them relevant information before their arrival (what to bring, etc.)

#### Hints for the volunteer

- Become a mentor/facilitator for the new EVS volunteers<sup>33</sup>
- Contact ex-EVS associations, etc.

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<sup>33</sup> See Highlight 7. II The mentor.

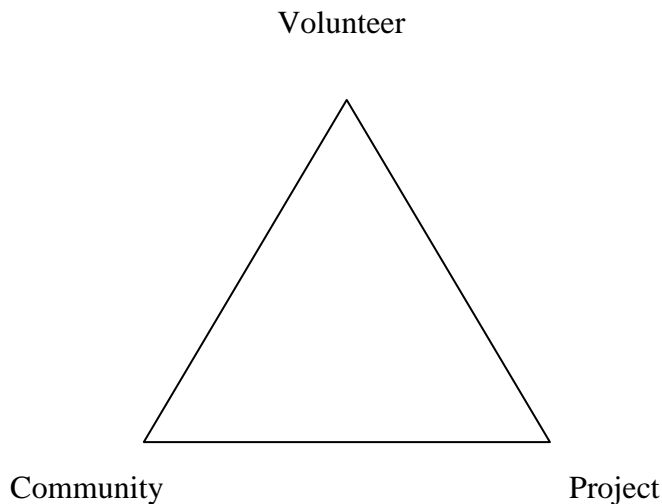
- Promote the EVS in schools, universities, clubs, etc.: present the Youth in Action programme, EVS, your own experience, Europe in general (European awareness, European citizenship)
- Volunteer and share your experience, for example by presenting the EVS during meetings and promotional project days (Europe Day, etc.)
- Volunteer in various initiatives, be active in an NGO which does activities similar to the ones carried out during the EVS project
- Create a new association or get involved in a network of associations

## HIGHLIGHTS

### 1. The triangle volunteer/community/project

We propose a model to balance the different parties involved in a project. This model may help in the EVS project when occurring inconsistencies among the project aspects.

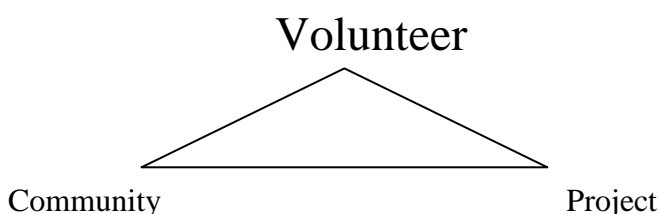
The triangle



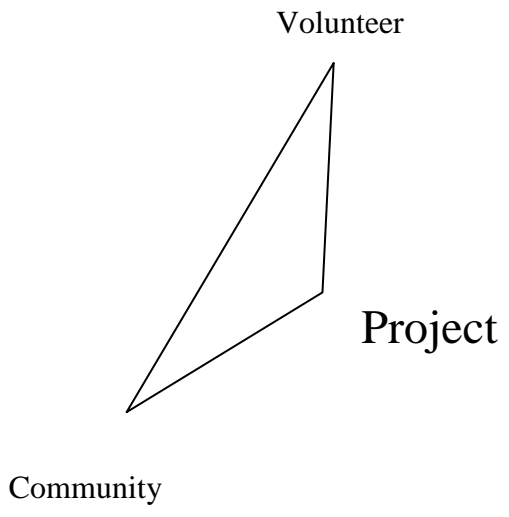
The triangle of volunteers consists of three main poles:

- The volunteer  
He/she is one of the actors of the project, may or not be part of the community benefiting of the project (in the case EVS is external). This is also the point of view which the program focuses more on, particularly in relation to the learning. He/she is the one who gives his/her work and exchange learnings with the other actors (project promoters and local community).
- The local community  
This is the actor on which the project activities act and the volunteer's presence. It is composed by those people that directly or indirectly expressed the need the project aims to meet, that receive the volunteer activity and that react with their hosting activity.
- The project  
It is the reaction to the identification of a need by the community. It is characterised by the thought of those who conceived it (association, institution, etc.) and foresees activities that can be done by volunteers. It acts as an intermediary between the volunteer and the community, it receives legitimacy and authority.

