



European  
Commission

# Study on the Impact of Transnational Volunteering through the European Voluntary Service

*Annex 1 – Case Studies*  
*April 2017*

# **Study on the Impact of Transnational Volunteering through the European Voluntary Service**

## ***Annex 1 – Case Studies***

### **EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture  
Directorate Youth, Education and Erasmus+  
Unit Youth, Volunteer Solidarity and Traineeship Office

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## Impact of EVS in Kohila, Estonia

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** Kohila Open Youth Centre (of the Kohila municipality)
- **Size of organisation:** 4 members of staff (2 full-time and 2 part-time) and 2 volunteers
- **Location:** Kohila is a borough in Rapla County in northern Estonia. It has a population of 3,505 and is the administrative centre of Kohila Parish.
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 2007
- **The organisation is accredited for:** Receiving volunteers. They have sent one volunteer to Macedonia this year for the first time, and are planning to send more in the future.
- **Volunteering sector:** Youth sector
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** Art, culture, education, sport and outdoor activities
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** Children and youth
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** No
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** The organisation has no other international networks outside of the EVS. They took part in some youth exchanges in Estonia but did not organise these themselves.
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** Kohila Kindergarten (Kindergarten Sipsik). Some volunteers also spend one day per week in a youth centre in the nearby town of Hageri (Hageri Open Youth Centre).

### Background of EVS in Kohila Open Youth Centre

Kohila Open Youth Centre is located in the Kohila Municipality in northern Estonia. It first started to implement EVS projects in 2007 in order to gain new knowledge through volunteers and open up young people and the local community to different cultures. According to the interviewed former head of the Kohila Open Youth Centre, *'with these projects we want to give the children and our community a new understanding and introduce them to new people who have different cultures and languages'*. The youth centre also wanted to show young people the possibilities they have to see Europe, such as through EVS, youth exchanges or Erasmus+. For its first seven years of implementing EVS project, the Kohila Open Youth Centre only used to take on one volunteer per year. However, in the last few years they have started to take on two volunteers. This encouraged the youth centre to start looking for a partner and therefore they asked the Kohila Kindergarten. The kindergarten has now been involved in EVS for two years.

Language skills was also a very important aspect for the youth centre which they aimed to address through the EVS projects, especially English. The interviewed former head of the youth centre explained that both young people and adults in the local community are too shy to speak English, whereas speaking it every day with someone would make them feel more confident. Nevertheless, the youth centre has had volunteers from a range of countries – including Spain, France, Italy, Ukraine and Russia. They have not previously hosted volunteers with fewer opportunities.

The types of tasks that EVS volunteers perform during their EVS include helping with the day to day running of the youth centre, for example by organising events for different occasions such as Halloween, and doing crafts such as a Valentine's Day card competition. Volunteers also help in the Kohila Kindergarten, for instance by doing exercises with the children. In addition, volunteers provide support to the Hageri Open Youth Centre, which is located in a

town near Kohila. The interviewed former head of the host organisation reported that they try to find something new and different to do every year with each new volunteer. EVS volunteers have also helped with different community events, for example at the local school or the Kohila local government.

## Impact on volunteers

### ***Perspective of ex-EVS volunteer from Ukraine who volunteered in Estonia in Dec 2015 – Dec 2016***

A. is a young 22 year-old woman from Ukraine who is currently studying a Master's in Mathematics in Kiev, Ukraine. She returned from her EVS in December 2016, after having done an 11 month mobility in Kohila, Estonia, with the Kohila Open Youth Centre. A. does not consider herself to be at a disadvantage compared to her peers, but recognises that she comes from a poorer country. However, she explained that everyone during her EVS knew about the volatile situation in Ukraine and this presented no problem; people were polite, kind and she had very high living conditions in Estonia.

A. described that for her, coming on EVS was '*destiny*'. She had previously done volunteering in her home town for two years during the summer, where she worked with children from the first and second grades. This involved activities such as taking the children to the cinema, the zoo and playing games with them. A. enjoyed this experience of working with children very much, so she decided as a '*new year's resolution*' to work more with children. Initially, she wanted to find something in Kiev, Ukraine, as that is where she is going to university. However, she accidentally found an article about EVS in Kohila on a social network group, which posts opportunities for youngsters, such as internships and job postings around Ukraine and abroad. Previous to this she did not know anything about EVS, but decided to apply for it. From then on, A. explained that '*everything happened very quickly – they called me in two days and then asked me to come straight away*'. The whole process took just a couple of weeks. She explained that she felt lucky to have experienced such a fast process, as usually EVS volunteers (such as her co-volunteers) have to wait almost one year to go on their projects. A. explained that her EVS situation was a special case, as a former volunteer from her host organisation had left her EVS before finishing the mobility, which meant that the youth centre was looking for another volunteer to replace her as soon as possible.

During her EVS, A. did a variety of tasks and activities - she was an assistant in the Kohila Kindergarten for two days per week, and was an art class assistant for one day per week in another youth centre (Hageri Open Youth Centre). For the remaining two days, she assisted the workers in the Kohila Open Youth Centre with any tasks which they required support with. For instance, she helped them organise different events such as children's holiday parties. In addition, A. also helped with different community events, for example at the local school or the Kohila government, and led information technology workshops and Russian lessons in the school.

As a result of doing EVS, A. explained that the most significant change she experienced was being more confident in herself. The experience enabled her to trust herself more, and to not be afraid of implementing her own ideas and making mistakes. This was very important for her as she explained that '*I am an easy going person, but I was not so open before the programme. EVS enabled me to become more confident and braver*'. She also learnt to not be afraid to make mistakes. EVS gave her opportunities to make mistakes and to learn from them, as '*non-one judges you*'. A. explained how in such situations, people would give her advice on how to improve and learn from mistakes, something which she highly valued and appreciated.

She also described how she is now more open-minded and that her outlook on life has changed - now, if she wishes to do something, instead of postponing it for later as she used to do, she will be proactive about it - '*I do not want to say 'later, later' anymore; I live in the moment and do things now*'. She provided an example of how during her EVS, she had the

opportunity to help conduct a dance club, something which she really enjoyed. As a result, when returning to Ukraine, she saved up money and went to a dance club for three months, something she would have previously put off. She is also more motivated to explore different places and do more activities, as she explained that *'I have already planned that during this summer, I will not sit at home but I will go somewhere. I like this kind of life – in Europe they have the opportunity to go wherever they want. They are always thinking outside the box and outside of their comfort zone – they are not afraid to go somewhere different'*.

As she had only returned one month before the time of interview and is currently studying for her Master's, A. has not yet had the opportunity to use her EVS experience when applying for a job. However, she mentioned that the experience provided her with strong communication, organisation, leadership and teamwork skills, which she recognises will be a big advantage for her in getting a good job.

A. explained that the reason she was able to improve on these skills was because she was *'lucky with the community there and with the supervisors'*, who provided her with a lot of work and support. *'The supervisors created a very good atmosphere for us volunteers and made it feel like a home'*.

A. explained that she had one supervisor in the kindergarten and one supervisor in the youth centre. This meant that if she needed something at any point, she always had someone to ask for support. This support was not only provided by the supervisors, but also by the teachers and other workers in the youth centre. Additionally, when she came to Estonia, her co-volunteer had already been there for three months, so he was able to help her with any problems she had and give her advice. It also helped that she was living with this co-volunteer, which meant that *'I had support both at home and at work'*. The local community also allowed her to discover new things.

### **Perspective of Current EVS volunteer from Russia**

V. is 29 year-old woman from Russia who is currently in her second month of a year-long EVS placement in Estonia. She graduated from university in 2009 in linguistics and international communication. V. does not consider herself to be at a disadvantage compared to her peers. This EVS experience is her first time volunteering.

V. explained that *'I had been dreaming to live abroad, and [EVS] is a good opportunity for me to learn new cultures and a new language'*. She felt ready to spend a year, or longer, somewhere abroad, and wanted to help people in some way. V. found out about EVS from a former EVS volunteer from her home city, who had returned from volunteering in Estonia. She had no prior information or awareness of EVS, but she mentioned that *'if I knew about it earlier, I would have done it earlier'*.

Similarly to A., V. is currently volunteering at the Kohila Open Youth Centre (two days per week), the Kohila Kindergarten (two days per week) and the Hageri Open Youth Centre (one day per week). By working in three different places, she is doing a variety of tasks. For example, in the kindergarten she does sports with the children – *'I love sport so I have some experience in this, and the kids love it. I tried it once and the teachers offered for me to do it every Tuesday'*. She also does crafts and science experiments, which she also tried to do in the youth centre and this proved to be popular – *'some ideas I use in both the kindergarten and the youth centres'*.

V. mentioned that she is currently studying Estonian which she really enjoys, and has also improved her English as she has to use it every day. She also explained, *'I like to meet people from different countries and to know their culture'*. Despite only being in her second month of EVS, V. already feels that it has changed her life. She reported that she has already become more grown-up and self-confident – as she explained, *'living alone abroad always makes you feel more confident and grown-up – now I cook better!'* She also feels much more responsible now since having to work with children – *'I do not have children and have never*



*had siblings, so I now feel more responsible for other children; every child has their own story and feelings, and I want to listen and to help make their life better'.*

In terms of her future plans for obtaining employment, V. is unsure what she will do. However, she was thinking about the possibility to do a similar programme in Russia but is not sure how to do this yet, as volunteering is still a new concept in Russia. She explained, *'I would love to be someone's mentor or coordinator. I would love foreigners to come to Russia as volunteers to see the country'.* She mentioned that when she first came to Estonia, she did not know anything about the country apart from what she had read in books – *'but when you live in a society it is different. I want to break stereotypes about Russia and show people it is a beautiful country. Lots of people want to go to Russia but are afraid to do so'.*

According to V., the Estonian people are the main factor that have so far made the largest impact on her life, both in her work and the local community. Similarly to A., she believed that *'Estonians are hard to open up and therefore it is difficult to become friends with them'.* However, she explained that she arrived in Estonia in December during the Christmas period and people in the local community invited her to visit their families and show her how they celebrate Christmas and their traditions. V. enjoyed and appreciated this very much, stating that they were similar to Russian families in terms of their hospitality. Overall, she explained that *'everybody has been so kind and helpful, and if I have any problem they will help me and give me advice'.*

### **Perspective of EVS receiving organisation**

According to the interviewed former head of the Kohila Open Youth Centre, EVS volunteers are motivated to take up volunteering abroad as it is an opportunity for them to leave their countries and live independently before moving from home and/or taking up full-time jobs. The EVS is a chance for them to develop their personalities and gain a clearer understanding of what they want to do in the future. As the former head of the youth centre explained, volunteers usually go away from their EVS with a positive attitude, better knowing what they want to do next. In addition, EVS is a chance for them to experience a different culture and try new things, maybe things which they would not do in their own country, such as hiking in the forest in the case Kohila. Last but not least, going on EVS and living independently is a chance for volunteers to learn how to manage their budget and experience travelling on their own.

The interviewed workers from the Kohila Open Youth Centre reported that sometimes it takes time to overcome the cultural differences between the local community and the volunteers. Nevertheless, they explained that they work hard to overcome these differences and to ensure that they do not pose a big problem. They also expressed that overall the volunteers are pretty happy, especially as there are a lot of people around them, providing them with a lot of support and comfort. This makes the volunteers feel welcome and part of the community. It was also suggested that doing an EVS placement for one year is a good amount of time for the volunteers to be able to get a lot out of the experience, but not too long that the volunteers start to become homesick.

## **Impact on EVS organisations**

### **Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation**

Since participating in EVS, the receiving organisation has largely benefitted in terms of improving their language skills. As the interviewed former head of the youth centre explained, her English has improved a lot since hosting EVS volunteers. Additionally, the interviewed head and former head of the youth centred explained how, since implementing EVS projects, they are now more open minded, as is the community. Hosting the EVS volunteers has also provided the receiving organisation with additional human resources in order to complete daily tasks.

It was also noted that cooperation between workers across other organisations under the government has also improved. This is due to the fact that the volunteers also visit other organisations, either to help with their activities or to participate in their events. These organisations are now aware that the Kohila Open Youth Centre hosts volunteers, so they are interested in having the volunteers visit them too.

The youth centre has also evolved over the years as a result of EVS. For example, the organisation now has an apartment from the local government which volunteers stay in every year. This was not previously the case, as volunteers used to have to move a few times before the organisation got this apartment. In addition, the youth centre has plans to continue evolving. The success of implementing EVS projects has inspired the Kohila Open Youth Centre to potentially take on one more volunteer. The interviewed former head of the youth centre explained that: *'we have one private school in Kohila and one high school, so we are trying to take on one more volunteer in order to help in the schools'*. This demonstrates how this host organisation plans to gradually expand even further in its implementation of EVS projects, having already increased its intake of volunteers from one to two.

### ***Perspective of current EVS volunteer and ex-EVS volunteer***

A. felt that she was able to have an impact on the youth centre's staff members, as she showed and encouraged the people she worked with to be more honest and open with each other, something which she observed to be a difference between Estonian people and Ukrainian people. As she explained, *'I hope they learnt that they need to be true and honest with each other, even in their community'*. She provided an example of how during her project, they encountered some problems and she was upfront and honest with the workers about the issues they faced and what she thought. As a result, the workers thanked her for her honesty and expressed how she was right in talking to them openly about the problem. A. hopes that the workers from the host organisation learn from her how to not be afraid to be open and to discuss everything with each other like she did with them.

As V. is in her second month of EVS, she hopes that she will be able to bring new ideas and a fresh insight to the host organisation. She also gave an example of when she cooked some muffins from her own recipe from home, and everyone enjoyed them. She said that by cooking something from her home country, this made her a bit closer to the kids, the teachers and the workers at the youth centre. V. also believes that she is very energetic and active, and that by having someone with her personality and attitude in the work place, everyone else will be inspired and motivated from that energy and positive atmosphere.

In terms of her sending organisation, Union Forum, A. explained how she wrote a blog for them in Ukrainian and contributed articles with photos about her EVS experience every two or three months. This meant that current and future volunteers could look at this information and discover more about different EVS experiences. A. has kept in contact with the sending organisation and described how the organisation was happy that she did a good job, and that they now also have a good connection with the host organisation.

In terms of her impact on the sending organisation, V. reported that she is in contact with one girl from the sending organisation, which is based in Russia, who V. met in Tallinn. She was the first person who showed V. around Tallinn and gave her advice on where to go, what to do, how to behave, etc. Additionally, V. mentioned that she has a blog where she posts photos and videos almost every day, and this is published on the sending organisation's website for other volunteers to read and find out about her EVS experience. She explained, *'I do [this blog] not only for myself, but for the kindergarten, the sending organisation, the youth centre, etc.'*

## Impact at local community level

### ***Perspective of the members of the local community***

The interviewed curriculum coordinator from the Kohila Kindergarten explained that the EVS volunteers do a variety of daily activities with the children which vary every week. V. volunteers at the kindergarten two days per week, and volunteers are involved with only one group of children. Nevertheless, it was reported by the curriculum coordinator that the children also introduce the volunteer to other classes, so that other children can also get to know the volunteers. The children now expect the EVS volunteers to arrive every year and this is no longer something new to them.

Overall, the interviewed curriculum coordinator explained that having the EVS volunteers is a very good experience. The volunteers are very popular and are always welcomed to different events in the community. The main positive effect was reported to be that members of the local community also get the opportunity to learn other languages from the volunteers, as well as getting to know more about other cultures and countries. Additionally, the EVS volunteers have made members of the local community more open minded and encouraged the children to feel comfortable and open with people from different countries.

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

The interviewed head and former head of the youth centre reported that the EVS volunteers had a positive impact on the local community by teaching their skills to others. For example: a variety of EVS volunteers gave language lessons to the community; one Italian volunteer hosted a dinner evening for the community as she was very good at cooking; one volunteer from Spain was very good at basketball so he provided some training lessons; and another volunteer was very good at hand crafts so she taught this to a group of young people outside of the youth centre. Overall, this knowledge which the volunteers have had a positive impact on members of the local community.

In addition to this, the ability of children in the local community to learn English was a highly valued positive impact of the EVS volunteers. It was reported by the interviewed head of the youth centre that young children started to learn English with the volunteers. Additionally, the older youngsters felt that they could speak with and open up to the volunteers as they trusted them. Nevertheless, it was noted that the type of engagement depends on the volunteer – some volunteers feel more comfortable with teaching younger children, whereas others are more comfortable with teaching older teenagers subjects such as Mathematics.

One important observation was that, according to the interviewed head and former head of the youth centre, more and more people have been coming to the youth centre as a result of the EVS volunteers being there. This is because the volunteers have played an important role in raising awareness of the youth centre by speaking with people in the local community, who may not have previously known about the youth centre. In some cases, it was reported that people came to the youth centre specifically to see the volunteers and spend time with them.

### ***Perspective of the volunteers***

A. hopes that she has had an impression on the young people she worked with by teaching them to not be afraid to be themselves and to open up to people. She gave an example of how she organised photography exhibitions as she knew that a lot of the children liked taking photos. She saw this as a way for them to show their talent to people and feel proud of themselves and their talents. She considered that by letting others see their work, the children would learn to not be afraid of showing who they are and of sharing their work with others. The photos were put on the walls of the youth centre and A. explained how the children *'are so proud of this now. They feel free and people can see who they are. When I was leaving my EVS [the teachers] said thank you to me for giving [the children] motivation'*.

In addition, A. organised a dance club with the youth. She explained how at first, the girls did not feel comfortable with foreign people. However, A. showed them how to not be afraid of communicating with people from other countries - she explained how there would also be other volunteers from different countries visiting after she leaves. A. created a lot of improvisation dance classes where the girls could be more open and through these improvisation lessons, they enjoyed being able to do what they want and not just doing what teachers say. As a result, A. explained that *'they felt freer with me, even though I was a foreign person'*.

According to V., who is in her second month of EVS, it is too early to tell what impact she has had on the host local community. She stated, *'I do not have friends yet, I know some people but we just talked briefly. Maybe most of [the local community] do not even know that there are new volunteers here'*. Nevertheless, V. did mention that because she looks younger than her age, young people think she is a similar age to them so they do not see her as an adult, but as someone who they feel more relaxed with - *'we are becoming closer and closer'*. She gave the example of a young Russian girl who sometimes comes to the youth centre. According to V., this girl is very shy and therefore, before V. arrived, she did not speak to anyone. However, V. helped to make her more friendly with the other people in the youth centre and told her that there is nothing for her to be afraid of - *'there are also other kids who want to share their stories with me'*.

#### Interviews conducted

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Job title	Date of interview
EVS alumni	Not affiliated	Young person from Ukraine	27-Jan-2017
EVS volunteer	Kohila Open Youth Centre	Young person from Russia	30-Jan-2017
EVS hosting organisation	Kohila Open Youth Centre	Head of the youth centre ( <i>joint interview</i> )	30-Jan-2017
EVS hosting organisation	Kohila Open Youth Centre	Former head of the youth centre ( <i>joint interview</i> )	30-Jan-2017
Local community	Kohila Kindergarten	Curriculum Coordinator	30-Jan-2017

#### Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in Kohila, Estonia

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
<b>I M P A C T  O N  T H E  I N</b>	<b>Personal and social development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem</li> <li>■ Increase in autonomy, independence</li> <li>■ Learning about oneself (self-discovery)</li> <li>■ More friends and contacts from other countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ For A. the most significant change she experienced was being more confident in herself. She explained, <i>'I am an easy going person, but was not so open before the programme. EVS enabled me to be confident and brave'</i>.</li> <li>■ V. reported that she has already become more grown-up and self-confident - she explained, <i>'living alone abroad always makes you feel more confident and grown-up - now I cook better!'</i> She also feels much more responsible now since having to work with children.</li> <li>■ A. described how she is now more open-minded and that her outlook on life has</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
D I V I D U A L  V O L U N T E E R			<p>changed - now, if she wishes to do something, instead of postponing it for later as she used to do, she will be proactive about it - <i>'I do not want to say 'later, later' anymore; I live in the moment and do things now'</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The former head of the youth centre explained that volunteers usually go away from their EVS with a positive attitude, better knowing what they want to do next.</li> <li>■ For V., the main added value of EVS is also having the opportunity to meet people from other countries and experience living in another culture.</li> <li>■ A. mentioned that doing EVS in another country that is not Ukraine allowed her to meet a lot of people from other cultures.</li> </ul>
	<b>Learning and competence development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Acquired new skills (i.e. how to plan finances)</li> <li>■ Increase in awareness and knowledge of non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Intention to learn foreign languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ According to the EVS host organisation, going on EVS and living independently is a chance for volunteers to learn how to manage their budget.</li> <li>■ V. was thinking about the possibility to do a similar programme in Russia but is not sure how to do this yet, as volunteering is still a new concept in Russia. She explained, <i>'I would love to be someone's mentor or coordinator. I would love foreigners to come to Russia as volunteers to see the country'</i>.</li> <li>■ V. mentioned that she is currently studying Estonian which she really enjoys, and has also improved her English speaking skills as she has to use it every day.</li> <li>■ A. explained how through her EVS, she improved her English and Russian language skills, as previously she did not speak Russian at all and during EVS she had the opportunity to do so.</li> <li>■ V. explained that she would never have gone to Estonia without EVS, nor would she have become a volunteer or learnt what it means to be a volunteer somewhere abroad.</li> </ul>
	<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Developed professional skills and attitudes, matching employers'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A. mentioned that the experience provided her with strong communication, organisation, leadership and teamwork skills, which she recognises will be a big advantage for</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demands</li> <li>Increased chances to find a job</li> <li>Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>her in getting a good job.</li> <li>V. was thinking about the possibility of doing a similar volunteering programme in Russia after her EVS, and she would never have become a volunteer if it was not for EVS.</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased participation in civic and political life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in participation in voluntary activities</li> <li>Better prepared to participate actively</li> <li>Increase in participation in similar youth projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>V. was thinking about the possibility of doing a similar volunteering programme in Russia after her EVS. She explained, <i>'I would love to be someone's mentor or coordinator. I would love foreigners to come to Russia as volunteers to see the country'</i>.</li> </ul>
	<b>Stronger sense of belonging to the EU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More aware of common European values</li> <li>Higher interest in European topics</li> <li>Feeling more European than before</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>'I like this kind of life – in Europe they have the opportunity to go wherever they want. They are always thinking outside the box and outside of their comfort zone – they are not afraid to go somewhere different.'</i> (A., ex-EVS volunteer)</li> <li>V. expressed that she wants to learn something new and find out more about Estonia. According to her, <i>'We are all in Europe and this way I can visit other European countries when I have free time'</i>. V. explained that she would never have gone to Estonia without EVS.</li> </ul>
	<b>Further mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved readiness to work / study / live abroad</li> <li>Increased confidence to travel to other countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. is more motivated to explore different places and do more activities, as she explained that <i>'I have already planned that during this summer, I will not sit at home but I will go to a forest or something. I like this kind of life – in Europe they have the opportunity to go wherever they want. They are always thinking outside the box and outside of their comfort zone – they are not afraid to go somewhere different'</i>.</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased intercultural learning and dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures)</li> <li>Better understanding of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both volunteers gained intercultural skills by interacting with people from other countries, especially as not many foreign people visit their respective home countries (Russia and Ukraine).</li> <li>V. explained <i>'I like to meet people from different countries and to know their culture'</i>. She also stated, <i>'I would love</i></li> </ul>



Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ other cultures</li> <li>■ More receptivity towards multiculturalism</li> <li>■ More tolerance and respect for other cultures</li> <li>■ Improved intercultural dialogue</li> </ul>	<p><i>to be someone's mentor or coordinator. I would love foreigners to come to Russia as volunteers to see the country'.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ V. mentioned that when she first came to Estonia, she did not know anything about the country apart from what she had read in books – <i>'but when you live in a society it is different'.</i></li> <li>■ Both volunteers expressed how by volunteering in Estonia they recognised similarities between the Estonian culture and the culture in their respective home countries (Russia and Ukraine).</li> </ul>
	<b>Improved social inclusion and solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in social awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ V. explained, <i>'I want to break stereotypes about Russia and show people it is a beautiful country. Lots of people want to go to Russia but are afraid to do so'.</i></li> </ul>
<b>O R G A N I S A T I O N</b>	<b>Organisational development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More human resources support for NGOs</li> <li>■ Increased cultural diversity in NGO</li> <li>■ Increase in tolerance and openness of staff</li> <li>■ Increased promotion of the participation of young people in organisation</li> <li>■ Enhanced image and reputation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ EVS volunteers help workers from the host organisation with daily tasks, providing extra human resources.</li> <li>■ Since participating in EVS, the receiving organisation has largely benefitted in terms of improving their language skills. As the interviewed former head of the youth centre explained, her English has improved a lot since hosting EVS volunteers.</li> <li>■ The interviewed head and former head of the youth centred explained how, since implementing EVS projects, they are now more open minded.</li> <li>■ According to the interviewed head and former head of the Kohila Open Youth Centre, cooperation between workers across other organisations under the government has improved. This is due to the fact that the volunteers also visit other organisations, either to help with their activities or to participate in their events.</li> <li>■ The host organisation plans to gradually expand by further increasing its intake of volunteers.</li> <li>■ According to the interviewed head and former head of the youth centre, more and more people have been coming to the youth centre as a result of the EVS volunteers being there.</li> <li>■ A. reported that she encouraged the people she worked with to be more</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
			<p>honest and open with each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ According to the interviewed head and former head of the youth centre, the EVS volunteers have allowed the workers to significantly improve their language skills, as well as to discover more about other cultures.</li> </ul>
	<b>Internationalisation of the organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More and new international contacts and partnerships</li> <li>■ Motivation to organise more EVS projects</li> <li>■ Transfer of know-how and good practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A. has kept in contact with the sending organisation and described how the organisation was happy that she did a good job, and that they now also have a good connection with the host organisation.</li> <li>■ The EVS host organisation would like to start taking on one more volunteer in the future in order for the local school to also benefit from them - <i>'we have one private school in Kohila and one high school, so we are trying to take on one more volunteer in order to help in the schools'</i>.</li> <li>■ A. mentioned that some workers from the EVS host organisation are interested in finding out more about EVS, maybe through more official meetings / training organised by National Agencies.</li> </ul>
<b>L O C A L  C O M M U N I T Y</b>	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The curriculum coordinator from the Kohila Kindergarten reported that, through EVS volunteers, members of the local community get the opportunity to learn other languages from the volunteers, as well as getting to know more about other cultures and countries.</li> <li>■ According to the curriculum coordinator from the Kohila Kindergarten, the EVS volunteers have made members of the local community more open minded and encouraged the children to feel comfortable and open with people from different countries.</li> <li>■ The interviewed head and former head of the youth centre reported that the EVS volunteers had a positive impact on the local community by teaching their skills to others. For example, a variety of EVS volunteers gave language lessons to the community.</li> <li>■ An example was given by the curriculum coordinator of a previous EVS volunteer from France, who provided French</li> </ul>



Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
			<p>language lessons to the local community. Nobody in Kohila previously spoke French, so this was a significant positive impact of EVS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In addition, it was reported by the curriculum coordinator that through interacting with EVS volunteers, members of the local community got to know about different cultures which they may not have otherwise been aware of.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Community cohesion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness of volunteering and EVS</li> <li>■ Enriching the cultural diversity of the hosting communities</li> <li>■ Increasing interest of local community in multilingualism and multiculturalism</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ According to the curriculum coordinator from the Kohila Kindergarten, the children from the Kohila Kindergarten now expect the EVS volunteers to arrive every year and this is no longer something new to them.</li> <li>■ According to the interviewed head and former head of the youth centre, more and more people have been coming to the youth centre as a result of the EVS volunteers being there.</li> <li>■ According to the curriculum coordinator from the Kohila Kindergarten, the volunteers are very popular and are always welcomed to different events in the community. The main positive effect was reported to be that members of the local community also get the opportunity to learn other languages from the volunteers, as well as getting to know more about other cultures and countries. Additionally, the EVS volunteers have made members of the local community more open minded and encouraged the children to feel comfortable and open with people from different countries.</li> <li>■ According to the interviewed head and former head of the youth centre, other organisations under the government are now aware that the Kohila Open Youth Centre hosts volunteers, so they are interested in having the volunteers visit them too.</li> </ul>

## Impact of EVS in Lahti, Finland

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** Youth Services at the City of Lahti (*Lahden kaupungin nuorisopalvelut*)
- **Size of organisation:** The City of Lahti employs 6,000+ staff out of which around 80-90 work in the youth department. The youth department has 20-40 regular local volunteers and they host 3-10 short and long-term EVS volunteers a year.
- **Location:** Lahti is one of the largest cities in Finland with 120,000 inhabitants. It is situated around 100km from the capital, Helsinki. The rate of unemployment at 17.6% in the Lahti region is 3.7 percentage points above the national average of 13.9%<sup>1</sup>.
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 2007
- **The organisation is accredited for:** Receiving and sending volunteers, coordinating EVS volunteers
- **Volunteering sector:** Youth, social exclusion
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** Youth work, youth leisure time activities, prevention of social exclusion among young people
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** Young people, especially young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** Yes, including young people with physical and mental disabilities and young people from vulnerable backgrounds
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** Broad international contacts for example through exchanges organised through Youth in Action and twin town (*ystävyyyskaupunki*) programmes with cities in other countries.
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** Youth clubs (*nuorisotilat*), youth workshops (*nuorten työpajat*), one-stop-shop for service point for young people (*Ohjaamo*) and small local youth NGOs.

### Background of EVS at the Youth Services at the City of Lahti

The Youth team at the City of Lahti (*Lahden kaupungin nuorisopalvelut*) is a team of 80-90 frontline youth workers, advisors and managers working in the municipality of Lahti. The municipality is a large local authority with a total of 6,000+ staff serving some 120,000 inhabitants in and around the city. The youth team has 20-40 regular, local volunteers and they host up to 3-10 short- and long-term EVS volunteers each year. The youth team has three main tasks: 1) to organise and facilitate leisure time activities for local youth, 2) support young people with their transition from education/training to employment, and 3) importantly, support NEETs and other inactive and vulnerable youth so as to prevent social exclusion.

The youth team got involved in EVS in 2007 after hearing about it from the National Agency. The motivation to get involved stemmed from an interest to provide young people in the area an opportunity of a volunteering experience abroad and an opportunity for local youth to 'mix in' with young people from other countries. In other words, the impetus did *not* originate from a specific or tangible 'need' per se, such as staff shortage, but the inspiration came

<sup>1</sup> The unemployment rate based on the share of 18-64 year-old unemployed from those in employment. Source: Tilastokeskus.

from a wish to expand opportunities for inter-cultural dialogue and thereby enrich the lives of local youth and those from other countries interested in volunteering in Finland.

The main 'task' of EVS volunteers is to interact with young people who participate in activities organised or facilitated by the youth team. EVS volunteers do not 'replace' any youth workers. This means that they are not expected to take the role of youth workers or coordinators who are trained and qualified professionals employed by the municipality. Instead, they are there to join in with other young people in the activities they do and help with the running of the various projects and activities they are involved in. As an example, many EVS volunteers are based in one of the many 'youth workshops' run by the municipality with local partners. Youth workshops (*nuorten työpajat*) are a specialist service supporting NEETs and other young people who are at-risk of social exclusion. They provide supported placements where young people learn practical skills, with each workshop having a different vocational focus (such as media, environment, etc.), and they receive group and individual coaching during their time at the workshop. The volunteers take part in all the same projects and activities than the native beneficiaries and they are encouraged to interact with the local participants and if / when appropriate, to initiate their own activities and projects with them. For example, at a media workshop EVS volunteers take part in the music and theatre productions by helping with choreography, production, organisation and clearing up – whatever they feel comfortable with helping and what is needed. At a drama workshops EVS volunteers have helped with their on-going 'European Youth' project. At an environmental workshop, the short-term EVS volunteers have a 'hands-on' role and they help with the range of projects they have on-going, such as building nature trails. Only rarely EVS volunteers carry out administrative tasks, mainly as a result of the language barrier. In some occasions EVS volunteers have helped with translations, for example from English to Swedish.

A typical EVS volunteer hosted by the youth team is a female volunteer from Europe. Initially they hosted younger volunteers, young people around 20 years of age, but now the focus has moved onto their 'older' peers, those aged 25+ who are looking for an opportunity try out or practice their vocational skills within related fields, such as teaching or youth work. The team regularly hosts volunteers with fewer opportunities mainly as part of inclusion projects they are involved in. These have included young people with disabilities and young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Also, it was pointed out that several volunteers have arrived with undiagnosed health problems, including depression.

## **Impact on volunteers**

### ***Perspective of an EVS alumni***

D. is a 28-year-old business owner from Latvia. She did a nine month EVS at the youth team of the Lahti municipality in 2008/2009 when she was a twenty-year old young woman who had never travelled abroad. At the time of her EVS, D. was a high school graduate, who was taking a gap year after finishing her first year of university studies. D. described herself as a very shy, introvert person who decided to pursue EVS because she was interested in spending some time abroad and had received a great endorsement about EVS from a former EVS volunteer who had come to share her story at her old school. She knew she wanted do a placement abroad and she saw EVS as a supported, safe choice. She also saw EVS as a 'transparent' option in that she knew what would be expected of her at her host destination as the advertisement was very clear. D. also described EVS as a 'competitive' programme in that 20 others applied for the same post. This meant that being successful at getting this post was already a boost for her self-esteem.

D. had experience of volunteering in her home town during events for children with special needs. She does not see herself as a disadvantaged youth, although she comes from a poorer country than her host country is. She sees herself as someone who is '*just normal, not privileged, but not lacking opportunities either*'.

The main task of D. as an EVS volunteer was to take part in the activities of the various youth clubs run by the municipality of Lahti. She was there to spend time with the young people, talk to them, listen to their stories and concerns and build a relationship with them. Building these relationships was particularly hard in the beginning when she still struggled to express herself in English and the local youth felt the same: they were shy, not used to speaking in English and very concerned about making grammatical mistakes. She started to do activities with them which did not require advanced language skills, like playing cards, doing handicrafts and participating in group activities *'as one of them, not as a youth worker'*. Eventually she started to support the youth workers in more concrete ways by helping to run different activities, teaching them salsa, tidying up after club events and activities, etc.

There are three main changes that D. has experienced as a result of EVS participation. The first and the most fundamental impact concerns the impact of EVS on her personal and social development. She called the EVS experience as *'completely transformative'* and *'as a major turning point in my life'*. In her own words, the EVS helped her to transform from a shy, introvert young girl who lacked confidence to a confident, outgoing and *'chatty'* person who is much more aware of her own capabilities. Not only surviving but *'blossoming'* in another country, culture and context made her much more aware of her own skills. It also *'forced'* her to become more socially confident, especially as her *'volunteering work'* involved mixing up with local youth, many of whom were even shyer to communicate in English. She learned various *'ice-breaking'* tricks – ways to start up a conversation with people from all sorts of backgrounds and English language abilities.

The friends she made during EVS have had a big impact in her life. She formed lifelong friendships with the two other EVS volunteers who she shared her flat with in Lahti. Even though the three came from completely different backgrounds and countries, the friendship has lasted and they still meet up on regular basis, even though it has been nearly a decade from their time together in Finland and even if they come from different countries around Europe. In fact, they still meet up on regular basis.

D. has also become more resourceful. She knows where and how to go and ask for help, she knows how to find other opportunities and now she has also the confidence to pursue those opportunities.

The second significant impact has been the impact on the sense of belonging to the EU and interest and confidence to move to study, work and live in other countries. D. recognises that moving to live in another country is challenging and a huge learning experience, but she embraced it and consequently has lived abroad on two different occasions since the EVS: once as an au-pair in Spain and once as an Erasmus exchange student in Spain. It was the EVS mobility that made her realise that she is able to *'cope'* in another country, and to learn new and different local cultures, traditions and practicalities.

Third, EVS helped her with her career especially in terms of available job opportunities. This is because she learned to speak English fluently and has also learned other languages (mainly Spanish) as a result of the periods she did abroad after her EVS. The language skills, together with her relevant study background in culture management, helped her to secure a good job at a Museum of Foreign Art in Latvia. She followed this career for four years until she decided to set up her own small handicraft company producing wall art.

D. felt that her EVS experience *'simply couldn't have been any better or more organised'*. She praised her hosts who she described as *'organised and supportive from day one'*. Someone was waiting for her at the airport when she arrived, drove her to her flat, took her shopping for food and essentials such as bus passes and telephone cards, showed her around the town and took her to register with a doctor. She was most impressed with the mentoring arrangement. Each EVS volunteer was assigned a *'work coordinator'* and a separate *'mentor'* to ensure that every volunteer had someone to talk to at all times, even if there was a personal disagreement or a problem with the *'work coordinator'* (which did not happen in her

case). D. explained that *'my mentor was very open-minded and she did a great job. She was always there for me, even though now in hindsight I'm not sure how she had the time for it. I could talk about anything, even when I was homesick'*. She recommended this arrangement for all other EVS projects.

Finally, D. made a point about EVS and other volunteering programmes that involve placement abroad as being much more challenging but at the same time more rewarding than voluntary opportunities in one's home country. This is because everything is more of a challenge when you are abroad. Foreign volunteers do not only need to learn the tasks they are expected to do, but they are also expected to learn and understand the culture, traditions, ways of working, ways of thinking and the language. Therefore, she feels that EVS is associated with a greater risk than volunteering opportunities in one's home country but also the potential for rewards is much greater. D. explained that *'thinking outside the box is an essential skill for any volunteer in a foreign country'*.

### **Perspective of EVS receiving / sending organisation**

The interviewed EVS volunteer mentors and coordinators (looking after host volunteers but also responsible for sending volunteers abroad) explained that most EVS volunteers are motivated to go on an EVS mobility by a desire to travel, an opportunity to learn about another country, a wish to improve English and / or a desire to learn about other cultures. At the same time they pointed out that they are receiving a growing share of applications from young people who want to do EVS to improve their career prospects as a result of a poor employment situation in their home country (and thereby needing to gain some practical experience) or as a result of wanting to work with young people so as to determine whether such career might be of interest and worth pursuing through further studies.

The staff at the organisation feel that EVS experience has the greatest impact on the social and personal development of the volunteers. They said that the positive impact on the self-esteem is the most visible one and appears to apply to all volunteers regardless of age, background, destination or the length of their EVS mobility. This is because the volunteers have to adapt to a new environment and quickly become used to situations that are outside their comfort zone. When they learn that they are capable of 'surviving' in a completely foreign environment, their confidence grows. This means that they become *'braver self-starters with more of an "I can do it" attitude'*. They also learn to express their opinions and become more familiar and confident with their own viewpoints.

Another 'social impact' is the trust the young volunteers build on people during their placements. They learn that they can go to another country and find people who are willing to help, support and look after them. They also really value the friendships and mentoring relationships they build during their time. Many friendships formed between EVS volunteers are long-lasting friendships and the staff at the organisation are fully aware that the volunteers stay in touch with one and another for years. Many volunteers also form friendships with the youth they mentor during their time at youth clubs and many are in regular contact with staff from the organisation too.

The second most obvious impact is an improvement on the language skills of volunteers. EVS volunteers become more fluent and confident English speakers and usually also learn at least the basics of the host country language. The interviewees pointed out that many arrive with a poor command of English, but they quickly improve when the main working language or the main language of communication at the host organisation is English. A group living arrangement with other EVS volunteers also help with the language learning and also help to foster friendships with other like-minded young people.

Volunteers gain a lot from EVS in terms of intercultural awareness. Living in an intercultural environment makes the volunteers more aware of their own culture and perceptions of others, according to the interviewed volunteer mentors. Many are also *'bitten by the travelling bug'*, meaning that become more confident and determined to travel in Europe,



including non-mainstream destinations which they may not have considered before EVS and including study and work periods. Before EVS, it did not even cross many volunteers' mind to go and live abroad, feeling like such opportunities are only for *'more successful young people'*, explained one EVS volunteer coordinator. Many also return from their EVS placement as more tolerant of *'different kinds of people from different countries'*.

During EVS, volunteers develop a wide array of professional skills. Depending on their project and tasks, volunteers develop skills in planning and managing time and activities. They also have an opportunity improve skills and practices around professional conduct and learnt to become more autonomous.

The employment outcomes of participants are not followed on a systematic manner, but the staff are aware of many NEETs returning from their placements who have re-discovered an interest in finding a job. Many EVS alumni have decided to pursue youth work or pedagogical studies as a result of the EVS experience confirming their interest in work in this field. One of the interviewees gave an example of a young boy from Finland who met one EVS volunteer at a youth club, and this stimulated him to consider spending a period of time abroad too. This boy was an introvert, shy boy who had never travelled abroad and was not sure what to do with his life as he was unemployed and not interested in studying. The youth workers and the PES counsellors encouraged him to consider a short (two month) placement abroad through EVS which he decided to go ahead with. *'He came back from EVS as a changed man'*, explained one of the interviewees. He came back: *'standing taller, more confident... his English had improved a lot. He had gotten to know lots of people who were different from the people he spent time with at home'*. The EVS experience had such a big impact on him that he decided to pursue employment and found a supported employment placement as an assistant at one of the youth workshops.

The interviewees were of the opinion that generally speaking young people with fewer opportunities have more to gain from the EVS, but overall the extent of the learning really depends on the motivation, adaptability and drive of each and every volunteer. They also reported slight differences on the impacts on volunteers depending on their age. They suggested that younger volunteers, those up to the age of 23-25, *'grow as people'* and *'mature'* during EVS. Specifically, they learn to manage their lives, such as learning to budget and manage finances, learning to prepare food, and learning to interact with new and different people. Previously they might have relied on parents for arranging travel but they have learned to be more autonomous and independent as a result of EVS. Older volunteers, those in the second half of twenties gain more significant career and occupational related learning – they learn more about what they enjoy doing for living, what they are good at and what they do not like as much. They tend to finish their EVS with more aware of their career aspirations.

The organisation does not struggle to recruit potential volunteers. Instead they always have more applicants than places and this applies to both local young people wanting to pursue short- and long-term placements abroad and young people from abroad applying to one of their own positions. One of the main reasons for this is the multi-disciplinary approach to youth work in Lahti. Lahti has a long history of all stakeholders involved in the lives of young people working together, in a partnership, to reduce social exclusion among young people and in ensuring that all local youth move from compulsory education to further education, training or employment. The primary example of this is the fact that young people are served from a one-stop-shop called *Ohjaamo* where young people have all the advice and guidance services they may need under one roof: PES (Public Employment Service) counsellors, social workers, youth workers and career guidance services. In practical terms this also means that all the key stakeholders are aware of the names and backgrounds of each NEET in the area and they try to propose different opportunities for them – and one of these options is EVS. The local PES in Lahti actively promotes EVS as one of the transitional measures for disadvantaged youth who are *'lost'*, unmotivated or unsure about what to do next. This is rather rare in that a) this level of co-operation, and b) recognition of EVS by the local PES is

not systematic across the country. But this set-up means that youth workers, PES counsellors and others in touch with NEETs are promoting EVS as potential opportunity on an on-going and systematic basis. EVS is also advertised through social media, websites, career guidance sites, schools, VET institutions and universities.

The main factors hindering the impact of the EVS experience on individual volunteers are unpreparedness of volunteers to take on the challenge of EVS and undiagnosed mental health problems. In some cases the application period has been long and thereby slightly off putting for some candidates but this is not deemed as a serious problem.

To maximise the impact of EVS on volunteers, the staff at the organisation encourage a greater investment in 'post-EVS' training which would teach the volunteers how they can use the skills and experiences they have gained during their EVS when they return home, and how they can promote EVS in their home community. They also encourage a review of the 'distance calculator' as it does not cover the travel costs to all destinations in full, thereby restricting the choices of potential volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### **Impact on EVS organisations**

This sub-section presents both the perspective of volunteers as well as of the receiving organisation in relation to the impact of EVS at the organisational level.

#### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving & sending organisation***

Interestingly, in this particularly case the most important organisational impact on the receiving organisation is not an ability to run an increased service (as in many other cases). This is because EVS volunteers working within the youth service do not replace paid staff, who in this case are qualified / trained youth workers. Instead EVS volunteers are in auxiliary roles, which are more appropriate for volunteers who do not speak the host country language. EVS volunteers are encouraged to socialise with and support the young people they are working with, support the staff with the running of the services and help by coming up with new ideas that can improve the existing services.

The staff at the host organisation suggest that they benefit from the new ideas that the volunteers bring to the organisation. The impact of each volunteer is different. This type of organisational impact depends on the background, skills and interests of volunteers. Some volunteers are artistically talented so they have been encouraged to pursue these talents and have been given opportunities to prepare their own exhibitions and act as photographers at events, for example. Others are good at establishing relationships with the local youth and do a brilliant job at engaging the beneficiaries, forming relationships with them and helping them by listening and through encouragement. Others are more confident and able to put forward new ideas for activities with young people, like dance and drama classes.

The EVS volunteers also bring a fresh set of values and ways of thinking which can challenge – in a positive way – the thinking of existing staff who may have been doing the job for a long time in a certain way.

The management of the EVS scheme in terms of hosting, sending and coordinating volunteers yields various management and partnership working skills for the staff involved. The management of the scheme and individual volunteers requires coordination, negotiations and discussions with partner organisations and management of budget and application processes.

Participating in the EVS programme has also had an impact on the organisational culture. The staff have become more open-minded through volunteers they have hosted. The staff have also been able to improve their English language skills; they have become more confident and fluent in English and less critical of themselves when speaking it.

The main problems stem from difficulties on the part of volunteers to adapt to a life in a new country where they cannot speak their own language and in other cases from difficulties in adapting to the local form of youth work, which is very different from the tradition role of 'teaching'. The concept of youth work in youth clubs is very different from the concept of traditional teaching, with the former focusing on creating trusting relationships with young people and the latter is more about formal teaching from the 'front of the class'. The EVS volunteers are brought into interact with and support the local youth rather than to teach them in a structured manner.

Friendships between volunteers and staff are also important to the organisation with staff still keeping in contact with volunteers from previous years. The effects are the strongest on the staff members who are responsible for receiving and mentoring EVS volunteers.

Undoubtedly, the staff find the running of EVS projects hard work, which needs to be fitted around their full-time jobs. This is the main limitation of the scheme. The organisational impacts could be maximised through earmarking of EVS funds for coordination so as to allow more local youth organisation to get involved and allow larger organisations to take a bigger role in coordinating larger numbers of EVS volunteers. The staff at the interviewed organisation would like to take a bigger role in this regard, but this is challenging as this has to be done alongside their full-time roles. They also highlighted the significant resources that are required to host young people with fewer opportunities, especially those who require support not only during their volunteering hours but also during free time. The organisation is committed to continuing with the scheme, although the local new youth strategy emphasises sending rather than hosting of volunteers.

### ***Perspective of an EVS alumni***

*'I'd like to think that we have a positive impact on our hosts',* explained the interviewed EVS alumni, D. Four different types of organisational impact are most evident.

First, D. felt that regular communication with volunteers has helped to improve English language skills of the staff at the organisation. She felt that the staff knew English very well even before her arrival but regular communication in English has helped with the fluency and pronunciation in particular.

An improvement in staff's intercultural understanding is another concrete example of the impact of EVS on the host organisation. D. explained that most staff had a limited knowledge of her home country, Latvia, so she got to introduce the country to her colleagues and address some myths.

Third, D. feels like she has formed great friendships with staff at the organisation. She remains in regular contact with a couple of staff members.

Finally, D. also felt that volunteers bring new ideas to their host organisations. In her case this included new activities for the youth who attended one of the youth clubs. In the beginning D. was struggling to express herself in English – and the participating youth felt even more conscious when trying to speak in English – so she decided to introduce Salsa classes as it allowed her to communicate through music and body, rather than words. It helped to *'break the ice'*.

### **Impact at the local community level**

This sub-section presents both the perspective of volunteers and of the organisation in relation to the impact of EVS at the community level.

#### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

The representatives of the hosting organisation indicated two local community groups who benefit the most from the work of EVS volunteers: the direct beneficiaries and the wider community of youth clubs and workshops.



First and foremost, the contact with international volunteers has a deep impact on many local youth who attend youth clubs and workshops where the EVS volunteers help out and mentor young people. Many beneficiaries of these services are young people who are in cross-roads in their lives and do not know what to do next or are facing personal, family or study / career related difficulties. Many do not travel and have insular lifestyles where they are unlikely to come across people from other countries. These young people can really benefit from the interactions with volunteers from other cultures as they are less likely to travel and make use of the various EU mobility opportunities than many of their peers who are pursuing their studies or careers. They find it *'cool to meet other young people from countries that they don't know much about'*, explained one volunteer. The EVS volunteers create an international and intercultural environment in the youth clubs and workshops, which motivates local youth to go on EVS mobility themselves. The interaction with foreign volunteers also motivates them to speak more English – or to discover that their English is better than they expected it to be.

Secondly, EVS volunteers have an impact on the wider your club and workshop community, including teachers, youth workers and local volunteers. They help to make these communities more international, they bring new ideas for activities and they support the staff and local volunteers with the running of the various activities.

The impact on the wider community within the city of Lahti is more limited and ad hoc, restricted to those who the volunteers have come in contact with in their personal time. Many international volunteers spend their personal time with fellow volunteers.

A key factor to maximising the impact of EVS volunteers on local youth is the length of the scheme. The staff at the host organisation highlighted the importance of having a combination of short- and long-term placements. In their view short-term placements are particularly valuable for young people with fewer opportunities as it gives them an opportunity of a period abroad that they may not have been able to consider otherwise. The long-term EVS placements are particularly important for the beneficiaries that the volunteers work with. This is because *'9-12 months is a long enough period to enable even the shyest, most introverted young people to find an opportunity to strike a conversation with the volunteers. They may not do this if the volunteer is there only for a month or two.'*

### **Perspective of an EVS alumni**

D. believes that the presence of EVS volunteers in youth centres improves intercultural knowledge and understanding among both staff and beneficiaries. Through EVS volunteers both groups learn about other countries and cultures: D. explained that she spoke in length about traditions, manners and also lighter subjects like the popular culture in Latvia. She told them about the food they eat in Latvia, about music they listen to and the traditions that are followed in her home country. She felt that the locals had a great interest in this as she was usually the first Latvian they had met.

D. felt that their status as volunteers and 'peers' of young people – as opposed to 'superiors' – allows the beneficiaries to open up to them and tell their stories. She remembers one girl in particular – this girl was a 13 year old girl whose parents were going through divorce. She was able to relate to the girl as her parents had divorced when she was the same age. She was able to listen, understand, share her story and give her tips about coping mechanisms.

In broader terms, the presence of EVS volunteers has a positive impact on their language skills, especially spoken English and confidence to use the language – rather than being afraid of speaking in fear of making a mistake.

D. made an impact on the wider migrant community in Lahti. She spent a lot of time at a multi-cultural centre Multi-Kulti where she got to know many other migrants living in Lahti. She felt that she could have made an even bigger impact if she was a bit older and more confident when she did her EVS, although she does not regret pursuing it as a 20 year old

girl. Otherwise, she found it difficult to make friends with locals who were not involved in the activities of the youth clubs or the multi-cultural centre.

To maximise the impact of EVS on local beneficiaries, she recommends more 'mouth-to-mouth' marketing of EVS: recruitment of EVS promoters from EVS alumni who go from school to school to tell about their EVS experiences. In her opinion, social media should be only one of many marketing strategies.

#### Interviews conducted

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Job title	Date of interview
EVS alumni	Not affiliated	Young person in LV	6 February 2017
EVS hosting organisation	City of Lahti	Mentor	6 February 2017
EVS hosting organisation	City of Lahti, youth services	Youth services coordinator	23 January 2017
EVS hosting organisation	City of Lahti, youth services	Youth services coordinator	2 February 2017
Local community	Lahti Job Centre	Youth employment advisor	25 January 2017

#### Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in Lahti

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
<b>I M P A C T  O N  T H E  I N D I V I D U A L</b>	<b>Personal and social development</b>	Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem	✓
		Broadened horizons	✓
		Increase in autonomy, independence	✓
		Learning about oneself (self-discovery)	✓
		More friends and contacts from other countries	✓
		Increase in cultural capital	
	<b>Learning and competence development</b>	Increase in all 8 key competences (foreign language skills, learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, etc.)	
		Acquired new skills (i.e. how to plan finances)	
		Increase in awareness and knowledge of non-formal learning	
		Plans to engage in further education	
<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	Developed professional skills and attitudes, matching employers' demands		
	Acquired experience and contacts for work		
		Increased chances to find a job	✓

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
<b>V O L U N T E E R</b>		Obtaining a job by using EVS experience Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals	✓ ✓
	<b>Increased participation in civic and political life</b>	Increase in participation in voluntary activities Increase in voter participation Increased participation in civic / political life Better prepared to participate actively Increase in participation in similar youth projects	
	<b>Stronger sense of belonging to the EU</b>	More aware of common European values Higher interest in European topics Improved image of the EU Feeling more European than before	
	<b>Further mobility</b>	Improved readiness to work / study/ live abroad Plans to move abroad for work / study / live Increased confidence to travel to other countries	
	<b>Increased intercultural learning and dialogue</b>	Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures) Better understanding of other cultures More receptivity towards multiculturalism More tolerance and respect for other cultures Improved intercultural dialogue	
	<b>Improved social inclusion and solidarity</b>	Higher positive values (tolerance, solidarity) Increase in social awareness Awareness of global issues Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society Increased commitment to work against discrimination, racism and intolerance	
<b>O R G A N I S A T I</b>	<b>Organisational development</b>	More human resources support for NGOs Increase in competence of youth workers (project management, fund-raising etc.) New ideas, tools and methods of working with young people and with non-formal learning Increased cultural diversity in NGO Increase in tolerance and openness of staff More projects on inclusion of youth with	

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
O N		fewer opportunities Increased promotion of the participation of young people in organisation Enhanced image and reputation	
	<b>Internationalisation of the organisation</b>	More and new international contacts and partnerships More international projects Motivation to organise more EVS projects Higher involvement in European activities Transfer of know-how and good practice Increased attention to including an international dimension in youth work	✓ ✓ ✓
L O C A L  C O M M U N I T Y	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	Increased awareness about volunteering Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue Fostering learning mobility of other youth Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be available	✓ ✓ ✓
	<b>Community cohesion</b>	Increased awareness of volunteering and EVS Increased awareness of the European Union Increased awareness of the concerns and interests of young people in society Enriching the cultural diversity of the hosting communities Increasing interest of local community in multilingualism and multiculturalism Overcoming stereotypes and prejudices Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue Stronger civil society	

## Impact of EVS in Roubaix, France

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** ADICE (Association for the Development of Citizen and European Initiatives)
- **Size of organisation:** 10 full-time staff
- **Location:** Roubaix is the city with the youngest population in France. It is located at the border with Belgium. It is characterised by a large population with migrant background (more than 50%, most from North Africa), low levels of education and high levels of unemployment and poverty.
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 2001
- **The organisation is accredited for:** Since it began its involvement in EVS, ADICE took all roles – sending, receiving and coordinating. However, ADICE sends much more volunteers abroad (200 per year) than hosting or coordinating in the home community (3-4 per year).
- **Volunteering sector:** youth sector with a focus on social inclusion of vulnerable young people
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** EU citizenship, EU awareness and democracy, education through sport and outdoor activities
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** disadvantaged young people, including NEETs, unemployed, un- or low-qualified, from migrant backgrounds, from low socio-economic conditions
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** Yes, ADICE focuses all their EVS projects – both sending and receiving – on the target group of youth with fewer opportunities
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** ADICE has a broad network of European and international partners with whom it cooperates in EVS as well as in other mobility programmes
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** local authority (*Pole Jeunesse*) and local partners from civil society play a key role in recruiting young people that ADICE sends on EVS.

### Background of EVS in ADICE

ADICE is a non-profit association working to combat discrimination and promote equal opportunity among disadvantaged youth. It was founded in 1999 by a former participant in the EVS pilot action whose motivation was to make transnational mobility accessible and possible for all young people and in particular for the disadvantaged. ADICE has been active in EVS projects since 2001 and organised to date more than 350 projects for sending volunteers abroad (short-term and long-term EVS) and coordinated the hosting of more than 80 volunteers. In addition to EVS, ADICE is involved in other EU mobility programmes (youth exchanges, Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus for young entrepreneurs, the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps), in the French civic service volunteering scheme and the 'Young ambassadors' programme between the US and France<sup>2</sup>.

For ADICE, EVS is more than just a volunteer placement scheme. It is a tool to build capacity of civil society organisations to achieve positive results for young people through mobility. ADICE considers that mobility can be a path towards employment, integration and social cohesion. ADICE uses EVS projects to prepare young people for employment (developing

<sup>2</sup> [http://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisation/14001486361\\_en](http://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisation/14001486361_en)

employability), for education (discovering new opportunities), for adulthood (developing autonomy) and for life as responsible citizens (engaging in civil society). To implement its vision, ADICE works in a network with the city council and other local youth structures under the umbrella of local youth policy aimed at supporting youth with their life project<sup>3</sup>. ADICE takes the role to inform and support youth to access international mobility. The local structures identify those in need of mobility opportunity and refer them to ADICE. ADICE organises sessions to inform youth about the mobility opportunities available to them, including EVS. Each year, about 2,000 young people take part in information sessions, from whom 300 are prepared to go on mobility and 200 are placed in EVS abroad<sup>4</sup>.

A specific feature of the EVS projects run by ADICE is the logic of '*one volunteer, one project*' which means that ADICE seeks to define a meaningful project for each volunteer<sup>5</sup>. This involves a focused matching of the volunteer's needs and expectations with the project and host organisation, and quality support in preparing them for mobility and accompanying them during and after EVS.

ADICE aims EVS projects at young people with fewer opportunities because it believes that it is for this target group that EVS can be most useful to improve their lives. In turn, this helps ADICE prove the impact of its actions and justify the financing it gets from local, regional and national level.

The typical volunteers that ADICE involve in EVS are aged 20-26, come from low-income families, have migrant background, live in disadvantaged areas (outside urban area) and have never been abroad. Most face discrimination, (long-term) unemployment, have low qualifications and limited social networks, and lack self-confidence and autonomy. About 80% are not in education, employment or training (NEET), who are not catered for by any other organisation<sup>6</sup>.

## Impact on volunteers

### ***Perspective of ex-EVS volunteer from France doing EVS in Turkey in August 2014 – March 2015***

J. is a French young woman with a migrant background (her parents are Algerian). At the age of 23, she went on EVS to Turkey for six months. She had an atypical EVS as she first spent two months in Gaziantep, a city near the border with Syria, but due to the security situation she had to return to France, only to continue her last three months of EVS in Canakkale, a city in the north of Turkey.

As a passionate graduate in communications, J. was motivated to take part in a transnational mobility to meet people from other countries. At first she was interested in going on Erasmus but her economic situation did not allow it; she then found a more feasible option for mobility through EVS.

EVS was the first transnational mobility experience for J., but not her first volunteering experience. Before EVS, J. undertook a six-month full-time civic service<sup>7</sup> in Lille, a city nearby her home town. It was at one of the events organised during her civic service that she heard about EVS during a presentation given by the organisation ADICE, which later became her EVS sending organisation.

During her EVS, J. was involved in a variety of projects and local activities run by the receiving organisations in both Gaziantep and Canakkale. She taught English to Afghan and Syrian refugee children, carried out activities with elderly in a senior care centre, translated

<sup>3</sup> The logic is that of complementarity of local structures. *Source*: Interview with local authority, 16 September 2016.

<sup>4</sup> ADICE runs one of the 3 Europe Direct centres in the region. Interview with ADICE Director, 16 September 2016

<sup>5</sup> Interview with the EVS project manager at ADICE, 16 September 2016

<sup>6</sup> Interview with the Director of ADICE, 16 September 2016

<sup>7</sup> Service civique is the national volunteering scheme in France.

at an international basketball event in Istanbul, cleaned a forest and assisted in preparing a grant application for an EU youth project. During her six-month mobility, she worked with different target groups, from young people, school pupils and refugee children to elderly, older women and people with disabilities.

J. reported that she learned and developed a lot during her EVS. Before the EVS, she was living with her parents. During the mobility abroad, she gained autonomy by managing her own finances and she learned to live with other people by sharing the flat with volunteers from different countries. As a consequence, when she returned from EVS, she moved to live on her own, sharing a flat with friends.

The work experience and language skills that J. gained during EVS enabled her to get a first job. *'Before EVS, I was not confident about my English, but now I am. This changed my life because when I returned from EVS, I found a job at Booking.com where English was a requirement. Without having gone on EVS, I am sure that I would not have been able to do an interview in English and work in English.'* In addition to the language skills, the experience of working in international teams 'with people from everywhere' was another outcome of EVS that helped J. obtain a first job.

J. also reported that EVS helped her discover the path she wants to follow professionally: *'When I returned from EVS, I realised that what I want to do is to work in an association that allows me to do something meaningful for young people...I then decided to leave my job at booking.com and to go work for AFEV, the association where I had previously done my civic service'. In the future, I plan to develop a youth project with my hosting organisation in Turkey'.*

During EVS, J. also made many new friends from different European countries, from among EVS volunteer peers as well as local people. She is still in contact with many of the friends she made during EVS, some of whom she will meet again during 'an EVS reunion' in Italy.

What J. values the most from the EVS experience is the direct contact with local people in Turkey. She appreciates the chance to learn the local language and work directly with local people as well as the need to learn to adapt to the host country and the local customs. EVS enabled J. to discover a different way of living and thinking: *'you understand that people live differently than in France, they don't have the same comforts than us, but they still live happily and are friendly to foreigners'.*

According to J., the success of her EVS is due to the support she received from the sending organisation, starting from the two-day pre-departure training course and continuing with the regular support during mobility, especially when needed to return and find another placement.

### ***Perspective of ex-EVS volunteer from France doing EVS in Sarajevo in 2012***

L. is a young French man coming from a family with low socio-economic conditions. He is certified in working with children through games and non-formal learning activities (known as 'animator' in France). At the age of 22, he went on EVS to Bosnia-Herzegovina for six months<sup>8</sup>. As a passionate sociologist, field in which he holds Bachelor and Master degrees, L. was interested to go abroad to discover different cultures. While in university, he went on Erasmus to Ireland. After finishing his Bachelor studies, L. wanted to take a gap year. He had heard from friends about the EVS projects promoted by ADICE; this organisation later helped him find his EVS.

L. had an atypical EVS experience since he was the only foreigner and young person in the small village of his placement and was the first ever EVS volunteer that the receiving organisation hosted. This meant that he got to be involved in all the different projects run by

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<sup>8</sup> The mobility was supposed to last 9 months, but he had to return earlier due to an injury in an accident in the mountains.



the organisation. At the beginning, due to the lack of local language skills, he did manual work of drying fruits and making jams to help farmers sell their products on the market. He later created a project with animation for children, involving team games and non-formal learning activities. However, his main project was to develop a tourism plan for the village, which included, among others, building a hostel.

L. reported that all tasks and activities he carried out during EVS helped to improve his professional skills. A concrete example is that he learned a new technical skill of how to develop tourism plans. L. also gained linguistic skills by learning to speak Bosnian from direct interactions with local farmers and children. He also made new contacts with EVS volunteers that he met during SALTO training courses, people that he is still in contact with.

L. is convinced that EVS influenced his professional life: *'Shortly after returning from EVS, I was proposed to work for two months as consultant to implement a childcare project in Bosnia. This opportunity was only possible because I was fluent in Bosnian and because my host association recommended me for the job.'*

Thanks to EVS, L. learned about how NGOs work. As a result, he discovered that what he wants to do in life is to work for a non-profit association because it is where he feels that he can do meaningful work for the benefit of many people. With this strong motivation, L. recently obtained a job at ADICE, the organisation that had sent him on EVS. According to L.: *'my job at ADICE is the best outcome from my EVS. I am in charge of managing the communication of the organisation, which includes promoting EVS to young people outside of the organisation [...] I lead some modules of the pre-departure training for the outgoing EVS volunteers [...] I got the job because I want to be an ambassador of EVS and help other young people to go abroad'*.

Participation in EVS also increased L.'s European awareness and a sense of responsibility. L. admits that he discovered his passion for Europe during his first mobility through Erasmus, but that he reflected more about its meaning and engaged more deeply to build his European awareness during EVS. This in turn made L. feel more responsible to fulfil his responsibility as an EU citizen: *'in EVS I knew that I was sent there by Europe to do something with and for other people from Europe, I felt more responsible than in Erasmus, like I had a debt toward Europe to represent EU in Bosnia'*.

The ex-EVS volunteer named two factors that ensured the success of his EVS. Firstly, the profile of the receiving organisation – with the breadth and depth of its missions to empower people in a small rural community divided by the Balkan war – corresponded to his interests. Secondly, what he valued the most from EVS were the SALTO training seminars organised on arrival and at midterm. He liked these seminars because of the space they offered to meet other EVS volunteers from countries in the region, which made it possible to share similar experiences and difficulties, and because of the structure they offered to have debates about the present and future of Europe. *'They helped me build European awareness and motivation to get more engaged with Europe'*.

### ***Perspective of ex-EVS volunteer from France doing EVS in Germany in October 2011 – June 2012***

M. is a French young woman holding upper-secondary level qualifications. She went on EVS to Germany for 9 months when she was 24. M. learned about EVS from a friend who is a former volunteer and motivated her to take part in the mobility. M. first did a short-term EVS for two weeks in Iceland and she liked the experience so much that she then decided to do a long-term EVS.

M. did her EVS in a Montessori school where she assisted young pupils (aged 4-7) in their learning process (i.e. in reading, mathematics etc.) but speaking to them only in French while they replied in German. She also taught French lessons to pupils aged 15-17.



What M. gained the most during EVS is autonomy. Being her first long period abroad, M. found EVS to be *'a first step to becoming an adult'*. At first, she found it difficult to adopt the routine of an autonomous person in a different country, for instance *'to take the bus and go to the supermarket as a German would do'*, but she admits that it became easier over time. Reflecting on her EVS experience, M. said: *'I learned that I can do everything without my mum, that I can be an adult and that I can do a lot of things that I haven't done before and talk to people that I haven't met before'*.

Thanks to EVS, M. improved her communication and interpersonal skills. If before EVS M. was a shy person who found it hard to speak to strangers, after EVS she is not only open to meeting new people, but what makes her genuinely happy is to speak to people from other countries.

During EVS, M. made new friends from among the French EVS volunteers hosted in the same school. She is still in contact with the friends she made during EVS whom she regularly visits albeit they now live in other European capitals. M. recalls having done numerous social activities with her friends during the EVS year, which she was not used to doing back home. According to M., friendship is the key to her successful EVS because *'without making friends there, you will feel alone and get depressed as did many EVS volunteers (who reported this at mid-term evaluation).'*

EVS also enabled M. to discover herself and to build her self-confidence. She says: *'I learned a lot about myself, now I know that I can do a lot of things alone. I can do everything that I want, I can find a job, I can go by myself on holidays, I am not afraid anymore.'*

Finally, the EVS experience meant intercultural learning for M. She admits that before EVS she had some preconceptions about living in Germany and about German people, but EVS made it possible for her to discover this country and culture that was new to her. After EVS, M. reports: *'Without EVS, I would have probably never travelled to and discovered Germany, but now I am ready to move to Germany if I am offered a job there'*.

After returning from EVS, M. went as *au pair* for one year to London, a move that was *'definitely'* influenced by her experience of mobility in EVS. She explains that EVS made her realise that she wants to work abroad because she feels happier and more open with people abroad. M. also reported that she travels more after EVS than she did beforehand because now she feels more comfortable traveling alone to other countries.

### **Perspective of EVS sending organisation**

According to research conducted by ADICE, EVS serves different purposes for different volunteers depending on their age or situation: a) a 'break' between studies and start of employment; b) a testing of their choice of professional orientation, or c) an alternative to their precarious situation, be it (long-term) unemployment or unsatisfactory work. According to the director of ADICE, the success of EVS lies in its flexibility enabling each individual, depending on their situation, to find through EVS an opportunity to take their lives a step further.

ADICE carried out two surveys among EVS participants, one for the 2011 European Year of Volunteering in cooperation with partners from Slovakia, Poland, Spain and France and the second one released in 2016. Both surveys found that between the departure and the return from EVS, the situation of the volunteers has changed for the better. For example, thanks to EVS participation, volunteers have a better capacity to access the labour market. The 2016 survey found that six months after their return from EVS, only 34% of participants were searching for a job compared to 78% before EVS as many found a permanent or fixed-term job. The Director of ADICE explains: *'the volunteers don't necessarily find employment easier than other young people, but they are better informed, they know what is possible for them and how to access it'*.

The surveys conducted by ADICE also found that, after EVS, most volunteers have a clearer idea about what they want to do in life. The 2011 survey results show that 44% of volunteers

changed their course of professional orientation on their return from EVS for reasons linked to the discovered new interests enabled by their mobility and the skills acquired through their project.

Participation in EVS also allows volunteers to develop skills needed in professional and social life. The highest gains, according to the survey ADICE conducted among former volunteers, relate to social and human skills (interpersonal communication, understanding of other cultures, adapting to new environments) and linguistic skills, but to a less extent technical skills (i.e. IT). Life skills are also developed, with eight in ten volunteers reporting that after EVS they can better manage stressful situations while six in ten feel they can better manage conflicts than before EVS.

According to the EVS project manager at ADICE, the biggest gain for all EVS volunteers is in self-confidence. Before EVS, at pre-departure training, they are shy to speak in public, for instance to present in front of others their expectations from EVS, but upon their return, they are at ease and enjoy giving public presentations like those at evaluation meetings. The project manager also reported that, upon their return from EVS, many volunteers commit themselves to promote volunteering and to continue being engaged in civil society organisations. Some EVS participants have continued as volunteers in their local organisations in the home community.

For young people with fewer opportunities, EVS is a chance to evade from their situation, open their horizons and discover new opportunities, and ultimately to gain ambitions to build their future in a positive way. It is common for the EVS project manager to hear volunteers saying upon their return from EVS: *'I did it, I didn't think that I will be able to survive abroad for six months, but now I know that I can do better and take up other opportunities'*. According to the EVS project manager, there are many cases of young people with fewer opportunities who first do short-term EVS during which they develop their autonomy and gain a sense of responsibility and are then motivated to go on long-term EVS.

ADICE staff reported concrete examples of positive destinations for ex-EVS volunteers. One of the volunteers from the first generation of EVS projects organised by ADICE is now working for the French National Agency. Another volunteer from Congo hosted at ADICE is now a UN representative. A former volunteer from a village in Australia that ADICE hosted is now a public policy consultant.

Most volunteers return from EVS with a stronger EU identity. The EVS project manager for ADICE explains: *'In EVS, volunteers from different countries live together, share a flat, and so they discover that they have common values and similar interests and that an EU programme is what brings them together [...] They develop a sense of belonging to an EVS community, a feeling of a shared identity as part of a big EVS family'*. According to the EVS project manager, the key factor that facilitates this impact is the common training that all volunteers attend at pre-departure, on arrival, mid-term and evaluation, which serve as a meeting point for a given generation of EVS-ers.

According to both interviewees from ADICE, young people with fewer opportunities gain more from EVS than other young people because they have a lower starting point in terms of lack of autonomy, low level of competences, limited networks and lack of experiences abroad. They can gain more from EVS than their peers but they can also face more difficulties; the success of their EVS depends a lot on the support and mentoring provided by the receiving organisation.

## Impact on EVS organisations

### ***Perspective of an organisation that is sending, receiving and coordinating volunteers in EVS***

For ADICE, EVS played a key role in building the organisation's capacity and its development. The ADICE Director explains: *'EVS is one part of our professional identity, it is in our genetic code. As soon as we founded the organisation, we started using EVS because it is a concrete way to realise our ambitions with a good support from the National Agency [...] We evolved together with EVS while we also adapted EVS with our own objectives and tools'*. A key factor that helped ADICE benefit from EVS for its development has been the strong support provided by the National Agency.

ADICE has also benefitted from EVS to build and enlarge its network of international partners. The director of the organisation reported that EVS has brought many new partners and contacts of organisations in other European countries as well as on other continents. Thanks to EVS, ADICE now has partners and projects in the Balkans, in South-East Europe, in Latin America, in North America and in Asia. ADICE uses the contacts it developed through EVS also to run projects in other mobility programmes, such as the French civic service and the EU Aid Volunteers.

EVS has also had a positive impact on the development of ADICE staff's skills and motivation. The EVS project manager at ADICE reports that she continuously learns a lot from EVS volunteers but finds it difficult to observe concrete changes because of *'being exposed to EVS volunteers on a daily basis'*. One concrete example is how the volunteers' feedback helped her improve the pre-departure training by adding some new topics and new activities. Meeting so many EVS volunteers, some of whom became her friends, motivates her to go on an EVS in the future.

### ***Perspective of EVS alumni***

Increase in staff's project management skills and specific technical skills are concrete examples reported by ex-EVS volunteers. For example, L. explained that since he was the first EVS volunteer that the organisation had hosted, this meant that the staff had to learn how to manage EVS volunteers and how to allocate tasks to the volunteers. Staff also gained from the knowledge and skills with the volunteer comes, i.e. how to develop tourism plans for the village, according to L.

Some ex-EVS volunteers believe that their presence made it possible for staff members of the receiving organisation to learn about and even experience a little of their (volunteers') home country and culture. For example, J. gave French language classes to her Turkish mentor; she also introduced staff to French food that they had not known before and made them aware of what French people think about different policies and how they openly discuss societal issues. However, all EVS alumni interviewed believe that they have learned more from the organisation than the organisation learned from them.

The contacts established with the volunteers they host enlarges the receiving organisation's network and can bring new partnerships. For example, a French ex-volunteer reported to be still in contact with the organisation that hosted her during EVS in Turkey and he/she is helping them in finding French participants for the EU youth exchanges they organise; the ex-volunteer also plans to develop a future youth exchange project in France in collaboration with the Turkish host organisation.

## Impact at local community level

### ***Perspective of the members of the local community***

Thanks to the presence of the volunteer, the host local community gets used to foreigners, other cultures, habits and different ways of thinking. A representative of the local authority

points that the presence of EVS volunteers gives locals the opportunity to improve their foreign language skills and to learn about other cultures. Furthermore, it raises the locals' interest in discovering new countries and cultures and thus motivates them to go abroad. The interaction between EVS volunteers and locals can lift existing prejudices on both sides, and even address racism and discrimination.

The presence of EVS volunteers in a community makes locals learn about youth policy as they better understand what youth policy can offer for young people. The representative of the youth department at the city council in Roubaix explains: *'Youth policy is often only visible in the media, but with the presence of EVS volunteers, it is more visible and locals learn about local youth policy'*.

The most visible impact of EVS on the local community in Roubaix is the increase in the number of young people willing to take part in EU mobility and in particular in EVS. This is the result of the efforts invested by ADICE to make the information about EVS visible and accessible for all young people. The interviewed representative of the local community exemplifies: *'Many young people do not know at first that this international mobility is possible for them free of charge. For example, we had a group of young people that went from Roubaix to Cambodia as part of a school project and met some other young people from Roubaix who were doing international mobility there and this motivated them to return and search for opportunities to go on mobility. The same occurred to a group of young people who were in the US and returned back to Roubaix and searched for international mobility opportunities. This shows that even if living in the same city, young people don't automatically know what their peers do and what opportunities they have. That is why making information accessible to all is essential'*.

The key factor that enables EVS to have an impact in Roubaix beyond the organisations participating in EVS is the political willingness of the local authorities to promote EVS as a way to promote the region and as a way to implement local youth policy (i.e. to reduce youth unemployment, promote social diversity and fight discrimination).

### ***Perspective of an organisation that is sending, receiving and coordinating volunteers in EVS***

The EVS participation stimulates ex-volunteers to continue their civic engagement upon return and, in turn, to create new opportunities to build the home local community. ADICE reported some concrete examples of EVS volunteers who, after completing their EVS, continued to volunteer in their local organisations in the home community and brought an EU level dimension to their activities. For example, an ex-volunteer who was involved in her home community before EVS, discovered the European dimension during EVS and upon her return developed several EU youth exchanges for the rural association in the home community. However, ADICE confirmed that a concrete impact of individual EVS volunteers on their home community upon return is difficult to grasp because it is not assessed as part of EVS projects. In addition to the evaluation meeting with volunteers upon completion of their EVS, ADICE also sends them a questionnaire at six months after their return, but only few volunteers respond and it is often still too early to observe their impact at community level.

At a broader scale, for the home community, the experience of EVS volunteers that return home raises awareness of the benefits of mobility programmes and encourages others to participate in EVS. The ADICE Director explains: *'everybody in the local community from the local authority to the local media know that EVS is useful for the development of young people [...] EVS is the example that we always give in our events to showcase the benefits it brings to young people of any background'*. For ADICE, raising awareness about EVS is an efficient way to reach out to potential new beneficiaries. This is proven by the large number of young people who come to the ADICE information sessions as a result of hearing about EVS from friends and acquaintances.

Another indicator of the EVS impact on local community is the absence of violence among youth in the community. The Director of ADICE reports that 'in 15 years, we have never had any aggressive attitudes from young people'. ADICE believes that by engaging young people in meaningful voluntary activities, EVS contributes to a positive local environment.

According to ADICE staff, the most visible benefit of EVS for the local communities, both at home and in the host country, is that it builds civil society. By supporting organisations, including small NGOs, to build their capacity to implement voluntary projects in the community, EVS contributes to strengthening civil society.

The experience and lessons gained through EVS can have a positive effect on local youth policy and practice. For example, ADICE uses EVS to collaborate with a broad network of local partners and to build their capacity for providing opportunities to young people in the city. ADICE believes that this is a way to multiply the positive effects of EVS projects through a system built at local level. This impact is enabled by the support available from local, regional and national authorities in France to ensure that EVS projects have an impact beyond the volunteer and/or receiving organisations. Financial support and policy support has made it possible to integrate EVS in the local and regional youth policy as a concrete action to address the challenges of young people (i.e. youth unemployment).

Another impact reported at system level is that EVS enables transfer of know-how and good practices. For example, the director of ADICE reported that after implementing an EVS project in Serbia, ADICE started collaborating with the World Bank in a programme to improve opportunities of young people in that region. The know-how and good practices from EVS are used to develop new mobility programmes. ADICE explained that they are developing a voluntary service programme between France and the US for which they use EVS as an example for the scheme's mission and structure. *'We use EVS as an example to prevent radicalisation of young people and to help youth get out of the situation in which they are stuck, but also to elaborate the systems of organisations to promote youth opportunities. The French embassy in the US supports us to develop volunteer exchanges based on the experience of the EVS. If we can build this, it is because we can apply the results and lessons we learned through ten years of experimenting with EVS. We want to do the same with the EU Aid volunteers'*

### **Perspective of EVS alumni**

The interviewed EVS alumni emphasised that learning is a two-way street and that they learned as much or more from members of local community as the community learned from them. For example, J. reported learning about the tragic situation in Aleppo, Syria while M. about the distinctive activities of the Montessori school.

In terms of the EVS impact on beneficiaries in the host community, J. and M. reported that the beneficiaries of their activities learned to speak French and discovered (at least some) aspects of the French culture. For example, M. reported to *'use each occasion (i.e. Easter, Christmas) to explain to school pupils how people in France spend those traditions so as to teach them about the cultural and social life in France, about similarities and differences in customs and habits'*.

Some of the activities organised by EVS volunteers make it possible for beneficiaries to take part in new activities that they would otherwise not have the chance to do. This was the case of the animation and non-formal learning through games that L. organised for children in the small village in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was for them a totally new and different way of learning from school education. *'In the absence of this project, the children would have probably never experienced non-formal learning and would have spent their spare time in the streets'*, according to ex-volunteer L.

For other beneficiaries, the simple fact of having access to activities dedicated to them is beneficial. For example, for the refugee children, the activities organised by EVS volunteers



like J. were beneficial as this was the only way for them to do something useful as they couldn't go to school.

As for the impact on the broader local community, the ex-EVS volunteers referred to the friends they made from among local people. They emphasised that EVS enabled a mutual learning: volunteers learned about the situation in Turkey while the locals learned about the different viewpoints that people from other countries have on same societal issues (i.e. homosexuality)<sup>9</sup>.

When it comes to the home local community, the biggest impact EVS alumni reported was on motivating others to go abroad through EVS. J. explained that every time she meets a young person who wants to go abroad, she tells them about EVS and her successful experience; as a result, one of her friends went on EVS in Romania and upon return back he organised an EU youth exchange project connecting the French sending organisation with the host in Romania. L. is also keep on motivating other youth to go on EVS and he got the job at ADICE for this exact purpose.

## References

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## Interviews conducted

Type stakeholder	of Organisation	Job title	Date of interview
EVS alumni	ADICE	Communication Officer	16-Sep-2016
EVS alumni	Not affiliated	N/A	16-Sep-2016
EVS alumni	Not affiliated	N/A	16-Sep-2016
EVS organisation	ADICE	Director	16-Sep-2016
EVS organisation	ADICE	EVS Project Manager	16-Sep-2016
Local community	City council youth depart.	Director of Pole Jeunesse Deschepper	16-Sep-2016

<sup>9</sup> Interview with J., ex-EVS volunteer from France who did EVS in Turkey.

## Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in Roubaix, France

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
<b>I M P A C T  O N  T H E  I N D I V I D U A L  V O L U N T E E R</b>	<b>Personal and social development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem</li> <li>■ Broadened horizons</li> <li>■ Increase in autonomy, independence</li> <li>■ Learning about oneself (self-discovery)</li> <li>■ More friends and contacts from other countries</li> <li>■ Increase in cultural capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Learning and competence development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in all 8 key competences (foreign language skills, learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, etc.)</li> <li>■ Acquired new skills (i.e. how to plan finances)</li> <li>■ Increase in awareness and knowledge of non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Plans to engage in further education</li> <li>■ Intention to learn foreign languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Foreign language skills</li> </ul>
	<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Developed professional skills and attitudes, matching employers' demands</li> <li>■ Acquired experience and contacts for work</li> <li>■ Increased chances to find a job</li> <li>■ Obtaining a job by using EVS experience</li> <li>■ Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased participation in civic and political life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in participation in voluntary activities</li> <li>■ Increase in voter participation</li> <li>■ Increased participation in civic / political life</li> <li>■ Better prepared to participate actively</li> <li>■ Increase in participation in similar youth projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
	<b>Stronger sense of belonging to the EU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More aware of common European values</li> <li>■ Higher interest in European topics</li> <li>■ Improved image of the EU</li> <li>■ Feeling more European than before</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Further mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved readiness to work / study/ live abroad</li> <li>■ Plans to move abroad for work / study / live</li> <li>■ Increased confidence to travel to other countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased intercultural learning and dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures)</li> <li>■ Better understanding of other cultures</li> <li>■ More receptivity towards multiculturalism</li> <li>■ More tolerance and respect for other cultures</li> <li>■ Improved intercultural dialogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Improved social inclusion and solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Higher positive values (tolerance, solidarity)</li> <li>■ Increase in social awareness</li> <li>■ Awareness of global issues</li> <li>■ Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society</li> <li>■ Increased commitment to work against discrimination, racism and intolerance</li> </ul>	
<b>O R G A N I S A T I O N</b>	<b>Organisational development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More human resources support for NGOs</li> <li>■ Increase in competence of youth workers (project management, fund-raising etc.)</li> <li>■ New ideas, tools and methods of working with young people and with non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Increased cultural diversity in NGO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>



Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in tolerance and openness of staff</li> <li>■ More projects on inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities</li> <li>■ Increased promotion of the participation of young people in organisation</li> <li>■ Enhanced image and reputation</li> </ul>	
	<b>Internationalisation of the organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More and new international contacts and partnerships</li> <li>■ More international projects</li> <li>■ Motivation to organise more EVS projects</li> <li>■ Higher involvement in European activities</li> <li>■ Transfer of know-how and good practice</li> <li>■ Increased attention to including an international dimension in youth work</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
<b>L O C A L  C O M M U N I T Y</b>	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness about volunteering</li> <li>■ Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Fostering learning mobility of other youth</li> <li>■ Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be available</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
	<b>Community cohesion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness of volunteering and EVS</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the European Union</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the concerns and interests of young people in society</li> <li>■ Enriching the cultural diversity of the hosting communities</li> <li>■ Increasing interest of local community in multilingualism and</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ multiculturalism</li> <li>■ Overcoming stereotypes and prejudices</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Stronger civil society</li> </ul>	

## Impact of EVS in Berlin, Germany

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** Internationale Jugendgemeinschaftsdienste (IJGD)
- **Size of organisation:** 30 volunteers
- **Location:** Berlin – socio-economically dispersed urban area with a strong web of community-based associations
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 1996
- **The organisation is accredited for:** receiving / sending volunteers/coordinating EVS projects
- **Volunteering sector:** education, culture, youth, sports, social care, cultural heritage
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** education, social care, sports
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** young people and young adults (no specific measures to include individuals with fewer opportunities)
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** Yes, volunteers from remote locations, refugees and economically disadvantaged individuals
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** the organisation has broad international contacts outside of the EVS and is participating in various other funding schemes
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** Schools

### Background of EVS in international youth community services (IJGD)

The IJGD is an umbrella organisation that consists of 13 regional associations all over Germany, all of which are non-profit NGOs. The IJGD has no affiliation with any political party or church. For over 60 years, IJGD has been organising volunteering projects both in and outside of Germany.

Since the launch of EVS in 1996, the IJGD Berlin has been involved in sending and hosting volunteers for the European Voluntary Service (EVS) programme. The IJGD's motivation to get involved in the EVS was to expand their work in the youth sector, to raise their international profile and emphasise their European orientation<sup>10</sup>. Their EVS participation was

<sup>10</sup> Interview with representative of IJGD, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

preceded by IJGD's involvement in various other European projects under different funding schemes, such as international volunteering camps (started in 1949).

IJGD implements EVS projects in cooperation with local partners, including local schools. IJGD manages the recruitment and accommodation of the volunteers as well as their cultural activities and all related administrative tasks. The same holds for reporting and application for accreditation. The local partners, in return, are responsible for the integration of the incoming volunteers into their community projects. To support the application process, they also provide the IJGD with detailed descriptions of the projects and of the tasks expected to be performed by EVS volunteers. Thus, the IJGD primarily coordinates the EVS volunteers who contribute to the local partners' projects.