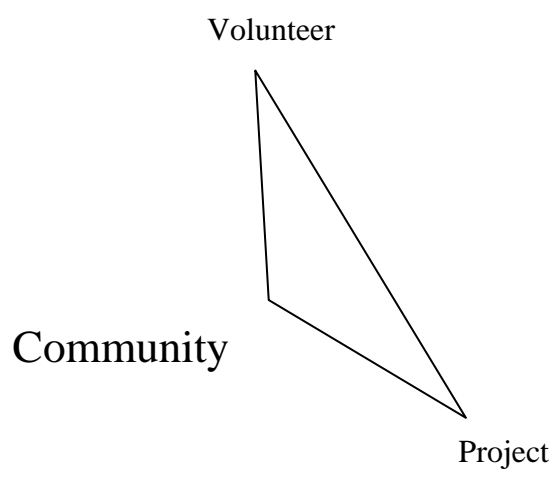
It is necessary to maintain a balance between different viewpoints, in order to preserve important elements of this union. Focusing too much attention on one element crushes the other possibilities.



Excessive attention to the volunteer may restrict the project effectiveness and overshadow the volunteering activity recipients, that is the community. Similarly, the return that the volunteer will have is a "distorted" situation of his/her experience, because he/she won't have had the opportunity directly perceives the roles of those involved.



An imbalance situation on the project and the promoter / the implementer and its policies can bring to losing the sense of the project, because it would be like taking away importance on the volunteer-community relationship.



If the focus is on the local community the risk, on one side, is to diminish the volunteer's contribution, and, on the other side, reducing the capacity to make proposals and any innovation that can come by the project promoter.

## 2. The quality of EVS projects

During the seminar, some indicators of quality in EVS projects were identified, in order to improve the EVS process and to valorize the volunteers' project. The indicators were developed with the aim of making them accessible to those involved in EVS projects and the resulting hints are here presented:

a. Orientation and Preparation

- Ensure that the volunteer really corresponds to the project and that he/she is motivated for it.
- A volunteer needs more preparation than the pre-departure training, something that should be more individual and more corresponding to the project, taking into consideration the fact that the EVS experience may be the first time for a volunteer to live abroad.
- SO should introduce to the volunteer what EVS is, differentiating it from an usual experience in a foreign country.
- The partnership is very important at this stage, working with partners you know or getting to know your partners (how they work, who they are, etc) before starting can help the success of the project.
- Involvement of the volunteer in the preparation phase.

b. Communication

- Constant communication between all actors, and most of all, quality communication between all actors can ensure success to the project
- As a HO make sure you transmit all the aspects of the project clearly to your partners and to the potential volunteers
- As a SO communicate to the hosting organization and volunteers what are your preparation and support methods before/during and after the project
- Sending and Hosting Organizations should keep in touch between each other through the whole duration of the project, to monitor the process and prevent possible problems
- Organizations should also keep constantly in touch with the volunteers. The SO can keep in touch through e-mails or skype meetings, while the HO should organize regular meetings with the volunteer
- The Activity Agreement can be a good communication tool, where all the practical and financial aspects of the project should be clarified<sup>34</sup>

c. The project: planning and implementation

- The project should answer to real needs: real need of an EVS volunteer, real need for the local community
- The project should have clear goals and aims
- The project should be clearly planned and outlined, as well as communicated to the volunteer. It should be a real project with real possibilities of implementation
- Tasks during the project should be clear to all actors (SO/HO/CO/volunteer), and planned as better as possible (leaving, of course, space for changes)

d. Integration

- The volunteer should feel integrated to the local community (read the section "During the EVS project")
- The volunteer should feel part of the hosting organization, and feel he/she has a place in it

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<sup>34</sup> See Highlight 5. The Activity Agreement.

#### e. Value and Impact

- Positive, long lasting changes should be targeted for all actors: local community, volunteers and organizations
- Enhance further collaborations between partners after the EVS activity
- Search the involvement of the volunteer in further volunteering activities after EVS
- The evaluation process can help all actors be aware of the positive changes the project gives them
- Promotion of the project should be given, within the surrounding community and environment, in order to enhance its impact and value. The project should be likewise promoted at European level

#### f. Learning awareness

Through different processes that are explained through out these guidelines, the organizations can help the volunteer value the EVS experience as a learning process, and make him more aware of all the concepts, skills and competences this process is giving him/her. Even if the activity had some negative aspects, making the volunteer aware of what he/she learned from it gives the project positive results<sup>35</sup>.

### 3. The available project database

The official database of the approved EVS projects is a "tool" created to find all the accredited organisations of the Youth in Action Programme: Sending, Hosting and Coordinating. The information is extensive (sometimes too much!) and yet it is not sufficient to explain a volunteer what the project is about, when does it start, or when he/she has to apply for it!