Many of their local partners within Germany also involve volunteers through other funding schemes, such as the International Juvenile Voluntary Service (IJFD)<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, the EVS is the only source of long term volunteers from countries outside Germany for the hosting projects.

IJGD reports that most EVS participants have already graduated from high school. Typically, the EVS volunteers received by the IJGD are in the transition from high school to higher education or from a bachelor's to a master's degree. A smaller share of the volunteers are university graduates. Some of the volunteers are early leavers from school or university studies. For them, the EVS poses a unique opportunity to find new perspectives and direction in their lives and careers. Occasionally, IJGD has received volunteers who have fewer opportunities than their peers. For example, there were cases of volunteers with economic or social disadvantages and some that suffered from discrimination due to their cultural and/or ethnic origin. However, as the IJGD does not collect information in this regard, their number cannot be estimated.

At IJGD, the EVS volunteers are encouraged to define their own projects within the first few weeks of their EVS and continue to pursue their projects throughout the EVS. The rationale of the IJGD regarding EVS is to allow volunteers to discover their own strengths and to give them space to learn from mistakes. The EVS volunteers typically assist in educational activities of the school that hosts them and, after some time, develop their own projects to teach members of the local community their skills and experiences. For instance, a volunteer in a W-I-R school typically assists the teaching staff during lessons and day-care activities and, as the project develops, starts to organise and hold his/her own lessons and/or workshops to school pupils.

## **Impact on volunteers**

### ***Perspective of EVS volunteer 1***

A. is a young, 29 year-old Romanian woman with a university degree in media and communication sciences. She went on EVS to Germany for 12 months between September 2015 and September 2016. She comes from a Hungarian-speaking minority in a small town in Romania, which makes her feel disadvantaged in comparison to the Romanian majority population.

A. was motivated to take part in EVS in order to gain work experience in community projects in the social care and/or education sector. She was particularly interested in learning new teaching methods that she could later apply in her professional career. She learned about EVS from a friend, who is an ex-EVS volunteer. Before going on EVS, A. had previously

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<sup>11</sup> The Internationaler Jugendfreiwilligendienst (IJFD) is targeted at young Germans aged 18 to 26, who want to volunteer abroad for a period of one year. It is aimed to develop their understanding of other cultures, to advance intercultural dialogue and occupational orientation. The programme is funded by the German Ministry of Family Affairs that allocates to each volunteer a subsidy of 350 euro per month.

volunteered for a local theatre in Romania and in a nursing home during her studies in London.

At first, A. was considering doing a transnational volunteering experience through a different programme because she was interested in a social project in South America. However, due to the limited funding available through this other programme (only accommodation covered) and the positive feedback she had heard from her friend about the EVS programme, she decided to apply for EVS. She found the EVS project in a W-I-R school in Berlin corresponding to her interests.

During her EVS, A. assisted with teaching and supervising young pupils (aged 6-10), and sometimes also other age cohorts. She also organised her own educational projects. As an experienced guitar player, she facilitated music sessions and taught interested pupils how to play the guitar. She also tried to engage pupils in playful English learning.

A. reported that the EVS experience had a '*massive impact on [her] life*'. She perceives herself as being more proactive now than before EVS. In particular, she finds that the EVS experience had an impact on her sense of initiative, her self-management and especially on her creative skills. A. also believes that, thanks to EVS, she is much more resilient whenever she encounters obstacles in her work or private life. Successfully handling the challenges of her EVS helped her to overcome her shyness and to gain self-confidence, both in her professional orientation and in her personal life. One specific challenge that she managed to overcome were the initial language problems. For example, A. stated that her high expectations towards herself stopped her from engaging in conversations in German, as she was '*afraid of making mistakes*'. Overcoming this attitude was a major learning outcome of her EVS. As a result, she now considers herself '*more fluent in German than in Romanian*'.

According to the volunteer, the time in Berlin helped her gain a clearer picture of where she wants to go professionally, namely to become a teaching assistant rather than a teacher. In particular, the EVS confirmed her interest to pursue a career in education and shifted her focus from the 'old-style' teaching approach to the inclusive learning focused on the learner. The time she spent volunteering at the W-I-R school made her realise that she would rather become a teaching assistant so as to be able to use alternative teaching methods to facilitate children's development.

Through her EVS, A. developed competences and job-specific skills that proved essential for her success in entering the German labour market. In particular, she learned teaching methods that are very different from the ones she had been studying in Romania. In sharp contrast to the formalised didactics in her home country, the W-I-R school promotes non-formal and informal learning methods, allowing the pupils to learn through playful interaction and giving them control over which content they want to learn at which time. This very different approach also made it difficult for the volunteer to blend in at the host school at first, but on hindsight it was one of her most valuable learning experiences, as reported by the volunteer herself. The new teaching methods and techniques that she learned during her EVS, i.e. the Montessori approach, helped to enhance her professional profile and to find a job in the educational sector in Germany. Thanks to the EVS experience, she learned to speak German and learned about German culture and work ethics, which helped her in finding employment in Germany. After her EVS she was able to find a job in a kindergarten in Berlin, which, as she states, '*was only possible through the previous experience at the "W-I-R Schule"*'. To support her career, the W-I-R School provided her with a generous recommendation letter that helped in the process of her obtaining the current job.

A. found the success of her EVS being facilitated by the good support provided by IJGD and the host school during every stage of her EVS activity. For example, she values the constant encouragement she and other volunteers received from IJGD, as she states '*they always urged us to be proactive and pursue our own projects [in the schools]*' and to organise own learning activities for school pupils. She felt very well taken care of, having a permanent supervisor that she could turn to with questions and problems at any time.

A. learned about how to participate in social and civic life in Berlin from the many practical activities organised by IJGD during her EVS. For example, IJGD organised frequent communal dinners and barbeques, city tours and museum visits to allow volunteers to experience different parts of the German culture.

### **Perspective of EVS volunteer 2**

J. is a young English man who did his EVS from September 2014 to August 2015 in a school in Berlin. He already knew the IJGD beforehand from his participation in volunteering camps. Prior to taking part in the EVS, he studied a Bachelor's in language and culture abroad in France. Having had previous experience with volunteering, he wanted to continue helping communities. He had good German language skills (B2) prior to his participation in the EVS programme and wanted to use the EVS for personal growth and practice the language he had just learned. Through the volunteering camps, he had gained a very positive image of the IJGD and Berlin. Consequently, he applied to do his EVS in Berlin with the IJGD. Since he knew about the 'outstanding' structure and funding of the EVS programme, he did not consider other volunteering schemes at the time.

His tasks within the EVS in the host school in Berlin revolved around assisting the teacher in educational activities and in day-care provided to school pupils. In addition, J. started his own project, called "the English club", to allow pupils to playfully experience English by means of songs, toys and drawing. As a result of the success of his initiative, he was able to get a job in a kindergarten in Berlin and now runs a similar project there.

J. reported that '*the EVS changed my life in many ways*'. Firstly, it introduced him to the German educational system and expanded his knowledge of volunteering and teaching. Through the EVS project, he engaged in volunteering camps and became a youth leader. He recently led in 2016 a trilingual project and started giving seminars to train trainers for youth work.

Secondly, the safe space created by the EVS project provided him with the opportunity to try out many things, such as yoga and Spanish courses. He stated to have '*fallen in love with the EVS programme*' as it had such tremendous effect on his personal development. He now feels much more comfortable to tackle new situations, which also led him to change his career path from teaching to youth work. From October 2016, he has started working for the IJGD in training and supporting new EVS volunteers and other young people. A career decision that he felt '*not brave enough to consider before*' EVS.

Thirdly, the EVS experience also strengthened the volunteer's European identity, especially through the contact with other EVS volunteers. '*It was an imprinting experience to share a house with different volunteers from different European cultures*', he recalls. He felt strong benefits from being part of a large group of international volunteers for a long period of time. Due to the length of the programme and the fact that volunteers are embedded in the local community and culture, J. believes that the EVS features a stronger intercultural learning than the Erasmus programme.

During his EVS, J. and his flatmate created a networking and evaluation meeting. They organised a get-together of all volunteers hosted by the IJGD to share experiences and to give feedback. The meeting was well received by the volunteers and by the IJGD; it was perceived as an opportunity to improve the experience of all parties involved in EVS projects coordinated by IJGD. In his project, he created space for volunteers to pursue their own projects within the EVS.

Overall, J. stated: '*the EVS was one of the most influencing experience I have ever made and how involved I am with IJGD now shows the huge impact of the EVS on myself*'.

### **Perspective of EVS receiving organisation**

IJGD finds that the intercultural learning offered through the EVS is the key benefit in comparison to other mobility programmes. One responsible stated, '*whereas, Erasmus*

*students are usually in their "Erasmus bubble", having little to no interaction with the local communities, the EVS volunteers are embedded in the local community in Berlin and at their workplace'. Especially the projects in schools are culturally immersive for EVS volunteers and pupils alike. As noted by one supervisor, 'the volunteers experience all the German festivities and customs during their work with the school children and are given the opportunity to present their own culture [to the pupils]'*.

According to the IJGD staff interviewed, *'the EVS enables volunteers to develop their sense of initiative and self-confidence'*. For example, the EVS project gives them space to discover their strengths and to develop their talents. Through the international environment of their EVS, volunteers gain new perspectives on their hosting country and on the home countries of their fellow EVS volunteers. Hence, their personal growth during EVS also contributes to the European integration and does so in a sustainable way, since *'volunteers regularly keep contact with friends and colleagues from their EVS time'*, as reported by IJGD staff.

The goal is to enable the volunteers to develop and execute a small project by themselves. In one case, *'a volunteer single-handedly developed and conducted a training for 14 volunteers, including refugees'*. This was especially positively surprising as this youngster was very shy at the beginning of the EVS project.

As reported by IJGD staff, the volunteers develop close relationships with the school children and can pursue own projects, which helps to develop strong social competences. For example, some volunteers experienced it as *'very empowering to be given a challenge to present their thoughts to a class of 40 children'*.

As a result of the EVS participation, one volunteer from Luxembourg stayed in Berlin and was employed by the school as a teaching assistant. Another volunteer quit his law degree and transitioned into teaching. Through the EVS project he found his passion for the teaching profession. Another volunteer, also pursuing a law degree at the time, changed her focus area to child law.

One factor identified by IJGD as potentially hindering the impact that EVS can have on volunteers is the language barrier. *'While some volunteers are daring and confident in speaking in German, shy volunteers sometimes struggle for most of their stay in Berlin'*. To anticipate this issue, the IJGD has started enrolling all volunteers to German courses at the community college (VHS)<sup>12</sup> as of 2016.

## **Impact on EVS organisations**

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

The EVS participation was deemed highly beneficial for the organisation by all interviewees from IJGD. The EVS accreditation raises the profile of the organisation and enables attracting not only volunteers for the EVS but also for other community projects of the IJGD. The multicultural atmosphere and the intercultural dialogue facilitated by the influx of EVS volunteers are perceived very positively by the organisation. It provides them with a strong international profile, thus attracting new partners and volunteers and supporting the brand of IJGD. The responsible at IJGD noted, *'the EVS accreditation has made it easier to acquire new community projects and to establish local partnerships, not just for the EVS, but also for our other programmes'*.

The EVS participation opened up IJGD's cooperation with other structures at local level (with which it had not collaborate before). For example, IJGD now cooperates with the VHS to offer language courses for all volunteers affiliated with the IJGD. In a similar fashion, the IJGD acquired a local partner to provide the volunteers with discounted tickets for cultural

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<sup>12</sup> Volkshochschule Berlin Mitte (VHS), courses are paid for by the IJGD



activities such as museums. In another case, the IJGD collaborated with the local church to accommodate a volunteer in a shared flat together with one seminarian.

The IJGD perceives EVS as beneficial for their organisation also because it provides them with various skills brought in by the European volunteers and their respective projects. One staff member noted, *'one volunteer, having a circus background, taught circus skills in various workshops, which were well received by the beneficiaries'*.

According to the interviewed IJGD project manager, *'the structure and grants of the EVS programme have been an engine for the IJGD's capacity building in the past years'*. The EVS has a central role in the international portfolio of the organisation, being one of four international programmes offered by the IJGD. The organisation currently hosts and sends about 15 EVS volunteers each year and would like to maintain this level in the future.

### ***Perspective of current EVS volunteers and of alumni***

Both EVS volunteers interviewed still feel a strong connection to their EVS hosting organisation even after completing their EVS. They brought different talents and skills to the organisation, thus benefitted the development of IJGD and its staff in different ways. For example, J. contributed to running IJGD's volunteering camps and workshops, providing additional human resources for the preparation and supervision of the events. He also strengthened the IJGD's international orientation through his exchanges with the staff. J raised the teams' language skills, mainly through being a native English speaker himself, and gave opportunity to learn about the differences between English and German culture. Consequently, the IJGD hired him, thus the EVS also contributed to their recruiting efforts.

A, on the other hand, still turns to the IJGD and her former hosting project manager for advice on matters concerning her career in Berlin and administrative issues. She maintains close contact to the IJGD staff and to her former colleagues and peer volunteers.

J. also reported that he established a close cooperation between his initial sending organisation and his hosting organisation<sup>13</sup>. His initiative helped the sending organisation to expand their work in the field and to attract more volunteers who want to do their EVS in Berlin. Moreover, he also referred a friend to this EVS cooperation, who recently started his EVS experience in Berlin.

## **Impact at local community level**

### ***Perspective of the members of the local community***

The volunteers support local community projects in many ways. When in *school projects*, the volunteers typically assist during lessons or by supervising pupils in the afternoon. For them, it is a *'win-win situation'* as volunteers and children can learn German and English together. Especially the German reading exercises with minors help the volunteers to practice their German. Other volunteers have initiated their own activities, such as guitar lessons, sewing singing and sport events. Volunteers also regularly give an introduction to their mother tongue for the pupils. Every year there is something new that volunteers contribute, such as one year a Greek volunteer taught the school children about Greek theatre. In another case, a volunteer taught the pupils how to juggle. Another volunteer was a football trainer and taught the children how to play. This was a welcome addition to the school's sport programme.

In addition to local schools, the Circus Schatzinsel also hosts EVS volunteers through projects coordinated by the IJGD. Circus Schatzinsel provides circus and artistic training to all interested ones with a focus on the training and development of young people. With its wide range of artistic, circus and theatre projects, the circus aims to offer young people

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<sup>13</sup> J was initially associated with a SO in his home town. Since they did not have a cooperation with the IJGD at the time, he needed to change to another SO in England to be able to do his EVS in Berlin with the IJGD.



opportunities to discover and develop their talents. For the circus manager interviewed, the EVS has *'become an incremental part of their circus project'*. Taking up one EVS volunteer per year, they rely on the young people to be a *'motor of innovation for their training and their show'*. Each volunteer with his/her individual cultural background brings in new ideas and talents into the project. Some volunteers developed new artistic pieces, others sparked new theatre parts and others contributed to the project's promotional activities.

During their work in the local community, volunteers develop a close connection to members of the community. An important impact of the EVS is that former volunteers become and remain part of the host community, i.e. host school or the circus where they did their EVS. Some volunteers still receive visits from families whose children were at the host school during the time of their EVS. In similar fashion, some of the school's teachers went to Luxembourg to visit a former EVS volunteer.

As for the present and past EVS volunteers at the circus, they have contributed to a political and intercultural discourse. As one project responsible from the the Circus Schatzinsel reported, *'they bring in a political dimension in our work and challenge existing opinions. Through the EVS volunteers, we are more inclined to discuss political issues, like recent changes of the political landscape of Eastern Europe.'* This is illustrated by a recent play initiated with a volunteer, called "where is my home". Volunteers regularly challenge the organisations' way of collaboration, existing routines and processes. As a result, the concept for the volunteers' integration has changed many times and routines have been articulated and amended, as reported by the interviewed responsible at a circus that hosts EVS volunteers. One technician at the circus, for instance, discovered his talent for communication through the collaboration with a volunteer and is now intensively involved in the supervision of the EVS project. His colleagues reported that he grew personally and professionally through this experience.

As noted by a member of the Circus Schatzinsel staff, *'the volunteers, with their own mobility experience, have shown to connect well with refugees'*. The circus camp helped the staff to develop an understanding of refugees and their cultures. Volunteers and refugees were able to connect very well, since both can engage in exchange about mobility experiences and the difficulties encountered when trying to blend in the German culture. Their collaboration in various projects, as well as their work in the local communities have helped to decrease xenophobia and prejudice of locals towards refugees. The representative of a local community school project stated that the contact with EVS volunteers from other countries helped pupils and parents alike to improve their image of foreigners and to change their attitude towards persons coming from abroad. The interviewee stated: *'The EVS volunteers are well received ambassadors of their countries and of international exchange in their community'*.

According to the circus manager interviewed, the length of the EVS programme is very beneficial in comparison the other programmes, i.e. internships. From her experience, *'volunteers typically need a full year to discover and seize their competences. This is especially true for volunteers without prior circus experience'*. However, the current volunteer, even though he just joined a few days ago, already established a cooperation with a circus from his home town's theatre group.

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

According to the receiving organisation IJGD, the EVS has had a positive influence on the local community. Most visibly, the experience with the EVS volunteers enabled IJGD staff to consult local authorities in how to deal with the incoming refugees during the peak of the European refugee crisis in 2015. One responsible stated, *'the work with the volunteers enabled us to give some advice to the city council in how to tackle the arrival and integration of young individuals foreign to Berlin and the German culture'*.

More generally, one of the IJGD's staff mentioned that *'the EVS projects improve the image of foreigners in the local communities and help to decrease resentments of German people towards foreigners'*. This is achieved as the volunteers become role models as helpful and accessible foreigners, as well as through direct interaction with them within their various projects / activities.

### **Perspective of the volunteers**

The EVS volunteers interviewed reported very different effects of their volunteering on members of the local community. As both volunteers carried out their voluntary service in schools, the most striking effect they recognised was on the school children they taught. One volunteer noted that her EVS also positively contributed to the host school by extending the school curriculum to include more music lessons. *'The guitar lessons helped children to discover music and to learn to play an instrument'*, a passion sparked by her, *'which some pupils still pursue to the present day'*. Another volunteer stated that his approach of teaching English had a lasting effect on his pupils by inspiring them to learn more languages and to be open towards other cultures and people.

### Interviews conducted

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Job title	Date of interview
EVS alumni	IJGD	Teacher	13-Sep-2016
EVS alumni	IJGD	Assistant	13-Sep-2016
EVS hosting organisation	IJGD	Project manager in charge of hosting / coordinating EVS	13-Sep-2016
EVS sending organisation	IJGD	Project manager in charge of sending EVS volunteers	28-Sep-2016
Local community	W-I-R Schule	Teacher	13-Sep-2016
Local community	Circus Schatzinsel	Social worker / Project manager	13-Sep-2016

### Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in Berlin, Germany

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
<b>I M P A C T  O N  T H E</b>	<b>Personal and social development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem</li> <li>■ Broadened horizons</li> <li>■ Increase in autonomy, independence</li> <li>■ Learning about oneself (self-discovery)</li> <li>■ More friends and contacts from other countries</li> <li>■ Increase in cultural capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ One volunteer overcame her shyness, which lead to an tremendous increase in her language learning</li> <li>■ Both volunteers gained knowledge about the German culture through their work with children</li> <li>■ Both volunteers are still in close contact to the hosting organisation and their fellow volunteers from the time of their EVS</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
<b>I N D I V I D U A L  V O L U N T E E R</b>	<b>Learning and competence development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in all 8 key competences (foreign language skills, learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, etc.)</li> <li>■ Acquired new skills (i.e. how to plan finances)</li> <li>■ Increase in awareness and knowledge of non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Plans to engage in further education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ One volunteer, without prior knowledge of German, is now more fluent in German than in the language of her home country</li> <li>■ One volunteer became a youth leader and learned how to facilitate workshops</li> <li>■ One volunteer shifted the focus of her educational career towards inclusive informal learning techniques</li> </ul>
	<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Developed professional skills and attitudes, matching employers' demands</li> <li>■ Acquired experience and contacts for work</li> <li>■ Increased chances to find a job</li> <li>■ Obtaining a job by using EVS experience</li> <li>■ Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ One volunteer reported a huge impact on her proactivity, her self-management and especially her ability to seize room for creativity</li> <li>■ Both volunteers acquired teaching approaches that they use in their present jobs</li> <li>■ Both volunteers changed their career paths after the EVS</li> <li>■ Both volunteers now work in jobs closely related to what they did during their EVS</li> <li>■ One volunteer is going to start to work for the hosting organisation</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased participation in civic and political life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in participation in voluntary activities</li> <li>■ Increase in participation in similar youth projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ One volunteer engaged in various volunteering camps during his EVS</li> </ul>
	<b>Stronger sense of belonging to the EU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More aware of common European values</li> <li>■ Higher interest in European topics</li> <li>■ Improved image of the EU</li> <li>■ Feeling more European than before</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ One volunteer felt more internationally connected through the experience of sharing a flat with several other EVS volunteers</li> </ul>
	<b>Further mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved readiness to work / study/ live abroad</li> <li>■ Plans to move abroad for work / study / live</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Both volunteers want to stay in Berlin for the next years. They both found employment in the city.</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased intercultural learning and dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Both volunteers reported a better understanding of the German culture through their EVS experience</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better understanding of other cultures</li> </ul>	
	<b>Improved social inclusion and solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One volunteer wants to work with an inclusive teaching approach in the future</li> </ul>
<b>O R G A N I S A T I O N</b>	<b>Organisational development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More human resources support for NGOs</li> <li>Increase in competence of youth workers (project management, fund-raising etc.)</li> <li>New ideas, tools and methods of working with young people and with non-formal learning</li> <li>Increased cultural diversity in NGO</li> <li>Increase in tolerance and openness of staff</li> <li>Enhanced image and reputation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One volunteer joined the hosting organisation and will start working for them as of October 2016</li> <li>The organisation reported a growing competence in managing EVS projects and partnerships</li> <li>One volunteer taught others in the hosting organisation circus skills</li> <li>The organisation stated that the EVS accreditation is extremely beneficial to attract new volunteers and partners</li> <li>The organisation mentioned the valuable intercultural exchange through the EVS</li> </ul>
	<b>Internationalisation of the organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More and new international contacts and partnerships</li> <li>More international projects</li> <li>Higher involvement in European activities</li> <li>Increased attention to including an international dimension in youth work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One EVS volunteer established a partnership between his hosting organisation and a youth organisation in his home country</li> <li>One sending organisation intends to use a volunteers feedback for promotion of the programme</li> <li>One organisation stated the EVS to be an important building block in their international portfolio</li> </ul>
<b>L O C A L  C O M M U N I T Y</b>	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries</li> <li>Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both local community representatives reported a positive influence on tolerance and acceptance of foreigners</li> <li>One volunteer enhanced her school's curriculum with guitar lessons. Another volunteer provided innovative</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
U N I T Y		available	<p>English lessons.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ One organisation is heavily benefitting from the creative influence from European volunteers for their circus project</li> </ul>

## Impact of EVS in Nagyvázsony, Hungary

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** Fekete Sereg Youth Association
- **Size of organisation:** 4 full-time staff members, currently 6 EVS volunteers
- **Location:** Nagyvázsony is a small village with a total population of 1,666, according to the latest census in 2011. It has a German (4%) and Roma (3%) community. It is located in Veszprem county, 144 km west of Budapest. The local associations play an important role in the community, including a loose network of youth NGOs.
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 2005
- **The organisation is accredited for:** Sending and receiving volunteers and coordinating projects.
- **Volunteering sector:** Focus on social inclusion
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** Youth work, art and culture, poverty
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** The organisation works with all youth from the village and its surrounding region, with a special focus on young people with fewer opportunities, NEETs and Roma.
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** Yes, most of the volunteers belong to this group. They come from rural areas, vulnerable social backgrounds and ethnic minority groups.
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** The organisation has a rich network of contacts not only in Europe, but in Asia and South America too.
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** Local municipality and the public institution run by it, local sport clubs and associations, and the new Generation Centre (youth office) of Veszprem.

### Background of EVS in Fekete Sereg Youth Association

Fekete Sereg is a non-profit youth association founded in 1997, with the ultimate goal to provide the youth of Nagyvázsony and its surrounding regions with the opportunity to spend their free time in a meaningful way, prevent school dropout, and support bottom-up youth initiatives. With nearly ten years of experience in the field of European youth exchanges, the association became involved in EVS in 2005 and has been active ever since, both as a sending and receiving organisation. In addition to EVS, Fekete Sereg also participated in several projects funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) and Youth in Action (YiA) and is currently a (lead) partner in Erasmus+ projects.

Fekete Sereg sees EVS as a great opportunity for young people with fewer opportunities, who otherwise may not have been able to go abroad, learn about different cultures, broaden their horizons, improve their existing skills and learn new ones. Furthermore, young people can contribute to the growth of their local community upon their return from EVS, by applying what they have learnt during this mobility. The typical volunteers that Fekete Sereg involves in EVS come from low-income families, live in remote villages, have never been abroad, and often belong to the Roma community and/or group of "NEETs".

It is an ultimate goal of Fekete Sereg to involve the EVS volunteers in the local community to the highest level possible, in order to foster mutual learning. Regarding the array of tasks the EVS volunteers are usually responsible for the following:

- Running a local youth club;

- Language teaching at local schools;
- Working at the local kindergarten;
- Supporting the host organisation (Fekete Sereg); and
- Implementation of activities of the local community, especially those of the local municipality.

## Impact on volunteers

### ***Perspective of EVS volunteer***

S. is an 18 year old woman from a rural area of Germany. She came for a year-long EVS to Fekete Sereg five months ago.

Despite her young age, S. was an active volunteer in her own local community as she had experience in helping out at the local school. For her, EVS provided an excellent opportunity to take a year off after her high school graduation in order to travel, develop her skills and grow as a person. Additionally, EVS offered an opportunity to gain greater autonomy by living on her own in a different country for the first time. She saw her EVS experience as an *'important step towards adulthood'*.

During her first five months of EVS, she has mainly been helping at a local school teaching English and German. Although she does not plan to become a teacher once returning to Germany, her teaching experience has helped her to further improve her English and, even more notably, to gain greater self-confidence. She reported that before going on EVS, her low self-esteem would have prevented her from standing in front of a group of young people and teaching them English.

Furthermore, by working at the local schools, she is in regular contact not only with her receiving organisation but also with members of the local community. S. reported that this has helped her tremendously in terms of gaining a better understanding of different cultures, to be more open, to challenge and overcome the stereotypes she had about Hungary and even more so about Hungarian people.

During her EVS experience she gained more independence than before, living in a shared house with other volunteers from all over the world, managing her own finances, taking care of everyday necessities such as opening a bank account, or searching for a plumber. Regarding this, she mentioned how this experience has helped her realise that all of the barriers and cultural differences which she was previously apprehensive of can be overcome.

M. is a 22 year old woman from a rural area of France. Her five month EVS experience is ending in January, thus she is already planning her next steps and preparing for her return to France. This is not her first EVS experience; she has previously volunteered in Greece through the programme, in the field of environment protection. When asking about her motivation to take part in EVS, she summarised it as follows: *'To travel. To play an active part in the community. To experience new things and to explore'*.

Similarly to S., she is also in contact with the local community on a daily basis, as her tasks involve working at the local kindergarten and youth club.

She highlighted two changes which she considers as the most notable ones resulting from her EVS participation in Hungary. First of all, she has become more open-minded, tolerant and accepting. Secondly, she reported to be much more appreciative of what she has, especially when experiencing the local realities of Nagyvázsöny on a daily basis. She shared her story about visiting France over the Christmas period and experiencing a lack of interest in going to the shopping mall with her friends, something which she would have enjoyed doing before her EVS. She also *'felt weird for receiving so many gifts for Christmas'* as she was *'no longer used to having so much, or more than what was necessary'*.



Thanks to her EVS experience, M. became much more organised than before, something which she will use in her next job upon her return to France. She also highlighted how much her orientation skills have improved during her EVS, which often prevented her from traveling to new places.

M. has already sent several job applications as she is returning to France in a few week's time. She reported that in every application she prepared, her EVS experience and all the skills gained during this time were significantly mentioned, as she considers them a huge asset.

Both of the interviewed volunteers reported that due to the nature of their tasks, they are in daily contact with members of the local community, which further fostered the impact of the EVS experience on them. This made it possible for both the volunteers and members of the local community to understand each other better, to learn about their cultural differences, and to experience how such barriers can be overcome. This experience also allowed both groups to feel more connected to Europe and the European Union.

### ***Perspective of EVS receiving organisation***

Most of the EVS volunteers Fekete Sereg receives are young people with fewer opportunities. They most often come from an economically disadvantaged, rural region of their respective countries, frequently with difficult family conditions. Consequently, EVS is particularly appealing to them as they would normally not have the chance to travel abroad. The second main source of motivation is to develop their skills and personalities by moving to a different country. Thirdly, most of the EVS volunteers received by the organisation have previously done other types of volunteering, most often at local level. Thus, they would like to explore transnational volunteering which they feel is a next step.

## **Impact on EVS organisations**

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

At the time of receiving the first EVS volunteer, Fekete Sereg was a considerably smaller youth association with fewer local, national and international connections. EVS helped the organisation to broaden its scope of activities, and to become recognised not only at the local level, but also at national and international levels. The EVS programme has been crucial to the growth of Fekete Sereg as an organisation and helping it with becoming what it is today. An interviewed member of staff from Fekete Sereg expressed how EVS had, and still has, a "multiplier effect". Each volunteer has helped the organisation to expand its network and to find partners for other European projects. More concretely, participating in EVS has resulted in several projects under LLP and YiA programmes. Furthermore, Fekete Sereg has been involved in four KA2 Erasmus+ projects. The association has built an excellent reputation within the youth sector in Hungary and is being frequently approached by representatives of other NGOs who would like their help with planning, preparing and submitting project proposals and running projects. The knowledge and know-how they possess has made the association a nationally recognised example, which is also supported by the fact that the Hungarian National Agency for the EVS is also very aware of the work of Fekete Sereg.

The EVS volunteers also bring in new perspectives, ideas and knowledge, as well as additional capacities for the organisation. According to an interviewed member of staff from Fekete Sereg, several of the activities would not have been possible (or only partially possible) without the help of the EVS volunteers. Given the very strong connection and excellent relationship between Fekete Sereg and the local municipality, the EVS volunteers also support a number of the town's initiatives, such as cleaning the neighbourhood around the river or organising events for the elderly.

Participating in the EVS programme has also had a strong impact on the organisational culture. The staff have become much more open-minded and richer in experiences through each volunteer they have received or sent. The staff have also been able to improve their English language skills; all full-time staff and local volunteers have improved their English language competences and by now all of them are able to express themselves clearly.

Certainly, the effects are even stronger on the staff members who are responsible for receiving and mentoring EVS volunteers. The two interviewed staff members from Fekete Sereg explained that supporting the volunteers and following their personal development path is a mutual learning process. Each and every volunteer brings in his/her own story and perspectives, reality and knowledge, thus there is always a potential for additional learning.

### ***Perspective of the EVS sending organisation***

The staff member of Fekete Sereg responsible for sending the EVS volunteers confirmed the reflections presented above and also highlighted that the most notable impact of EVS is that a small youth organisation located in a remote village can become more visible and widely known across Hungary. For example, he mentioned that an increasing number of young people from outside the town and even the region apply to take part in EVS through Fekete Sereg.

### ***Perspective of current EVS volunteers and of alumni***

Both of the interviewed volunteers believed that they brought in additional resources to the organisation that hosted them and contributed to the implementation of several activities. M. is the first-ever EVS volunteer who has worked at the local kindergarten, therefore this is a learning process for all parties involved.

The volunteers also believe that they have contributed to increasing the language competences of Fekete Sereg's staff. Given her experience in video editing, M. also helped with putting a promotional video together which would not have been possible without additional resources from the organisation.

They both believe that their sending organisation benefitted from their EVS experience as this has helped to create important links to the hosting organisation. As shown, such connections can contribute to further co-operation and can trigger the implementation of potential project ideas under other European-funded programmes.

## **Impact at local community level**

### ***Perspective of the members of the local community***

Ten years ago when Fekete Sereg hosted the first EVS volunteers, the organisation had connections mostly with the younger generation of the village. Receiving EVS volunteers broadened the horizons of the youth association which, by now, has become an important driver of the local community and has established an excellent relationship with the local municipality.

Given the geographical and social context of Nagyvázsony, where Fekete Sereg is located, programmes like EVS have an even bigger role to play in contributing to a tolerant and culturally diverse society, as many of the locals had not met a person from abroad before EVS volunteers came to the town. During the past ten years, volunteers have become a part of everyday life in the local community. Locals have become more open to new cultures and now accept volunteers as an integral part of the village life.

Reportedly, many of the EVS volunteers have served as role models for the youth of Nagyvázsony, who have become more motivated to go abroad through EVS in order to gain similar experiences and be part of this adventure.

Besides these attitudes and behaviours, the town has also benefitted from the presence of EVS volunteers in a much more concrete way. The EVS volunteers support the implementation of a number of activities. A local community member who was interviewed for this assignment said that the EVS volunteers have helped the town by *'teaching languages to the local youth, playing games with them, introducing their own culture, organising events, contributing to environmental projects such as cleaning the river side and building a bridge over it'*.

The same interviewee confirmed that the EVS volunteers have had a truly important role in the local community, and that she has never experienced any problems with the volunteers, thanks to the work of Fekete Sereg in this regard.

### **Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation**

The EVS volunteers are very well received in the town by the locals. The interviewees highlighted that there has never been any problem or difficulty between the volunteers and the local residents; however, they did confirm that it was a learning process for all parties in the beginning. According to the feedback from the locals, the volunteers are seen bringing great added value to the city by contributing to a more culturally diverse community and fostering a more open and tolerant society, regardless of age. This is also due to the fact that the EVS volunteers play an important role in organising local events, supporting local initiatives and teaching young people, and they serve as an example for many young people who have fewer opportunities. In a way, the volunteers often fulfil the role of *'ambassadors of the programme'*, as most of the local youth would not have otherwise learnt about EVS and all of its potential. This has led to an increased number of local youth willing to take part in such experience and apply for EVS projects.

### **Perspective of the volunteers**

Both of the interviewed volunteers believe they have had the strongest impact on the young people they were working with, given the nature of the tasks they are/were involved in. As a result of their presence, the youth have had a chance to meet people from a completely different culture, speaking a different language and thereby helping to overcome stereotypes. Both interviewees were also of the opinion that their presence brings/have brought more concrete value; among others, they mentioned the following:

- By improving the linguistic competencies of locals;
- By organising events; and
- B advertising EVS to locals.

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### Interviews conducted

<b>Type of stakeholder</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Background or job title</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>
EVS volunteer (just finishing her EVS)	-	Volunteer, FR	12-Jan-2017
EVS volunteer	-	Volunteer, DE	12-Jan-2017
EVS hosting organisation	Fekete Sereg Youth Association	Responsible for receiving EVS	12-Jan-2017
EVS sending organisation	Fekete Sereg Youth Association	Responsible for sending EVS	12-Jan-2017
Local community	Local municipality	Officer responsible for culture and development	16-Jan-2017

■



Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in Nagyvázsony,  
Hungary

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews	
I M P A C T  O N  T H E  I N D I V I D U A L  V O L U N T E E R	<b>Personal and social development</b>	■ Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		■ Broadened horizons	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		■ Increase in autonomy, independence	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		■ Learning about oneself (self-discovery)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		■ More friends and contacts from other countries		
			■ Increase in cultural capital	
	<b>Learning and competence development</b>	■ Increase in all 8 key competences (foreign language skills, learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		■ Acquired new skills (i.e. how to plan finances)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		■ Increase in awareness and knowledge of non-formal learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		■ Plans to engage in further education		
■ Intention to learn foreign languages				
<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	■ Developed professional skills and attitudes, matching employers' demands	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	■ Acquired experience and contacts for work	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	■ Increased chances to find a job	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	■ Obtaining a job by using EVS experience	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	■ Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals			
<b>Increased participation in civic and political life</b>	■ Increase in participation in voluntary activities	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	■ Increase in voter participation			
	■ Increased participation in civic / political life			
	■ Better prepared to participate actively			
		■ Increase in participation in similar youth projects		
<b>Stronger sense of belonging to the EU</b>	■ More aware of common European values	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	■ Higher interest in European topics	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	■ Improved image of the EU			
		■ Feeling more European than before		
<b>Further mobility</b>	■ Improved readiness to work / study/ live abroad			
	■ Plans to move abroad for work / study / live	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased confidence to travel to other countries</li> </ul>	
	<b>Increased intercultural learning and dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures)</li> <li>■ Better understanding of other cultures</li> <li>■ More receptivity towards multiculturalism</li> <li>■ More tolerance and respect for other cultures</li> <li>■ Improved intercultural dialogue</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Improved social inclusion and solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Higher positive values (tolerance, solidarity)</li> <li>■ Increase in social awareness</li> <li>■ Awareness of global issues</li> <li>■ Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society</li> <li>■ Increased commitment to work against discrimination, racism and intolerance</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>O R G A N I S A T I O N</b>	<b>Organisational development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More human resources support for NGOs</li> <li>■ Increase in competence of youth workers (project management, fund-raising etc.)</li> <li>■ New ideas, tools and methods of working with young people and with non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Increased cultural diversity in NGO</li> <li>■ Increase in tolerance and openness of staff</li> <li>■ More projects on inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities</li> <li>■ Increased promotion of the participation of young people in organisation</li> <li>■ Enhanced image and reputation</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Internationalisation of the organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More and new international contacts and partnerships</li> <li>■ More international projects</li> <li>■ Motivation to organise more EVS projects</li> <li>■ Higher involvement in European activities</li> <li>■ Transfer of know-how and good practice</li> <li>■ Increased attention to including an international dimension in youth work</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews
L O C A L  C O M M U N I T Y	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	■ Increased awareness about volunteering	<input type="checkbox"/>
		■ Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries	<input type="checkbox"/>
		■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue	<input type="checkbox"/>
		■ Fostering learning mobility of other youth	<input type="checkbox"/>
		■ Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be available	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Community cohesion</b>	■ Increased awareness of volunteering and EVS	<input type="checkbox"/>
		■ Increased awareness of the European Union	<input type="checkbox"/>
		■ Increased awareness of the concerns and interests of young people in society	<input type="checkbox"/>
		■ Enriching the cultural diversity of the hosting communities	<input type="checkbox"/>
		■ Increasing interest of local community in multilingualism and multiculturalism	<input type="checkbox"/>
		■ Overcoming stereotypes and prejudices	<input type="checkbox"/>
		■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue	<input type="checkbox"/>
		■ Stronger civil society	<input type="checkbox"/>

■



## Impact of EVS in Pordenone, Italy

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** A.N.F.F.A.S<sup>14</sup>. (Associazione Nazionale Famiglie di Persone con Disabilità Intellettiva e/o Relazionale – National Association of Families of Persons with Intellectual and/ or Relational Disabilities)
- **Size of organisation:** 100 staff, 40 senior volunteers, 20 young volunteers and 5 EVS volunteers
- **Location:** Pordenone is a relatively small and provincial city in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region of Italy. The region has legislative and financial autonomy and is relatively isolated from the rest of Italy (also due to its geographical location). It has a diverse population representing many different ethnic and linguistic minorities but there is very little interaction with other European cultures compared to other cities and regions of Italy.
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 1997
- **The organisation is accredited for:** receiving, sending volunteers and coordinating EVS
- **Volunteering sector:** social care
- **The recurrent theme of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** health and well-being
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** people with disabilities
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** Yes, volunteers at a social disadvantage such as early school leavers, (long-term) unemployed, those with low self-esteem, people with disabilities of either a physical or intellectual nature, etc.
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** the organisation has broad international contacts outside of the EVS but thanks to its involvement in EVS
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** local cultural organisations, local schools, national youth organisations such as "InformaGiovani"

### Background of EVS in A.N.F.F.A.S Onlus di Pordenone

A.N.F.F.A.S. (Anffas) is a national non-profit association founded in 1958. Its mission is to provide residence and assistance to people with disabilities.

Anffas coordinators learned about the European Voluntary Service programme (EVS) during an international conference on volunteering at which they met another organisation - Envol - which was involved in EVS. As a result, Anffas was motivated to become involved in sending and hosting volunteers through EVS, which it did in 1997. At the time, Anffas was the only organisation in Italy which included disadvantaged young people amongst its volunteers. Since 1997, Anffas has hosted 116 volunteers and sent 96 abroad. Anffas's mission in relation to the EVS is to promote the personal and social development of the individual volunteers and to enhance the level of awareness and openness to cultural diversity across Europe. Ultimately, the long-term objective is to contribute to greater tolerance, intercultural awareness, social inclusion and solidarity among all those involved in EVS, both directly and indirectly.

Typically, Anffas hosts and sends young volunteers whose average age is 20-24 and who have some form of social disadvantage (i.e. left school early, are unemployed, have mental or physical disabilities etc.).

All EVS projects in which the hosted volunteers are involved focus on providing assistance to the people with disabilities that Anffas caters for in Pordenone (hereafter called as 'Anffas residents'). In this way, EVS projects fit well into the organisation's

<sup>14</sup> [https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisation/42001261079\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisation/42001261079_en) and <http://www.anffaspordenone.it/>

activities. The EVS volunteers' tasks include, among others, assisting with meals and other basic assistance. The volunteers also help organise workshops and activities for residents such as pottery, painting and similar hands-on activities. The EVS volunteers are also involved in the therapeutic activities including massages, "dance ability", theatre, dancing, music therapy and sensory stimulation. Other activities include trips to the seaside or to other nearby cities including overnight stays. The volunteers thus interact extensively with all staff and beneficiaries of Anffas as part of their everyday activities.

No previous experience in working with people with disabilities is required for EVS volunteers as they are 'trained' in their first 2 months of EVS through job-shadowing of healthcare professionals so as to learn how to complete their tasks and how to interact with the beneficiaries.

## Impact on volunteers

### **Perspective of EVS alumnus 1**

G. was among the very first EVS volunteers that Anffas hosted in 1997. He was unemployed at the time of his application and felt that he needed an opportunity to make a change in his life. At the age of 22, he was introduced to EVS through a job centre for young people in his hometown in France. With no previous experience in volunteering, B. chose the EVS project at Anffas because he liked the idea of working with disadvantaged people.

G. reported that he gained a lot from EVS in terms of human capital but also in terms of relational development. G. mentioned becoming more empathetic, aware of other people's problems and more able to listen and follow advice. He recalls: *'the possibility to give and receive care and affection changed my outlook on life completely'*. Before EVS, he was very much concentrated on his own problems, but the EVS experience brought him in daily contact with people with problems different from his own and this *'helped put things into perspective'* for him. According to G., *'such an experience would not have been the same if it had happened in his hometown'*. This shows how highly he valued the cross-border aspect of EVS.

The volunteer believes that moving to a new country and living on his own helped him reconsider his life up to that point as he gained a positive outlook on his future. Before EVS, the volunteer was unemployed and had no strict routine to adhere to. Therefore, volunteering through EVS enabled him to develop autonomy and to learn life skills, such as respecting a daily schedule, interacting with others in a professional context and, above all, *'giving proper consideration to other people's advice and opinions, both regarding the professional and personal spheres of life'*. Furthermore, the time spent as a volunteer helped boost his self-confidence. For example, G. received praise for his work from his superiors at Anffas, something he hadn't experienced previously and this made him feel that his work was meaningful.

Overall, the EVS experience was so life-changing for the interviewee that he considers it *'second only to the birth of [his] child'* in terms of the magnitude of impact. A concrete example is his career progression thanks to EVS. After completing his EVS, he was employed by Anffas and has worked there ever since. He learned a variety of new skills that are technical and job-specific for the social care sector. G. learned how to handle less mobile people with disabilities by providing personal care in relation to hygiene, feeding, dressing and using the toilet, among other tasks. The volunteer has particularly improved his ability *'to approach and communicate with people with varying degrees of disability'*. These skills acquired during his EVS proved to be a stepping stone into the job he later obtained at Anffas.

While his experience as an EVS volunteer has had a big impact on his personal and social development, on developing key competences and on his career prospects, G. considers that EVS had less impact on his sense of belonging to the EU. The interviewee's civic participation has increased through his employment with Anffas but not outside of this context.

### **Perspective of EVS alumnus 2**

S. is a 21 year-old young man who was working in a residence for elderly people in France when he decided to apply for a position as EVS volunteer in 2015. While he enjoyed the type of work he was doing at the residence, he no longer found the context sufficiently stimulating and so he registered with the job centre, which then introduced him to the EVS programme and the available projects. He chose the EVS project at Anffas in Pordenone because he wished to continue working in the field of social care.

The ex-volunteer initially found it difficult to adapt to the new context in another country. The language barrier was big and he was quite shy at the beginning, as he recalls. However, he found that the EVS experience *'definitely helped [him] grow as an individual person'*. In particular, he reports that during the first months he spent as an EVS volunteer he learned to interact with people from different cultures in a new way. For example, while he was already familiar with different cultures due to growing up in a multicultural city, he found that the relationship between people from different backgrounds was entirely different within the EVS context. At Anffas and within EVS, the interviewee mentioned that there was *'equality between all cultures'* while in his home city people from different cultures were mostly divided according to different areas of the city and tended not to interact much. He found that while outside of the EVS context diversity may be perceived as something negative, within EVS *'diversity is considered an added value and something to discover rather than fear'*. Therefore, EVS participation helped him learn to appreciate and value diversity of people and of cultures.

Upon completing his EVS, the ex-volunteer was employed by Anffas and is still working there. While EVS experience and skills gained contributed to obtaining a job with Anffas, the volunteer's prior experience with similar activities was a key advantage that makes it difficult to attribute the change in employment situation to EVS alone. Thanks to EVS, he did however learn soft skills which are objectively an advantage for job seekers, such as language and communication skills. S. overcame the language barrier and learned Italian while also learning to relate and communicate with people from a variety of different cultural and social backgrounds. S. mentioned that his time as an EVS volunteer had taught him to *'develop projects and plan for the future'*.

Overall, according to this ex-volunteer, *'an EVS experience helps people to grow and become autonomous adults. It provides you with life skills such as being able to adapt to new contexts, something that in turn leads you to broaden your perspectives and your ambitions'*.

For him, the EVS experience had no real impact on his sense of belonging to the European Union, possibly due to the fact that he comes from a metropolitan and multicultural city. Participation in EVS, however, did make him feel like a global citizen part of the bigger world beyond the EU borders. He developed this feeling thanks to the international atmosphere experienced at the on-arrival training in Rome when we met all other volunteers doing EVS in Italy. The feeling then matured throughout his experience as a volunteer thanks to the numerous events organised during his EVS that included fellow EVS volunteers as well as people with an international background.

### **Perspective of EVS current volunteer 1**

J. is a 23 year-old young woman from Ukraine who holds two Master degrees (in religious studies and philosophy, and in history). Prior to her EVS, she already had some international volunteering experience in Poland where she took part in a 'cultural camp'

run by the organisation 'Fundacja Borussia'. Before deciding to apply for a position in an EVS project, the interviewee was working in a residence hosting people with disabilities and thus had already practical experience on the various tasks that volunteers usually undertake at Anffas. She learnt about EVS through her university and decided to apply because she was dissatisfied with the organisation where she was working. She applied for the EVS project at Anffas because she found the organisation's ethos corresponding to her interest of working with people with disabilities and she wanted to discover new / different approaches that she could later apply for the same target group in her home country.

The volunteer has only just started her EVS at Anffas in Pordenone at the time of the interview. She reported that it took her some time to settle into a 'volunteering' mindset, as opposed to working as an employee in Ukraine which entailed being reachable 24-hours a day. She had to get used to not being directly responsible but above all to having much free time. She initially found this difficult and was anxious but eventually got used to having free time and started to enjoy it and to use it to meet new people, travel or simply dedicate the time to her own well-being (e.g. by relaxing and reading a book). From the perspective of personal development, the volunteer stated that the first two months have had a big impact on her, introducing her to new cultures, to different methods in working with disadvantaged people and to a life abroad in general. She mentioned how mixing with people from such a wide variety of cultures and living in Italy on her own stimulated her thirst for travel and helped her understand that she would like to live abroad. During her EVS J. also discovered a different way of approaching work, where colleagues can interact with one another in a horizontal and non-hierarchical way. The relationship between residents and care professionals was also different insofar as at Anffas they *'were treated as equals with whom the care workers shared their time rather than as ill people in need of assistance.'*

After just two months of EVS, J. has already seen some concrete changes in her personality, including questioning her own cultural traits and habits. For example, she feels that she is much more open towards others, less shy and less afraid to ask questions about her tasks. She mentioned that both beneficiaries and colleagues have told her that she has become a much more outgoing, communicative and generally "warmer" person. J. feels that while this experience may not necessarily provide her with a lot of new employment skills (given that she already had a similar work experience before EVS), it will definitely have a positive impact on her employability because she will be able to add Italian and English to the languages she speaks.

She also mentioned that as a result of her EVS she is starting to feel more 'European'. This sense of belonging to the EU is observable, according to J., in the way she interacts with both colleagues and beneficiaries but also in her approach to everyday life which has become more open and sociable. She believes that this will help her to fit in and adapt to different work environments across Europe. She already notices that through EVS she has learned about Europe and has experienced what Europe is in practical terms, such as the freedom of movement without border controls.

When J. found out about EVS, she hardly believed the flyer she read and thought it was a scam. Even after asking for further information and deciding to apply, she didn't know what to expect from it. J. had never been abroad and had only lived for a short period of time in a big city in Ukraine and thus, J. says, her horizons were limited. EVS opened up a new world in which the work she enjoys (social care) is performed with a different approach, *'in a better way'*. This confirmed for J. that social care is the area in which she would like to pursue a career. Thanks to EVS she has also decided that she would like to pursue her career outside of Ukraine because she is happier living according to what she defines as *'European standards'*. To put it in her words, *"EVS has helped her understand who she is and what she would like from life"*. EVS has had such an impact on J. so far

that she has started to write about it and at some point would like to gather her stories into a book.

J. was the first person from her hometown in rural Ukraine to go abroad. She feels that through EVS she has discovered the easiness of traveling within the EU that she was not exposed to beforehand, calling it *'the beauty of travelling without excessive restrictions'*. As a result, she would now like to live outside of her home country after EVS. Overall, EVS has helped her understand who she is and what she would like from life.

She believes that volunteers from rural areas outside of the EU could benefit much more from the EVS experience than European citizens or citizens from big cities in general. She feels that the EVS experience has made her more European-minded and that this is something that other people from her home town could also benefit from.

### ***Perspective of EVS current volunteer 2***

L. is a young French man who started his EVS in May 2016. Prior to applying for EVS, L. was employed in his hometown but was not passionate about the job he was doing. He liaised with his job centre mentor who suggested various options including volunteering opportunities abroad other than EVS, but he was not satisfied with these options either. However, he found a flyer about EVS at the job centre and, after some online research on various EVS projects, he decided to apply. He chose the project with Anffas because he already had some experience working with disadvantaged groups and wished to pursue this further. His decision to take part in EVS was not well received by his parents, but he decided to follow it through nonetheless.

So far, his experience as an EVS volunteer helped confirm that social work is the occupational field in which he would like to build a career. As a result, he is planning to study psychology at Bachelor level and to compete in an open public competition for social care workers. The interviewee feels that the skills he is learning as a volunteer will help him in these endeavours, especially thanks to the practical experience he is gaining at Anffas. The interviewee also found that the level of responsibility he has been given as a volunteer so far has boosted his self-confidence. One concrete example is a field trip involving an overnight stay during which he was put in charge of two residents, a degree of responsibility he hadn't experienced before and which made him feel as though his work is appreciated and valued, which inspired him to pursue a career as a social care worker.

In his home country, the interviewee was already living on his own hence he already had a high degree of independence. However, EVS enabled him to learn to live with people from different cultures and with different backgrounds, which was at first a challenge but taught him patience and adaptability, two skills he believes will be very important for him in the future considering that he would like to pursue his career as social care worker abroad.

Overall, L. feels that EVS has helped him mature to the point that he has reached a *"new level"* as far as personal and social development are concerned. This has put him on the right track to become an autonomous and responsible adult. However he attributes this particularly to the field in which he is volunteering, i.e. responsibility to help disadvantaged people, rather than to the cross-border nature of the volunteering. L. felt that the kind of relationship he had built with the beneficiaries he was working with had a deep impact on him and provided a break away from the work he was doing previously, helping him to grow on a personal level. The responsibility he was given in relation to the beneficiaries made him feel as though his work was meaningful.

### ***Perspective of EVS receiving organisation***

The focus of Anffas is on hosting EVS volunteers from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. In the opinion of the interviewees, these candidates are often motivated by the need to make a change in their life, something they might not be able to make



otherwise due to lack of opportunities. One interviewee from Anffas mentioned how many volunteers wouldn't have been able to meet the costs of travelling and renting in the absence of the EVS programme. She added: *'I have seen volunteers change their lives completely, going from an unsatisfactory personal and/ or professional situation to being happy and feeling fulfilled'*.

Interviewees from Anffas believe that through participation in EVS volunteers grow as individuals thanks to their interaction with the staff of Anffas and especially with the beneficiaries of Anffas. Volunteers at Anffas have the opportunity to improve their language skills and in some cases their self-confidence via interaction with other care workers. One interviewee from Anffas mentioned also the positive effect that working with people with disabilities can have on the volunteers' development. She explained that the volunteer's ability to communicate improves by working with people with disabilities because the volunteers without experience need to learn a new level of communication which is non-verbal. As the interviewee also acts as a reference person for any personal issues that volunteers may be dealing with outside of their work at Anffas, she reported noticing a progression in how volunteers deal with co-habitation issues. Therefore, overall, the impact of EVS on volunteers is positive, which is confirmed by the fact that only one hosted volunteer has ever terminated the EVS project early while those who have been offered the opportunity to remain as employees as Anffas have chosen to do so.

According to the Anffas coordinators interviewed, there is not necessarily a certain group that benefits more from EVS than others, but a greater focus is needed on involving disadvantaged participants who are currently underrepresented in EVS. In their view, *'the EVS programme can and should be made more accessible to young people with disabilities'*.

## **Impact on EVS organisations**

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

Since Anffas became involved with EVS in 1997 there have been a lot of changes to the organisation. It has grown in terms of staff and its offer of services. Over the last 20 years, Anffas has gone from employing very few staff to employing 170 people (EVS volunteers excluded) and from a relatively small building to a brand new building with much more space for activities. While these changes cannot be entirely attributed to EVS, the activities conducted in these new spaces, the number and variety of national and international partner organisations that Anffas works with as well as the increase in its visibility in the local area are linked to its EVS involvement.

Since Anffas has been involved in EVS, it has had various opportunities to meet new organisations and exchange tools and methodologies. Involvement in the EVS network also opened up for Anffas a world of opportunities in other international European projects. In fact, Anffas has since been involved in other international exchange programs such as those under the Leonardo da Vinci action. Taking part in organising and implementing intercultural activities in Pordenone has greatly raised the profile of Anffas in the local area. This is thanks to the involvement with schools but also due to the numerous activities organised with local businesses and cultural organisations, such as *'cultural aperitifs'* and *'conversation evenings'*. The result is an increase in the organisation's profile within the community and at the same time it also changed the organisation's profile which became associated to more diverse contexts (intercultural and European activities) and not just to assistance to people with disabilities.

EVS has also helped increase the number and quality of activities provided by Anffas to residents. Sending volunteers abroad has given Anffas the possibility to travel and visit other projects as well as to interact with other service providers. This, in turn, has given

them the possibility to learn about different workshops and techniques in working with disadvantaged people. Since Anffas got involved with EVS it has increased the number of activities provided also thanks to discoveries made via networking activities with the organisations that host the volunteers they send through EVS and via inputs from the volunteers themselves.

Since joining EVS, Anffas has become more involved in the organisation of events promoting different cultures and languages in the local area. Anffas has also been involved in the promotion of volunteering among local schools, which ultimately raised its profile in the community and brought new partnerships with local structures. Just recently, Anffas signed a partnership deal with the Italian Union of the Blind<sup>15</sup> and with the radio station 'voice in the desert'<sup>16</sup> to host a 100% blind EVS volunteer and disseminate the experience via the radio and other events.

The interviewees from Anffas believe that socially disadvantaged volunteers bring a lot of value to their activities and to the profile of their organisation and that if it were easier to send and receive disadvantaged volunteers, there would be an even greater impact on the organisation.

### ***Perspective of current EVS volunteers and of alumni***

All volunteers interviewed shared the view that exchanging and sharing different languages and cultures had a positive impact on all those involved in their EVS projects and particularly on the healthcare professionals at Anffas. Staff learned a lot about new languages and new cultures. One of the EVS volunteers performed typical French songs and played the guitar when he was living in France and thus shared his passion and knowledge on the topic with his colleagues.

As concerning the impact on the sending organisations, the volunteers interviewed could not report any particular impact on the organisation in their home country. This is explained by the little interaction of the current volunteers with the sending organisation once they start their EVS abroad and the lack of maintained contact reported by alumni after EVS.

## **Impact at local community level**

### ***Perspective of the members of the local community***

Three members of the local community were interviewed, two from an organisation in charge of intercultural events and one teacher at a local school.

According to both interviewees from the local organisation, the presence of EVS volunteers in Pordenone has boosted all those events which are aimed at integrating different cultures and providing assistance to foreigners in Pordenone. The events have a much wider scope and a broader range of participants thanks to the increase in number and variety of 'internationals' due to the presence of EVS volunteers. EVS volunteers also participate in the development of the events and in fact the idea of having a steady flow of intercultural events was born when one member of the local organisation met two Serbian EVS volunteers several years ago. There has thus been an increase in the number and type of intercultural events in the city, which now include 'cultural aperitifs', 'cultural dinners', sporting events, 'international conversation tables' as well as trips outside Pordenone. This increase in intercultural events has had a positive impact on the local community in that it enhanced interaction with and openness towards various cultures as well as a greater awareness of volunteering. Volunteers are furthermore involved in the promotion of EVS in local schools which also gives them the opportunity

<sup>15</sup> Unione Italiana dei Ciechi e degli Ipovedenti – ONLUS [<https://www.uiciechi.it/>].

<sup>16</sup> Voce nel Deserto [<http://www.vocenedeserto.org/>].



to discuss languages and cultures and act as a catalyst between the various organisations involved in the promotion of cultural events which may not have collaborated otherwise. An interviewed teacher from a local school mentioned how the presence of EVS volunteers had created a much more vibrant atmosphere in Pordenone, a city which is otherwise lacking an active youth community.

Thanks to the above-mentioned collaboration, the reverse effect has also emerged, with EVS volunteers serving as role models motivating students from local schools to also volunteer at Anffas together with the EVS volunteers. Anffas now has a number of local students who volunteer on their premises.

Members of the local community who benefit from the presence of EVS volunteers include permanent residents of Anffas (people with disabilities) but also other international members of the community such as those moving to Pordenone for work or traineeship opportunities either permanently or temporarily. In fact, the intercultural events and promotional events about EVS are aimed at any person in Pordenone but also any foreigners visiting the tourist office in Pordenone are informed about the events.

All interviewed members of local community reported noticing an increase in the community in the interest towards volunteering as well as in travelling abroad since EVS volunteers have been involved in local events. The interviewees mentioned an increase in people asking for information regarding the intercultural events organised in the city but also about EVS and volunteering in general. One interviewee also mentioned a noticeable decline in prejudice towards foreigners in Pordenone which is directly proportional to the increase in participation in intercultural events and in EVS involvement.

According to some of the local community members interviewed, EVS volunteers tend to stick together and to interact with members of the local community only during specific intercultural events organised in the city. It was reported that this might be due to the language barrier many of the EVS volunteers face (at least at the beginning of their EVS). There are also other more infrastructure-related barriers to the integration of EVS volunteers in Pordenone, with the most visible being the poor public transportation and the lack of bike sharing options.

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

Both interviewees from the receiving organisation (Anffas) felt that their involvement with EVS has enhanced their presence in and involvement with the local community. Over the years, they have noticed an increase in participation as well as a greater interest in the topic of volunteering from the local community and greater synergies between the various stakeholders involved. They have noticed a positive change in attitude within the local community as well as within certain local organisations towards people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. For example, the tourism office has become much more active over the years and promotes the intercultural events that involve Anffas and their EVS volunteers.

According to the Anffas staff interviewed, the wider community also benefits from the international atmosphere that EVS volunteers create in Pordenone as well as from the various intercultural events organised by and together with the volunteers. They feel that over the years residents have become more tolerant towards people from other cultures and that they increased their interest in travelling to other countries and in other cultures in general. Those benefitting directly are those participating in the events organised by intercultural organisations in collaboration with Anffas and local businesses. However, the interviewees believe that the benefits ripple throughout the wider community given the small size and interconnected nature of the local community.

Anffas coordinators confirmed that the presence of EVS volunteers has a positive effect on the beneficiaries who reside at Anffas in Pordenone. The Anffas residents benefit generally from the presence and work of these international volunteers but in particular

from those EVS volunteers with some form of disability themselves as they naturally know how to communicate on the same level (including those with severe disabilities). One example given was that of an autistic EVS volunteer without previous experience working with people with disabilities, who '*naturally kneeled down to talk to residents in wheelchairs which allowed for much more balanced dialogue*', as reported by the Anffas coordinators interviewed.

### **Perspective of the EVS volunteers and alumni**

All EVS volunteers hosted by Anffas, current volunteers as well as alumni, were humble when it comes to reporting the impact they perceive that their presence have had on the local community. They find it difficult to assess their impact on the beneficiaries of their activities or on the wider community of Pordenone. However, they do believe that the prolonged cultural exchanges that occur thanks to the presence of EVS volunteers in Pordenone has a positive impact on the hosting community in the same way that it has an impact on them. Interviewees mentioned how the introduction to new cultures and languages and to people with very different backgrounds (religious/ non-religious, urban/ rural, European/ non-European, etc.) provides the tools for combating discrimination and increasing tolerance. They believe that ultimately the local community becomes more open to different cultures as a result of these intercultural exchanges facilitated through the EVS projects.

Interviewees also mentioned that the presence of people from different countries and who often did not speak Italian had a positive impact on the residents at Anffas. In particular, the residents felt more at ease with EVS volunteers because they felt they had similar challenges to communicate hence they found the interaction to be 'on equal footing'. The volunteers however felt that the possibility to travel, volunteer and live in a new country had much more of an impact on themselves than their presence could have on the residents that they catered for during the EVS.

In terms of interaction with the wider local community, opinions differed. Some volunteers found the local community to be generally quite difficult to approach, while others had less difficulties in this respect and found the local people to be very open and accessible. The language barrier, experienced more heavily by some volunteers than by others, can explain this variation in views.

### Interviews conducted

Type stakeholder	of Organisation	Job title	Interview date
EVS alumni	A.N.F.F.A.S Onlus Pordenone	Healthcare Assistant <sup>17</sup>	6-Sep-2016
EVS alumni	A.N.F.F.A.S Onlus Pordenone	Healthcare Assistant	6-Sep-2016
EVS volunteer(s)	A.N.F.F.A.S Onlus Pordenone	Volunteer	6-Sep-2016
EVS hosting organisation	A.N.F.F.A.S Onlus Pordenone	International Programme Coordinator	6-Sep-2016
EVS sending organisation	A.N.F.F.A.S Onlus Pordenone	Coordinator of the A.N.F.F.A.S. centre	6-Sep-2016
Local community	Araba Fenice	Founder	6-Sep-2016
Local community	Pordenone International	Mentor	6-Sep-2016
Local community	Istituto di istruzione superior	Teacher	6-Sep-2016

<sup>17</sup> "Operatore Socio Sanitario"

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Job title	Interview date
	tecnico e professionale (Isis) Flora Pordenone		

### Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in Pordenone, Italy

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
<b>I M P A C T  O N  T H E  I N D I V I D U A L  V O L U N T E E R</b>	<b>Personal and social development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem</li> <li>■ Broadened horizons</li> <li>■ Increase in autonomy, independence</li> <li>■ Learning about oneself (self-discovery)</li> <li>■ More friends and contacts from other countries</li> <li>■ Increase in cultural capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Feeling as though their work is valued and being given responsibility were two big confidence boosts.</li> <li>■ Especially for those coming from remoter areas, EVS has broadened their horizons greatly.</li> <li>■ All interviewees mentioned that living alone in a new country made them question their abilities, habits and overall who they were.</li> </ul>
	<b>Learning and competence development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in all 8 key competences (foreign language skills, learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, etc.)</li> <li>■ Acquired new skills (i.e. how to plan finances)</li> <li>■ Increase in awareness and knowledge of non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Plans to engage in further education</li> <li>■ Intention to learn foreign languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ One interviewee mentioned using the skills he gained during EVS to pass a public competition.</li> <li>■ Most volunteers intend to pursue an international career and to learn other languages.</li> <li>■ Cultural awareness and the ability to listen to other people's needs were mentioned by most volunteers as something they learned.</li> </ul>
	<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Developed professional skills and attitudes, matching employers' demands</li> <li>■ Acquired experience and contacts for work</li> <li>■ Increased chances to find a job</li> <li>■ Obtaining a job by using EVS experience</li> <li>■ Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Two were employed directly by the organisation which means they definitely acquired the skills (one had never worked in that field before).</li> <li>■ Interviewees mentioned that this experience consolidated their interest in the area and made them decide to pursue a career.</li> <li>■ Most believe that this experience will help them find a job, if not for the practical skills learnt, for the life skills it</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
			has provided them with.
	<b>Increased participation in civic and political life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in participation in voluntary activities</li> <li>■ Increase in voter participation</li> <li>■ Increased participation in civic / political life</li> <li>■ Better prepared to participate actively</li> <li>■ Increase in participation in similar youth projects</li> </ul>	
	<b>Stronger sense of belonging to the EU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More aware of common European values</li> <li>■ Higher interest in European topics</li> <li>■ Improved image of the EU</li> <li>■ Feeling more European than before</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ One interviewee felt she had finally been introduced to Europe and to Europeans. On this basis she chose to remain in Europe.</li> </ul>
	<b>Further mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved readiness to work / study/ live abroad</li> <li>■ Plans to move abroad for work / study / live</li> <li>■ Increased confidence to travel to other countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All interviewees considered pursuing their future studies/ career abroad (e.g. one intends to move to Canada) and put this down (to varying degrees) to their EVS experience.</li> <li>■ One interviewee now felt ready to interact in a relaxed way with people from Europe.</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased intercultural learning and dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures)</li> <li>■ Better understanding of other cultures</li> <li>■ More receptivity towards multiculturalism</li> <li>■ More tolerance and respect for other cultures</li> <li>■ Improved intercultural dialogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ One interviewee mentioned that living with people from different cultures taught him to be more patient and tolerant.</li> <li>■ The fact that all cultures are considered equally was highly regarded by one interviewee who didn't find a similar situation in his home country.</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
	<b>Improved social inclusion and solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Higher positive values (tolerance, solidarity)</li> <li>■ Increase in social awareness</li> <li>■ Awareness of global issues</li> <li>■ Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society</li> <li>■ Increased commitment to work against discrimination, racism and intolerance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ One interviewee claimed that while he didn't feel more European as such he now felt "international."</li> </ul>
<b>O R G A N I S A T I O N</b>	<b>Organisational development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More human resources support for NGOs</li> <li>■ Increase in competence of youth workers (project management, fund-raising etc.)</li> <li>■ New ideas, tools and methods of working with young people and with non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Increased cultural diversity in NGO</li> <li>■ Increase in tolerance and openness of staff</li> <li>■ More projects on inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities</li> <li>■ Increased promotion of the participation of young people in organisation</li> <li>■ Enhanced image and reputation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The opportunity to interact with other organisations from across Europe has granted to access to different and new approaches.</li> </ul>
	<b>Internationalisation of the organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More and new international contacts and partnerships</li> <li>■ More international projects</li> <li>■ Motivation to organise more EVS projects</li> <li>■ Higher involvement in European activities</li> <li>■ Transfer of know-how and good practice</li> <li>■ Increased attention to including an</li> </ul>	

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
		international dimension in youth work	
<b>L O C A L  C O M M U N I T Y</b>	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness about volunteering</li> <li>■ Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Fostering learning mobility of other youth</li> <li>■ Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Collaboration with local schools has greatly increased knowledge of volunteering in the community.</li> <li>■ Events organised with local bars and bookshops have also increased the level of cultural understanding in Pordenone.</li> <li>■ Many events have been created to invite people to speak different languages (aperitivo linguistico) and learn about different cultures.</li> </ul>
	<b>Community cohesion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness of volunteering and EVS</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the European Union</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the concerns and interests of young people in society</li> <li>■ Enriching the cultural diversity of the hosting communities</li> <li>■ Increasing interest of local community in multilingualism and multiculturalism</li> <li>■ Overcoming stereotypes and prejudices</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Stronger civil society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ There is much more knowledge of volunteering thanks to the EVS and the events organised in the city.</li> </ul>

## Impact of EVS in Rotterdam, The Netherlands

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** Lava Legato
- **Size of organisation:** 13 volunteers
- **Location:** Rotterdam is the second largest city in the Netherlands with a population of over 600,000. The city is situated along the west coast, in a highly urbanised area called the Randstad. Several of Lava Legato's projects are based in Feijenoord, which is one of the city's poorest districts.
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 2001
- **The organisation is accredited for:** Receiving, sending and coordinating EVS volunteers.
- **Volunteering sector:** youth, social inclusion, entrepreneurship
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** social entrepreneurship, social inclusion, local cohesion and networking
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** Lava Legato works with local organisations / social entrepreneurs that aim to achieve a social benefit. In practice, this means supporting children from deprived backgrounds, victims of abuse and disabled people.
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** A few, from poorer backgrounds. These volunteers are often the result of sporadic ad-hoc exchange projects. Examples are exchanges with Turkey and Saba<sup>18</sup>.
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** Lava Legato has a broad network of international contacts outside EVS.
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** Several local organisations that aim to achieve a social benefit for the local community, and that can appropriately support EVS volunteers.

### Background of EVS in Lava Legato

Lava Legato is a non-profit organisation that was founded in 2001, following on from another project that initially aimed to provide young Dutch people with paid work experience placements in Ireland. It quickly became evident that there was a demand for more work experience places and in order to meet this demand, the organisation applied for EVS accreditation, which led to Lava Legato being established.

Until 2006, Lava Legato only functioned as a sending organisation, after which it also became a hosting organisation in the Dutch town of Zutphen. Gradually, their role in Zutphen evolved into a coordinating role. In 2009, Lava Legato moved their hosting focus to Rotterdam, its goal being to support local partners and set up local enterprises with the aim of facilitating social change in areas of deprivation in Rotterdam. Lava Legato receives subsidies from Erasmus+, but covers its remaining costs by generating revenue from other ventures. While all of Lava Legato's EVS projects have a social purpose, their topic and the work that volunteers are involved in varies. Some examples of Lava Legato's current projects and ventures include:

- *The Rotterdamsche Confituur* (Rotterdam fruit preserve - The fruit preserve is a traditional local product made with organic fruit in cooperation with local partners and sold to local businesses), where volunteers help run the business and support young people who are on work experience placements there. These young people are from special education backgrounds and this project provides them with work experience that they would otherwise not have the opportunity to do.

<sup>18</sup> **Saba** is a Caribbean island and the smallest special municipality (officially public body) of the Netherlands.



- *Women's shelter Arosa*: Lava Legato supplies this shelter with volunteers who help with cooking, cleaning, organising activities for children, and also function as a buddy for the women who come to the shelter.
- *De Vijfsprong*: A biodynamic farm that does activities for people with disabilities, who are supported by staff with psychosocial, socio-therapeutic and agricultural expertise. EVS volunteers' work relates to activities around the farm as well as to the social care aspect.

Lava Legato also supports volunteers who want to set up and run their own project. However, this opportunity is often not taken up, as for many this is too big of a commitment. That said, one of the volunteers who is about to end her EVS will remain connected to Lava Legato to set up a local restaurant, aimed at serving local produce.

Lava Legato does not actively target young people with fewer opportunities, but they have hosted a few volunteers from deprived backgrounds following ad-hoc exchange programmes. The interviewee from the organisation points out that, while not falling in the category of '*having fewer opportunities*', many of their young volunteers are vulnerable people who have little experience of being independent and therefore need a lot of support. Volunteers at Lava Legato are generally either young people (often from Germany) who are seeking to do some voluntary work between finishing secondary school and starting university, or young adults approaching 30 years old (often from Spain or Italy) who seek to gain work experience - this could be a consequence of the high youth unemployment rates in these countries.

## Impact on volunteers

### ***Perspective of the EVS volunteer***

N. is a 28 year-old woman from Spain. She completed secondary vocational education. She wanted to volunteer abroad both for the experience in general as well as due to the lack of opportunities in Spain following the economic crisis. She hoped that a volunteering experience in another country would provide her with the opportunity to start anew. Her partner gave her information about EVS and she then used the European Youth Portal to look for projects. This helped her look for opportunities in the Netherlands, which is where she wanted to go. During her volunteering experience, she was involved in several of Lava Legato's projects; she worked at the women's shelter and in a school providing day care for children. She most enjoyed working for the Rotterdam fruit preserve project, as she loves cooking.

While she was nervous before starting EVS, her time volunteering has not been particularly challenging. Lava Legato have supported her with any issues she has had. She found that the most difficult aspect of EVS was living with flat mates. They were five people living in the same flat and she shared a room with one of them for half of the year. She explained that '*you have to keep an open mind and understand different cultures*'.

N. feels that she has benefited from the EVS experience, especially in terms of the work she has done - '*the thing that has changed the most in me is the feeling that I am more appreciated and valued*'. She explained that as a result of this she feels a greater sense of self-accomplishment.

The experience has provided her with a wealth of opportunities such as working in the cooking sector. Because she does not have the relevant qualifications or work experience, it was very difficult to enter this market in Spain. However, in the Netherlands this is less difficult as the sector has lower entry standards. The volunteering experience has also enabled her to be more mobile. In Spain, she lived in the north of

the country which is not as well connected as the major cities are, making travel to Europe expensive, whereas in the Netherlands this is much easier.

With her time at Lava Legato coming to an end, she will develop her own project in the organisation. She will extend the opening hours of the Rotterdam Fruit Preserve restaurant to Sundays, where she will provide Spanish volunteers who have fewer opportunities (such as the long-term unemployed) with the opportunity of short-term work experience in the restaurant. They will also be able to access other activities of Lava Legato. She explained that she would not have been able to do this in Spain because the bureaucracy and the costs associated with opening a restaurant are too high. In the Netherlands it is easier to open a restaurant, and also to find volunteers. For example, in Spain prospective volunteers are often asked for specific qualifications before they can work. She is planning to complete the Youthpass upon completion of her volunteering experience.

### ***Perspective of the EVS alumni***

P. is a 20 year old woman from a small town in Germany. She is currently studying for a Bachelor's degree in the Netherlands. Her parents are academics and she does not consider herself as having fewer opportunities. Before her EVS experience, she was involved in the European Youth Parliament, which got her interested in the European Union (EU). After finishing secondary school she wanted to do something useful with her time during a gap year. She searched on the internet for opportunities and found EVS. She used the European Youth Portal as well as the website of a sending organisation in her town to get information on the application process and the different projects available.

At Lava Legato she was involved in various projects which all had a strong connection to the local community. Her tasks included cooking with disabled people, 'urban gardening' with long-term unemployed people to help give them some meaning and structure to their days; and watching kids during play time at a primary school.

EVS was her first experience of living away from her parents. It helped her become an adult and be more responsible. She did not experience any difficulties during her time as a volunteer, except for the language barrier, which was an issue when working on projects. She explained that Lava Legato were very kind and caring especially when her mother was diagnosed with cancer during her stay: *'Lava Legato were very supportive in this difficult situation and were like a family'*.

The EVS opportunity has helped her a lot – for example, it helped her decide if she indeed wanted to study her subject (international relations) in the Netherlands. It also allowed her to experience the Dutch culture and learn more about political issues. It has also helped her build her CV - more specifically, it helped her get a German scholarship that gives funding to people who have volunteered in the community. She said that *'people see the commitment and effort you have put in'*. She did not use the Youthpass much; she sent out the certificate when applying for something but she does not think that organisations recognise it because EVS does not seem to be well-known.

More broadly, it has helped her grow as a person and be more open about other cultures. She is now less afraid to ask things and is more certain of her own decisions.

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

The organisation sees both school-leavers and young adults volunteering in their projects. School-leavers often want to experience volunteering and do a gap year before starting university. Young adults see the experience as an opportunity to gain work experience.

The main challenge for all volunteers is to adapt and accept a certain structure and responsibility that comes with the volunteering projects, and to work with people they

would perhaps not have chosen to work with otherwise. Volunteers will work with several of Lava Legato's ventures. These organisations all have different organisational cultures, different expectations and involve different tasks and people. Adapting to these different environments can be challenging. However, it does help the volunteers to find out about their interests, what they enjoy doing and what they do not enjoy.

The variety of work has received positive feedback from volunteers, but at the same time it is also a topic of criticism, as certain organisations were not what volunteers expected or wanted to work in. Some young people will remain in the Netherlands after their EVS period ends and seek to continue to work there (voluntary or not).

The EVS mentor points out that volunteers are not necessarily young people with fewer opportunities. However, they will usually be young people who would otherwise not have the opportunity to travel or who have difficulties in finding and gaining work experience. The latter in this case is often a result of the economy in the volunteer's home country. For example, quite a few volunteers come from Spain, which is experiencing a high youth unemployment rate.

According to the EVS mentor, the volunteering experience broadly entails three key challenges and potential impacts on the volunteers that the mentor supports them with. These include the following:

- a) Being more open-minded - volunteers are placed in a country that is not their own, are working with people from other cultures, and are living with people who they would perhaps not have lived with otherwise. This requires them to be open-minded to new cultures, people and ideas.
- b) Personal growth and self-starting - volunteers have to create a new life in a new environment. They are provided with accommodation and support, but they have to go out themselves in the local community to pursue activities of interest to them, to shop and to socialise. This encourages them to consider their own interests, make new contacts and generally be pro-active.
- c) Flexibility and ability to adapt - the volunteer is placed outside of their comfort-zone and has to be flexible in order to adapt to a new environment and to make this their new home. Furthermore, the nature of Lava Legato's project-based work means schedules can often change.

The EVS mentor explained that all volunteers change in different ways, so it is difficult to generalise the impact EVS has on them. However, it was mentioned that some of the older volunteers appreciate the opportunity more and may get more out of the experience.

## **Impact on EVS organisations**

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

EVS has been crucial for the development of the organisation. In 2001, EVS was used as a way for Lava Legato to meet the increasing demand it was facing as a sending organisation. Since then, it has grown to also take on coordinating and receiving roles.

As a receiving organisation, Lava Legato plans its projects around two specific aspects: firstly a project must aim to achieve a social benefit for the local community in Rotterdam; secondly, the project must be suitable for the EVS volunteers to work on it. Taking part in EVS and providing a social benefit are the organisation's only structural components, in the otherwise shorter term project work of Lava Legato. The fact that Lava Legato is able to periodically offer volunteers is attractive to the partner organisations.

There have also been some changes to organisational processes and culture since taking part in EVS; however, a member of staff from the host organisation pointed out these changes may be related to wider cultural changes and are not necessarily due to EVS. These changes centre on the newer generation of young people either avoiding or finding work and taking on responsibilities at an older age. For example, some young people who do not like entry-level jobs will opt to continue to study instead. The placements at Lava Legato require the opposite; they require the young person or adult to commit and do the job.

This change has led to the organisation having to provide more support and deal with more complaints (rather than the volunteers taking responsibility and problem-solving themselves). Subsequently, a more '*process-based*' approach has been adapted over time. An example of this is dealing with feedback; in the past negative feedback would be dealt with through a more '*relaxed*' approach. Now, there are official procedures in place to contact the sending organisation and discuss negative feedback if the placement was rated below a certain threshold.

Additionally, there is a feeling that some, albeit a minority, see their placement as a vacation or student experience. There have been some experiences with volunteers coming to the Netherlands specifically for the policy on drugs, some have stolen from the organisation (for example, they are given a bike for the duration of their stay and in the past, these have not been returned), or have damaged the accommodation provided to them. As a result, Lava Legato has had to draft a rule book (and is perpetually adding to this) and now asks for a deposit. This has detracted from the original concepts of what volunteering is meant to represent.

At Lava Legato, all members of the organisation work at some point with the EVS volunteers. This experience means they are now better at being very clear to the EVS volunteers about the rules, while remaining approachable. This, and being able to de-escalate situations, has facilitated personal development in Lava Legato's members.

### ***Perspective of the EVS volunteer***

N. explained that the host organisation gets new ideas and points of view from their volunteers. Generally, people from other countries bring new perspectives and ways of thinking. She gave an example of how she feels that in the Netherlands, '*people eat to survive*', not to enjoy. However, she taught staff members that food and cooking is also something to enjoy, that it is important to eat healthily and to spend time on it. This then led to the idea of opening the restaurant business that she will be leading on.

As for the sending organisation, they benefit from EVS volunteers because they can send people from their country abroad, and learn from the ideas and experiences which they bring back. However, N. did not have a very good experience with her sending organisation. She feels like she received some information in the initial meeting but no additional support. They also asked her to complete a form for people who are looking for EVS projects, despite having already found a placement. She felt that it was a way for them to justify that they had provided more support than what they actually did.

She is now looking for volunteers for her project, for which she has contacted sending organisations. However, of the many sending organisations in Spain, she received few responses. Most of those who replied were not Spanish. She feels like sending organisations are not really interested in helping and subsequently she is struggling to find people.

### ***Perspective of the EVS alumni***

P. points out there is a very close working relationship between the EVS volunteer and the host organisation. This went very well and they are still in contact. All of the projects

the organisation does depend on the volunteers. Volunteers can also come up with new ideas for the organisation, so in that sense it is a mutually beneficial relationship.

The link between P. and the sending organisation was not as strong. After EVS, she focused on caring for her mother rather than responding back to the organisation. She did write a blog and allowed them to use this in their newsletter. However, she would have liked to have helped make EVS more well-known.

## **Impact at local community level**

### ***Perspective of organisation***

The impact of Lava Legato's work follows from teaming up with partner organisations and setting up their own enterprise, all of which include a component of achieving some social benefit. For the Rotterdam fruit preserve specifically, where pupils from special education are provided an opportunity for work experience, the revenue generated in partnership with local Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) has the additional goal of stimulating the local economy.

### ***Perspective of the EVS mentor***

The mentor points out that the presence of EVS volunteers particularly impacts people who have experienced abuse or who have a disability. These people are often socially excluded, and their contact with EVS volunteers takes them out of this routine. It also enables the sharing of ideas between the volunteer and the beneficiary, which can also affect the wider community. An example to illustrate this is the healthy food cooked by volunteers for residents of a women's shelter. Beneficiaries here often come from deprived backgrounds and may not have the money or knowledge on how to cook such meals. This food has an obvious short term impact, but the increasing awareness of such healthy meals can also have a longer term impact (i.e. healthier lives for the beneficiaries and their children).

### ***Perspective of the EVS volunteer***

N. said that EVS projects give direct beneficiaries the opportunity to meet people they would otherwise not have met. Some find in the volunteers an opportunity to talk with someone and open up to them. Sometimes they find a friend in the volunteer. The relationship is different from the one they have with professionals. For example, in the school N. worked at, there was a girl that particularly liked playing with her. Later, she met the girl's mother (as she was working in the women's shelter), who mentioned that her child was very happy at school. In addition, those who speak English ask N. questions about Spain - however, fewer children and older people speak English.

She says that volunteers can also help some workers to value their own work more. When they see that volunteers come to help them with their work for free, they realise that their work is not just about earning money, but also has intrinsic value.

### ***Perspective of the EVS alumni***

P. found it difficult to say what specific impact the volunteers' work has had on the host local community. She believes their impact is more about small personal changes, by giving support to individuals who support the local community as a whole. She explained: *'because the Lava Legato projects are there, already there is more community activity going on, which makes it more lively and inclusive [of people in the] community'*. She gives a couple of examples that stood out to her, where she believes she was able to make a difference. Firstly, at a primary school where they would watch the kids during play time, she became friends with two of the kids and played games with them. For the kids it was interesting to meet someone from another country. Secondly, at the urban

garden (*Rotterdamsche Munt*) one of the long-term unemployed people in the project was learning English, so they helped each other learn English and Dutch.