The SO should inform the volunteer that he/she will find some, but not all the information on the database, i.e. the deadline for manifesting the interest, for presenting the project application or the duration of the service. To get this information the volunteer might refer to other source of information (i.e. dedicated websites) or ask directly the HO for updates.

It is useful to explain the volunteer the way the database works, and what are its limits, here are some suggestions.

- Before the volunteer starts looking for a project, explain him/her how to use the database

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<sup>35</sup> See Highlight 6. The eight competencies for the lifelong learning.

The screenshot shows a search form with the following fields: Country, Town, Type of accreditation, Theme, Inclusion, Approval Date, Short/Long Term, EI Ref, EI title/contents, and Organisation name. There are 'Reset' and 'Submit Query' buttons at the bottom.

- The country and town: advise the volunteer to explore several options, or even to leave this space blank! Looking up a project based only on the country where it is located will not always produce satisfactory results.
- Type of accreditation

The dropdown menu for 'Type of accreditation' is open, showing three options: 'Sending organisation', 'Host organisation' (highlighted in blue), and 'Co-ordinating organisation'.

Remind your volunteer to select the voice HOST ORGANISATION. By doing this you will avoid wasting time to send applications to associations that do not host volunteers and then receiving negative answers.

- Theme

The screenshot shows the search form with the 'Theme' dropdown menu open. The menu lists various themes such as 'Active role of women in society', 'Anti-discrimination', 'Anti-drugs / substance abuse', 'Anti-racism / xenophobia', 'Art and culture', 'Child protection', 'Development cooperation', 'Disability', 'Education through sport and outdoor activities', 'Environment', 'Equal opportunities', 'European initiatives', 'Fight against racism and xenophobia', 'Gender equality', 'Health', 'Heritage and environmental protection', 'Heritage protection', 'Inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue', 'Inter-religious dialogue', 'Measures against delinquency', 'Media and communications/Youth information', 'Media and communications', 'Migrants', 'Non-discrimination based on sexual orientation', 'Other', 'Post-conflict/post-disaster rehabilitation', 'Post-conflict resolution and reconstruction', 'Regional cooperation', 'Rural communities', and 'Rural development'. The 'Heritage and environmental protection' option is highlighted in blue.

This is where it gets complicated!

- Go through the themes with your volunteer.
- Advise him/her to search through themes that are similar between each other in order to find all the projects that might interest him/her.
- Let him know that most projects have two themes, which are not necessarily listed in order of importance, but rather in an alphabetical order.

Some themes are similar to each other, for example:

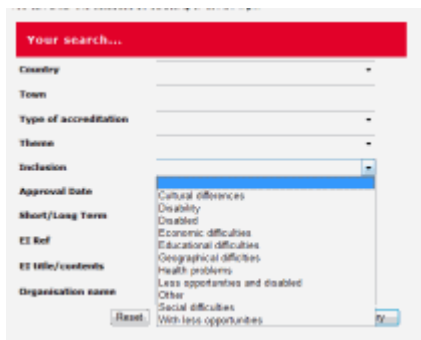
- Environment – Heritage and environmental protection
- Art and culture – Heritage protection
- Civil protection – Heritage and environmental protection – Heritage protection
- Inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue
- Social exclusion – social inclusion – social integration
- Youth information – youth leisure – youth policies – Media and communication/Youth information

Suggest the volunteer to go through more than one subject related to each other in order to cover all the possible themes an association working in a certain field might have covered. Let him/her know that organisations select the theme by ticking two boxes.

Some of the most requested themes are not explicitly on the search engine, for example you don't find "work with children" or "work with elderly people". Some of the themes that relate to this kind of work are: Disability, education through sports and outdoor activities, equal opportunities, health, social integration / inclusion / exclusion, youth information / leisure / sports.

Give suggestions to your volunteer on what themes he should search in according to their general interest.

- Inclusion



The screenshot shows a search engine interface with a red header bar containing the text "Your search...". Below the header, there are several search filters: Country, Town, Type of accreditation, Theme, Inclusion, Approval date, Short/Long Term, EI Ref, EI title/contents, and Organisation name. The "Inclusion" dropdown menu is open, displaying a list of options: Cultural differences, Disability, Disabled, Economic difficulties, Educational difficulties, Geographical difficulties, Health problems, Less opportunities and disabled, Other, Social difficulties, and With-leisure opportunities. A "Reset" button is visible at the bottom left of the search filters.