#### Interviews conducted

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Job title	Date of interview
EVS alumni	Lava Legato	N/A	27-Jan-2017
EVS volunteer	Lava Legato	N/A	23-Jan-2017
EVS hosting organisation	Lava Legato (external)	Mentor	05-Jan-2017
EVS hosting organisation	Lava Legato	Board member/recruiter	06-Jan--2017

#### Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in Rotterdam, Netherlands

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
<b>I M P A C T  O N  T H E  I N D I V I D U A L  V O L U N T E E</b>	<b>Personal and social development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem</li> <li>■ Broadened horizons</li> <li>■ Increase in autonomy, independence</li> <li>■ Learning about oneself (self-discovery)</li> <li>■ More friends and contacts from other countries</li> <li>■ Increase in cultural capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Alumni: She is now less afraid to ask things and is more certain of her own decisions;</li> <li>■ Volunteer: "The thing that most changed in me is the feeling that I am more appreciated and valued"</li> <li>■ Volunteer: "you have to keep an open mind and understand different cultures"</li> <li>■ Alumni: EVS was her first experience living away from her parents. It helped her become an adult and be responsible as you have to do everything yourselves.</li> <li>■ Mentor: [volunteers] have to go out themselves in the local community to pursue activities of their interests, shop and socialise. This encourages them to consider their own interests, make new contacts and generally be pro-active.</li> <li>■ Alumni: you work together with people from all over Europe</li> <li>■ Alumni: it helped her experience the Dutch culture.</li> </ul>
	<b>Learning and competence development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Plans to engage in further education</li> <li>■ Intention to learn foreign languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Alumni: it helped her decide if she indeed wanted to study her subject (International Relations) in the Netherlands</li> <li>■ Alumni: it has helped her get a German scholarship that gives funding to people who have volunteered in the community</li> </ul>



Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
R			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer: Her experience there has helped her improve her English and she is now also considering taking up Dutch classes.</li> </ul>
	<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquired experience and contacts for work</li> <li>Increased chances to find a job</li> <li>Obtaining a job by using EVS experience</li> <li>Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer: she will develop her own project in the organisation and it contacting sending organisations to help find volunteers.</li> <li>Alumni: it helped her decide if she indeed wanted to study her subject (International Relations) in the Netherlands</li> <li>Alumni: it has helped her build her CV</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased participation in civic and political life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in participation in voluntary activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer: in her own project, she will provide Spanish volunteers with fewer opportunities (such as the long-term unemployed) with the opportunity of short-term work experience in the restaurant.</li> </ul>
	<b>Further mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved readiness to work / study/ live abroad</li> <li>Plans to move abroad for work / study / live</li> <li>Increased confidence to travel to other countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer: The volunteering experience has also enabled her to be more mobile. In Spain, she lived in the North which is not as well connected as Spain's major cities, making travel to Europe expensive</li> <li>Volunteer: She will set up her own project in the Netherlands at Lava Legato</li> <li>Alumni: She is not studying at a Dutch university</li> <li>Mentor: the fact that their relative is living and working abroad longer term can be an incentive for some people to travel outside of their own country when otherwise they would not have. This applies in particular to older people (i.e. parents, grandparents).</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased intercultural learning and dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures)</li> <li>Improved intercultural dialogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alumni: it has helped her be more open about other cultures</li> <li>Volunteer: Those who spoke English asked her questions about Spain.</li> <li>Alumni: So they could help each other learn English and Dutch.</li> </ul>



Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
	<b>Improved social inclusion and solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in social awareness</li> <li>■ Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Volunteer: in her own project, she will provide Spanish volunteers with fewer opportunities (such as the long-term unemployed) with the opportunity of short-term work experience in the restaurant.</li> <li>■ Alumni: It also allows you to get to know Europe and people from other (e.g. deprived) backgrounds that she, coming from an academic background, would otherwise not have met. This provided her with some perspective and made her feel privileged and appreciate that more.</li> <li>■ Alumni: It helped her see problems that can be changed via politics</li> </ul>
<b>O R G A N I S A T I O N</b>	<b>Organisational development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More human resources support for NGOs</li> <li>■ Increase in competence of youth workers (project management, fund-raising etc.)</li> <li>■ New ideas, tools and methods of working with young people and with non-formal learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organisation: [All at the organisation] are better at being very clear to the EVS volunteers about the rules, while remaining constructive and approachable. This, and being able to de-escalate situations, has facilitated personal development in Lava Legato's members.</li> <li>■ Volunteer: the host organisation gets new ideas and points of view from their volunteers. Generally, people from other countries bring new ideas</li> <li>■ EVS has been crucial for the organisation. In 2001, EVS was used as the solution to meet demand of Lava Legato as a sending organisation.</li> <li>■ The fact that Lava Legato is able to structurally offer volunteers is attractive to the partner organisations.</li> </ul>
<b>L O C A L  C O M M U N I T Y</b>	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Fostering learning mobility of other youth</li> <li>■ Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mentor: people are often socially excluded, and the contact with EVS volunteers takes them out of this routine. It also enables sharing of ideas between the volunteer and the beneficiary.</li> <li>■ Volunteer: direct beneficiaries the opportunity to meet people that they would otherwise not have met. Some find in the volunteers an opportunity to open their hearts and talk. Sometimes they find a friend in the volunteer. Those who spoke English asked her questions about Spain.</li> <li>■ Alumni: For the kids it was interesting to meet someone from another country.</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
		would otherwise not be available	<p>Also, at the urban garden (Rotterdamsche Munt) one of the long-term unemployed people in the project was learning English. So they could help each other learn English and Dutch.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organisation: providing working experience for young people with learning difficulties that would otherwise not have the opportunity to</li> </ul>
	<b>Community cohesion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness of the concerns and interests of young people in society</li> <li>■ Enriching the cultural diversity of the hosting communities</li> <li>■ Increasing interest of local community in multilingualism and multiculturalism</li> <li>■ Enriching the working lives of others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Volunteer: volunteers can also help some workers at the project value their own work more. When they see that volunteers come to help them with their work for free, they realise that their work is not just about earning money but has intrinsic value.</li> <li>■ Alumni: Because the Lava Legato projects are there, already there is more community activity going on which makes it more lively and inclusive [of people in] the community"</li> <li>■ Alumni: it helped her see problems that can be changed via politics</li> </ul>
	<b>Wider community benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Economic benefits for the local community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The revenue generated in partnership with local SME's has the additional goal of stimulating the local economy.</li> </ul>

## Impact of EVS in Warsaw, Poland

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** Polska Fundacja im. Roberta Schumana (Schuman Foundation)
- **Size of organisation:** 8 staff members, 12 coordinated volunteers in projects other than EVS, hosting 2 or 3 volunteers per year / sending approx. 20 volunteers (partner projects)
- **Location:** Warsaw, big city, the capital of Poland
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 2000/2001
- **The organisation is accredited for:** receiving / sending volunteers/coordinating EVS projects
- **Volunteering sector:** youth, social care, education
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** disability, civic and European education
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** youth, teachers, local authorities, adults - overall the organisation has very wide and differentiated target groups
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** Yes, often hosting EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities, in particular persons with disabilities (blind persons), people with socio-economic obstacles, young people coming from small towns/villages
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** the organisation has broad international contacts outside of the EVS
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** partners at local level, such as local authorities, NGOs, church/parish institutions

### Background of EVS in the Schuman Foundation

The Schuman Foundation joined the EVS in 2000/2001 as a sending, coordinating and hosting organisation. The EVS is an important tool to realise the Foundation's mission, i.e. the promotion of European integration and its values. This is achieved, among others, by enabling the EU citizens from various countries to meet each other, which is convergent with the aims of international volunteering projects within EVS. The volunteers that the Foundation hosts through EVS realise this mission by carrying out presentations at primary and secondary schools about the Foundation, the countries and cultures they come from as well as about European values<sup>19</sup>.

It is rather difficult to depict a typical profile of the EVS volunteers involved by the organisation as they represent a very diverse group of young people. However, some minor trends can be observed, depending on whether volunteers are hosted in the organisation or sent abroad through EVS<sup>20</sup>. While all age groups are represented, the Foundation more often hosts younger people (younger or slightly over 18 years old) from various countries (mainly from Germany, France, Austria, Ukraine, Georgia), than compared to the young Poles it sends abroad. There is a tendency, mainly among German volunteers, to join EVS after graduating from upper secondary school. As for those Polish young people that the foundation sends abroad through EVS, they are usually students aged 23 or over, who completed their 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Bachelor studies. Young people with fewer opportunities are often hosted by the foundation in EVS, but it is not a prevailing group. For instance, the Foundation has previously hosted a blind EVS volunteer, young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and some volunteers from remote, rural areas.

Whereas volunteers come from all countries taking part in the EVS programme, some regions, such as Scandinavia, and some countries – like the UK – are less represented among the volunteers that the foundation typically hosts through EVS. On the other

<sup>19</sup> Interviews with EVS organisation's staff members, 7 and 9 September 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Interviews with EVS organisation's staff members, 7 and 9 September 2016.

hand, there are slightly more EVS participants coming to volunteer at the foundation from Southern and Western Europe, Balkans and partner countries (Ukraine, Belarus, Caucasus region, Turkey)<sup>21</sup>.

Volunteers hosted by the Foundation are typically involved in a variety of tasks, some of which are carried out only by volunteers, such as the above-mentioned presentations at schools or strengthening the work of schools' *'European Clubs'*. They are also involved in organising international study visits for people from various other countries and helping with the EVS info-point (though there is limited interest in the latter).

Through their engagement in the Foundation's work, volunteers are in touch with all members of the organisation, with other EVS volunteers and with international community in Warsaw. For example, volunteers often rent an apartment together with other EVS volunteers or with other international young people (i.e. students, expats etc.) They also manage to build relations with the local community in Warsaw, but only in their free leisure time. For instance, some cooperated with another foundation as a part of their hobby; others took part in dance classes, where they met local people.

## Impact on volunteers

### ***Perspective of EVS volunteer 1 (12 months in Poland)***

Volunteer 1 came from a small town in Northern Europe. She is a 20 year-old high school graduate with some previous volunteering experience (but not in a voluntary service project). The volunteer did her EVS in Poland between September 2015 and August 2016.

As reported by the interviewed volunteer, her decision to participate in EVS was spontaneous. Coming from a small town in her home country, the main motivation to apply for an EVS project was the **desire to live abroad and experience a different environment**. The respondent wanted to become more sociable and **more confident in using a foreign language** in daily life. She perceived **EVS as a safe and structured option** to realise this dream and also as a programme that offers **something meaningful to do in another country**. Financial support and assistance with finding a place to stay were also considered as motivating factors by the volunteer.

The volunteer also said she **always wanted to live in a big city** thinking that she will enjoy it. The EVS experience helped her to verify this vision (*'I did it and I did enjoy it'*). She said it has proven her that she feels happier to live in such an environment comparing to her small home town. In her view, volunteering abroad in a small town, where people do not speak English, would have been more difficult because there is no common language in which to communicate (*'I was lucky to be in Warsaw and not a small village'*). She also added that *'it takes a while to start mixing with the local community as when you don't speak Polish, you meet mainly international people, and you work in English'*.

The EVS experience gave her **a feeling of confidence, pride, and empowerment**. It showed her that she can pursue her personal goals and is capable of living on her own in a big city. It also taught her **to be independent** and allowed her to **develop sense of humour** (*'You don't take things so seriously if you face a challenge with humour'*). The awareness that she did not give up when the times were difficult made her stronger, she said.

Equally important impact of EVS experience was the incentive to **rethink her future career path**: *'As for the work, the EVS experience taught us [EVS volunteers] a lot about ourselves'*. Before coming to Poland, the respondent thought that she would enjoy

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with an EVS organisation staff member, 7 September 2016.

office work. However, after doing some office work at the Foundation, she has serious doubts whether this type of employment is suitable for her (*'When I start my university I don't want to apply for a track that leads to a career in an office. I don't think 40 years sitting in an office is for me'*).

Another lesson learnt during the EVS mobility came from sharing a flat with a group of international young people from Finland, Russia, Germany and Italy, who got along very well and had a lot of fun together. *'After this experience'*, the respondent said, *'I pay more and **more attention to the person's personality than to their nationality**'*.

Through the work at the Foundation she became very familiar with **the Erasmus+ programme**: *'I learnt a lot about the various opportunities the EU offers when it comes to participation in such a programme'*. Having learnt a lot about visa processes when fulfilling her tasks and activities, now she **appreciates the fact that she does not need a visa to travel and work across the EU**.

Generally, the respondent **did not face any major problems** during her stay in Poland, but she indicated that she is an independent person who usually tries to solve her problems herself. She rated the communication between her sending organisation and the Schuman Foundation as very good. She also reported that guidance from the coordinators and other people from the Foundation has been offered to her whenever needed. The only inconvenience for her was to travel a long distance from her home town to the city where the pre-departure training was taking place. Even though it was optional, she decided to go there and to pay for herself for the travel.

The second aspect referred to by the volunteer as somewhat challenging was **the long wait until getting fully engaged in the organisation's tasks**. She would have liked to have an earlier introduction into volunteer's tasks and the role of the organisation and she believes that this could have enabled an even higher impact of EVS on her learning and development. The interviewee thought that: *'It would be good to have more tasks at the Foundation, especially at the beginning, during the first 3 months. [...]. Only in January we started to manage e-mail boxes, be involved in daily tasks, but I felt that we could have done that a lot sooner'*. One idea she shared about how volunteers could become more involved from the beginning of the EVS project was to advertise themselves through presentations at local schools.

### **Perspective of EVS volunteer 2 (12 months in Poland)**

Volunteer 2 is 23 years old, has some prior volunteering experience and comes from a small town in Western Europe. The volunteer did her EVS in Poland between September 2015 and August 2016. Similarly to the respondent above, joining EVS was a spontaneous decision. She did her Bachelor degree in European Studies, including an Erasmus semester in France, but in her view the programme was too much focused on Western Europe. Having never been to any Eastern European country, she decided to apply for projects in this region. Her flatmate enjoyed a semester in Warsaw as part of the Erasmus programme so when she saw a project in Warsaw that fitted with her study background she decided to apply. An important aspect was also that the project was located in a big city, in Warsaw.

When listing the reasons why she chose to participate in EVS, the volunteer mentioned the following: *'I thought that EVS is a good opportunity because **most of internships are unpaid** and I also wanted to **gain some work experience** after my studies. In my country if you want to do an internship you have to be enrolled at the university and I wasn't a student anymore'*. The opportunity to take part in a language course as a part of the EVS was also mentioned among the benefits of participation in EVS compared to doing an internship in the home country.

The most important impact EVS had on the volunteer was raising her intercultural awareness and dialogue as well as furthering her plans regarding employment and her

career path (*'What I want to do in my future'*). The interviewee said that during her stay in Poland she **learnt a lot about herself** and **about intercultural communication**. She became very interested in the subject of intercultural communication and is thinking about studying this subject at university in the future. Sharing a flat with people from different countries was *'an opportunity for a reflection on how we are influenced by our nationality'*, the respondent said. For instance: *'It was interesting to see Greek and Turkish girls talking about their country's history, i.e. clashes and wars, and how they have been taught this history in their schools'*. EVS experience also helped her **reconsider her future career plans** and she now considers **doing more volunteering** in other sectors to see what kind of work suits her.

Another benefit mentioned by the respondent was the **opportunity to discover a new country** she has not been to before (*'It was an eye-opening experience to see various places in Poland. [...] I think I've seen more of Poland than I have of my own country'*). The interviewee said that some other volunteers were only travelling to other countries, but in her view such an approach to EVS mobility makes it impossible to interact with local community and to make friends, which was her priority (*'For me it was important to integrate, find friends, it was my time in Poland and I wanted to get to know this country'*). Still, **meeting members of the local host community was not easy** in Poland. Also other volunteers she met had similar experiences. It took her four to five months before she started to speak to Polish people and make some friends. Therefore, she believes that the **length of the EVS project** is a crucial factor helping in this case: *'If I had only four months it would have been a totally different experience as many things changed in January when I started to feel more at home here'*.

Another **factor that facilitated integration was volunteering in a big city**, where there is a lot to do in the free time and therefore easier to meet other people, locals as well as internationals. The interviewee shared a story she had heard from two Spanish girls who volunteered through EVS in a small village in Poland close to the Russian border, who were the only foreigners there, and thus did not feel welcome, but even felt that *'people just stared at them'*.

In terms of organisational aspects of staying abroad, *'everything was set and waiting for us'*, the respondent said. The coordinating and hosting organisation was described as being very helpful. The only **issue that could be improved was to have more tasks at the Foundation**. The interviewee recalled that: *'The time before Christmas was kind of frustrating because for the first two months the only task was to prepare the schools' presentations and we did not even have any invitations to hold such presentations in any school'*.

### **Perspective of EVS receiving organisation**

According to interviews carried out among the Foundation's staff, it is difficult to determine trends in relation to the profile of a typical volunteer and the drivers of their motivation to volunteer abroad as well as who benefits the most from the experience. However, some the examples have been shared by the respondents pointing out to the following observations:

- In Eastern Europe there is a tendency to think that it is worth to go to the West, because it is better to live there (*'[...] it is a kind of escape from their own country'*).
- There was a high interest among Polish youth, a couple of years ago, to go to Caucasus (i.e. Georgia and Ukraine), but this trend seems to be over now.
- In Germany, EVS is typically undertaken by young people who wish to fulfil civic service as an alternative to the [military] service.

These are nonetheless fragmentary observations and they can look different in different places, as highlighted by the interviewees.



In their view, **the impact of EVS on participants depends on the host organisation and people who work there.** This includes the way they cooperate with volunteers, regulate their tasks, respond to their needs, motivate and engage them. Hence, any improvements in this area are to be triggered not at the system level but at organisational level.

There are also **situations which are difficult to overcome, particularly in relation to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.** As expressed by the respondents, *'unfortunately, they face their own personal barriers that make travelling very difficult (e.g. people with physical disability, amblyopia). Not only the range of tasks they can undertake is limited, but also a trip to a different country can be simply impossible'*. The **barriers faced by people with disabilities are systemic**, in the view of the Foundation staff, and similar to those faced in employment (*'It is an issue of functioning of such people in social and professional life. EVS is not different here'*). On the other hand, the organisations that take part in the EVS programme were said to have limited capabilities when it comes to cooperation with such vulnerable volunteers. *'Since they calculate that they will benefit from the volunteers' work, they are probably afraid that the input made by disadvantaged youth [with disabilities] will be limited. They are also constrained by the time limits and the lack of staff who can work with this group of young people'*.

The long-term stay abroad typically produces a **sense of loneliness and separation from family among the majority of EVS volunteers.** As reported by the respondents from the foundation, long-term volunteering in a different country can release all possible stresses related to cultural shock, staying far from a family, friends, work, school, and the home country, as well as financial issues. Language barriers, particularly in the case of languages that are not popular to learn (such as Polish), is also a major factor that contributes to this pressure as are the cultural differences, especially for volunteers from remote regions. These challenges may sometimes cause dropping-out from EVS, but there are also other reasons why volunteers decide to end their mobility early. The interviewees provided the following examples:

- Volunteers receive better (job) offers: *'If a long-term unemployed person, e.g. from Spain, comes here it is not his only option and he starts looking for a job in the meantime. Often he has no choice and has to start a job he is accepted for and thus end the volunteering experience earlier than planned'*.
- Volunteers arrive with some dysfunction that they often do not realise they have, such as high sensitivity or psychological problems, which emerge more visibly in a stressful situation related to staying abroad. There have also been situations where a volunteer has been argumentative and it has been the organisation that has had to end such cooperation.
- There are also individual situations of **mismatch** between the volunteer and the host organisation / EVS project, for example when *'a volunteer is stressed here and it is not a pleasant situation because the country, place, and organisation have been chosen badly'*.

Overall, however, dropouts happen rarely, and over the past five years there have been only five resignations (on the Foundation's projects), out of which two were caused by health or psychological problems stemming from the type of volunteering job, or else, the mismatch between the volunteer's profile and the EVS project / tasks.



## Impact on EVS organisations

### ***Perspective of the EVS organisation that sends, receives and coordinates volunteers***

The Foundation has been involved in EVS for 15 years. Given the long-term involvement, the interviewees found it impossible to make comparisons with the situation of the organisation before joining the EVS programme. Besides, the Foundation has always been pro-European and thus *'welcoming and sending participants from / to the EU is something natural'*, which facilitates the impact of the EVS at organisational level.

One observation made refers to the fact that **more Polish people have been interested in going abroad through EVS in the past than are now**. This may be explained by the fact that going abroad from Poland to Western Europe used to be more difficult several years ago than it is now given the EU membership. Polish youth receive more educational and training offers from abroad than before and EVS is not as attractive anymore according to the foundation staff interviewed (e.g. compared to all the opportunities available, such as student exchanges, research programmes, youth exchanges as part of Erasmus+, local activities etc.). This means that it is no longer easy to find people willing to participate in a volunteering project abroad through EVS. For instance, a couple of years ago, when a volunteering project in Georgia or in Ukraine was announced, the Foundation was overflowed with applications. Recently however, it took the organisation six months to find a volunteer who wants to go on EVS to Ukraine. This also applies to recruiting volunteers for EVS on long-term projects to other countries: *'We could not recruit a volunteer to a prominent institution in Brussels, which would be a great starting point for a career'*, as reported by one of the foundation's representatives. This change can be observed over the past two or three years, since 2013/2014.

The constant presence of two or three international volunteers in a team of the organisation was underlined as a factor that changes the work of the organisation. It makes the organisation **more international, contributes to its cultural** diversity and gives staff members an **opportunity to hear various views** and perspectives from outside Poland.

One factor mentioned as hindering the impact of the EVS at organisational level is **the language barrier**. Given that the Foundation works mainly in Poland, the lack of knowledge of Polish language makes it more difficult for volunteers to work at its office because some issues have to be solved in Polish. Recruiting volunteers, who speak some Polish, is not a solution in this case as this would limit the number of young people who want to volunteer at the Foundation. At the same time, *'teaching the language is too complicated and too long-term process to be efficient during the project. It must be a very talented and motivated person to learn it'*, as a staff member of the organisation reports.

### ***Perspective of current EVS volunteers and of alumni***

The interviewees found it difficult to define their impact on the organisation that hosted them. For them *'it is hard to see our personal effect as [the organisation] always has two volunteers here'*. Besides they had to learn a lot to fulfil their tasks, they said, and the school visits that were their main projects took place outside the Foundation. In case of the latter, they think they raised more awareness about the Foundation's activities and its main mission, hence **increasing visibility of the organisation in the community**.

## Impact at local community level

### ***Perspective of the members of the local community***

The interviewed local community members were two mothers of children attending a kindergarten that hosts EVS volunteers (not the same volunteers interviewed during this

study). The kindergarten is designed for children with intellectual disabilities, autism, complex disability and for participants of rehabilitation / education activities (hereinafter referred to as the participants) as well as individual pre-school preparation.

The respondents welcomed the idea of having EVS volunteers at this type of organisation. They reported: *'This is a great programme, particularly when it comes to working with children with disabilities. EVS volunteers bring lots of energy, work and engagement in an environment where the needs are incredibly high'*. This is because there is **no language barrier** between volunteers and children who cannot speak, and their communication is based on intuition, gestures, mimics, empathy and pictures. This type of contact and support is particularly appreciated by parents of children with disabilities because they are aware how hard and demanding the work with such children is. EVS volunteers are able to quickly build good relations with such vulnerable children, provide direct help to teachers and share their positive attitude towards working with children. Therefore, parents are very pleased that volunteers have been assigned to the groups attended by their children and hope that new volunteers will come this year (in 2016) as well as in the coming years.

Among the main benefits of the EVS volunteers' involvement the following examples have been listed during interviews with the members of the host local community:

- They bring **knowledge from other countries on how to work with children** so both teachers and parents can also learn from them, use their ideas, games and fun.
- Their presence contributes to **cultural exchange** when both children and parents *'can hear foreign languages, see other preferences, and have contacts with 'otherness' which is an enriching experience'*. This is possible, among others, through various activities organised together by volunteers and parents (e.g. artistic performances for children during Christmas season).
- It has the potential to **reduce the level of xenophobia**, particularly when people who are closed towards other cultures see how EVS volunteers from other countries take care of their children. It changes their perception of other cultures and *'has even more impact when volunteers have a different colour of skin, that this kind of 'otherness' is appreciated'*.
- It also contributes to **developing international contacts between local community members and EVS volunteers** in certain cases. For example, some local community members stay in touch with EVS volunteers through Facebook, which is important especially when they have never had any friends from countries the volunteers came from.

The interviewed parents also said that volunteers bring with them **the potential to change the perception of the EU and raise European awareness**, but this depends on the parent and their views. For example, the respondent joined the Schuman Parade<sup>22</sup> for the first time after meeting EVS volunteers. Moreover, the concept of volunteering and EVS in general has become more popular over time, as stated by the respondents. Some people have become interested in finding out whether young Poles also go abroad as part of the EVS programme.

However, not all parents/local community members had contacts with volunteers and not all had a chance to benefit equally from the EVS volunteers' presence in their community. The main factor that **facilitated mutual contacts was the knowledge of foreign languages** (English or other languages spoken by volunteers). In one case the respondent reported that she felt exceptionally privileged, because one volunteer agreed to go to a swimming pool with her son, which was a big support and also a big

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<sup>22</sup> Schuman Parade is an annual demonstration of support for the idea of European integration and the active role of Poland in the EU.

responsibility (*'We have been favoured; it was a bonus'*). A volunteer's help during the trip to the seaside together with parents and children has also been much appreciated. In both cases, the EVS volunteers' help was appreciated as *'unburdening'* the parents' duties.

One of the main factors facilitating the impact of the EVS on the local community, according to interviewees, was a careful selection of people who will be capable of handling the volunteer tasks in such demanding environment (*'It seems that the **volunteers are not just random people** if they decide to carry out such work'. 'I think they are selectively directed to such work, because they have experience in working with children'*). Those who volunteer at the special kindergarten are **characterised by great openness** (*'once they gave me a big hug when they found out I'm a mother of one of the children they work with'*) and **ability to build a deep contact and relation with children**. Such individual predispositions were said to be decisive when it came to making closer links with local community (*'Not all volunteers can be so open towards the community. It depends on an individual person'*).

Another important factor is the **attitude of the coordinators and staff** at the kindergarten. The respondents found it crucial that they gave volunteers the opportunity *'to give something from themselves'* by involving them in a community life and activities. For instance, they could teach music, join parades and present their national cuisine, their countries and culture, traditions, during various community events. This way, their role is not limited only to helping with kids at the given kindergarten (*'not just 'sit and look''*), but *'they can share all that they bring with them and their skills can be fully used'*. As summed up by one of the parents, *'they give a lot of themselves to our kids and we could see it, for example, when preparing together a show. There is a tripartite cooperation of coordinators, volunteers and parents'*.

In addition, **the length of the volunteering** period was also mentioned as having a positive impact, because it allows children to get used to volunteers and to build deeper relations, which otherwise would be quite limited or impossible if EVS mobility was shorter.

Concluding, the local community members reported that they would like to get to know the EVS volunteers better (e.g. through presentations). Although EVS volunteers prepared short stories about themselves and their home countries, which were presented on kindergarten's wall, the respondents were eager to know more about their life, families and motivation to do such work (*'People are curious when it comes to such volunteers'*). In their view, **closer relations between EVS volunteers and local community would be mutually beneficial**. On one hand, parents could learn a lot from EVS volunteers who share their talents and the richness of their culture. On the other hand, local community members could be helpful by providing information or help with assistance in the community when needed by the volunteers.

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving and sending organisation***

The interviewed representatives of the Robert Schuman Foundation expressed their confidence regarding the positive impact that EVS has on the host local community in Warsaw. This includes the **mutual learning about different languages and traditions of different countries**, which is enriching for both sides of the EVS project: the host communities and EVS volunteers. They said that *'EVS facilitates such intercultural contact, particularly in local communities, which are hermetic, in small towns or special organisations, where the influx of people and information from abroad is limited'*. This is a model situation, however, and in reality the impact on the local community depends on each person (volunteer / local community member) and each situation.

The **level of** openness or closure of local community towards 'the world outside' has been depicted as a factor that plays a role in hindering or facilitating the impact of the EVS on the local community. What is important, according to interviewees, is : *'whether it is a more open community which had some contact with 'otherness' or a community that is close-knit internally, without a need for contact with the world outside'*. For example, if a local community is close-knit, it might not be open to the experiences that EVS volunteers bring with them.

### **Perspective of the volunteers**

According to interviewed volunteers, through EVS they contributed to **raising awareness of other countries and cultures** among the pupils attending the schools where they did their presentations during the EVS project. In addition, many young Poles do not know about EVS and its concept, so, in their view, the young people they met had a chance to learn about it through direct contact with EVS volunteers. The respondents hope that they also managed to change some stereotypes among Polish locals about their home countries: *'Hopefully, though my presence, I show that people from my county are also quite normal and nice'*. They also see EVS as *'an opportunity to meet somebody who is from Europe, not that far geographically, but from a different kind of a country'*.

**Deeper immersion into the local community's life**, according to both volunteers interviewed, **seems to be conditioned by the project location, knowledge of English and Polish, volunteer's own initiative, and the length of the project**. In their view, it is easier to volunteer in a big city, which offers many things to do in the free time.

### Interviews conducted

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Job title	Date of interview
EVS volunteer/alumni	Schuman Foundation	Young person in PL	31-Aug-2016
EVS volunteer/alumni	Schuman Foundation	Young person in PL	31-Aug-2016
EVS organisation	Schuman Foundation	Project Coordinator	7-Sept-2016
EVS organisation	Schuman Foundation	Director	9-Sep-2016
Local community	Own business	Self-employed	15-Sep-2016
Local community	Law office	Assistant	16-Sep-2016

### Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in Warsaw, Poland

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews
<b>I M P A C T</b>	<b>Personal and social development</b>	■ Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem	✓
		■ Broadened horizons	✓
		■ Increase in autonomy, independence	✓
		■ Learning about oneself (self-discovery)	✓
		■ More friends and contacts from other countries	✓
		■ Increase in cultural capital	✓

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews
O N  T H E  I N D I V I D U A L  V O L U N T E E R	<b>Learning and competence development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in all 8 key competences (foreign language skills, learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, etc.)</li> <li>■ Acquired new skills (i.e. how to plan finances)</li> <li>■ Increase in awareness and knowledge of non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Plans to engage in further education</li> <li>■ Intention to learn foreign languages</li> </ul>	✓
	<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Developed professional skills and attitudes, matching employers' demands</li> <li>■ Acquired experience and contacts for work</li> <li>■ Increased chances to find a job</li> <li>■ Obtaining a job by using EVS experience</li> <li>■ Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals</li> </ul>	✓
	<b>Increased participation in civic and political life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in participation in voluntary activities</li> <li>■ Increase in voter participation</li> <li>■ Increased participation in civic / political life</li> <li>■ Better prepared to participate actively</li> <li>■ Increase in participation in similar youth projects</li> </ul>	
	<b>Stronger sense of belonging to the EU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More aware of common European values</li> <li>■ Higher interest in European topics</li> <li>■ Improved image of the EU</li> <li>■ Feeling more European than before</li> </ul>	✓
	<b>Further mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved readiness to work / study/ live abroad</li> <li>■ Plans to move abroad for work / study / live</li> <li>■ Increased confidence to travel to other countries</li> </ul>	
	<b>Increased intercultural learning and dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures)</li> <li>■ Better understanding of other cultures</li> <li>■ More receptivity towards multiculturalism</li> <li>■ More tolerance and respect for other cultures</li> <li>■ Improved intercultural dialogue</li> </ul>	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
	<b>Improved social inclusion and solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Higher positive values (tolerance, solidarity)</li> <li>■ Increase in social awareness</li> <li>■ Awareness of global issues</li> <li>■ Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society</li> <li>■ Increased commitment to work against discrimination, racism and intolerance</li> </ul>	
O R G A N I	<b>Organisational development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More human resources support for NGOs</li> <li>■ Increase in competence of youth workers (project management, fund-raising etc.)</li> <li>■ New ideas, tools and methods of working with young people and with non-formal learning</li> </ul>	✓

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews
<b>S A T I O N</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased cultural diversity in NGO</li> <li>■ Increase in tolerance and openness of staff</li> <li>■ More projects on inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities</li> <li>■ Increased promotion of the participation of young people in organisation</li> <li>■ Enhanced image and reputation</li> </ul>	✓
	<b>Internationalisation of the organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More and new international contacts and partnerships</li> <li>■ More international projects</li> <li>■ Motivation to organise more EVS projects</li> <li>■ Higher involvement in European activities</li> <li>■ Transfer of know-how and good practice</li> <li>■ Increased attention to including an international dimension in youth work</li> </ul>	
<b>L O C A L  C O M M U N I T Y</b>	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness about volunteering</li> <li>■ Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Fostering learning mobility of other youth</li> <li>■ Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be available</li> </ul>	✓ ✓ ✓
	<b>Community cohesion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness of volunteering and EVS</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the European Union</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the concerns and interests of young people in society</li> <li>■ Enriching the cultural diversity of the hosting communities</li> <li>■ Increasing interest of local community in multilingualism and multiculturalism</li> <li>■ Overcoming stereotypes and prejudices</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Stronger civil society</li> </ul>	✓ ✓  ✓  ✓ ✓





## Impact of EVS in Faro, Portugal

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** ECOS – Cooperativa de Educação, Cooperação e Desenvolvimento [Cooperative of Education, Cooperation and Development]
- **Size of organisation:** 7 members of staff
- **Location:** Faro is the capital of the Algarve region of Portugal. It has a population of 57.000 of which 15.6% aged 15-24. It is an area with a loose web of youth NGOs and a lack of participation of the community in general. Faro has a Roma community located outside of the urban area.
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 2012
- **The organisation is accredited for:** Since it began its involvement in EVS, ECOS took all roles – sending, receiving and coordinating. However, ECOS receives much more volunteers (10 per year) than it sends abroad (3 in total since 2012).
- **Volunteering sector:** youth sector with a focus on youth work and youth participation
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** EU citizenship, EU awareness and democracy, youth work and youth participation
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** disadvantaged young people, including NEETs, unemployed, Roma youth, from low socio-economic conditions
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** Yes, volunteers who face social and economic obstacles or cultural differences (i.e. Roma background)
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** ECOS has a broad network of European and international partners with whom it cooperates in EVS and other programmes
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** the Governmental Youth Institute (IPJ), the municipality, local partner NGOs, cultural institutes, Community Centre for Roma etc.

### Background of EVS in ECOS

Established in 2010 by a group of youth workers, ECOS<sup>23</sup> is a cooperative of educators working to promote young people's inclusion and participation in society through youth work and non-formal education. Two of the founders are former participants in the EVS pilot action who decided to bring their EVS experience in terms of the European dimension of youth work to their local / regional community. In addition to the EVS, ECOS is involved in other EU youth initiatives of the Council of Europe and of the European Youth Forum. It is at local level though that ECOS seeks to contribute the most with its European experience and know-how. For example, ECOS is considered to be a pioneer in youth participation and structured dialogue in the region of Algarve. Building on this good practice, ECOS has been working together with local authorities to implement local youth councils and to develop local and regional youth policies such as the 'Algarve 2020 – A Contract for Youth'<sup>24</sup>.

ECOS has been active in EVS since 2012 receiving yearly ten volunteers who are hosted either by the ECOS office (ECOS as the host organisation) or local partner NGOs (with ECOS acting as a coordinating organisation). ECOS sends a few Portuguese abroad in EVS each year but this is far less than the number of volunteers it receives, explained by the low interest of Portuguese to move abroad. Every year, ECOS implements one EVS project entitled 'Activating Youth' that has now reached its 7<sup>th</sup> edition. The goal of the project is to activate youth by informing local young people about EVS and other learning and mobility opportunities. The project involves organisations with different backgrounds

<sup>23</sup> [https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisation/941729060\\_fr](https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisation/941729060_fr) and <http://ecos.pt/>

<sup>24</sup> ECOS (2016). *First Plan of Regional Action on Youth of Algarve: Algarve 2020: A Contract for Youth* [1<sup>st</sup> Plano de Acao Regional de Juventude do Algarve: Algarve 2020: Um Contrato Jovem].

and themes from Faro where volunteers do their EVS while also taking part in joint activities of ECOS.

For ECOS, the EVS project it implements is a tool to develop a new culture of youth participation at local level in the region of Algarve in Portugal. ECOS's rationale is to use the EVS project in a dual manner. On the one hand, through EVS, ECOS aims to build the capacity of organisations working with youth at local level by enabling them to host EVS volunteers. On the other hand, ECOS uses the EVS project to reach out to local young people to inform them and make them aware of the learning and mobility opportunities available to them and how to access them<sup>25</sup>.

The typical activities in which ECOS involves the EVS volunteers it hosts and coordinates relate to daily tasks and office work to support project coordinators in running the following projects:

- 'Youth mobility and initiative centre' (hosted by ECOS) – activities to promote EVS and other mobility opportunities available through the Erasmus+ programme to local young people and local youth NGOs
- Networking for youth participation at local level (hosted by ECOS)
  - 'DYPALL network' involves 22 European partners from 17 countries to work towards mainstreaming youth policy development at local level,
  - 'Network of Democratic Citizenship Schools' involving 4 school communities in different countries with the objective to promote youth participation in school decision-making.
- Inclusive Science Programme (hosted by the Living Science Centre of Algarve) – volunteers provide support to design, implement and promote educational activities aimed at bringing science to young people with mental disabilities and to youth from the Roma community (i.e. workshops, exhibitions, fieldworks, production of graphic and web materials etc.)

A specific feature of the EVS projects run by ECOS<sup>26</sup> is the strong partnership with local NGOs. While some EVS volunteers are directly hosted by ECOS in their office, most of the volunteers are coordinated by ECOS but are working on specific youth projects of local partners for at least part of their EVS (2-3 days a week). For example, some volunteers support the work with Roma people at the Roma Community Centre while others work on projects of the Association of Designers of South (ADS) or on socio-cultural activities of the local NGO 'Sardinha de Papel' – all three local partners were interviewed for the study. The rationale of this approach is that ECOS uses EVS to build capacity of local organisations to organise more and better youth and civic projects at local level that can thus lead to improved participation of young people in the civic and social life of Faro, a city that otherwise lacks participation of the community in general. ECOS aims to achieve this by firstly using EVS to bring in resources (human and financial) for the local youth NGOs and then by helping them build on their experience with EVS volunteers to obtain accreditation for EVS projects.

The typical volunteers that ECOS involves in EVS are 25-30 year-olds who have completed secondary school or university studies. The EVS project managers at ECOS noted that, in recent years, they received many applications from students / graduates who have been on Erasmus and wish to continue with another EU mobility due to not finding employment in their home country. They have the advantage of already having contacts abroad and knowing how to prepare their application for EVS (write CV and motivation letter). According to its aim to give priority to volunteers with fewer opportunities, ECOS has been trying to reach out to EVS applicants without university

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<sup>25</sup> European youth Portal (n.d.). Activating Youth project: [https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/project/793\\_fr](https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/project/793_fr)

<sup>26</sup> Interview with the President of ECOS, 22 August 2016.

degree for their EVS projects, but this is difficult due to the language barrier in the selection process<sup>27</sup>.

## Impact on volunteers

### **Perspective of EVS volunteer 1 (October 2015 – September 2016)**

M. is a Slovakian young woman doing an EVS for 12 months at ECOS between October 2015 and September 2016. Before EVS, she spent three years and a half volunteering for an NGO in her home country, as a part-time job, during which she developed and implemented projects for children and young people (i.e. summer camps, youth exchanges, and national events). She heard about EVS while working for this NGO where she met some Spanish volunteers doing EVS in Slovakia. Motivated by their positive experience, M. decided to participate in EVS after her graduation in order to gain experience that she could later use when returning to Slovakia.

During her EVS, M. was involved in a variety of projects and local activities. She helped organise a conference for the DYPALL network, including liaising with participants for travel and other arrangements. She provided support to the project manager in charge of the democratic citizenship networking with schools by organising meetings with school pupils and training of school teachers. In addition, she started her own projects: a blog for expats about living in Faro and a language café for anyone who wants to learn Portuguese by speaking to a local.

The biggest gain reported by the volunteer is in her language skills. Before EVS, the volunteer did not speak a word of Portuguese, but during EVS she learned to speak it fluently. At the beginning of her EVS, the respondent experienced a language barrier when attempting to interact with locals, but this has turned in her favour as it enabled her to learn the language from locals.

M. reported that the EVS experience enabled her to discover herself, in particular her strengths and weaknesses. For example, through EVS, she discovered that she is *'a quite organised person that likes structure in her life'* whilst she also found out that it is difficult for her to adapt to unforeseen circumstances such as *'to move on from a bad experience like when disappointed that things do not turn out to be as expected initially'* (referring to change in her tasks from EVS project description to arrival at ECOS).

Thanks to EVS, the volunteer learned job-specific skills such as how to organise meetings and conferences, prepare promotional materials and use social media to promote events and reach out to potential participants (i.e. for recruiting interested people for the language café). However, the skills that the respondent improved most through EVS and that she finds most useful for future employment are the ability to adapt to new or unforeseen situations, to be flexible in relation to new tasks and to work in different environments in international teams.

The volunteer found that EVS is more useful for improving her employability rather than for finding employment. The reason is that *'outside of the third sector, employers don't know about EVS'*, according to the volunteer. However, *'although you will not get employed for your experience through EVS, if there are two candidates with similar profiles, the one with EVS experience is more likely to be employed'*.

According to the volunteer, the EVS experience made her realise what she wants and does not want to do in life in terms of career path. In particular, after experiencing the work in NGOs in Portugal as well as in Slovakia, she realised that she would like to have a more structured working environment and, for this reason, she is decided to seek a

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<sup>27</sup> Group interview with ECOS project manager for EVS and ECOS coordinator of EVS volunteers, 22 August 2016.

work experience in the private sector. The respondent explains: *'Even negative experiences help to clear up the mind'*.

The volunteer reported that, during her EVS, she learned a lot about the geography and culture of Portugal. As for meeting new people, the volunteer considered that the opportunities were rather few to interact with locals or even with other EVS volunteers hosted at other organisations in the same city. The language barrier was, according to the volunteer, one of the main hindering factors to meeting locals: *'at the beginning of my EVS, I spoke no Portuguese so I could not speak to local people as many cannot speak English'*.

Besides her EVS project, M. got engaged and volunteered also for other civic initiatives at local level in Faro. For example, during the summer period, due to the lower work volume at the ECOS office, M. found another volunteering activity for a couple of hours each Thursday to help a local organisation with collecting left-over food from supermarkets and distributing to immigrants and homeless people. She also did some voluntary work at a local cultural festival (i.e. comedy show). M. found these to be good opportunities to interact with locals and to learn Portuguese. While EVS may have boosted her motivation to contribute to these local volunteering actions, M. was already an active citizen engaged in various civic projects before EVS.

According to the volunteer interviewed, the length and intensity of EVS is a key factor to ensure strong impact of the experience on participants. In her view, a 3-4 month project would only allow for engaging a volunteer in one activity, but a 12-month EVS allows for a complex experience with several activities and longer-term projects thus making it *'a more thorough learning experience'*. Overall, she found that EVS was a very positive experience, explaining: *'if I hadn't come here through EVS, I would have regretted it all my life'*.

### ***Perspective of current EVS volunteer 2 (October 2015 – September 2016)***

S. is a 30-year old Czech young woman doing an EVS for 12 months at a Roma Community Centre in Faro between October 2015 and September 2016. She holds a Masters' degree in education. Before EVS, she worked for four years for Amnesty International in Czech Republic on human rights education, running workshops and trainings for teachers and working with minorities and migrants.

When she applied for EVS, S. was not new to the idea of voluntary service. She had been volunteering for various organisations in the city where she lived and elsewhere in the country, mostly on projects involving Roma people and minorities. For example, S. participated in work-camps and even led some. She started volunteering when she was in university and continued volunteering in several projects while holding on to her job at Amnesty, totalling up to ten years of volunteering (part-time) by the time she applied for EVS.

S. learned about EVS while participating in other volunteering projects and meeting people who had taken part in the programme. She had decided a long time ago, for over four years, that she wanted to do an EVS ('I always wanted to participate in EVS'), but she needed to leave her job to be able to go. Having a high interest in working with minorities, S. found the EVS project coordinated by ECOS and hosted at the Roma Community Centre in Faro.

During her EVS, S. worked directly with Roma people. She planned and realised various activities with Roma women and children, such as writing workshops, handcraft workshops and games for children. She experienced several difficulties in doing her tasks and running the planned activities due to the different events or activities taking place in the Roma community. She would have liked to receive more support with the activities she planned and realised, in particular with recruiting participants for the activities.

S. already had prior experience in working with the Roma and had come to Portugal with a previous volunteering project five years before her EVS. Therefore, she assessed that EVS did not produce any major changes for her. However, the biggest difference compared to her prior volunteering projects was that through EVS she could ensure a *daily* presence in the local community *for a long period of time* (12 months). This allowed her to get immersed in and observe the Roma community in a more meaningful manner. In this way, she developed her understanding of the complexity of the problems related to social inclusion of Roma people. She stated: *'I lost a bit of my idealism of how we can fix the problem, I got to understand the situation of Roma people and the difficulties in their community'*. S. feels now better prepared to work in Roma inclusion projects and, in this sense, she believes that *'EVS was an enrichment'*. She is certain that, upon her return home, she will be able to use the experience she gained through EVS for advancing her career.

According to the volunteer, improved language skills is one of the biggest gains from the EVS experience. Before EVS, she had come to Portugal for a few months five years ago and she had learnt a basic level of Portuguese (A1 level). However, 12 months was enough to learn the language properly. As a result of EVS, she is now fluent in Portuguese and can speak to local people, which is an important skill to be able to realise the activities with Roma people.

S. also reported that during EVS she met a lot of interesting EVS volunteers from other countries during common activities in Faro and during on-arrival and mid-term meetings. Meeting people doing the same work made it possible to exchange ideas and practices that influenced and inspired her in the activities with Roma people.

The volunteer used the EVS experience to travel and get to know Portugal and the lifestyle of the Portuguese people. However, she learned also less positive aspects that made her aware that certain values shared in her home country are not necessarily universal, such as the way animals are treated. Being motivated to help and instil new values in the local community, S. started her own civic action, besides EVS, to help improve the situation of animals in Faro in cooperation with other local organisations. She thus volunteered, in parallel to EVS, to advance this project.

The volunteer assessed the EVS as having an excellent design in terms of training and support foreseen for volunteers while *'a disappointing experience in practice'*. She reported to have heard many frustrating experiences from other volunteers who arrived highly motivated on EVS to realise meaningful work, but have faced difficulties in doing that. The key factor, according to S., is the support the volunteer receives from the hosting organisation (HO) and coordinating organisation (CO) in terms of timely information, help in realising activities, guidance about the target group, assistance with language at the beginning of EVS, etc. *'A timely and quality support can ensure the volunteer remains motivated and avoid frustrations'*, says the volunteer interviewed. In addition, she considers that the financial support is a key element of EVS that enables the volunteer to carry out a long-term voluntary service.

### ***Perspective of ex-EVS volunteer 1 (March 2013 – February 2014)***

A. is a Polish young man who did his EVS at ECOS between March 2013 and February 2014. At the age of 24, A. decided to go on EVS as a gap year during his university studies. He had no prior experience with volunteering other than one-off volunteering at cultural events and music festivals. Interested to get to know new cultures and meet new people while also motivated to change something in his life, A. researched about EVS on the internet and applied for the EVS project at ECOS. He then joined the first generation of EVS volunteers hosted by ECOS.

A. recalls not having fixed tasks part of a tailored project, but supporting ECOS staff with several youth projects. At the beginning, he provided support with office work, but then



he was involved in implementing the projects in the city, when he assisted with the organisation of events, logistics and daily contact with project participants from different European countries. After a while, A. recalls, the EVS project coordinator started adjusting the activities for specific volunteers so as to best fit their interests. As a result, A. did some work at a local radio and, during summer time, assisted with surfing lessons for children and young people.

At the beginning of his EVS, A. faced the language barrier as he was not speaking the language at all while local young people he was working with only spoke Portuguese. However, he considers this to be *'a good challenge'* that made him improve his language skills really fast. His English language skills were also much improved during EVS.

According to the ex-volunteer, the biggest change that EVS had on this life was in terms of his personal development. Before EVS, he did not have a fixed routine, but during EVS, he learned to work according to a fixed schedule. By taking responsibility for a big group of children and young people during specific activities, he learned how to be responsible and improved his sense of responsibility. He also improved his leadership skills while organising study visits for young people coming from other countries to Faro.

A. also learned and improved professional skills during the EVS. In particular, he improved his organisational and communication skills while working at ECOS. He states: *'EVS helped me to become more cooperative, more honest, more opened to people and to new ideas'*. For example, when he was working at the local radio, A. improved his rhetorical skills and learned how to work in the radio field. As a result, he now wishes to develop a career in the radio industry, a career decision that he admits that was triggered by his EVS experience. He intends to use his EVS work experience when applying for a job in the industry. For instance, he mentions the EVS in his CV and at job interviews to inform employers about his prior experience at the local radio. A. believes that the EVS experience does not have a significant impact on employers' decision who to hire, *'only in specific cases it can help a bit'*, but he admits that the language skills and other skills gained during EVS can *'definitely help in obtaining employment'*. In other words, EVS boosted his employability but not necessarily employment chances.

In relation to impact on European awareness, A. assessed that this did not change much due to EVS because he already had contacts with people from other EU countries before EVS. However, prior to EVS, he was not aware and did not know much about youth work, but during EVS he learned about how to develop and organise youth projects funded through EU programme. Although after EVS he did not continue to work on social or youth projects, he did continue to volunteer abroad. He went to Iceland to volunteer for an NGO about travelling. While not connected to the topic of his EVS project, the motivation to continue volunteering abroad was stimulated by the experience he had during EVS of living abroad.

According to the ex-volunteer, the key factor that enabled his positive EVS experience was the support he received from his EVS mentor, who was a local person designated by ECOS to take this role. The mentor helped him to understand the local lifestyle and local culture.

The main challenge that A. recalls is that the organisation did not plan specific tasks or projects for specific volunteers from the start. In his view, the key to ensure the success of EVS is to secure a good match of the EVS volunteer's interest with the EVS project and the receiving organisation.

### ***Perspective of ex-EVS volunteer 2 (March 2013 – February 2014)***

V. is a Serbian young woman who did her EVS at ECOS between March 2013 and February 2014. Prior to EVS, she volunteered for about two years for a local NGO whose mission was to promote intercultural dialogue between young people of different ethnicities in the municipality / region.

At the age of 25, V. decided to go on EVS after meeting several volunteers doing their EVS at a local NGO in Serbia where she was volunteering. V. saw EVS as a great opportunity to gain international work-relevant experience, to make new friends and to discover a new country.

During her EVS at ECOS, the volunteer was involved in promoting the activities of ECOS through social media to attract new local volunteers and participants to activities, mostly from university students coming from different parts of Portugal and from other countries. As part of these promotional activities, V. learned photography and video-editing skills that she did not know at all before EVS but was motivated to learn and to develop during EVS. During summer period, when the workload at ECOS office was lower, V. spent a month working in other NGOs implementing summer activities for children, such as surfing, body boarding and sailing.

The most memorable experience was when she was responsible for preparing a grant proposal for a youth project through Youth in Action programme, including collecting all necessary documents, coordinating with partners from other countries, writing and sending the application to the National Agency. She recalls this as *'the most challenging but thrilling work experience as I learned a lot about writing project proposals and coordinating with partners'*.

The biggest change after EVS, according to the ex-volunteers, was in the area of social skills and intercultural learning. V. met many new people during the EVS, *'people with very different profiles than mine and from what I was used to meeting'*. She made new friends with peer volunteers and local people (ECOS members) with many of whom she is still in contact even over two years after completing her project. In fact, she takes part in yearly meetings with the friends she made during EVS.

Besides enlarging her network of friends and contacts, V. learned about new cultures, both about Portugal and about the cultures of other EVS volunteers. By spending one year in Portugal, she learned that people in Portugal have different perspectives on life. She also improved her language skills. By speaking to locals, she learned to speak Portuguese, which proved useful in her job search in Portugal. By communicating to other EVS volunteers and to ECOS staff, V. also improved her English, which later helped her to obtain a job with an international NGO.

According to the ex-volunteer, *'EVS changed [her] perspective on life and opened horizons'*. Before EVS, she did not have many chances to travel abroad. Through EVS, she learned to take risks, to take on new adventures and to try out new experiences that, before EVS, she thought she could not do. For example, after completing her EVS project, she returned to Serbia but just to come back to Portugal in search for a job. She stayed four and a half months and managed to get a student job with the help of the contacts made during EVS (recommendation of a friend from Faro). Due to visa issues, she eventually had to return back to Serbia.

Having a good knowledge about EU and being involved in civic and community projects already before EVS, there was no big development for V. in these areas, but it confirmed her motivation to contribute to building the community and the society at large. She is now working for an international NGO called SOS Children's Villages<sup>28</sup>. V. believes that her EVS experience and the language skills acquired and improved during EVS helped her get employed at this NGO (*'my CV has the EVS experience among my top work experiences'*). Therefore, while EVS did not help much in getting employment in Portugal, it did back in Serbia.

Overall, the ex-volunteer assessed her EVS experience as being a *'great opportunity that benefitted my life a lot, both in terms of personal and social development and in my*

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.sos-decijasela.rs/?lang=en>



*career path*'. The extent of the impact of EVS on her life was influenced, according to the alumnus, by the length and the intensity of the voluntary service with daily volunteering over a period of 12 months.

### **Perspective of EVS receiving organisations**

According to the EVS project manager at ECOS, EVS has a positive impact on most volunteers. The most visible change for the majority of the volunteers is the gain in self-confidence and self-esteem. Some volunteers feel intimidated at the beginning as they find themselves in a new, unknown environment but eventually, getting over this unfamiliarity helps to boost their confidence. Furthermore, most volunteers develop their European awareness through discovering common values and interests by living and working together for a long period of time.

The director of the Roma Community Centre consulted for this study explained how volunteers go through many changes during their EVS: *'At the beginning they want to do a lot of activities and they don't understand the system and why changes in the local community are slow. For example, EVS volunteers are shocked because of the conditions that animals are treated, but in time they get to understand that there is no infrastructure, no shelters for dogs in Faro'*. Volunteers develop resilience and flexibility as they learn that problems are not as easy to solve, even if solutions seem easy elsewhere (in their home country), they learn to be patient and understanding and to do what is possible in the context of the host country. For instance, one EVS volunteer started contacting local organisations working with animals to initiate a project for animal protection.

The representative of a community NGO – Papel de Sardinia, a local NGO that hosts volunteers through EVS projects coordinated by ECOS – confirmed that volunteers can learn and develop a variety of skills. For example, volunteers improve their creativity by learning how to work with crafts with new materials, they learn to organise workshops for children and young people, but they also learn essential life skills, such as managing their own finances, living on their own and being flexible when situations or tasks change.

According to the interviewed representative of the Association of Designers from South (ADS), an NGO that hosts EVS volunteers with the coordinating support of ECOS, volunteers develop technical skills during their EVS. For example, volunteers learn to use ICT technology and specific software (i.e. Illustrator) through the on-the-job training they are given as part of EVS. The acquired technical skills can improve their career prospects. For instance, the organisation coordinator knows of one EVS volunteer who returned home and started a photography company as a result of getting motivated during EVS to follow this career path.

The EVS project manager at ECOS confirmed that participation in EVS allows volunteers to discover their vocational interests and have clearer ideas about their career aspirations or even a re-orientation of their career path. She gave the example of one volunteer, a teacher from Spain, who discovered during EVS her interest in social responsibility projects and, as a result, decided to refocus her career path and is now in Brazil working on socio-cultural projects for young people and for sustainable development. In her current work, the volunteer is using the knowledge gained during EVS about EU grants for multi-media projects as well as the contacts that ECOS has with NGOs in Brazil.

According to the EVS project manager at ECOS, many EVS volunteers decide to move to a new country or continent for work or study after EVS or to remain in Portugal, but there are also volunteers that return back to their home countries. It depends on each individual volunteer how they use their EVS experience to benefit their future, for instance *'some ex-EVS volunteers take longer than others, but after 4-5 years they use their EVS experience somehow'*, according to the EVS coordinator at ECOS. The

volunteers that benefit the most from EVS, according to the observations of ECOS staff, are the ones who are most pro-active and have concrete ideas from the beginning of their EVS on what they want to achieve through EVS. The trend observed is that university students / graduates tend to have a specific focus for their EVS project to benefit their employability while other volunteers are more open to take on various opportunities after EVS.

According to ECOS staff, the EVS experience and ultimately its impact depends on the motivation of each individual participant: *'within the same project, different volunteers act and react differently'*. The factor mediating the positive impact is thus the match of the volunteer's expectations with the EVS project. This match can be facilitated by the sending organisation in two ways: firstly, by preparing the volunteer and managing their expectations and secondly by informing the HO about the profile and interests of the individual volunteer. Based on the information received from the SO, the HO can then match the volunteer with the activities and tasks available, for instance, ECOS typically adapts the tasks in EVS projects to the volunteers' skills and learning expectations<sup>29</sup>. But, in some cases, the tasks cannot be easily adapted due to the nature of the EVS project. The Roma community centre director confirmed that the key to a successful EVS is the motivation of the volunteer for the given project, but also stressed motivation has to come with good inter-personal skills and empathy from the beginning (as a basis) and interest towards the topic or the people / community members they are supporting (in this case, Roma rights and inclusion). Therefore, in his view, the selection of the *'right volunteers'* is crucial to match the expectations on both sides, that of the volunteer and that of the host organisation.

## Impact on EVS organisations

### ***Perspective of an organisation that is sending, receiving and coordinating volunteers in EVS***

According to ECOS and its local partners, hosting EVS volunteers builds the capacity of small organisations that cannot afford to employ full-time staff. EVS brings in valuable resources (time, human, financial resources) that help local NGOs increase the number and quality of activities they offer. For example, ADS is an association that works only with part-time volunteers (no paid professionals); for them, having several EVS volunteers working full time on the projects of the organisation meant they could realise more activities and events than beforehand. For example, EVS volunteers made it possible for ADS to produce an event in Lisbon on experimental design. The increase in the capacity of the NGO led to its empowerment to do more – they are currently seeking, with help from ECOS, to get accreditation for organising their own EVS projects.

Some of the activities carried out by EVS volunteers make it possible for the organisation to realise new activities for beneficiaries that they otherwise would not have had the capacity to deliver. This is the case of the workshops that the EVS volunteer initiated for Roma children and women at the community centre. The director of the centre explains: *'We [staff of the centre] have many ideas for activities, but we usually have neither time nor capacity to realise these activities with our own staff. Without the EVS volunteers, the workshop activities couldn't be done'*. Therefore, thanks to EVS, the Roma community centre has more capacity to organise new activities and implement new ways of working with Roma people.

For many local organisations, EVS boosts their international contacts. In particular, there are many examples provided by ECOS interviewees of EVS alumni, who upon their return home, they facilitated contacts between the HO and the SO or with other NGOs in their

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with ECOS

home community and, by doing so, they enabled the realisation of new transnational youth projects. One concrete example was of a volunteer from Ukraine who did an EVS at an improvisation theatre in Faro and after returning home she '*opened the doors*' for cooperation of the HO with theatre NGOs in Ukraine and enabled international youth exchanges.

For ECOS, who have a broad network of international partners, EVS projects make it possible to extend the outreach at local level through a multiplier effect. In particular, EVS helps ECOS to better reach out to young people and to liaise with other local organisations through volunteers. For instance, EVS volunteers help disseminate local projects via their contacts and networks of young people at local level. They have access to a broad network of EVS and Erasmus participants living in the city, which is instrumental to promote the organisation's projects 'mouth-to-mouth' and reach out to new possible beneficiaries.

According to the president of ECOS, EVS contributed to the political recognition of the NGO at local level. It facilitated its contact with the municipality and helped to enlarge its network of local partners. Thanks to EVS, ECOS is now recognised for its success in bringing European dimension to youth projects at local level and for its key role in supporting local NGOs to build their capacity.

The interviewed HOs reported that EVS volunteers bring in new project ideas and new ways of working that, over time, can have a positive impact in that the organisation becomes more open to new methods and new tools. According to the interviewed staff at ECOS, EVS volunteers brought new ideas of concrete activities, such as the idea of a 'time bank' and new ways of recruiting young people for activities by using social media. With their new and creative project ideas, EVS volunteers add value and enrich the organisation's activities. For example, the ADS reported that some EVS volunteers interviewed locals for a documentary they filmed. The organisation's staff also learned new skills from EVS volunteers, such as how to use social media and IT tools. For instance, volunteers have given training to staff on how to use Word Press.

According to the interviewed representative of ADS, the local volunteers of the organisation benefitted from the presence and work with EVS volunteers by improving their English skills and learning about new cultures. He stressed however that the intercultural learning was mutual for both the EVS volunteer and for the organisation and that the benefits were long-lasting due to the long-term interaction during the EVS project. This resulted in the HO keeping in contact with the volunteers also after the completion of the EVS project.

EVS volunteers bring fresh energy and motivation to the staff of the organisation and to the community. As the ADS interviewee reports, '*some volunteers gave us energy as their way of thinking was very positive, optimistic and focused on solutions to problems*'. The director of the Roma community centre even found that the Roma EVS volunteer they hosted had a greater impact on the organisation's staff than on the Roma people (due to the language barrier in communicating with the beneficiaries). Since the volunteer was an activist for Roma rights, he taught the staff a lot about the situation of Roma people in other countries. The President reported that he learned a lot about Roma activism and the different conditions and situations faced by the Roma across different EU countries. The impact on the organisation was so great that the volunteer was seen by the staff as a '*consultant who gave positive feedback and encouraged us that we are not doing worse than others in Roma community centres across Europe*'.

EVS volunteers bring a perspective from the outside on the work of the host organisation, which can be a refreshing experience that can lead to organisational development. The director of the Roma community centre explains: '*If the organisation has the same staff for many years doing the same job produces stagnation, but it is better for organisation and also for the community to have someone from outside coming into the community*'.

*with plenty of motivation and new ideas*'. At ECOS, volunteers were involved in staff team meetings, which were held in English, and this enabled them to contribute with ideas on how to improve internal procedures. A concrete example is that 'ECOS lunch and practice' was initiated as a space to debate about internal working rules. It also helped ECOS better reflect on the needs of the local community, i.e. EVS volunteers organise 'impressions of Faro' to collect ideas and feedback from locals. For some hosting organisations, EVS also contributes to better structuring of their work. According to the president of ECOS, EVS volunteers need more structure than other staff or volunteers, which pushes the organisation to improve the way it structures its work, projects, activities and even individual tasks.

The expectation shared by the organisations consulted was that the volunteer is committed to support the HO in its activities and projects. According to the interviewees, the success of an EVS project depends on the motivation of the volunteer for the given project (*'A problem can be seen as a barrier or as an opportunity'*). Therefore, the critical factor is the match of volunteers' expectations with the situation and conditions on the receiving organisation. A mismatch in expectations can result in frustrating experiences or even drop-outs.

### ***Perspective of EVS volunteers and alumni***

Improvement in staff's project management skills was reported by both alumni interviewed. Being the first generation of EVS volunteers that ECOS hosted and coordinated, the alumni believe that their feedback helped ECOS staff learn how to better prepare and manage EVS projects, including how to allocate specific tasks to each volunteer according to their interest. One ex-volunteer stated: *'We held regular meetings with ECOS staff where we provided our feedback on how to improve the EVS experience and how to organise it better for the next EVS volunteers'*.

The current EVS volunteers believe to have contributed to the increase of ECOS staff's language competences. One volunteer thinks that she helped raise the English level of the organisation's publications by proof reading the materials. An ex-volunteer recalls that ECOS staff learned some Serbian to the extent that when her parents came to visit her *'they were impressed about how much Serbian ECOS staff and volunteers knew'*. Increase in staff's technical expertise and skills was also mentioned by some EVS volunteers. For example, one current volunteer mentioned that she contributed with her knowledge of *YouthPass* to help ECOS staff develop and better use this tool in the EU youth projects they organise.

Some ex-EVS volunteers believe that their presence made it possible for staff and volunteers to learn about new cultures. For example, a participant in the first EVS project of ECOS explained that through conversations about Poland he spread information about his home country among ECOS staff and among peer EVS-volunteers; yet, he did this in an informal context as he *'never had the chance to have an official presentation about Poland'*. On the other hand, EVS volunteers currently hosted by ECOS do not share the same views: *'Here in the organisation, staff members have travelled a lot so they know about other cultures [...] they hosted many EVS volunteers before I arrived so they are not interested to learn more cultural aspects'*. This suggests that there is a learning curve for the HO staff who, in the first years of implementing EVS, are interested to discover new cultures, but this learning curve gets attenuated over time.

The interviewed EVS volunteers believe that their service brings additional resources to the host organisation. For example, by assisting with administrative tasks or keeping in contact with partners, EVS volunteers help advance projects that would have otherwise progressed more slowly. Volunteers also bring in a fresh perspective to the work of the organisation. For instance, by showing how the same activities can be done differently, EVS volunteers can contribute to organisational development. One volunteer explains: *'I think that it is good that somebody from outside comes in and points at the strengths or*

*challenges of the organisation. The outside perspective can influence how to do things differently and motivate the organisation to change'.*

## **Impact at local community level**

### ***Perspective of the members of the local community***

The director of a Roma Community Centre in Faro decided, upon learning about EVS, to bring in a Roma EVS volunteer to serve as a role model for the Roma people in the community, who have low expectations about their future. The rationale was that the Roma EVS volunteer could be closer to the Roma and motivate them to develop a positive outlook on life. The Roma Community Centre has so far hosted four EVS volunteers with the coordination support from ECOS.

The director reported that the integration and acceptance of EVS volunteers by the Roma community is easy. The only obstacle is the language barrier, which is difficult at the beginning, but towards the end of EVS, the volunteers are fluent in Portuguese. On the other hand, the language difficulties of EVS volunteers can be an advantage since Roma people feel more at ease and comfortable. They feel empowered because they try to teach volunteers some words or phrases. The community centre director stated: *'It is an interesting dynamic in the construction of relations between Roma people and the international volunteers'.*

Given that there are many other social workers and community volunteers that support the Roma community, the director of the Roma community centre found it difficult to identify the impact of EVS volunteers alone. Still, he pointed that by bringing in a foreigner to volunteer in the community, located in a district where locals do not want to come or live, gives a message of hope to the community that they are appreciated and that *'they are part of the world'*. The difference between EVS volunteers and the community volunteers coming in the district is that the latter know very well all Roma in the community but they do not have the power to give a message of hope, nor have such a strong connection to the rest of the world.

The director noted several visible changes thanks to the presence and work of the EVS volunteers. For example, one EVS volunteer had the idea to do weekly handcrafts workshop with Roma women. The workshop, as assessed by the director, was *'a very positive experience for the Roma women, who felt comfortable speaking to the EVS volunteer (also a woman) about their problems because they knew that the volunteer will not judge them'*. During this weekly handcrafts workshop, Roma women feel they have their *'own time and space for themselves [...] without this activity, their lives will be limited to taking care of the household'*. As a result, Roma women were coming to the Centre to speak to the EVS volunteer and to show her the handcrafts they did at home. Even when the volunteer completed the EVS, the women continued coming to the Centre for doing handcrafts sessions because they got used to this activity and enjoyed it.

The work of the volunteers empowers Roma people and give a sense of need to continue activities started by EVS volunteers. For example, the Community Centre will continue the workshop with Roma women as well as the programme for animal protection started by the current EVS volunteer. The activities that the EVS volunteers start can be sustainable if the ideas are good and there is interest from the community members (Roma people) to participate.

The impact goes also beyond the Roma people. For example, the first EVS volunteer of the community centre, who was Roma, organised a 'Roma culture week' around the city, which involved training courses and workshops for workers from municipality, health care professionals, social workers and others. The training focused on intercultural awareness of the problems and situations of Roma people. The director of the centre explains: *'For the social workers to hear a Roma activist speaking about Roma rights and culture, it was*



*a big awareness moment and learning curve because they realised many things they hadn't before [...] This is also due to the contextual situation in Portugal, where are not many organisations with Roma activists advocating for Roma people's rights'.*

The interviewed director considers that there is a visible difference in the level of impact of EVS on the local community depending on the intensity and regularity of the activity. For instance, the current EVS volunteer implemented the workshop once a week, while in the past it used to be once a month. The more regular the activity, the more contact the Roma people have with the EVS volunteer, thus the stronger the impact of the EVS volunteer on the Roma community because they have the time to strengthen the connection.

### **Perspective of EVS coordinating organisation and of EVS receiving organisations**

The EVS project manager and the volunteers' coordinator reported that one volunteer from the first generation of EVS volunteers hosted by ECOS initiated a project – Video-Forum – to involve the local community to participate in interactive video-projections and to discuss about global issues with impact at local level. The video-forum has been continued by each generation of volunteers at ECOS and is a concrete example of how EVS volunteers can have a direct impact on the wider community. The video-forum involves informal debates with members of the local community in English, which however is a barrier to reaching out to more diverse community members.

EVS volunteers spread information and appreciation of socio-cultural activities at local level. According to the ECOS staff interviewed, EVS volunteers are more informed about the cultural events in Faro than the local people are. By speaking to friends and interacting to locals, the volunteers contribute to disseminating information about the available opportunities at local level for education, cultural life, youth activities and civic initiatives, among others. By speaking positively about the existing opportunities in Faro, the volunteers 'show local people how to value and appreciate what is there at local level'. Some volunteers created a radio programme where they had interviews with locals about different social issues and spread information about cultural events in Faro. This dissemination is important in the context in which local people tend not to be aware of the richness of cultural and social events and activities existing in Faro. This was confirmed by the 'impressions of Faro' collected by EVS volunteers that found that people from Faro who travelled abroad are more aware of the opportunities available in Faro than the locals who have not travelled abroad.

The presence of EVS volunteers raises awareness about EVS and volunteering in general. By being visible in the local community, which is rather small and inter-connected, EVS volunteers raise awareness about volunteering abroad. As a result, more young people at local level are interested in EVS and mobility opportunities. The manager of a community NGO who hosted two EVS volunteers coordinated by ECOS reported an illustrative example: *'Spanish young people from university met the Italian EVS volunteers and then came to the association and wanted to know how they too could volunteer abroad [...] Some locals come to the activities organised by the NGO just because they like the EVS volunteers'.*

However, overall, the interviewees believe that the impact of EVS volunteers on the local community is low. According to the president of ECOS, the EVS programme has a strong focus on the EVS volunteers, but there is no emphasis to structure impact on local level. *'Impact occurs at informal level, but it is not the priority of EVS projects'.* The situation is even less positive when it comes to the impact on home community. ECOS reports that their goal of the EVS project is that volunteers feel motivated to go on multiplying projects in their own country. However, there is a lack of support and follow-up from the sending organisations. According to ECOS staff: *'Many of the EVS volunteers go back home and are disappointed because during EVS their expectations change. There is a need of support for implementing a project for follow-up on a long term and needs to be*

*thought from the beginning as part of the project. It will help to give an impact and sense of local community, to go beyond the personal benefits’.*

From a broader perspective beyond the presence and work of EVS volunteers, the biggest impact of the EVS, according to all three ECOS staff members interviewed, is the contribution of EVS to building civil society by developing the capacity of youth organisations at local level. ECOS is a clear example of the influence of the EVS programme. Two of the founders of ECOS are ex-EVS volunteers from 1998 who, after working several years in international youth NGOs abroad, returned back to Faro and started a cooperative of educators in 2010. They were motivated to bring the European dimension of youth work at local level. ECOS sees in EVS the way to build the capacity of grassroots organisations to offer more and better projects for young people at local level. ECOS uses EVS to achieve the goal of strengthening youth civil society at local level by:

- building youth participation at local level by encouraging local young people to go on EVS abroad and to return home and apply the lessons learnt – i.e. the team of EVS volunteers promote EVS and support local young people with their applications for EVS;
- developing capacity of youth workers and project leaders in local organisations by involving them in EVS projects and other EU mobility actions so as to give them access to training and to European expertise and to bring it back to develop actions at local level;
- building a network of local organisations that together can create more impact of youth participation at local level – ECOS creates synergies between organisations at local level based on the common ground of involvement in the EVS projects it coordinates and helps local partners to obtain EVS accreditation and develop their own EVS projects.

In view of using EVS to build civil society in the region, ECOS coordinates EVS volunteers who work for projects of local partners (hosted in other local NGOs, although some are hosted at ECOS office). While EVS volunteers can help build capacity of small organisations that cannot afford to recruit staff, they also incur a high responsibility and workload for the organisation to manage them. This was confirmed by all three host organisations consulted that reported lacking capacity and expertise to manage the administrative issue of the EVS projects, but on which they can rely on ECOS as coordinating organisation. For example, the ADS Association was motivated from the start to get involved in EVS, but had no capacity to organise EVS projects on their own so the partnership with ECOS made it possible for them to host volunteers as of 2012. Over time, ADS developed expertise and capacity through hosting EVS volunteers and, with the help of ECOS, managed to obtain accreditation for EVS and to develop their own EVS projects – an example of how a coordinating organisation can support small local NGOs to build capacity. Another NGO at local level, Sardinha de Papel, stated: *‘It would be too difficult for us to manage and coordinate volunteers, but with support from ECOS, we can host them’.*

A critical support factor identified by the interviewees of HOs is the funding provided through EVS to organisations from the third sector, not public or private organisations. The funding HOs receive to implement EVS projects and host EVS volunteers, enables building the civil society.

### ***Perspective of EVS volunteers and alumni***

The interviewed EVS volunteers and alumni reported to have had little direct contact with local beneficiaries of HO’s activities, with the exception of the volunteer who worked directly with Roma people at the Roma community centre. All other volunteers sought to develop, on their own, opportunities to interact with locals. Two of the volunteers interviewed provided support, over summer period, to other local NGOs organising



surfing activities for children and young people. Another volunteer started volunteering, on the side of EVS, for a local NGO to distribute left-over food from supermarkets to homeless and poor people.

By coming in contact with EVS volunteers, locals expanded their horizons and improved their language skills. For example, the latter volunteer reported that the staff of the local organisation, whom she helped with the food supply to homeless people, discovered EVS and learned about what it means to be a volunteer abroad. They also learned about Slovakia as a country and culture and they improved their English by listening to the volunteer speak in English while the volunteer learning from them to speak in Portuguese, hence '*a win-win situation*'. Improved English skills were also reported in the case of the children with whom some volunteers interacted for the surfing lessons during summer holidays.

In addition to their tasks as part of their EVS project and involvement in other local NGOs, all EVS volunteers coordinated by ECOS in that given year worked together to organise a video-forum of Faro and to print their mark on the inhabitants. The video-forum included documentaries and videos on social topics or awareness-raising around a societal issue, i.e. treatment of animals or global citizenship etc. Following the video, the EVS volunteers had an intercultural dialogue with locals in a structured setting. This is an example of an organised intercultural learning in the community mutually benefitting the EVS volunteers and the locals.

At the video-forum as well as during the promotional activities done as part of EVS projects, EVS volunteers raised awareness about international volunteering and about EVS in particular. One volunteer who started a Language café reported speaking to locals about EVS. Another volunteer motivated a local young person to get involved in ECOS and to become EVS volunteers' mentor.

As for the impact on direct beneficiaries of activities, the EVS volunteer who worked with Roma people at the Roma community centre reported that EVS enabled Roma children and women to access activities in which they would otherwise not be able to take part. The volunteer explains: '*I think that Roma children are not bored the whole day, they learn to see a different reality and have the chance to do different activities*'. By having opportunity to discover and participate in new activities, such as non-formal learning games and handcrafts workshop, Roma women and children expand their horizons and are empowered, even if at a small scale.

By the power of example, the impact is multiplied in the community beyond direct beneficiaries. A concrete example was given by one EVS volunteer who, upon noticing the mistreatment of animals in the city, started volunteering with other local NGOs to help improve this situation by taking, as a first step, the time to walk and feed dogs. In her view, '*volunteers have a different behaviour with animals than locals do and, by their power of example, locals can see and may change over time*'.

One volunteer expressed his frustration that he never had the chance to see if his EVS work had any real impact. According to him, the impact that the presence and work of any EVS volunteer has on the local community depends on the specific EVS project and on the tasks that the volunteer is doing, whether or not connected or routed in the community. The more time and frequent interaction the volunteer has with local people, the higher the impact. Conversely, if the volunteer assists a group of children for only one week – during summer surfing activities – '*the time is too little to have long-lasting effects*', according to the alumni interviewed.

When it comes to the home local community, the biggest impact EVS volunteers and alumni reported was on motivating others to go abroad through EVS. Two of the four volunteers interviewed reported that they motivated friends to do an EVS. By sharing her experience with her friends via regular posts about her EVS on social media and her blog,

M. inspired a friend from Croatia to apply for EVS and who is currently on EVS. V. had a similar experience. Upon her return from EVS, V. promoted the EVS experience among her friends and network, talked about EVS, informed about application process and conditions, helped others apply and find EVS projects. As a result, one of her friends went on EVS because of her support and positive example.

### References

ECOS website: <http://ecos.pt/pt/>

EVS database: [http://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisation/941729060\\_en](http://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisation/941729060_en)

### Interviews conducted

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Job title	Date of interview
EVS alumni	ECOS	Student	3-Aug-2016
EVS alumni	ECOS	Volunteer	8-Aug-2016
EVS volunteer	ECOS	Volunteer	22-Aug-2016
EVS volunteer	ECOS	Volunteer	22-Aug-2016
EVS organisation	ECOS	President	22-Aug-2016
EVS organisation	ECOS	EVS Project Manager	22-Aug-2016
EVS organisation	ECOS	EVS Supervisor	22-Aug-2016
Local community	Community NGO (Sardinha de Papel)	Coordinator	22-Aug-2016
Local community	NGO association of Designers	Director (volunteer)	22-Aug-2016
Local community	Roma Community Centre	Executive Director	01-Sep-2016

### Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in Faro, Portugal

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews
<b>I M P A C T  O N</b>	<b>Personal and social development</b>	■ Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem	✓
		■ Broadened horizons	✓
		■ Increase in autonomy, independence	✓
		■ Learning about oneself (self-discovery)	✓
		■ More friends and contacts from other countries	✓
		■ Increase in cultural capital	
<b>T H E  I</b>	<b>Learning and competence development</b>	■ Increase in all 8 key competences (foreign language skills, learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, etc.)	✓ Foreign language skills
		■ Acquired new skills (i.e. how to plan finances)	

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews
N D I V I D U A L  V O L U N T E E R		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in awareness and knowledge of non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Plans to engage in further education</li> <li>■ Intention to learn foreign languages</li> </ul>	
	<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Developed professional skills and attitudes, matching employers' demands</li> <li>■ Acquired experience and contacts for work</li> <li>■ Increased chances to find a job</li> <li>■ Obtaining a job by using EVS experience</li> <li>■ Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased participation in civic and political life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in participation in voluntary activities</li> <li>■ Increase in voter participation</li> <li>■ Increased participation in civic / political life</li> <li>■ Better prepared to participate actively</li> <li>■ Increase in participation in similar youth projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Stronger sense of belonging to the EU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More aware of common European values</li> <li>■ Higher interest in European topics</li> <li>■ Improved image of the EU</li> <li>■ Feeling more European than before</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Further mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved readiness to work / study/ live abroad</li> <li>■ Plans to move abroad for work / study / live</li> <li>■ Increased confidence to travel to other countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased intercultural learning and dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures)</li> <li>■ Better understanding of other cultures</li> <li>■ More receptivity towards multiculturalism</li> <li>■ More tolerance and respect for other cultures</li> <li>■ Improved intercultural dialogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Improved social inclusion and solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Higher positive values (tolerance, solidarity)</li> <li>■ Increase in social awareness</li> <li>■ Awareness of global issues</li> <li>■ Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society</li> <li>■ Increased commitment to work against discrimination, racism and intolerance</li> </ul>	
	<b>Organisational development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More human resources support for NGOs</li> <li>■ Increase in competence of youth workers (project management, fund-raising etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews
<b>A N I S A T I O N</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ New ideas, tools and methods of working with young people and with non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Increased cultural diversity in NGO</li> <li>■ Increase in tolerance and openness of staff</li> <li>■ More projects on inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities</li> <li>■ Increased promotion of the participation of young people in organisation</li> <li>■ Enhanced image and reputation</li> </ul>	
	<b>Internationalisation of the organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More and new international contacts and partnerships</li> <li>■ More international projects</li> <li>■ Motivation to organise more EVS projects</li> <li>■ Higher involvement in European activities</li> <li>■ Transfer of know-how and good practice</li> <li>■ Increased attention to including an international dimension in youth work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
<b>L O C A L  C O M M U N I T Y</b>	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness about volunteering</li> <li>■ Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Fostering learning mobility of other youth</li> <li>■ Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Community cohesion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness of volunteering and EVS</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the European Union</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the concerns and interests of young people in society</li> <li>■ Enriching the cultural diversity of the hosting communities</li> <li>■ Increasing interest of local community in multilingualism and multiculturalism</li> <li>■ Overcoming stereotypes and prejudices</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Stronger civil society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>



## Impact of EVS in Baia Mare, Romania

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** Team for Youth association
- **Size of organisation:** 3 full-time staff and 53 local volunteers
- **Location:** Baia Mare is a small city in the North-Western region of Romania with a population of 123,738 residents. It is the capital of the Maramureş county. It is characterised by a large share of residents from ethnic minorities, in particular Hungarian (12.25%) and Roma (2.76%).
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** June 2010
- **The organisation is accredited for:** Sending, receiving and coordinating EVS volunteers.
- **Volunteering sector:** Youth sector with a focus on social inclusion of vulnerable young people.
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** Recognition of non-formal learning, intercultural learning, and social inclusion of young people.
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** Young people in rural areas, Roma children, youth with disabilities, etc.
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** Yes, Team for Youth has hosted volunteers with physical disabilities, school dropouts and the socio-economically disadvantaged.
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** Team for Youth has just started developing international contacts and so far has 70 international partners on 4 continents.
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** Team for Youth has 84 local partners, including kindergartens, schools, high schools, universities, Roma community centre, social centres, day-care centres, foster homes, orphanages, public library, hospitals, museums etc.

### Background of EVS in Team for Youth Association in Baia Mare

Team for Youth is a non-profit association working to foster the social inclusion of disadvantaged young people, in particular of youth from rural areas and Roma people. It was founded in 2009 by a former EVS volunteer whose motivation was to bring the European dimension to the city of Baia Mare. At that moment, there was a lack of information and access to non-formal learning methods and a lack of intercultural events in the local community, which the new NGO aimed to address. Having as its main objective to create non-formal learning activities with an intercultural dimension, the association placed EVS projects at the core of their work from the very beginning. Since June 2010, Team for Youth has hosted 191 EVS volunteers (108 on long-term and 83 on short-term mobility), sent 117 volunteers abroad, and forged over 70 international partnerships<sup>30</sup>.

For Team for Youth, EVS is more than just a volunteer placement scheme. It is a tool to mainstream non-formal education methods in the local community. According to the Vice-President of the NGO, the association's objective is to become a training centre on non-formal education and EVS fits this aim perfectly: *'having non-formal learning in an international environment is key, thus EVS projects are beneficial both for us [staff of the association] and them [EVS volunteers]'*.

A specific feature of the EVS projects run by Team for Youth is the strong emphasis on youth work with disadvantaged young people, in particular youth from rural areas. For example, every summer the NGO organises a series of summer camps aimed to give the children in the rural areas the chance to interact and socialise with volunteers and to learn about other countries in a non-formal way. Activities are part of the EVS project 'Life Skills for Rural Education' run by Team for Youth.

<sup>30</sup> [https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisation/948006027\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisation/948006027_en)



The typical volunteers that Team for Youth involve in EVS are aged 18-20 and have completed upper secondary school. The most popular destinations to send volunteers abroad are Spain, Italy, Poland and Germany due to the proximity or familiarity with the language. The volunteers that Team for Youth hosts in EVS tend to come from Turkey and Poland, in particular on short-term mobility for which Turkish people do not require a visa. Team for Youth has hosted a number of volunteers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as youth with disabilities and chronic diseases. The policy the NGO pursues is not to target EVS projects at youth with fewer opportunities, but to offer equal opportunities to all young people<sup>31</sup>.

## Impact on volunteers

### ***Perspective of EVS volunteer from Portugal doing EVS in Romania in Sep 2016 – Sep 2017***

A. is a Portuguese young woman holding a Bachelor Degree in Portuguese Sign Language. At the age of 23, she went on EVS to Romania for one year. EVS was the first transnational mobility experience for A., but not her first volunteering experience. Before EVS, at age 15, A. carried out voluntary work three times a week, for two weeks in a mental health house in Lisbon, far from her home city. For this purpose, she had to relocate to the capital and to move in the mental health house.

A. was motivated to do volunteering in another country because she wanted to help other communities, whilst at the same time trying new experiences to develop herself. She reported: *'I always wanted to volunteer in another country'*. She searched the Internet for volunteering programmes abroad - in particular, she used the blog of a young Portuguese person who had done volunteer work under various programmes. From this blog, A. found out about the EVS scheme and considered it the most feasible option for her to volunteer abroad. Once she decided to go abroad through EVS, A. started applying for EVS projects which she selected based on the topic of the projects, and not by their host country. She applied to several projects and was even rejected once for an EVS project in Latvia, before being selected as volunteer for the EVS project of Team for Youth in Romania.

During her EVS, A. was involved in the 'Skills for rural education' project run by Team for Youth. As part of the project, A. has supported English classes in a school (pupils aged 8-14) and in a kindergarten (children aged 2-5) in two villages near Baia Mare. Her activities focused on non-formal learning in order to attract children to learn English in a playful and fun way. A. has also carried out activities in a high school (pupils aged 16-18) in the city of Baia Mare, where she spoke to young people about career options and expectations for their future. In addition, A. has also provided support to other associations in town, such as those that work with children with Down syndrome, by helping with therapy activities. Other ad-hoc activities included promoting EVS and the activities of Team for Youth in the city and surrounding villages, for example by means of organising info-sessions and seminars at the schools which she visited.

A. reported that she has already learned and developed a lot during her EVS, although she still has about 9 more months until the completion of her project. Before EVS, she was not comfortable with speaking in front of an audience, as she was afraid of being asked questions to which she may not have had an answer. Now, after the first three months of her EVS experience, she feels much more comfortable with speaking in front of a class because, as she explains, *'the pupils are learning from me and I too am learning from them'*.

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with the Vice-President of Team for Youth, 7 December 2016.

A. can already notice changes in her personality as a result of the EVS experience. She has become more patient with others around her. She is now also more determined to contribute to meaningful, positive changes in the local community. These changes in her personality are not only visible to her, but also to her parents. A. reported: *'My family said that my personality is now different, that I know better what I want and that I am more determined. I tend to agree. I left my comfort zone and I can now see other realities and think more for myself on how to bring about change to improve life in the community in general.'*

A. also reported to have learned to work with children, to use non-formal learning methods, and to adapt these activities to different age groups. She said: *'I learned to be patient with children, as they need time to learn...I learned how to deal with children, what is the best method, and which activities are better for them to learn English. I also learned how to keep things simple and I now feel comfortable with 'teaching' children of any age by using non-formal learning methods.'*

After just several months of EVS, the Portuguese volunteer already feels 'more European' as a result of meeting people from different countries and learning about other cultures. In particular, A. has learned a lot about life in Romania and, as a result, has broken all of her previous stereotypes about Romanians. A. explains: *'In Portugal we have a lot of stereotypes about Romania, we think it is a dangerous country and full of Gypsies. By coming here through EVS, I have broken all of my stereotypes. There are cultural differences, but I see them as an opportunity to learn to do things in a different way.'*

The volunteer also reported to have improved her English language skills and to have learned some Romanian as a result of her participation so far in EVS. When asked whether she plans to use the EVS experience to obtain employment, A. answered that this is not her main goal, but she is certain that the experience will help her gain more job opportunities in the future as companies increasingly value job applicants with experience of social activities and volunteering.