Explain the volunteer that this is not a theme, but projects that host people with fewer opportunities.

- Approval date: let the volunteer know that approval date is the date when the organisation was approved in the database, and that it will not affect his/her search so much.
- Short/Long Term: this is an indicator recently introduced in applications. There are only 27 organisations at the moment that actually base on this indicator. Advise your volunteer to leave this space blank, or he/she will not have any results.
- EI Ref: explain the volunteer what EI stands for. Let him/her know that if he/she finds an interesting project, a good way to get back to it is by just inserting the EI in this space.
- EI title/contents, Organisation name: using this field makes the search faster once it is known what to look for, i.e. when looking for project description once the project or the HO/CO.

Advise the volunteer to base his first search ONLY on the following indicators: Country, Type of Accreditation and Theme. Other indicators will be useful afterwards, to trace back a project or to have a search based on more technical information.

Once the volunteer has done the search, he/she can still encounter some difficulties, therefore it is useful to give as much information as possible using a sample project.

Let the volunteer know that by clicking on any EI, he/she will get detailed information about the project.

As regards this point, it is important to remark the volunteers the following:

- The validity date: verify that the project won't expire before the next deadline
- Proposed activities: let the volunteer know that this is where he/she will find her tasks and probable time schedule. Let her know that activities may vary, as well as the schedule, during the project
- Volunteer profile and recruitment process: This is where the volunteer might find the most information about the application before contacting the association. It is very important to read it carefully! This section will tell the volunteer what is the organisation looking for, and therefore help him/her prepare his/her application. It will tell the volunteer whether the association focuses on a motivation letter or on the CV, whether the applicants will be short listed and it might (very small chance!) tell the volunteer when the selection process takes place<sup>36</sup>
- Contact details: tell the volunteer to take note on the contact details, specifically on the name of the contact person and e-mail. He/she will need them to send the application, or to ask more details to the host organisation about the project

Making your volunteer aware of all these issues might help him find a better project, and try not to become desperate after reading one hundred pages.

#### 4. Volunteer's motivation letter

The SO has the task to give the volunteer all the useful information for writing the motivation letter to send to the HOs.

Following, some useful information for the SO to help the volunteer to draft the motivation letter.

Here is a possible structure for the motivation letter, adapted from the website <http://blog.youthnetworks.eu>:

##### *1. Opening statement*

Address the letter to the project coordinator you find in the database.

##### *2. Introduction*

Introduce yourself by telling who you are and what you do. Define the characteristics of your personality such as your strengths and weaknesses, your view of life and your interests and hobbies. Motivate why you have decided to do EVS and introduce your past experiences linked to volunteering.

##### *3. Motivation*

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<sup>36</sup> See Highlight 4. Volunteer's motivation letter.

Tell why you want to participate in this project and what your previous experiences in this field are. Which of the tasks you think are more interesting for you? Explain what your possible contributions will be, mention your skills and tell how you could use them for the project. Show them why you think you are the most suitable volunteer for this project. Write something about your expectations and why you chose that country. When presenting yourself, include your previous volunteering experiences. If you are selected, you are going to be a volunteer, so it is good to show you are already acquainted with the world of volunteering.

#### 4. *Closing statement*

- Inform the HO about how many months you are available and about the fact that you have a SO.
- Say goodbye and mention that you will wait for their answer. Sign and add your contacts.

#### *Additional tips:*

- The letter must be written in English or in the official language of the country where the project is hosted.
- Are you allowed to add some pictures? If you decide to add them, you should send one or more pictures interesting for the volunteering activity!
- The human factor is very important in your letter. However, try to write a letter based on facts. It is important to keep in mind two aspects: you are writing a motivation letter in order to present yourself to a person that has never ever met you and you have to attract the attention of the person reading it among other several motivation letters received.
- Try to show you are open to new impressions.
- Tell something special about yourself so it will become clear why the HO should chose you as future volunteer!
- Try not to be far too much enthusiastic if it's not true. Just be honest: organisations will appreciate this.
- Mention some positive information about the HO and its projects (why exactly this projects an this organisation?), in order to show it you read carefully the project and you are really interested on it.

As SO, you can suggest the volunteer to have a look at a motivation letter written by another volunteer, but make sure they do not copy-paste it in their own motivation letter.