According to A., the success of her EVS is due to the support she constantly receives from the host organisation, both from the staff and from peer-learning with other volunteers (local volunteers and other EVS volunteers hosted or coordinated by the same organisation). She reported: *'We receive a lot of support from the host organisation. We have a lot of volunteers and we support each other, we can work alone and in pairs with other volunteers. If we want to do a personal project, we receive all the support we need.'* A. also appreciated that someone in the sending organisation is regularly checking on her and monitoring her situation to make sure everything is going well.

### ***Perspective of ex-EVS volunteer from Turkey doing EVS in Romania in Jul – Sep 2016***

U. is a young Turkish man studying economics at a university in Ankara. At the age of 23, he carried out a short-term EVS of two months (July – Sep 2016) in Romania. While EVS is his first transnational volunteering experience, it is not the first he has volunteered. U. has a vast experience of voluntary work in his home town. Over the past five years, he has been volunteering for two organisations – the Children with Leukemia Foundation and the Thema Foundation. As a member of the Children with Leukemia Foundation in Turkey, he has helped children and their families by organising information sessions and by helping with translation. He is also a member of the Thema foundation and is actively planting trees to create a greener environment.

The voluntary work done in his home town in Turkey motivated U. to extend his volunteering across borders in order to help people abroad. He found information about the EVS on the Internet. At first, he searched the official website of EVS on the European Youth Portal, but then applied via a Turkish website promoting EVS projects. He applied for several projects based on the topics that interested him most, in particular work with

children, and was accepted for the project run by the Team for Youth association in Romania.

The focus of U.'s EVS project was on work with Roma children. The ex-volunteer carried out activities for Roma children in schools, in charities and in local NGOs working with Roma. He also supported activities with children with Down syndrome and with autistic children, as well as with adults with disabilities. The volunteer undertook a wide array of tasks during his EVS, ranging from sport activities, music and dancing, as well as painting and handcraft; all activities implemented were adapted to the specific needs of the age group and profile of the children. At the time of his EVS, Baia Mare was a candidate for the title of European Cultural Capital for 2021, so U. had the opportunity to also get involved in the campaign for promoting the city to win the title.

According to the ex-volunteer, the most interesting part of his EVS was the opportunity to carry out a personal project which involved making a video where he recorded people in Romania speaking about the music they listen to. Thanks to this personal project, he met many Romanian people from different backgrounds who were curious to learn about his project and his EVS experience.

On the other hand, the most difficult part of EVS was the very first day in the Roma community centre. U. had paired with another Turkish EVS volunteer, but they were both unprepared to lead activities with a class of 25 Roma children. U. explains: *'We were two volunteers and they were 25 children, they didn't speak English and we were using a local volunteer as translator. The children were looking at us and we didn't know what we were going to do. We didn't know how to arrange the class, what activities to do. That is when we realised that we needed to research some activities to do. What was also difficult was that the children were of different ages. Some children were 5 years old, whilst other were aged 8 or 10. Some were interested in puzzles while others preferred other activities'*. What helped U. overcome this difficulty was the support provided by the Team for Youth coordinators and other volunteers, who provided information and tips about how to work with Roma children. A second aspect that helped U. was that he had a team-mate to rely on, as he explains: *'the pairing approach in EVS creates confidence that you are not alone in this'*.

The biggest change that U. experienced during EVS was the strengthening of his European, or even global citizenship, through the realisation that volunteering can unite people of different backgrounds under one common purpose. He explains: *'We were with French, Spanish, Italian, and Latvian people – people from all over the continent, people from different religions, different ages. We were all together, doing the same thing for the same purpose. This shows that we can be united. It was amazing for me. I realised that if you have an important purpose, people can be united regardless of their background – a kind of unity in purpose'*.

As a result of learning about the Romanian people and culture during his EVS, U. broke all his stereotypes about Romania. He reported the following: *'Before coming to Romania, I had many stereotypes about Romanians and about Roma people. After my two months of EVS, I broke all my stereotypes. Now, I speak to my Turkish friends about how Romania and Romanians really are. I always say that they should go on EVS to Romania to see how it really is'*.

The EVS experience also made the volunteer more aware of social disadvantages, and more willing to help people. U. explains: *'Before EVS, I had worked with children with leukaemia, but I was avoiding working with homeless people or with Roma children. After EVS, I feel more comfortable working them as I know how to communicate with them, I understand them and I am used to talking to them'*.

While the length of the EVS project was too short for U. to be able to learn the Romanian language, he did improve his English language skills. Another big change he experienced

as a result of EVS is the desire to travel more in order to discover more countries and cultures. As U. reports, EVS broadened his horizons and motivated him to travel to Greece and to Israel to learn more about these countries with which Turkey has had a long-standing conflict.

The EVS experience also reinforced U's motivation to continue volunteering. After his successful short-term EVS, he now wishes to do a long-term EVS in Poland after his graduation in 2018. He also believes that EVS helped him decide on what he wants to do with his life. U. explains: *'In EVS, you depend on an NGO, but ultimately you are alone and you need to decide yourself on the activities to do and how to organise your time. Your decision-making mechanism improves in EVS'*.

The ex-EVS volunteer named two key factors that ensured the success of his EVS: the helping attitude displayed by **the local people** and the **support of the hosting organisation**. The openness of locals towards EVS volunteers is what U. valued the most in his EVS, as he explains: *'Local people helped us a lot because locals in Romania are always so willing to help . They were caring and tried to help our project by reaching out to the right people. I am still in contact with them - not only local volunteers, but people whom I've met on the street or in the bar, people who tried to help us with whatever was needed to pursue our project, for example by driving us around to places'*. The ex-volunteer also highly valued the host organisation for the constant support they provided and the many opportunities available to learn from the staff and from other volunteers. U. reported: *'They are an amazing organisation. At the on-arrival training, we had the chance to compare the host organisations and I found out that this was the best organisation I had heard of. I was trying to spend all my time in the Team for Youth office in order to learn as much as I could from them'*.

### **Perspective of EVS sending organisation**

According to the Vice-President of the Team for Youth association, the biggest gain for all EVS volunteers is learning English language skills. As he reports, some of the volunteers come with a poor level of English, but they quickly improve as the main working language of the NGO is English. *'One can already see a huge difference in their English language skills from the mid-term of their EVS activity'*, explained the Vice-President.

Volunteers also gain a lot from EVS in terms of intercultural awareness. Living in an intercultural environment makes the volunteers more aware of their own culture and perceptions of others, according to the interviewed Vice-President.

During EVS, volunteers also develop a wide array of professional and life skills. Depending on their project and tasks, volunteers can develop skills in planning events, managing budgets and evaluating projects. What all volunteers develop, regardless of their tasks, is autonomy in how to conduct their work and their personal life. Team for Youth reported concrete examples of positive destinations for ex-EVS volunteers. Some Romanian volunteers who went on EVS obtained jobs in multinational companies in Bucharest upon their return, while others started working for the National Agency or even for Team for Youth. For example, one volunteer who carried out her EVS in Spain was employed upon her return as EVS Project Coordinator at Team for Youth. Another ex-EVS volunteer is now responsible for managing local volunteers of the NGO, as well as managing the sending of volunteers through EVS. Some other ex-volunteers became involved as mentors of EVS volunteers upon their return from EVS.

According to the Vice-President of the organisation, volunteers from outside of the EU gain more from EVS than volunteers from EU countries. The impact of EVS is greater on them as they learn to a greater extent to be more open to integration and to absorb the values of the EU. The Vice-President explains: *'They benefit more from EVS because they get to experience a way of living that is different from theirs. They see EVS as a major opportunity to gain valuable experience that can help them find a job in Europe and, in*

*this way, to open their horizons to opportunities that are not available in their own country'. A concrete example was an EVS volunteer from Ukraine who developed her English language skills during her EVS in Romania, which helped her find a job as a flight attendant for Qatar Airways.*

A key factor that influences the impact of EVS on the individual participants is their motivation and expectation from their project. After over six years of experience in EVS, during which he met more than 300 volunteers, the Vice-President of the organisation is aware that *'different participants expect different things from EVS'* and this impacts the extent to which they will benefit from the experience. *'For some, EVS is just a chance to travel or to develop themselves and gain new skills, while for others, it is a chance to help communities outside of their country or to gain work experience at international level',* said the interviewee.

## **Impact on EVS organisations**

### ***Perspective of an organisation that is sending, receiving and coordinating volunteers in EVS***

From the very beginning of its existence, Team for Youth placed EVS at the centre of their intercultural activities and non-formal learning projects. The biggest changes experienced by the NGO thanks to EVS has been broadening the range of topics they work on, expanding the profile of youth involved in their activities and widening its network of local partners. This was only possible due to the additional human resources that EVS volunteers brought to the organisation. As reported by the Vice-President, the NGO started its activities in 2010 while having only two members of staff and working exclusively with children in orphanages. After obtaining the EVS accreditation, the NGO started hosting more and more EVS volunteers and for longer periods of mobility – from 8-9 months to 12 months. This enabled the creation of more projects to meet the needs of the local community, such as to include schools, high-schools and kindergartens in rural areas. *'Over time, more local institutions have been asking to host volunteers from our side. We try to develop new partnerships and to maintain and improve the ones we already have',* said the Vice-President.

For Team for Youth, EVS played a key role in building the organisation's capacity and contributing to its overall development. The quality criteria and procedures used for implementing EVS projects inspired the development of the association's working procedures. Additionally, based on the lessons learnt from EVS projects – both good practices and failures – the staff further developed their project management skills. They created a booklet on how to organise the selection of EVS volunteers and they improved the preparation of volunteers for EVS mobility. Furthermore, the organisation started using the procedures learnt from EVS projects for implementing other local and national projects by following the same steps of preparing, implementing, evaluating and following up.

The staff of the organisation learned specific technical skills from some of the EVS volunteers. For example, some volunteers taught staff how to use cloud to store information, whilst others taught them some photography and video skills, sign language, dancing and singing, among others. Furthermore, by working together with international volunteers, the staff and local volunteers also learned about new cultures and developed their intercultural communication competences, in particular how to communicate in a clear and non-ambiguous manner with people from other countries.

Thanks to the EVS projects that they implemented, Team for Youth gained visibility at local level and became known as the biggest organisation involved in EVS in the city of Baia Mare. The NGO also gained recognition at national level from the Ministry of Youth and enjoys a good cooperation with the National Agency and with Eurodesk. With the



occasion of celebrating 20 years of EVS, the association organised a full-day workshop to inform youth and raise awareness about EVS, which was attended by over 80 participants coming from different cities in the north of Romania.

Over time, Team for Youth has developed expertise in EVS and has learnt to adapt the projects to obtain the best outcomes for the volunteers and the local people involved. A concrete example is that the association decided to prolong the length of mobility projects from 8 to 12 months in order to give EVS volunteers the possibility to follow not one, but two school years, and thus reach out to more beneficiaries. This change was assessed to be particularly beneficial for the volunteers for whom *'the longer the mobility, the larger the impact, as they have more time to learn'*, according to the Vice-President of the NGO. Building on their expertise in EVS, Team for Youth is now planning to develop a project focused solely on sending volunteers abroad and to create a community with the Romanian participants in EVS. The rationale is that, upon their return, Romanian volunteers would help promote EVS and empower other young people to volunteer. In the future, Team for Youth would like to develop volunteering mobility at national level, similarly to *'service civique'* in France.

### **Perspective of EVS volunteers**

An increase in staff's technical skills and an intercultural understanding are some concrete examples of impacts of EVS on the host organisations, as reported by the interviewed EVS volunteers. For example, A. explained that she had the opportunity to teach some of the staff about Portuguese Sign Language and that her initiative increased their interest and raised their awareness about the use of sign language. She also reported that other staff in the association learned from her about Portugal as a result of a presentation she gave about her country when she discussed similarities and differences with the Romanian culture. A Turkish ex-volunteer reported that the host organisation is using the outputs of his voluntary work, namely the video he produced interviewing locals and the welcome letters he translated in Turkish for new volunteers from Turkey.

## **Impact at local community level**

### **Perspective of the members of the local community**

The EVS volunteers hosted by Team for Youth do not only support the activities of the receiving organisation, but are also involved in activities of the local partner organisations and institutions. They carry out activities in kindergartens, schools, orphanages and social centres to complement the usual activities of these institutions by adding a non-formal learning and intercultural dimension. For example, twice a week, EVS volunteers provide assistance with activities at a kindergarten, in particular with the English and French classes. Other EVS volunteers assist with activities at the Roma community centre, which welcomes about 4 volunteers twice a week. While the children were shy at the beginning, over time they became more open and familiar with the foreign volunteers. As reported by one kindergarten teacher, *'Every Monday and Wednesday the children look forward to the arrival of the volunteers who organise playful activities with them'*.

EVS volunteers bring in new activities that would otherwise not be done because of the educators' busy schedule to implement the set curricula. The activities of the EVS volunteers – dancing, singing, handcrafting etc. – are also more playful than the usual educational activities carried out by the educators and, as a result, trigger the interest of the children. During the summer holidays, EVS volunteers play a key role in organising and carrying out activities at summer camps for children. According to the teacher interviewed, the summer camps could only take place with the support given by the EVS volunteers. *'If it were not for their support, we would not have been able to organise the summer camp because most of the teachers were on holiday. The EVS volunteers*



*organised the entire activity programme for the summer camp and offered many opportunities for children to learn and adapt to new situations'. EVS volunteers also bring new skills that complement the skills and aptitudes of the teachers. For example, a social worker at the Roma community centre observed that many EVS volunteers have practical skills and can help with practical work of refurbishing or renovating furniture or classrooms at school, which teachers cannot do alone.*

A visible impact of the EVS volunteers' activities has been observed in the eagerness of the young children to learn English. Besides the language skills, children also learn new games, songs and dances, and develop an active interest in new countries and cultures. As reported by the kindergarten teacher, one EVS volunteer presented a short film about his home country Ukraine, which increased the children's interest and awareness of the country's customs and traditions. This was manifested in the many curious questions they asked. *'The impact was much greater than if any teacher would have presented the same film, because the volunteer is a real-life example of that country'.*

The presence and activities of the EVS volunteers also have a direct impact on the teachers they interact with during the English and French classes. The kindergarten teacher observed that, thanks to a good collaboration between them, the teachers learned new ways of teaching from the EVS volunteers, such as learning through games and through interactive and non-formal activities.

A concrete change produced as a result of the contact with EVS volunteers is that children as well as their families become more open to foreigners and people from other backgrounds and races. The kindergarten teacher explains: *'In our school, children perceive differences based on race and ethnic background. Since we have been working with EVS volunteers, we have hosted volunteers who were black. At the beginning, the children were quite reserved, but over time, they got used to volunteers from different backgrounds and now they see it as normal to welcome any volunteer regardless of their country of origin, race or ethnic background. This is a serious achievement that would otherwise not be possible because our city and Romania in general is not such a racially diverse environment where children could easily interact with other races'.* The same was reported by a social worker who indicated that the contact of Roma children with foreign volunteers did not only generate a more open attitude of the children towards foreigners, but also of their families. *'In the past, the Roma families did not have a good image of foreign volunteers as they thought that these volunteers are paid to work with them. Over time, those parents that do get involved in activities started changing their image of the volunteers after they had seen first-hand their enthusiasm and commitment',* reported the social worker.

The duration and intensity of the contact between the EVS volunteers and the children is a key factor that influences the extent of the impact. The social worker at the Roma community centre observed a concrete difference in impact depending on how often and for how long one volunteer was visiting the Roma children. She explains: *'In the past we had one volunteer coming once a week. Now, the volunteers come twice a week. This is very important because the more often and the longer the volunteer stays in contact with the Roma children, the greater the impact is on the children'.* Her observation leads to the conclusion that the duration and intensity of the voluntary service are key factors that influence the impact EVS has on direct beneficiaries of the volunteers' activities. From this perspective, long-term projects are more beneficial than short-term ones because the children can interact and get to know the volunteers over a longer period of time. In addition, the motivation and the attitude of the volunteers is another key factor that can stimulate or undermine the impact. *'Those volunteers who come with an open attitude and full of energy influence positively the children's learning. Others who are shy and reserved do not have the same influence',* said the social worker.

Both interviewees confirmed that those members of the local community who interact the most with the EVS volunteers, such as teachers at kindergartens and schools where volunteers do activities, benefit the most from their presence in terms of getting to know them and learning from them.

### ***Perspective of an organisation that is sending, receiving and coordinating volunteers in EVS***

Firstly, the EVS volunteers have a direct impact on the local volunteers of the Team for Youth association. The EVS volunteers create an international and intercultural environment in the city, which motivates local volunteers to go on EVS mobility themselves.

Secondly, the EVS volunteers have a direct impact on the teachers they assist during English classes in kindergartens and schools. Teachers learn from volunteers to use games and non-formal learning tools, and they even started using such methods in their daily teaching, as reported by the Vice-President of Team for Youth.

Thirdly, the contact with international volunteers has a deep impact on the children and pupils who participate in the EVS volunteers' activities. The most visible impact is that children start understanding how important it is to speak a different language, in particular English, and to be able to communicate with people from other countries. They are thus more motivated now to learn English.

Fourthly, the presence of EVS volunteers in the community also has an impact on the local residents of Baia Mare. They have become more open to foreigners and are increasingly welcoming the concept of volunteering. For example, Team for Youth reported that more and more, local institutions and organisations are open to having volunteers help them on their own projects. Therefore, thanks to EVS volunteers, volunteering is becoming widespread in the community.

A particularly important impact on the local community is generated by the Romanian volunteers who went on EVS abroad and returned home. They become living examples of EVS experiences and motivate other young people to go on EVS or to volunteer in the community. Many of the volunteers returning home continue to volunteer for Team for Youth by helping promote EVS face-to-face, by assisting with the implementation of EVS projects, or in the selection of new volunteers for EVS. They also offer their expertise to the Team for Youth staff whenever possible.

### ***Perspective of EVS volunteers***

In terms of the EVS impact on beneficiaries in the host community, the pupils improved their English skills and developed a genuine desire for learning English, thanks to the playful activities implemented by the EVS volunteers. For example, A. explains that *'the children are very interested in the games and activities we do. Some of them have already improved their English skills because they are now not as focused on avoiding mistakes, but can learn English by playing'*. Another concrete example is that the Roma children enjoyed the music and dancing activities of the Turkish volunteers and, through these activities, they learned a bit about the culture of Turkey.

Perhaps the biggest impact that EVS volunteers have on direct beneficiaries is encouraging their openness to foreigners, as beneficiaries feel that they are cared for by people beyond their local environment. A. explains: *'Children love to have volunteers in their school. They are very happy because somebody from outside is coming into their village to their school'*. U. confirms as well: *'All these children [Roma, autistic, with Down syndrome] need love. They are really happy to receive such care from people coming from abroad'*. A. was impressed by the great disparities between urban and rural areas in Romania and, consequently, she values even more the contact with the pupils in the villages. A. reported: *'The most interesting thing is to see the differences between the kids in the villages and those from schools in the city. They are all kind to us, they give*

*us hand-made presents and they treat us very well'. The impact of 'opening up' is even more visible in the case of the children with Down syndrome, who A. recalls 'were very shy at the beginning, but now they have opened up and they give us hugs because we have slowly gained their trust'. Indeed, gaining trust is the key to having an impact on children, and in this regard teachers are the supportive factor. A. explains: 'Teachers are very supportive. If the students don't partake in the activities we planned, the teachers feel ashamed and sad because they realise the effort we invest in these activities'.*

From the perspective of the Turkish ex-volunteer interviewed, the biggest change he observed as a result of his voluntary work is bringing together the local Romanian people and the Roma children, indicating a start in the cycle of breaking existing prejudices. U. explains: *'In Romania, the locals and the Roma community are segregated, they do not interact. We were trying to get them closer and to break stereotypes between Romanian and Roma people. I am not sure we succeeded but at least we tried. I think we managed to bring the local Romanian and the Roma children closer'.*

The activities run by EVS volunteers also have a direct impact on the teachers assisting the classes. There are two main areas of direct impact on teachers. Firstly, teachers learn from EVS volunteers to use non-formal learning tools and games in their teaching. Especially in the rural areas, non-formal ways of learning are new and most teachers are experiencing such methodologies for the first time through the EVS volunteers. A Portuguese volunteer interviewed was confident that this impact is sustainable and that the teachers will continue using the non-formal tools and games in their teaching even after the EVS volunteers leave. A Turkish ex-volunteer interviewed confirmed that the teachers he interacted with learned from him to use new tools for learning, such as origami, music, dancing and painting. But according to him, the biggest impact on the teachers has been that they learned to *'be softer and kinder with the children'*, as a result of observing closely how kindly EVS volunteers interact with the Roma children.

Secondly, the teachers learn from EVS volunteers about new countries and cultures. For example, the Portuguese volunteer gave a presentation about Portugal to the classes she assisted, in order to spread knowledge about the Portuguese culture. As a result, she noticed that the teachers became more interested in the country and its culture.

Besides the direct beneficiaries of the volunteers' activities, other people in the local community are also impacted by the presence of the EVS volunteers. They learn from the volunteers about the reality of life abroad, disconfirming the misinformation they receive from the media; some locals even became interested to discover more about other countries, and to travel to the home countries of the volunteers. The locals were most curious about those countries that are most different to their own. A Turkish ex-volunteer said: *'There is a lot of misinformation and subjective news about Turkey in Romanian media. We [Turkish volunteers] informed Romanians about the reality in our country and the life of Turkish people. In the end, my mentor came to Turkey and he changed his perspective on the country. EVS gave me the chance to explain what kind of life we are living in Turkey'.*

When it comes to the impact on the home local community, the volunteers expressed their intention to continue volunteering at home to help their local community. Furthermore, they reported that upon their return, they will promote EVS and reach out to as many young people as they can to motivate them to go on EVS. A. emphasised that she wishes to *'explain that EVS is for everyone'.*

## References

Team for Youth website: <http://www.t4uth.ro/>

EVS database: [https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisation/948006027\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisation/948006027_en)

EVS project implemented by Team for Youth:

[https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/project/1007\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/project/1007_en)

## Interviews conducted

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Job title	Date of interview
EVS volunteer	Team for Youth	EVS Volunteer	7-Dec-2016
EVS alumni	Not affiliated	Student	7-Dec-2016
EVS organisation	Team for Youth	Vice-President	7-Dec-2016
Local community	Kindergarten	Educator	7-Dec-2016
Local community	Roma Community Centre	Social worker coordinating the Roma Community Centre	15-Dec-2016

## Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in Baia Mare, Romania

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
<b>I M P A C T  O N  T H E  I N D I V I D U A L  V O L U N T E E R</b>	<b>Personal and social development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem</li> <li>■ Broadened horizons</li> <li>■ Increase in autonomy, independence</li> <li>■ Learning about oneself (self-discovery)</li> <li>■ More friends and contacts from other countries</li> <li>■ Increase in cultural capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Learning and competence development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in all 8 key competences (foreign language skills, learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, etc.)</li> <li>■ Acquired new skills (i.e. how to plan finances)</li> <li>■ Increase in awareness and knowledge of non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Plans to engage in further education</li> <li>■ Intention to learn foreign languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Foreign language skills</li> </ul>
	<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Developed professional skills and attitudes, matching employers' demands</li> <li>■ Acquired experience and contacts for work</li> <li>■ Increased chances to find a job</li> <li>■ Obtaining a job by using EVS experience</li> <li>■ Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased participation in</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in participation in voluntary activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
	<b>civic and political life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in voter participation</li> <li>■ Increased participation in civic / political life</li> <li>■ Better prepared to participate actively</li> <li>■ Increase in participation in similar youth projects</li> </ul>	
	<b>Stronger sense of belonging to the EU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More aware of common European values</li> <li>■ Higher interest in European topics</li> <li>■ Improved image of the EU</li> <li>■ Feeling more European than before</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li></li> </ul>
	<b>Further mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved readiness to work / study / live abroad</li> <li>■ Plans to move abroad for work / study / live</li> <li>■ Increased confidence to travel to other countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased intercultural learning and dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures)</li> <li>■ Better understanding of other cultures</li> <li>■ More receptivity towards multiculturalism</li> <li>■ More tolerance and respect for other cultures</li> <li>■ Improved intercultural dialogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> </ul>
	<b>Improved social inclusion and solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Higher positive values (tolerance, solidarity)</li> <li>■ Increase in social awareness</li> <li>■ Awareness of global issues</li> <li>■ Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society</li> <li>■ Increased commitment to work against discrimination, racism and intolerance</li> </ul>	
<b>O R G A N I S A T I</b>	<b>Organisational development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More human resources support for NGOs</li> <li>■ Increase in competence of youth workers (project management, fund-raising etc.)</li> <li>■ New ideas, tools and methods of working with young people and with non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Increased cultural diversity in NGO</li> <li>■ Increase in tolerance and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li></li> <li></li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
<b>O N</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>openness of staff</li> <li>■ More projects on inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities</li> <li>■ Increased promotion of the participation of young people in organisation</li> <li>■ Enhanced image and reputation</li> </ul>	
	<b>Internationalisation of the organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More and new international contacts and partnerships</li> <li>■ More international projects</li> <li>■ Motivation to organise more EVS projects</li> <li>■ Higher involvement in European activities</li> <li>■ Transfer of know-how and good practice</li> <li>■ Increased attention to including an international dimension in youth work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
<b>L O C A L  C O M M U N I T Y</b>	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness about volunteering</li> <li>■ Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Fostering learning mobility of other youth</li> <li>■ Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<b>Community cohesion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness of volunteering and EVS</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the European Union</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the concerns and interests of young people in society</li> <li>■ Enriching the cultural diversity of the hosting communities</li> <li>■ Increasing interest of local community in multilingualism and multiculturalism</li> <li>■ Overcoming stereotypes and prejudices</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Stronger civil society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>



## Impact of EVS in Belgrade, Serbia

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** Young Researchers of Serbia<sup>32</sup>
- **Size of organisation:** 9 out of which 4 are volunteers and 1 is a social worker
- **Location:** Belgrade, the capital city of Serbia. Youth unemployment rate in Serbia was 28.5%<sup>33</sup> in 2015. The urban area of the City of Belgrade has a population of 1.34 million and 22.5% of the country's population lives within its administrative boundaries. The level of participation of young people in volunteering activities is rather low compared to western European countries<sup>34</sup>.
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 2002 – EVS sending volunteers; 2005 – EVS sending and receiving volunteers.
- **The organisation is accredited for:** Sending and receiving volunteers and coordinating EVS projects.
- **Volunteering sector:** Youth
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** media communication, youth information provision, support in international summer work camps
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** young people aged 15-30 years old / volunteering organisations in the youth sector at national level; youth with fewer opportunities who do not have access to information about volunteering – e.g. young people from rural areas.
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** Yes, in 2016, but the staff at the organisation were not aware of their situation prior to their arrival because the volunteers did not mention their health condition to the sending organisation (e.g. concentration deficit).
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** the organisation has a broad network international contacts outside of the EVS – around 90 partners.
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** Other youth organisations in the country.

### Background of EVS in Young Researchers of Serbia

Young Researchers of Serbia (YRS) has been involved in international short- and long-term volunteering programmes for 40 years, including EVS programmes since 2002, when it became possible for Serbia to be involved in the programme. In 1990 it established a volunteer exchange programme called 'Voluntary Service of Serbia' (VSS), through which 1,000 young people per year volunteer abroad or come from abroad to volunteer in Serbia. In 2016, there were 42 international camps<sup>35</sup> in Serbia organised together with 60 local partners. Additionally, in 2016, YRS hosted 9 EVS volunteers, which was the most they had ever hosted (1-2 EVS volunteers were hosted in previous years). Before the summer, EVS volunteers receive training aimed at camp leaders and are then assigned to several work camps during the summer, as both participants and camp leaders, i.e. group coordinators. EVS volunteers are also involved in the daily work of VSS and promotional activities, according to their interests and capabilities (e.g. promoting through social networks, organisation of Info-days). According to the interviewed Volunteer Programme Coordinator, *'it is a very dynamic programme'*<sup>36</sup>.

The YRS organises and provides peer to peer support ('Social services' programme) for volunteers with fewer opportunities (e.g. blind young people; young people with a lower

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.mis.org.rs/vss/pages/sr/kontakt.php>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/Public/PageView.aspx?pKey=26>

<sup>34</sup> Tomanović, S. and Stanojević D. (2015) Young People in Serbia 2015 : situation, perceptions, beliefs and aspirations, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung: SeConS Development Initiative Group, Belgrade, <http://secons.net/frontend/publications.php?p=14>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.mis.org.rs/vss/pages/sr/volonterski-program/kampovi.php>

<sup>36</sup> Interview with the Volunteer Programme Coordinator (11 January 2017)

economic background for whom financial support is necessary), who are willing to travel abroad to a work camp or other types of short-term and long-term volunteering schemes, either abroad or in Serbia.

YRS are members of several international volunteering networks<sup>37</sup> through which they cooperate with other organisations, meeting at least twice a year and using that opportunity to develop the organisation's capacity at the same time.

## Impact on volunteers

### ***Perspective of ex-EVS volunteer ('A') from Belgium doing EVS in Serbia in February 2016 – December 2016***

For A., the EVS volunteering experience happened just after graduating in social work studies in September 2015. In that sense, volunteering as a sector was an opportunity to broaden the social work skills acquired during his studies, and to put them into practice.

A. had previous experience in doing short-term volunteering (15 days), as he had participated in an international work camp in Germany in May 2015. This experience made him keen to look for further volunteering opportunities, but he was not able to take part in one at the time because he had to finish his Bachelor degree thesis and studies. After graduation, A. started looking for a job, but after two months of searching he was unsuccessful in finding one. Therefore, he started thinking about the EVS and searched through the database on the European Youth Portal for opportunities available. Information about the EVS and the Portal was shared by the organisation with which he went on the international work camp.

However, the search on the portal seemed endless and, as A. pointed out '*... I sent only one application. I am not sure I would have continued looking for other placement opportunities on the portal*'. Fortunately for him, he received a newsletter from the Belgian organisation with which he went on the international work camp, which contained information about their Serbian partner organisation who was looking for EVS volunteers for a 10 month project. A. applied straight away and was instantly accepted, which meant that he soon found himself abroad, without proper preparation and training – but he did not mind this as it was something he really wanted to do.

During the EVS, A. was involved in daily activities within the receiving organisation, such as activities related to international work camps both in Serbia and abroad – e.g. producing statistics, updating a database with information on international work camps, office communication, and answering questions from the volunteers going to the camps. During the summer time, A. participated in six work camps (duration of two weeks each) organised by the receiving organisation, both as a participant providing support to other camp leaders, and as the leader in two of the camps. Before that, he participated in the training for camp leaders, which was highly appreciated by A. because he was trained in skills such as leadership, team work, and communication.

In addition to the above, A. was in charge (from April to November) of weekly '*open*' meetings with people interested in volunteering and the EVS (which are a regular practice of the receiving organisation). That created the opportunity for A. and other EVS volunteers to share their experience with potential new EVS volunteers.

The very positive aspect of this experience was the opportunity within the EVS scheme to participate in regional meetings with other EVS volunteers from the region. As A. pointed out, '*I have enjoyed those meetings because I had the opportunity to meet new people and to hear about their experience. Unfortunately, not all were satisfied with their EVS experience because the work they were supposed to do was not well planned and*

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<sup>37</sup> Alliance of European Volunteering Service Organisations; Coordinating Committee of International Volunteering Services; Service International; Regional Asian Network; South East European Network

*therefore they felt useless / bored. In that sense, I felt lucky to be that busy'. A. acknowledged that the receiving organisation 'had significant experience in hosting volunteers and it was clear that they knew what needed to be done. They are also super motivated people who are workaholics and that is motivating'.*

A. acknowledged that a significant impact of the EVS experience was discovering his interests in the field of international volunteering: *'This is a big thing for me because when I left Belgium for Serbia I had no idea what I wanted to do or what I could do with my diploma. Now I have found something I would really enjoy to work in'.* Moreover, A. mentioned that there now might be a job opportunity for him within the sending organisation.

During the EVS experience, A. improved his self-confidence, which he said *'is quite a big thing for me'.* He learned how to create interactive infographics in order to improve EVS activities on the internet and social media: *'this is something I did not know before but I have now discovered some tools'.* A. also learned a bit of the Serbian language. In general, according to A., there are a lot of things from this experience which could be useful when applying for any type of job in the future, for example having an intercultural experience, working with young people, and organising and managing work camps.

Although participating in several trainings, both in Belgrade and in Belgium, on the topic of the Youthpass, A. does not find this useful because, in his opinion, employers are not interested in the Youthpass. What he acknowledged as more significant is the fact that the volunteering experience can be included in a CV which might be more appreciated by employers.

### ***Perspective of ex-EVS volunteer ('E') from France doing EVS in Serbia in February 2016 – December 2016***

E. has obtained a Bachelor degree in management of non-profit organisations and is unsure whether he will continue his studies. Similarly to A., the volunteering experience for E. lasted 10 months and both volunteers shared common activities in the receiving organisation, as previously described. In addition to this, E. was also involved in the organisation and promotional activities of the summer work camps (e.g. preparation of posters, visits to universities and schools). Inclusion of people with fewer opportunities was also one of E.'s activities – he participated in workshops for Roma people in which they presented EVS and work camps. For E. there was no need for mentors because EVS volunteers mutually supported themselves.

E. also spent three months in another organisation in Nis, helping with the promotion and organisation of summer work camps. During the time spent in the receiving organisation and in Nis, E. conducted many French workshops and video workshops for *'outside'* participants, including local children. These activities were not part of the original volunteering programme, but were rather implemented on E.'s initiative. These so called *'language cafes'*<sup>38</sup> were introduced by E. and are still being implemented in Belgrade. For that purpose, cooperation with *Institute Francaise*<sup>39</sup> was established to promote the French language, or *Servantes* for the Spanish language.

E. obtained previous volunteering experience in an NGO at national level through the civil service in France, for the duration of 8 months. During the time when E. was looking for a job, which was difficult to find, he also started looking for an EVS opportunity, because he did not want to work in a company doing the same job every day (as opposed to EVS

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.mis.org.rs/vss/pages/posts/language-cafe-the-11th-of-october-from-19-to-21h-in-kulturni-centar-grad-449.php>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.mis.org.rs/vss/pages/posts/ateliers-sur-la-culture-francaise---postule-avant-le-21-octobre-2016-448.php>

which he described as an *'interesting job'*). In addition, E. was motivated to be in an international environment and to work abroad in a country where French is not the main language.

Similar to A., E. also found out about EVS from his friends who participated in EVS in previous years. This made E. curious and he searched on Google for more information on EVS. Although he paused his search during the civil service period, E. resumed his search after this and found online the organisation Concordia with which he made contact and later on became their EVS volunteer. E. found this specific EVS opportunity via Concordia's newsletter which is sent to its users (including E.), rather than through the European Youth Portal.

Since E. was involved in the preparation of promotional posters, he learned how to use InDesign and Canvas software. E. also improved his skills in video production. He is also proud to have learned a basic level of the Serbian language. Moreover, he gained knowledge on how youth work and work camps operate in Europe.

Besides that, E. is planning to go back to Serbia because his girlfriend is there and that changed his life significantly. Therefore, he is currently doing *'a job on the side'* in order to gain some money to be able to go back to Belgrade. Since he was involved in video production, he realised that is something he is interested in and has started looking for a university or other institution where he could study video production. The desire to find a job in the youth sector and international environment also became clearer to E., although he is aware of the difficulty of finding a job in this sector.

#### ***Perspective of ex-EVS volunteer ('K') from Slovakia doing EVS in Serbia in February 2016 – December 2016***

K. is 28 and has finished her Masters studies in Geography. K. had previous experience in volunteering, having done one internship in an NGO in Slovakia and participating in two short-term volunteering projects abroad (similar to work camps).

K. spent the first two months and the last three weeks of her EVS in Belgrade, whereas the remaining months were spent in Obrenovac, in another partner organisation – the Youth office of the EVS receiving organisation. During the summer months, K. participated in three work camps, both as the participant and the leader. During her stay at the receiving organisation, K. was involved in uploading information on the work camps database, and also worked with other EVS volunteers who were based in Belgrade. In Obrenovac, K. worked for the Youth office which only had one employee. The work here involved promotional activities to secondary school children<sup>40</sup> about the work camps, separate presentations on EVS and creating the programmes for the Youth office.

Although K. has finished her studies in geography, she realised that this subject is not valued much nor very sought after by employers. She was motivated to participate in the EVS scheme as she was not sure that she wanted to pursue geography as a career. As she explained, *'EVS sounded like a great opportunity for non-formal education in a completely different direction'*. K. also wanted to travel and was interested in other countries and cultures.

K. started looking for EVS opportunities three years ago (when she was 24 years old, which she initially thought is too late, although EVS is offered until 30 years of age) after she heard about the experience from a friend - as she explains, at that time *'I did not find anything that suited me'*. As she was working at the same time, she was not actively pursuing to go to an EVS. Nevertheless, after changing her job and realising that she was unsatisfied with it, K. started looking again for an EVS opportunity and found the one in

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<sup>40</sup> PPT presentations were in Serbian whereas K. held her presentations in English

Belgrade, which she was interested in. As she explained, *'the project found me'*, as she found out about it through the newsletter sent by the organisation with which she had previously volunteered. Searching through the European Youth Portal database did not result in any suitable and potentially interesting projects.

Since K. was the only EVS volunteer<sup>41</sup> in Obrenovac and the Youth office employee was engaged in numerous other activities, she sometimes felt on her own and would have liked to have had a mentor with whom she could have spent some free time.

K. recognises the impact of EVS on personal traits, such as gaining *'more confidence and independence'*. For example, she decided to organise painting classes for children which she never thought would have happened in the sense that she could teach someone else something. Since she did a lot of promotion on the website and the Facebook page, she also learned design skills. An additional impact was not directly connected with the EVS project - K. enjoyed taking pictures and the Youth office employee noticed that, so he organised an exhibition in a gallery for K, which she explained *'was amazing. I never dreamed about this. And now I am studying photography. It literally changed my life'*.

K. suggested that it is a crucial thing that EVS volunteers are independent because if they are dependent and always waiting for others to tell them what to do, they might end up achieving much.

### **Perspective of EVS receiving organisation**

The EVS volunteers who are capable of taking over the leadership role, after receiving the training for camp leaders offered by the YRS, are assigned the role of a work camp leader or group leader. Through such an engagement, EVS volunteers have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills, intercultural skills, team work skills, communication skills and conflict resolution skills in an international setting. In addition, summer work camps are organised throughout Serbia, thus offering the opportunity to get to know parts of the country other than the capital city, not only from a geographical point of view, but also from a cultural perspective, and understanding the way of life there, which also includes different types of everyday problems they face.

Although EVS volunteers appreciate having a clear work programme, the high intensity of the programme and the mix of different activities and places was questioned (e.g. two months office work in Belgrade during preparation phase, then several months in a smaller city and its partner organisation, followed by some time in Belgrade again for the evaluation phase). A former volunteer interviewed explained that *'we would have preferred to have had a constant type of activity in the same city'*. According to the YRS, this is very individual and cannot be generalised and the EVS volunteers are well informed in advance (during the recruiting phase) about the content and type of the programme they will participate in.

The EVS programme for the 9 EVS volunteers finished in December 2016 and 3 of them are to return in January 2017 for a short training programme developed together with German partners. One EVS volunteer will return to live in Belgrade, whilst another volunteer applied for a job in his EVS sending organisation. In general, it can be said that the EVS volunteers benefited from *'developing a culture of work in the NGO sector and its specific field of international volunteering'*.

Three out of 9 EVS volunteers had an interest in video making and therefore were linked with a colleague from the Faculty of Art, who taught them short video production and film editing. As a result, the three volunteers produced a large amount of video material during their volunteering experience, which was translated and edited into short films as good practice examples for YRS.

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<sup>41</sup> In the case of the Youth office K. was also the first EVS volunteer ever



## Impact on EVS organisations

### *Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation*

The main impact on the EVS receiving organisation is reflected in the availability of higher amount of resources (human, financial, time) which otherwise would not have been available. EVS volunteers were able to contribute to the organisation's everyday activities by providing counselling services (based on their own experience) for future interested EVS volunteers. Furthermore, EVS volunteers provided input into the tasks which the organisation did not have sufficient time and resources to do them on their own (e.g. updating the database on volunteers participating in international camps).

Since YRS manages around 1,000 volunteers from Serbia and from abroad (through work camps), EVS volunteers are a great help in providing support in organising and managing such a large number of volunteers - in particular because YRS' policy is to meet in person with each volunteer which is time-consuming. Other tasks of EVS volunteers involve: initiating first contact with the volunteer, providing support in filling in and sending the application forms, arranging the pre-departure preparations, conducting evaluations upon return from work camps - in general, the whole procedure.

The opportunity for a young person who enters the YRS office to speak with someone from a different country was regarded as a big step forward and an eye-opening moment for potential future volunteers. As the interviewed YRS Volunteer Programme Coordinator explained, *'the presence of international volunteers in the office, where the work focuses on the exchange of international volunteers, was very significant'*.<sup>42</sup>

In terms of the EVS volunteers' participation in promotional activities, the interviewed YRS President stated that *'it always happens that they [volunteers] leave something new based on the initiatives and ideas they had - for example, one volunteer realised that YRS did not have sufficient capacity to deal with promotional activities, and therefore organised a Working Group of volunteers who participated in the work camps abroad and who wanted to help in promotional activities - that was in 2009 and the group is still active today and is very independent.'*<sup>43</sup>

In several cases throughout the years, it happened that the EVS volunteers which the organisation had sent abroad, after returning back to Serbia, started working in YRS as a permanent employee, as is the case for the current Volunteer Programme Coordinator (who has been an employee at YRS since 2008).

The fact that in 2016 YRS hosted 9 EVS volunteers, compared to the 1-2 EVS volunteers from previous years, is a huge change for the organisation in terms of capacity building and management risks. In addition, the role YRS had could be described as a coordinator at the programme level (due to the coordination of activities with local youth organisations in smaller cities), which was something new to YRS and something YRS would like to develop further in the future.

### ***Perspective of the EVS sending organisation***

The SPW-FIYE from Poland, established in 1994, is an organisation which is active in international voluntary service. Currently, they have one full-time and two part-time staff in Serbia. In 2011, the organisation published a report with the list of EVS volunteers they had hosted up to then<sup>44</sup>. Most of the volunteers worked with people with fewer opportunities, e.g. disabled children and youth, or in places providing special care for adults and seniors, etc. Since 2011, the EVS volunteers are also hosted in the organisation's office, which means that they are involved in their everyday activities. A

<sup>42</sup> Interview with the YRS Volunteer Programme Coordinator, 11 January 2017

<sup>43</sup> Interview with the YRS President, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2017

<sup>44</sup> <http://spw.info.pl/index.php/do-pobrania/summary/3-publikacje/2-broszura-let-s-begin-evs-chain-reaction>



few years ago SPW-FIYE also tried to implement ecology-related projects with EVS volunteers, and although they were not highly successful, they heightened the interest of volunteers, and made them aware of the need to think about new ecology-related projects in the future.