As SO, you can revise the motivation letter and/or help the volunteer translate it in English or in the language of the HO country.

If the SO has already worked with the HO, it can also forward directly the motivation letter and CV.

#### 5. The Activity Agreement

To formalise the EVS project, SO, HO and volunteer need to do a sort of a "contract" among them, which describes rights and obligations of all parties of the project, project activities and the main project content.

The Activity Agreement (AA) has to be signed by all project partners within 45 days of that approval and before the volunteer's departure.

There isn't a model for the AA and its form remains at the discretion of the actors involved.

In the AA, it is necessary to agree on the very specific questions for the volunteer, such as:

- Type of accommodation
- The amount of money to be paid to volunteer for transport, food, pocket money
- The language course methodology (number of hours, as weekly commitment, how long, etc.)
- The weekly and monthly real commitment of the volunteer
- The tutor's name
- The project mentor's name<sup>37</sup>
- The division of the European grant and the payment procedures, with the relating deadlines

Given the importance of this information for the volunteer, it is necessary they are shared and discussed by both sides, in order to ensure the volunteer will spend as nice as possible the time in the project abroad.

The Activity Agreement is also a key element to ensure a strong partnership between the organisations and volunteer involved.

As a minimum the document must contain:

- The project title and reference code of approval (not just the code of the accreditation project, but also the number of contract with the National Agency involved) and the duration of the project (in this case, it means the duration of the activity, that is the length of the volunteer's staying abroad in the project)
- HO, SO and CO (if different) name and references, as well as the volunteer's ones Organisation name and references to Enter Host and Co-ordination (if different) and voluntary
- Definition of rights and obligations of all parties (SO, HO, CO and volunteer obligations)
- Allocation of project funds (based on different responsibilities - For example, if the SO will buy the tickets, it will always be the SO to receive the reimbursement for that), payment terms of reimbursements and data bank support<sup>38</sup>
- A description of the volunteer's role and commitments, practical information (number of serviced hours, days off per week, holidays, accommodation provided, food, local transport) and what is expected that the volunteer can learn during his/her project.
- Name and signature of the legal representatives of all partner organisations
- Name and signature of the volunteer (or volunteers) involved in the activities

The AA must be signed in four original copies (SO, HO, Volunteer, CO, National Agency). (Attached, a Draft Credit Note).

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<sup>37</sup> See Highlight 7. II The mentor.

<sup>38</sup> The **Budget** is reported as approved in the project: the lump sum provided for the SO (usually the budget is given to the CO or the HO and transferred to the SO) plus maximum budget expenditure for travel costs. **Payment terms** - conditions and how the project promoter pays the agreed figures. For example, it may be decided to pay a deposit to start the project upon submission of a credit note and a final payment at the end of the project. **Bank data** - In addition to the bank's name and address of the IBAN should be entered also the SWIFT code.

## 6. The eight competencies for the lifelong learning

The eight skills for the lifelong learning are the formal framework for the Youthpass, the certificate issued to the volunteers involved in the EVS at the end of their project. As it follows, the skills along with some tips on how to enhance learning related to each competency in the EVS project:

### Communication in mother tongue

*Communication in the mother tongue is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts; in education and training, work, home and leisure.*

**Concepts:** knowing yourself and being able to express yourself clearly and in an appropriate way

- Give opportunities to the volunteer to teach his/her language to the target group
- Encourage the volunteer to write about his/her experience (blog, articles, etc.)

### Communication in foreign languages

*Communication in foreign languages broadly shares the main skill dimensions of communication in the mother tongue: it is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in an appropriate range of societal and cultural contexts (in education and training, work, home and leisure) according to one's wants or needs. Communication in foreign languages also calls for skills such as mediation and intercultural understanding. An individual's level of proficiency will vary between the four dimensions (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and between the different languages, and according to that individual's social and cultural background, environment, needs and/or interests.*

**Concepts:** getting to know the different, recognizing different cultures and forms of expression, accepting the other

- Participation in classes of language and culture
- Visits and trips in the hosting country as part of the training
- Meetings with locals (ex-EVS volunteers, families, youngsters etc.)
- Role of the mentor
- Encouragement of expression through cooking, music, art etc.
- Respect of volunteer's learning attitudes

### Mathematical competences and basic competence in science and technology

*Mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations. Building on a sound mastery of numeracy, the emphasis is on process and activity, as well as knowledge. Mathematical competence involves, to different degrees, the ability and willingness to use mathematical modes of thought (logical and spatial thinking) and presentation (formulas, models, constructs, graphs, charts).*

*Competence in science refers to the ability and willingness to use the body of knowledge and methodology employed to explain the natural world, in order to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions. Competence in technology is viewed as the application of that knowledge and methodology in response to perceived human wants or needs. Competence in science and technology involves an*

*understanding of the changes caused by human activity and responsibility as an individual citizen.*

Concepts: problem-solving tools and skills, knowledge and experience that support your ideas, opinions, expressions

- Inclusion and involvement of the volunteer in the HO activities explaining the cause and effect of the activities proposed
- Freedom of the volunteer to fulfill tasks on his/her own, always with the available support of the HO, thus allowing the volunteer to be successful, but also facing and solving problems individually

### Digital competence

*Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.*

Concepts: being able to critically find and exchange the information

- Provide information tools, support in research, understanding and re-elaboration of the information
- Help to use new tools (IT tools: software, Skype, blog, Facebook etc.)
- Provide information and documentation devices (TV, camera, computer, radio etc.)

### Learning to learn

*Learning to learn is the ability to pursue and persist in learning, to organize one's own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups.*

*This competence includes awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to overcome obstacles in order to learn successfully. This competence*

*means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and making use of guidance.*

*Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts: at home, at work, in education and training. Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual's competence.*

Concepts: recognize and register what learnt, use it and be open and welcome towards new inputs

- Monitor the volunteer (i.e. once a week) to see what he discovered, what was problematic; generally orally, but also through any kind of forms so to register his/her learning process (i.e. every 2 months)
- Stress the importance of pre-departure and arrival training courses
- Advice to have a diary
- Training/introduction to learning as key issue of the voluntary experience, using also questionnaires to understand what kind of "learner" and the personal disposition in learning
- Contact with the direct

### Social and civic competences

*These include personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and cover all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary. Civic competence equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation.*

Concepts: the passage from individuals to organized groups and communities

- Regular communication for a higher involvement of the volunteer with the HO (mentor, supervisor)
- Involvement of the volunteer in the surrounding community/social life
- Include volunteers in internal meetings so that they feel part of the HO
- Organize intercultural evenings (HO or volunteer)
- The volunteer should adapt as much as possible to the local community
- HO should foster the volunteer's initiative and participation in social and civic life
- Promote the idea of "local friends" by the HO

Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship

*Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports individuals, not only in their everyday lives at home and in society, but also in the workplace in being aware of the context of their work and being able to seize opportunities, and is a foundation for more specific skills and knowledge needed by those establishing or contributing to social or commercial activity. This should include awareness of ethical values and promote good governance.*

Concepts: don't wait for solutions, follow your initiative

- Explain from the beginning that the volunteer should be responsible and make propositions
- Lead and support the volunteer from the beginning, then give space to the volunteer to develop his/her own ideas
- Make the volunteer aware that the success of the project depends a lot on his/her own inputs

Cultural awareness and expression

*Appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature, and the visual arts.*

Concepts: culture and art is meant as awareness of own roots and richness to express and share

- Talk about the prejudices that the volunteer has and raise questions, in order to put them into discussion
- Help the volunteer to discover all the cultural aspects offered by the hosting country/community
- Help to experience the culture
- Give advice to go to exhibitions, cinema etc.
- Meeting with families and people from the local community
- If the volunteer feels frustrated because of the different culture discuss and support him
- Give some space for the volunteer for him/herself and for his/her culture

## 7. The mentor

The mentor is fundamental in EVS projects. The following remarks are hints to take into consideration when identifying a possible mentor and identifying his/her role and some suggestions for activities that the mentor may propose to the volunteer.

Identifying the mentor: who can be the mentor?

- A person external to the project, not linked to the volunteer by a hierarchical relationship
- A competent and trained person, with a deep knowledge of the Youth in Action Programme
- A person with an EVS and/or volunteering experience
- A person sensitive to intercultural aspects
- A person aware of volunteers' needs and who knows where to stop
- Suggestions: an ex EVS volunteer, a university student, a young volunteer of your association

Defining mentor's role

The mentor should

- Support the volunteer integration in the hosting organization and in the community
- Support the volunteer in the learning process and in learning the language
- Assist the volunteer in the communication
- Be the link and the mediator between the volunteer and the hosting organization

Mentor's tasks

Before the EVS activity begins

The mentor should

- Be informed about the project and the volunteer's characteristics
- If possible, contact the volunteer

During the EVS activity

The mentor should

- Meet formally and informally the volunteer, in order to monitor the activity and the learning process; the meetings should happen once a week for the first two months, and afterwards at least once a month
- Discuss with the volunteer about frustration, expectations, fears, etc.
- Support the volunteer in the conflict management
- Have a role in the evaluation process, by participating in drafting the Youth Pass and in the evaluation meetings

After the EVS activity

The mentor should

- Keep in contact with the volunteer and the hosting association

Some suggestions

- The sending and the hosting organizations should agree before the EVS project starts about the mentor's role. The sending organization may ask for additional information about that to the hosting organization

- The mentor should be a reliable person both according to the hosting organization and the volunteer
- Before the EVS project starts the volunteer and the mentor can be in contact! The volunteer should at least know the mentor's name and contacts, and the hosting organization should inform the mentor about the project and the volunteer

## 8. Orientation for volunteers

Following, there are some considerations about the importance and the definition of the orientation for volunteers, a concept that is at the heart of every voluntary process, as well as Volunteer Support Centres (CSV) activity.

Orienting does not mean giving ready and mature choice to a person. Orienting means supporting the person to build or search for tools and skills useful for his/her choices. This process puts the emphasis on personal autonomy. When making immediate and future choices, even if accompanied, therefore the person puts greater attention to meeting his/her needs and explicit and implicit characteristics and knowledge.

The CSV offer the opportunity to participate to volunteering proposals according to many possibilities: it has therefore kept in mind that EVS is not the end point or the unique volunteering opportunities, but a step in a volunteering process.

The orienting is offered mainly in the form of the interview, taking in consideration and exploring voluntary initiatives and programs to be done at both national and international level, and through all the associations and opportunities to participate that the local community offers.

The main objective of the orienting interview is to reduce uncertainty and increase the knowledge about a question that requires a decision; the orienting interview is useful to:

- define the questions and let decisions to emerge for solving them;
- analyze the available resources about the person (acquired at school, in training, work or leisure time) in order to have a draft on personal skills;
- identify an action plan in its practical feasibility;
- provide information and research techniques for answering the questions.

## 9. Checklist for the volunteer

This checklist is for young people after they contacted a HO or SO. This checklist is to be used together with the information they gave you. You will not find general information about EVS in this list, but more tips about the project and things you need to check or to know in each phase of the project. Please use this checklist together with all the information and support you will receive from the SO and HO.

### BEFORE YOU FIND THE HOSTING PROJECT – WHAT TO DO?

- Understand the roles of each actor involved in EVS (volunteer, SO, HO, CO)
- Understand why you want to do EVS
- Explain your interest and needs to the SO, in order to let it help you to find a project more easily

- Understand how the database work and what are its limits<sup>39</sup>
- Understand how to present your candidature to the HOs<sup>40</sup>
- Understand what volunteering means and what the volunteers do
- Receive all the information from the SO regarding the project (time, procedures, etc.)
- Get in touch, whenever possible, with other volunteers that did or are doing their EVS
- Inform your family about what you are going to do during the EVS
- Express your needs to the SO in order for them to help you find a project
- Understand the selection procedures of the HOs
- Write a motivation letter and the CV together with the SO<sup>41</sup>
- Understand that being selected doesn't mean the project will be approved. The project is approved when the competent National Agency or the European Commission approves it

#### BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR THE EVS PROJECT – WHAT TO DO?

- Get the insurance, the travel tickets, all the information about the HO and its contacts
- Take part to the pre-departure preparation with the SO
- Know who your mentor and tutor are
- Take part to the pre-departure training
- Inform all those interested about what you are going to do
- Get information about the 8 key competences and about the Youthpass
- Sign the Activity Agreement and get a copy of it. Take it with you when you leave<sup>42</sup>!
- Understand the main dimensions of EVS: volunteering, active citizenship, non-formal education
- Read the Charter of EVS

#### DURING THE EVS PROJECT – WHAT TO DO?

- Meet the mentor when agreed
- Monitor your learning and ask the HO to help you do this
- Participate in the on-arrival and intermediate training courses
- Run a blog to speak about your experience
- Get in touch with your SO as often as useful for you
- Inform everyone when there are problems – SO and HO should help you solve them
- Get information about the local community, town where you are, culture, etc.
- Get support in the administrative issues of your stay
- Get informed about the rules and roles in the HO and all aspects regarding the activities you will be involved in
- Ask for support from the HO in developing your ideas and proposals
- Give your feedback and suggestions to the HO about how to improve the EVS project

#### AFTER THE EVS PROJECT – WHAT TO DO?

- Supporting other volunteers who are beginning their EVS process
- Take part in youth networks and/or associations

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<sup>39</sup> See Highlight 3. The available project database.

<sup>40</sup> See Highlight 4. Volunteer's motivation letter.

<sup>41</sup> See Highlight 4. Volunteer's motivation letter.

<sup>42</sup> See Highlight 5. The Activity Agreement.

- Promote your experience by offering information and your experience
- Take part to EVS promotional events
- Go on volunteering
- Create new associations or find associations where running activities similar to the EVS project ones
- Stay in the host country

## 10. The link between the volunteer and the community

This section provides some food for thought and some practical suggestions on how to stimulate the link of volunteer with the community, mainly understood as local community in the country of departure.

In particular, the Volunteer Support Centres (CSV), which act as SOs, have the mission to bring citizens closer to the world of volunteering and to provide services to the associations of its territory. In this context, it is very important being able to create an interest in EVS volunteers also in volunteering at a local level for their territory and it reflects the commitment of CSV to serve as intermediaries between the citizen and local and European volunteering.

What to give young people before leaving to do EVS?

This question refers to SO and in particular the case of CSV.

Some suggestions:

- Suggest volunteers associations performing similar business activities on the territory of the HO. If possible, ask the students to make "study visits" at these associations and, where possible, to volunteer some time in these associations
- Give youngsters information about volunteering on their territory. It 'important that youngsters, when they go abroad to volunteer, know what is volunteering in their territory.
- Involve youngsters awareness initiatives and volunteering training - it is essential that youngsters understand the meaning of volunteering before the departure
- Foster the meeting among local volunteers and other EVS volunteers

What to give young people during the EVS?

Create a relationship between the volunteer and the SO, i.e. supporting his/her involvement in it, allowing its structure to know the volunteer and his/her hosting project. The EVS volunteer, if connected with the belonging territory, becomes an antenna in another country and can act as a bridge with other volunteers in Italy or association dealing with similar themes locally.

What to give young people after returning from EVS?

This question refers to SO and in particular the case of CSV.

Some suggestions:

- Former EVS are privileged witnesses when promoting volunteering, both for local volunteering and for EVS. It is important that at the volunteer's return, the SO valorise this experience. You can send the ex-EVS to volunteering promotional meetings, let them meet with future EVS volunteers, etc.
- When the EVS volunteer comes back, the SO may propose volunteering engagement opportunities similar to those carried out in the HO. A very good outcome would be that the volunteer may assist the HO and other local organisations to create partnerships. In this sense, the SO commitment is crucial

→ Never abandon volunteers. Getting in contact with them at least to see how they live their return is very important.

## ANNEX 1

### INVOICE

Invoice No: XXX

Invoice Date:  
07/07/2008

Supplier:

**Name of sending organisation**

Address

Establishment Registration No: xx

Bank name: xx

Bank branch: xx

Bank account: xx

SWIFT: xx

International bank account number (IBAN): xx

Purchaser:

CSV

VIA GRAMSCI, 12 GENOVA

No.	Description	Price in euros
1.	Sending Activity costs for EVS volunteer name surname (project number xxxxxxxx)	600,00 €
2.	Sending Activity costs for EVS volunteer name surname (project number xxxxxxxx)	600,00 €
<b>Total Amount Payable</b>		<b>1200,00 €</b>

Sum in words: one thousand two hundred euros

Invoice signed by: EV

## **WEB SITES**

European Commission – Youth Policy  
[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm)

European Union activities on Education, training and youth  
[http://europa.eu/pol/educ/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/educ/index_en.htm)

Salto Youth Resource Centre  
<http://www.salto-youth.net>

National Agencies for Youth in the Programme Countries  
[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth/doc152\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth/doc152_en.htm)

Italian National Agency for Youth  
<http://www.agenziagiovani.it/>

European Youth Forum  
[www.youthforum.org/en/](http://www.youthforum.org/en/)

Eurodesk  
<http://www.eurodesk.eu/edesk/Welcome.do>

Youthpass  
[www.youthpass.eu](http://www.youthpass.eu)