The impact described reflects in the fact that, during the summer in 2016, representatives of the sending organisations were invited to a '*camp-caravan*' for eight days<sup>45</sup>. They visited different summer international work camps in Serbia organised by the receiving organisation. This was an opportunity to observe, share good practices and gain experience on how others organise work camps, as well as to meet colleagues from other sending / hosting organisations and to share their experience on EVS practice. As a result of its success, some of them will organise a similar thing in their country next year.

In addition, employees of the sending organisation improved their language skills, their ability to understand young people and their needs and problems, and also improve their IT and social media skills – as an interviewed EVS coordinator from SPW-FIYE said, '*they [EVS volunteers] inform me of all things to do with Instagram and Snapchat*'.<sup>46</sup> The EVS volunteers also introduced Twitter and Instagram to the organisation's promotion activities.

When the organisation was in its infancy, the work camps were the main focus whereas. After the accession to the EU, a shift was made towards EVS programmes and nowadays, the organisation's work is in favour of EVS, which makes up '*half of the activities of the organisation*'.

### **Perspective of current EVS volunteers and of alumni**

The main impact from the perspective of alumni is implementation of their ideas on how they could contribute to organisation's activities by offering something new for what they realised there is a need for (e.g. language cafés, video for promotion campaign). These new perspectives of inputs resulted in outputs which remained sustainable even after the EVS volunteers returned back home.

A. acknowledged the fact that there were 9 EVS volunteers in the office at the same time, which was a good experience for them as they were able to support each other. On the other hand, their large presence was a new experience for the host organisation because until then, they usually only hosted one or two volunteers at the same time. In that sense, the receiving organisation learned how to cope with a higher number of EVS volunteers in organisational terms.

Due to E.'s initiative, '*language cafes*' in the languages of EVS volunteers were organised twice a month in Belgrade, which became part of the receiving organisation's regular activities and are still taking place.

E. also developed a video for the YRS video promotion campaign which is still in use today. It is a 6 minute video about work camps, including interviews with people both organising and participating in the camps. This required travelling through the work camps in the summer time in Serbia, which was described as a '*profound experience*' by E.

The impact on the EVS sending organisations described by EVS volunteers is also related to the organisations' participation in the '*camp-caravan*', as previously described.

In the case of K., since she was the first of nine EVS volunteers to come to the Youth office in Obrenovac, she thought this was a good opportunity for the office to learn how to manage EVS volunteers. Moreover, she said that '*it is a good opportunity for them to*

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<sup>45</sup> <http://www.mis.org.rs/vss/pages/posts/ldquoworkcamp-caravanrdquo---the-study-visit-to-workcamps-in-serbia-442.php>

<sup>46</sup> Interview with SPW-FIYE EVS Coordinator on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2017

*have a foreigner in their community, because local people have never been abroad or have never spoken to a person from another country. I could feel that it was important for them that I was there and that I shared ideas about volunteering’.*

## **Impact at local community level**

### ***Perspective of the members of the local community***

According to the Youth office in the city of Obrenovac, which is the main office for youth of the local self-government (public body) of the municipality of Obrenovac, the volunteers’ impact was significant.

During her time in the Youth office, K. was also engaged in the work of the local social centre Fondacija za mlade (Foundation for Youth). K.’s impact on the Foundation was significant because she acted as the center’s manager and organised film productions, exhibitions, etc., which took place much more frequently than usual.

K.’s contribution was significant in the aspect of promotional activities and therefore *‘she significantly contributed to promoting volunteering, mobility programmes for youth, EVS, and work camps’*. This was even more significant because the local community did not have the capacity to perform promotional activities on their own.

Her contribution was also significant during the summer period in terms of the support she provided in the work camps in Obrenovac (as a participant and as a leader). K. was able to motivate young people through promotional activities to encourage participation in the summer work camps, which was an important achievement and a long-term impact because the experience of work camps is usually spread by word of a mouth.

Another long-term impact is the new Mobility Fund created by the municipality of Obrenovac, through which young people of the city and its surrounding area can finance national mobility to undertake volunteering. The Fund was created to foster and support young people’s interest for mobility which was increased after the EVS volunteer spent several months within the Youth Office of the municipality. The EVS volunteer demonstrated with her own example the benefits of the mobility and was able to motivate others (young people, municipality officials, parents) for either national or international mobility.

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

According to YRS, their partnership with 60 organisations within the informal network of youth organisations contributed significantly to strengthening relationships and clarifying EVS tasks and activities when EVS volunteers from Belgrade were sent to other smaller cities, i.e. partner organisations. In addition, smaller organisations were encouraged to try a new experience, which motivated them to get accredited for EVS<sup>47</sup>. Direct contact with a young person from another country is an appealing aspect for the local community, as they tend to motivate young people to volunteer.

### ***Perspective of EVS alumni***

E. and A. described the level of impact on the local community as less visible, because they mainly contributed to the development of the receiving organisation in Belgrade.

## **Interviews conducted**

<b>Type of stakeholder</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Job title</b>	<b>Interview date</b>
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<sup>47</sup> Only a few of them are currently registered for EVS receiving

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Job title	Interview date
EVS alumni	Not affiliated	Young person in BE	16-Jan-2017
EVS alumni	Not affiliated	Young person in FR	16-Jan-2017
EVS alumni	Not affiliated	Young person in SK	16-Jan-2017
EVS receiving organisation	Young Researchers of Serbia (YRS)	Volunteer programme coordinator	11-Jan-2017
EVS receiving organisation	Young Researchers of Serbia (YRS)	President	11-Jan-2017
EVS sending organisation	Stowarzyszenie Promocji Wolontariatu – FIYE Poland (SPW-FIYE)	EVS coordinator	18-Jan-2016
Local community	Youth Office Obrenovac, Serbia	Manager	12-Jan-2017

### Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in Belgrade, Serbia

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews		
<b>I M P A C T  O N  T H E  I N D I V I D U A L  V O L U N T E E R</b>	<b>Personal and social development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem ✓</li> <li>■ Broadened horizons ✓</li> <li>■ Increase in autonomy, independence ✓</li> <li>■ Learning about oneself (self-discovery) ✓</li> <li>■ More friends and contacts from other countries ✓</li> <li>■ Increase in cultural capital</li> </ul>			
		<b>Learning competence development and</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in all 8 key competences (foreign language skills, learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, etc.) ✓</li> <li>■ Acquired new skills (i.e. how to plan finances)</li> <li>■ Increase in awareness and knowledge of non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Plans to engage in further education</li> <li>■ Intention to learn foreign languages</li> </ul>		
			<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Developed professional skills and attitudes, matching employers' demands</li> <li>■ Acquired experience and contacts for work ✓</li> <li>■ Increased chances to find a job ✓ (A.)</li> <li>■ Obtaining a job by using EVS experience ✓ (K., A., E.)</li> <li>■ Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals</li> </ul>	
				<b>Increased participation in civic and political life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in participation in voluntary activities</li> <li>■ Increase in voter participation</li> <li>■ Increased participation in civic / political</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>life</li> <li>Better prepared to participate actively</li> <li>Increase in participation in similar youth projects</li> </ul>	
	<b>Stronger sense of belonging to the EU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More aware of common European values</li> <li>Higher interest in European topics</li> <li>Improved image of the EU</li> <li>Feeling more European than before</li> </ul>	
	<b>Further mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved readiness to work / study/ live abroad</li> <li>Plans to move abroad for work / study / live</li> <li>Increased confidence to travel to other countries</li> </ul>	✓ (E.)
	<b>Increased intercultural learning dialogue and</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures)</li> <li>Better understanding of other cultures</li> <li>More receptivity towards multiculturalism</li> <li>More tolerance and respect for other cultures</li> <li>Improved intercultural dialogue</li> </ul>	✓ ✓ ✓
	<b>Improved inclusion solidarity social and</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher positive values (tolerance, solidarity)</li> <li>Increase in social awareness</li> <li>Awareness of global issues</li> <li>Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society</li> <li>Increased commitment to work against discrimination, racism and intolerance</li> </ul>	✓
<b>O R G A N I S A T I O N</b>	<b>Organisational development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More human resources support for NGOs</li> <li>Increase in competence of youth workers (project management, fund-raising etc.)</li> <li>New ideas, tools and methods of working with young people and with non-formal learning</li> <li>Increased cultural diversity in NGO</li> <li>Increase in tolerance and openness of staff</li> <li>More projects on inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities</li> <li>Increased promotion of the participation of young people in organisation</li> <li>Enhanced image and reputation</li> </ul>	✓ ✓ ✓ (E. – with Roma population)
	<b>Internationalisation of the organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More and new international contacts and partnerships</li> <li>More international projects</li> </ul>	

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Motivation to organise more EVS projects</li> <li>■ Higher involvement in European activities</li> <li>■ Transfer of know-how and good practice</li> <li>■ Increased attention to including an international dimension in youth work</li> </ul>	✓
L O C A L  C O M M U N I T Y	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness about volunteering</li> <li>■ Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Fostering learning mobility of other youth</li> <li>■ Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be available</li> </ul>	✓ (via EVS experience and direct contact)
	<b>Community cohesion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness of volunteering and EVS</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the European Union</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the concerns and interests of young people in society</li> <li>■ Enriching the cultural diversity of the hosting communities</li> <li>■ Increasing interest of local community in multilingualism and multiculturalism</li> <li>■ Overcoming stereotypes and prejudices</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Stronger civil society</li> </ul>	✓ (in the case of K. and Youth office in Obrenovac)

## Impact of EVS in Murcia, Spain

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** Euroacción Murcia
- **Size of organisation:** the organisation has five staff members responsible for project management and education activities, and one accountant. As a host institution, they receive two volunteers at a time. As a project coordinator, they coordinate around 8-12 volunteers each time, including the ones they are hosting.
- **Location:** Euroacción is located in the city of Murcia, the capital of the Region of Murcia in south-eastern Spain. According to Eurostat data for 2014, GDP per capita in this region is less than 75% of the EU-28 average.<sup>48</sup> Euroacción cooperates with several community-based associations providing support to disadvantaged people in the city.
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 2011
- **The organisation is accredited for:** receiving and sending volunteers and coordinating EVS projects.
- **Volunteering sector:** Social inclusion and youth.
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** Euroacción hosts volunteers to work in the themes of personal and professional development, human rights, and development of European projects. The associations which Euroacción cooperates with focus on social inclusion, environment, disability, and addictions treatment and rehabilitation.
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** Euroacción works mainly with imprisoned persons, young people in youth detention centres and early leavers from education and training. The entities which Euroacción cooperates with work with socially excluded people, immigrant women and children, children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, disabled people, and people with health problems.
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** Yes, they have received several volunteers with low socio-economic status and health issues.
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** the organisation has broad international contacts outside of the EVS (over one hundred). They also have Erasmus+ KA2 and KA3 projects and youth exchanges.
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** Local partner non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

### Background of EVS in Euroacción Murcia

Euroacción Murcia is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) providing emotional, educational and socio-therapeutic support to different at-risk groups. It was created in 2002 and since then it has worked with volunteers, totalling around 70 volunteers over the years. One of the three founding members had a very satisfactory experience as an EVS volunteer in the past and proposed that Euroacción should join this initiative. Euroacción implemented its first EVS project in 2011 and are accredited as a sending, receiving and coordinator organisation.

The main selection criterion of volunteers is their motivation and interest in the areas of work of Euroacción and the NGOs it cooperates with. The organisation applies the principle of equal opportunities in volunteer selection and has received some volunteers with disadvantaged backgrounds, difficult family situations, early leavers from education and training, and young people with addictions and other health problems. Volunteers come from a variety of countries (e.g. France, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Serbia), and are of different ages.

<sup>48</sup> Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/GDP\\_at\\_regional\\_level](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/GDP_at_regional_level)



The tasks performed by EVS volunteers at Euroacción include office work related to European project management, promotion of volunteering among young people at universities and other settings, and contribution to non-formal education activities. In the other host organisations volunteers can participate in a variety of activities including, for instance, activities in a school with an alternative pedagogical project, extracurricular leisure activities and academic support for immigrant children, or support to people with disability, health or behavioural problems.

## **Impact on volunteers**

### ***Perspective of current EVS volunteer 1 (September 2016 - July 2017)***

S. is a 29 year-old Italian young man with a Bachelor degree in political sciences and international studies. He learned about EVS in a post-graduate course on European projects. At the time, he had a job but wanted to change his field of work and thought that the EVS could help him do this. Also, he was 29 years old and therefore it was the last year that he could participate in the EVS.

He looked for volunteering opportunities on European and Italian portals and finally found the placement offered by Euroacción on the European Youth Portal. He chose Spain because he had a basic level of Spanish and wanted to improve it.

S. is currently participating in the development of European projects and has so far given talks in universities to promote EVS, as well as disseminated information on Euroacción projects through social networks. He will also be participating in school support activities for 12-13 year-old children with behavioural issues.

S. believes that the experience will help him find a new job in the area he is most interested in, European projects. He observed that working in Spanish and English is a welcome challenge because it helps him improve his language skills. The experience is also helping him to focus on himself and gives him the opportunity to reflect, plan and make decisions about his future.

Co-habiting with his flatmates is proving both challenging and rewarding. He is learning how to interact with people from different backgrounds and how to accept them without judging. It became clearer to him that what is normal for one person is not normal for another, and that there can be different equally good ways of doing something.

### ***Perspective of current EVS volunteer 2 (September 2016 - July 2017)***

J. is a young 23 year-old Portuguese woman who has recently finished her Master's studies in organisational psychology. She wanted to have a volunteering experience before entering the labour market and knew about the EVS through a friend who had previously been a volunteer under this programme. J. contacted the same sending organisation and looked for opportunities that were related to her field of study. She wanted to do some volunteer work with children in order to '*get out of my comfort zone*'.

Until now, she has mainly been involved in office activities supporting the development of European projects, and has given talks in universities to promote EVS. However, there has been a delay in commencing school activities with children, which is currently the main factor preventing her from taking full advantage of her experience.

J. believes that the EVS experience is making her more open and willing to take risks, and has also increased her sense of initiative. She feels more inclined to meet new people and discover different cultures. In addition, she believes that the experience may help her find a job as she is gaining a better understanding of different types of jobs and careers. She feels more comfortable with working under time pressure and embracing different ways of working, and is learning to be more positive and proactive, and contributing with new ideas.

### ***Perspective of ex-EVS volunteer (September 2015 - July 2016)***

M. is a young 29 year-old Polish woman with a Master's degree in sociology. She has had several experiences as a volunteer in her home country and worked for five years in an organisation developing projects for the European Union. It was there that M. found out about the EVS, and was in charge of coordinating volunteers for two years before enrolling as a volunteer herself. By then, she had a good overview of the existing hosting organisations and types of projects. She wished to work in the field of non-formal education and Euroacción seemed to be the best option.

At Euroacción she contributed to the development of European projects, non-formal education activities and school activities for the development of social skills.

The EVS experience gave M. the opportunity to steer her professional career towards her main field of interest - non-formal education. It was also an enriching experience from a personal point of view. Contrary to what she expected, her previous theoretical knowledge of what being a volunteer entailed did not in fact prevent her from encountering difficulties associated with undertaking a new project in a foreign country.

At the beginning, co-habitation was an important challenge. In addition, during her stay M. realised that her Spanish language skills were less developed than she thought and as a result felt frustrated, as she could not deliver her work up to the standards she would have liked to. Starting work in a new professional area was also a learning process.

Ultimately, her experience as an EVS volunteer helped her develop intercultural communication skills, improve her foreign language skills, deal with new situations, and be less afraid of making mistakes. She is also very satisfied with the relationships she has created with her colleagues. Overall, she believes that EVS has been a life changing experience. M. is now working at Euroacción and feels that this is a great opportunity to take her experience even further.

### ***Perspective of EVS receiving organisation***

The coordinator of EVS volunteers at Euroacción has been in this role since 2011. She observed that they all develop their foreign language skills in Spanish thanks to the language courses they receive, whilst also developing their intercultural skills. Through EVS they learn to interact with people with different habits and cultural backgrounds.

Volunteers also develop their professional skills. For instance, those involved in Euroacción's non-formal education activities acquire skills related to the delivery of training. Volunteers involved in the development of European projects acquire proposal and report writing skills. In other activities, they learn to work with children or with people at risk of social exclusion.

In some cases, after their EVS experience, volunteers decide to go back to studying or change their mind about their study pathways. For instance:

- Some early leavers from education and training decided to resume their studies;
- Some young people who had finished upper secondary school changed their minds about the higher education programme they wanted to follow;
- Some young people who had completed a higher education programme decided to enrol in another programme, related to the activities they developed as volunteers.

Other participants decide to continue as volunteers in other projects, and to also continue improving their foreign language skills. Several volunteers found a job either at Euroacción, at one of the associations it cooperates with, or at other entities through the contacts they made during their stay.

Overall, the effects are more visible in the case of young people with fewer opportunities, but all the participants benefit from the experience. A key aspect that contributes to volunteers' satisfaction and that ensures an impact on their professional skills, is that

they are given the opportunity to develop the professional activities they were initially promised they would do.

M., who is a former volunteer and now a mentor, explained that you can see an evolution in all EVS volunteers but that the changes can be more or less noticeable, depending on how volunteers are at the beginning of their EVS. She observed that *'some are unrecognisable at the end of their experience in terms of how open they become... more mature, independent... how they make plans, manage and organise their lives'*.

## **Impact on EVS organisations**

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

According to the EVS coordinator from Euroacción, volunteers bring renewed motivation to the team. Sometimes workers feel tired of the routine and volunteers are *'like a breath of fresh air'*. Volunteers also help with the association's work, reducing workload in the office and, for instance, allowing the organisation to work in smaller groups when doing activities with at-risk young people.

Some volunteers also bring new knowledge which can enrich the association's work. For instance, one volunteer contributed with her experience in non-violent communication and another one helped them integrate a gender perspective into their work. Such sharing of knowledge and methods is more likely to happen with volunteers who have a relevant professional and academic background.

Receiving young people with a lower level of studies and less professional experience can also be highly rewarding. They may take longer to adapt, but it is very motivating for the staff to see their evolution.

Some volunteers continue cooperating with the organisation after finalising their EVS service. Euroacción believes that they fit very well into the role of mentors and create a lot of empathy with new volunteers thanks to their recent experience.

### ***Perspective of current EVS volunteers and of the ex- EVS volunteer***

Volunteers consider that they help the association by taking on some lengthy tasks that would otherwise have to be done by the association's staff. They can also propose new ideas and tools, for instance digital tools that can make some of the tasks easier. The ex-volunteer mentioned that she also contributed to the association's work and proposed different points of view based on her previous experience in project implementation and volunteer coordination.

The volunteers and ex-volunteer also highlighted their contribution to human relationships and intercultural interactions. One volunteer reflected on the fact that they bring cheerfulness and a positive attitude, as well as *'small and simple things'* from their cultures. Their different languages and experiences enrich the team's daily interactions.

## **Impact at local community level**

### ***Perspective of the members of the local community***

F. and K. work for two different organisations providing support to people in a situation of social exclusion. They agree that the presence of foreign volunteers is particularly enriching for children.

K. is mainly working with immigrant children from Muslim backgrounds and explained that EVS volunteers bring a different reality to them. Children are often curious about volunteers' language, physical appearance (e.g. why they wear piercings, tattoos, etc.), and lifestyles (for instance, whether volunteers are married and have children, and if not

why, or their eating habits). K. hopes that the interaction with foreign volunteers is helping children to understand and respect different lifestyles and mentalities.

Meeting volunteers can also raise interest in doing volunteering. In particular, several girls supported by K.'s association went to the Murcia voluntary service to learn about existing opportunities. For the moment, none of them have enrolled in EVS, but some girls have offered to help in the association.

F. observed that some young people are surprised that someone would leave their country to work abroad without receiving a salary. They start reflecting on what a person can gain from going abroad and helping others. They also seem to be more interested in Europe and the people living in it.

Volunteers can also contribute to local communities by proposing new activities to local associations, based on their knowledge, experience and interests. For instance, in K.'s association a volunteer with a background in gender issues proposed a new workshop for mothers, and another volunteer developed a basic computer skills course for children.

In F.'s association, volunteers often develop their own activities during the last months of their stay. For instance, one volunteer wanted to use the Theatre of the Oppressed with unemployed women and the association helped her develop and implement a small project using this approach. Other volunteers coordinated a group of school support for young people in secondary education, prepared a training module on refugees, or provided academic support in foreign languages.

F. considers that the impact of EVS can vary according to the attitude of the volunteer. People who are more proactive are more likely to propose and implement new ideas, and create a greater impact. However, impact does not only depend on them, but also on the evolution of the entire team, on how they adapt to each new volunteer and integrate their knowledge, skills and attitudes into their daily work and personal life.

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

Euroacción's representative explained that they often work with young people with a low cultural background and little knowledge of what happens beyond their local community. Many of them have never left their city or even their neighbourhood. Meeting foreign volunteers and learning from their experiences is an eye-opening process. Euroacción and the NGOs they cooperate with also work with immigrants who very easily identify with foreign volunteers.

Euroacción considers that volunteers can also have a very important role in the promotion of EVS and volunteering in general. This is why they involve volunteers not only in discussions with university students, but also in trainings delivered by the association, events and informal meetings. It is important that young people learn about EVS from the volunteers themselves.

### ***Perspective of the volunteers and the ex-EVS volunteer***

S. explained that the type of impact depends on the activities developed. Overall, they bring an intercultural environment to organisations where this was not possible before. Also, volunteers become new team members adding extra human resources, which may mean that associations can do more activities or address more beneficiaries.

M. also highlighted the relevance of the intercultural dimension volunteers bring to local entities. For instance, she developed some activities in a school where the children had never met a foreign person before and were very curious about her. The older youth realise that they can have a similar experience even if they do not have financial resources or a certain education level. This was the case for M., who first thought about going abroad in secondary school when she met a Comenius language assistant from Spain.

S. considers that EVS dissemination activities among students - for instance in universities - are very important. Many students do not know about the programme and, when they find out about it, it is important to give them the opportunity to discuss their concerns. For instance, many believe that they could be sent to a country they do not want to go to, or a project they are not interested in. Also, they do not know when to do it (for instance, if candidates need to have finished higher education) or how to select a project.

### Interviews conducted

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Job title	Date of interview
EVS alumni	Euroacción	Mentor	11 January 2017
EVS volunteer	Not affiliated	Young person from Italy	12 January 2017
EVS volunteer	Not affiliated	Young person from Portugal	11 January 2017
EVS hosting organisation	Euroacción	Coordinator of Educational Programmes and Volunteering	11 January 2017
Local community	Neighbourhood coordinator 'Los Rosales' (NGO)	Social and youth worker	12 January 2017
Local community	National Association Abraham Project (NGO)	Coordinator of volunteers, training and employability projects	26 January 2017

### Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in Murcia, Spain

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
<b>I M P A C T  O N  T H E  I N D I V I D U A</b>	<b>Personal and social development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in autonomy, independence</li> <li>■ Learning about oneself (self-discovery)</li> <li>■ More friends and contacts from other countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 'Some are unrecognisable at the end of their experience in terms of how open they become... more mature, independent... how they make plans, manage and organise their lives' (ex-volunteer/mentor)</li> <li>■ 'I feel more aware of myself. I tend to plan more what I want to do later. It helps you decide' (S., volunteer)</li> <li>■ 'I find myself at home, at the level of human relationships' (M., ex-volunteer)</li> </ul>
	<b>Learning and competence development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in all 8 key competences (foreign language skills, learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, etc.)</li> <li>■ Acquired new</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 'They all end up speaking the language' (Euroacción EVS project coordinator)</li> <li>■ 'I wanted to change. I was working in events organisation and communication (...) (This experience) should help me find a job. Eleven months working abroad on European issues which is the topic I like'.</li> <li>■ 'I did not have many chances in Poland to develop non-formal learning (activities). Euroacción was working on</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
L V O L U N T E E R		<p>skills (i.e. how to plan finances)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in awareness and knowledge of non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Intention to learn foreign languages</li> </ul>	<p><i>this (...) [At Euroacción] I helped in trainings. In the beginning [I helped] with logistics, observed the process, and then started participating but not as a trainer (...) I had to learn' (S., volunteer).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>'Others have seen the importance of learning a foreign language, and look for other volunteering programmes to continue learning languages' (Euroacción EVS project coordinator)</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Acquired experience and contacts for work</li> <li>■ Increased chances to find a job</li> <li>■ Obtaining a job by using EVS experience</li> <li>■ Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ M. explained that EVS was an opportunity to do <i>'the work that I really wanted to do [deliver non-formal education]. Three years ago I couldn't have imagined it... it has been a big step in my professional path'</i> (M., ex-volunteer)</li> <li>■ S. expected that the EVS experience will <i>'help me find a job... 11 months working abroad on European issues which is the topic I like'</i> (S., volunteer).</li> <li>■ <i>'I was very happy when I was invited to stay. It extends my experience. What I have learned can be immediately applied. I have ended up working with European volunteers'</i> (M., ex-volunteer).</li> <li>■ <i>'[There are] young people who dropped out of their studies and decided to go back to studying (...) there are people who have higher education studies and decide to study something else (...) some people have finished secondary [education] and change their minds about what they want to study [at the higher education level]'</i> (Euroacción EVS project coordinator)</li> </ul>
	<b>Increased participation in civic and political life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in participation in voluntary activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>'Some decide to continue with volunteering activities. Others have seen the importance of learning a foreign language, and look for other volunteering programmes to continue learning languages'</i> (Euroacción EVS project coordinator).</li> </ul>
	<b>Stronger sense of belonging to the EU</b>	N/A	N/A
	<b>Further mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved readiness to work / study/</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>'Others have seen the importance of learning a foreign language, and look for other volunteering programmes to</i></li> </ul>



Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
		live abroad	<i>continue learning languages'</i> (Euroacción EVS project coordinator)
	<b>Increased intercultural learning and dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures)</li> <li>■ Better understanding of other cultures</li> <li>■ More receptivity towards multiculturalism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>'In the beginning I clashed a lot with one of my flatmates. In the first month I felt challenged by the differences in our daily life and in how to communicate. The mentor is a therapist and this was helpful when I had conflicts at home.'</i> (M., ex-EVS volunteer)</li> <li>■ <i>'I will probably think more about other things... about how to relate to others... the fact that what is normal for you is not normal for someone else. Accept without judging. There are also different ways to do things the right way'</i> (S., volunteer, discussing co-habitation).</li> <li>■ <i>'[I feel] more open (...) I am more willing to meet new people, experience new cultures'</i> (J., volunteer)</li> </ul>
	<b>Improved social inclusion and solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>'There are people with higher education who decide to study something else, related to the topics [they have worked in as volunteer]'</i> (Euroacción EVS project coordinator)</li> </ul>
<b>O R G A N I S A T I O N</b>	<b>Organisational development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased staff motivation</li> <li>■ More human resources support for NGOs</li> <li>■ New ideas, tools and methods of working with young people and with non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Increased cultural diversity in NGO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>'[We] also learn from the motivation of volunteers. There is sometimes an ennui, a tiredness... seeing a motivated person is like a breath of fresh air'</i> (Euroacción EVS project coordinator)</li> <li>■ <i>'In the training sessions with young people with less opportunities we like to work in small groups. Volunteers allow us to work in small groups (...). In terms of internal management, the volunteers help with office work, they reduce our workload'</i> (Euroacción EVS project coordinator)</li> <li>■ <i>'Two volunteers brought new methodologies. One worked in non-violent communication and we have adopted it. The other one had extensive experience in gender topics'</i> (Euroacción EVS project coordinator)</li> <li>■ <i>'[Volunteers] bring another culture, language. You learn from other places... simple, small things'</i> (S., volunteer).</li> </ul>
	<b>Internationalisation of the organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Motivation to organise more EVS projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In regards to whether their organisation is motivated to continue or not with EVS: <i>'Yes. We believe it is very beautiful to see the evolution of volunteers and of the host entities. The</i></li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
L O C A L  C O M M U N I T Y	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness about volunteering</li> <li>■ Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries</li> <li>■ Higher interest in Europe</li> <li>■ Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be available</li> </ul>	<p><i>cultural and linguistic learning, the adaptation... it is very gratifying'</i> (Euroacción EVS project coordinator)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>'... in particular, girls who are considering going to university, they went to a session at the Murcia voluntary service to learn about volunteering opportunities. When you meet someone from abroad, you start considering the option of going abroad to help in other places'</i> (K., worker at local NGO).</li> <li>■ <i>'[Volunteers] show a different reality to children. Different lifestyles and cultures (...) hopefully [this will change] their concept of different countries, [they will learn] to respect'</i> (K., worker at local NGO).</li> <li>■ <i>'For minors, it can be a referent. Coming from your country to work for free, to help others... what leaving your country can bring to you... what is Europe and how do other Europeans live'</i> (F., worker at local NGO)</li> <li>■ <i>Volunteers have provided 'school support in foreign languages to children. In English, and sometimes in French'</i> (F., working at local NGO)</li> </ul>
	<b>Community cohesion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness of volunteering and EVS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>'[Volunteers] make friends with people at local level, who then ask them information [on EVS] to participate in it'</i> (Euroacción EVS project coordinator)</li> </ul>

## Impact of EVS in Istanbul, Turkey

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** TOG – Toplum Gönüllüleri Vakfı (Community Volunteers Foundation)
- **Size of organisation:** over 50 staff members
- **Location:** TOG has offices in Istanbul as well as in other cities in Turkey. TOG is an umbrella organisation composed of university student clubs.
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 2008
- **The organisation is accredited for:** receiving / sending volunteers/ coordinating EVS projects
- **Volunteering sector:** youth sector with a focus on youth participation
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** youth participation, social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, culture and creativity
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** university students from all around Turkey, which means that the target group is very diverse and includes, among others, youth with fewer opportunities
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** volunteers with educational difficulties, cultural differences, economical and social obstacles, geographical obstacles, etc.
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** the organisation has broad international contacts outside of the EVS
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** universities in most of the big cities in Turkey, secondary schools, teachers, municipalities or other local NGOs.

### Background of EVS in TOG

TOG is a non-profit foundation established in 2002. Its mission is to achieve active participation of young people in society by means of facilitating their mobility at national and international level. TOG is an umbrella organisation formed of university clubs in 79 cities across Turkey which TOG supports through capacity building, scholarships and resources. TOG's activities are primarily targeted at university students who they engage in volunteering and mobility projects.

TOG has been involved in EVS since 2008. At first, TOG was only involved in sending volunteers abroad, but over time it built the capacity and partnerships to host volunteers. TOG's motivation to become involved in the EVS programme stems from the benefits it brings for young people's intercultural learning as well as the capacity building for the organisation, in particular in terms of developing partnerships with countries that they do not typically cooperate with (i.e. Armenia) to expand the intercultural learning opportunities for Turkish young people. In addition to EVS, TOG is involved in the mobility programme at national level.

The profile of EVS volunteers changes every year according to the organisation's different projects. However, TOG typically aims at involving youth with fewer opportunities, in particular those with socio-economic obstacles and cultural differences. For example, TOG selects volunteers from Greece and Armenia, which are countries that Turkey has been in conflict with and thus the cultural differences are big. TOG aims to ensure gender balance amongst EVS volunteers it hosts, but female participation is typically higher. TOG selects the volunteers it involves in EVS projects based on their motivation for doing voluntary service.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with EVS Coordinator of TOG, 31/08/2016

The tasks performed by EVS volunteers hosted by TOG differ from one project to another, but they typically involve office work (volunteers work across different departments of the organisation to gain different competences), running workshops and designing different projects for young people in the local community. The projects they design are tailored to the needs of young people in the community and are supported through funding obtained through Erasmus+ or other international or local funding programmes. The tasks are flexible within the EVS projects and they are adapted to the volunteers' needs and expectations.

## Impact on volunteers

### ***Perspective of EVS volunteer 1***

F. is a young Italian woman who did her EVS for 11 months with TOG in Turkey in 2016. She was motivated to take part in EVS by a friend who had a positive experience participating in EVS in Romania. F. saw EVS as an opportunity to discover a new culture, as her friend did, as well as to gain work experience that could later help her in finding a job.

The most visible changes reported by the volunteer compared to her situation before EVS were learning more languages (English and Turkish), obtaining a better understanding of cultural and other differences, overcoming shyness, improving ability to make decisions, gaining more self confidence and learning how to plan, as well as how to change and adapt plans at short notice, and improved decision making. F. believes these changes happened because of the concrete experiences she had during her EVS as she had to design, implement and evaluate workshops, to arrange all materials, assess the needs of participants and arrange the schedule according to these needs.

According to the volunteer, the experience gained through EVS was *'unique and changed her life'* comparing to her situation before EVS. A concrete example was learning to live with people from different cultures. F. reported that at the beginning it was very hard for her to live with a flatmate, but after a while she learned to live and share the apartment with them. As a result, she still lives with the same flatmate. The volunteer described this experience as a concrete *'transformation in her life'* in terms of how she built autonomy and learned to cope with cultural differences.

Overcoming her shyness and becoming more confident are the biggest gains from EVS. She stated: *"Before EVS, I was very shy and found it difficult to speak in public, but this changed very much during EVS; I am now at ease with speaking in front of different and large audiences in public"*. F. also became more empathetic towards others and learned important team working and communication skills.

The two most important competences that F. developed are improved communication skills in her mother tongue and in English. This was because she started to communicate better while working in different teams and had become more aware of the linguistic differences and their causes. Being able to work more effectively as a member of an international team during her workshops is an indicator of this development. She also stated that she developed better problem solving and critical thinking skills, allowing her to express her ideas more cohesively compared to before EVS. In addition, working with IT, social media management and database management tools enabled her to increase her digital competences.

With regard to her employability and career prospects, she had the feeling that it was a worthwhile experience because she hadn't had any prior work experience in this field. She thinks that this experience will be very valuable for her CV as well as in her job interviews as she was able to obtain a lot of work experience during her EVS. EVS was also a good practical opportunity to understand the professional work in the field, including possible logistic-related problems. She is now very much aware of all positive and

negative aspects of working in the youth sector. She wants to continue working in the youth sector.

In relation to the aspect of participation in civic and political life, she stated that she did not know anything about Turkey before her EVS so having the opportunity to meet people and learned about their views on the EU and their values was appreciated by the volunteer: *'Listening to the perception of the people in Turkey about Italy and Italians as well as the Turkish media coverage of news about Italy was interesting for me'*. One important change has been that she started to get very interested in the news in Italy. She became more interested in her country and strengthened her identity as an Italian. She also feels an increased sense of belonging to EU, including willingness to study / work / live in different EU member states. She stated: *"I feel much powerful and brave to live in another country after my EVS experience"*.

She dealt with a lot of young people as a part of her voluntary work, strengthened her intercultural awareness, her understanding of social inclusion and solidarity. She enjoyed the opportunity of comparing different youth cultures. She learned a lot about the Turkish culture and her own culture by comparing the values of the two countries. She has become more aware of the importance of intercultural communication even with a lack of a common language.

### **Perspective of EVS volunteer 2**

G. is a young woman with a Turkish migration background living in Germany who is carrying out her an 11 month-long EVS between January and November 2016. At first, she intended to do voluntary work with children in Germany, but after visiting Turkey and seeing the situation of children in two orphanages, she decided to do voluntary work in Turkey rather than in Germany because she felt that she could be more helpful there. Driven by this motivation, she then searched for EVS projects in Turkey.

The biggest change G. experienced as a result of EVS has been building her autonomy and developing her life skills: *"I learned to view myself as the main actor in my life because beforehand I was relying on my parents and what I have noticed is that my mother was doing almost everything for me, but I only noticed that during my EVS project"*. Now she feels she is stronger and powerful enough to survive on her own. She learned how to advocate for her rights in the difficult context of living as a young woman in Istanbul on her own. She learned how to cope with loneliness and most importantly she learned *"not to give up"* when facing challenges.

The volunteer reported a definite increase in self-confidence and in life skills. For instance, the volunteer reported that she learned to manage and resolve conflicts thanks to improving her listening skills and understanding of other people's viewpoints.

She also reported that her English and Turkish language skills improved significantly, which in her opinion *'helps to become a better communicator in society'*. She also developed cultural and expression competences and also learned how to communicate with other people from different backgrounds and with different target groups or different contexts (friends, public bodies, private sector etc.) The volunteer also improved her digital competences thanks to the tasks performed during EVS, i.e. using PC and media tools.

The volunteer developed professional skills by using different IT tools and softwares which she believes will help her during her future work. *'During my EVS, I had to communicate with many different sectors and especially with governmental bodies and public organizations so it will be much easier for me to find a job because I really learned the logic of communication'*. She believes that doing her EVS at a big and well structured organization such as TOG will improve her CV. As she wants to become a teacher, this organization will be a good reference for her to find a future job. Thanks to the work

experience gained through EVS and to the language skills acquired in Turkey, G. passed the university exam in Turkey which allows her to continue live and study in Turkey.

While doing her EVS in Turkey, F. also learned about the situation in Turkey and Turkish people's perceptions of the EU and European institutions. While she was already active in civic and political life in her home country before going on EVS, the mobility experience has brought her different perspectives. She has learned a lot about different cultures and cultural sensitivities and she reported to be more aware now, after EVS, of cultural differences in society and she thus knows how to behave in a culturally sensitive manner.

### **Perspective of EVS volunteer 3**

A. is a young Polish woman aged 33 who did her EVS for 11 months with TOG in Turkey. As a student of Turcology, she was motivated to take part in EVS in order to learn more about Turkey and to practice the Turkish language.

After completing her EVS, A. decided to change her career orientation as her interest moved from academia to working in the civil society field. TOG helped her to learn about how NGO operate: *"I started looking for the things/jobs that I want to do. I changed my plans for the future and made a good start into new career path."*

Her Turkish improved significantly. Her communication skills and ability to work with people coming from different backgrounds improved. She stated: *'Given that TOG works with a very diverse group of young people I had the opportunity to meet very different people and this helped me to learn and become better at intercultural communication'*.

By working in an international environment at TOG during her EVS, she improved her team working skills and broadened her network of contacts which opened new possibilities for her. For instance, she started to live and work in Turkey after her EVS and is now employed by one of the biggest private universities in Turkey.

As for the positive impact, the volunteer reports that she has become stronger and more confident in dealing with problems on her own. The volunteer also reported some negative impact of the EVS experience. For example, she stated that the lack of concrete tasks for her to do on EVS impacted negatively on her motivation and even led to her *'feeling useless'* and feeling excluded from certain activities within the organisation.

### **Perspective of EVS receiving organisation**

According to the receiving organisation, there are two key drivers of motivation for young people to go on EVS: i) some go on EVS because they cannot find employment in their home country and thus see EVS to do something useful for their development, and ii) some volunteers are driven by their interest in discovering a new country and culture. The interviewee from TOG explained that many of the EVS volunteers they host had chosen Turkey as host country because they find it different from their home country, *'challenging or even exotic'*. TOG reported to host a high number of EVS volunteers coming from Germany.

EVS participation contributes to volunteers' personal development. In general, most of the changes they observed are in communication skills, being more specific about decision making, deciding about their future plans and paths (to continue with NGO work, or study, etc.), new languages, taking initiatives and responsibilities, developing their digital competences, overcoming their prejudices and learning about different cultures. They also mention that the activities contribute to their self-confidence, goal setting, dealing with challenges because they have to work in different environments which for many may be the first time in their lives they have done this. Volunteers of TOG also mention the positive impact on their public speaking skills, as they have to run sessions at different places.

As reported by the interviewees from TOG, the EVS contributes to improved communication, relationship management skills and self-confidence: *'Sometimes working*



*with TOG may create an artificial world for them because TOG is a well structured organization and they expect to have always similar experience when they return home which sometimes doesn't happen. This may cause frustration'. Because they expect to find most of the organizations with similar experiences, resources or opportunities when they go back to their countries. On the other hand, most of them find good opportunities after EVS, i.e. different scholarships, internships which shows that EVS participation can have a positive impact on their employability. TOG interviewee explains: 'Most of our volunteers find scholarships in Turkey. They also get to know a lot of youth organisations and this expands their network that helps them in their future projects or even with their job search'.*

Several ex-EVS volunteers returned to their home countries and started to work as EVS coordinators in their local organisations. They develop ideas about their future career plans and strategies during their EVS experience. The main factor that facilitates this positive impact of EVS, according to TOG interviewees, is that more time and a stronger focus is placed on EVS volunteers to discuss their future career plans with their mentors. This enables them to return home with concrete ideas about their professional pathway. Almost all of the returnees work now in the youth sector in their home countries and they use all the competences gained during EVS. They feel more competent and it becomes easier for them to find a job that matches their skills.

The EVS process is a good opportunity to get to know more organisations in their home countries because TOG is a big organisation with many international projects and by taking part in these projects volunteers learn about the organizations from their home country. They increase their awareness of local news and political developments in their countries much more compared to before. Because they started to take a more active role in developing projects that may solve the youth problems in Europe or they became more aware of the societal problems because of the projects they were dealing with. They do feel much more responsible for the developments in the world and in their own countries. For instance, according to comments we have received from the volunteers, most of them are decided to vote after EVS although they had not placed much importance on voting beforehand. Volunteers have also become more involved in discussions about youth issues/problems in Europe.

TOG is an active organization in the Advisory Council of Council of Europe and so are familiar with the Council of Europe. They follow all developments in the AC and even get involved in the campaigns such as 'no hate speech', 'all different all equal' campaigns of the Council of Europe, etc. As a result volunteers have also learned more about the Council of Europe and other EU institutions.

Most volunteers have increased motivation to live in another EU country because they have more information and increased awareness of the different opportunities available, such as scholarships, educational options, etc., in different EU Member States. For instance, according to feedback received from their mentors, they thought it would be better to live in Brussels if they want to continue work in youth sector.

The EVS experience raises their awareness about the EU, its institutions and values. Volunteers also realise similarities and differences between European youth. They discussed and learnt about the meaning of European citizenship and interculturality in Europe. Volunteers discuss the intercultural issues faced by members, workers of the organization and the local community. This helps them to become more aware of their own home culture as well as the similarities and differences of cultures. *'They start to act more as a part of the solution in Europe. For instance, they learned a lot about the situation in Syria and of the situation of refugees that came to Turkey. This situation raised their awareness about the solidarity and social inclusion issues in Europe'.*

According to the TOG representative, the effects of EVS participation are greater for certain EVS participants, especially for volunteers from Armenia or similar countries that

face changes in their youth sector. This is explained by the fact that many of the EVS volunteers hosted by TOG returned home to work in the youth sector, hence they brought the biggest changes to those countries where the youth sector was still in the early phase of development. The participation in EVS also has strong effects on those EVS volunteers who already have a Turkish background (i.e. coming from Turkish families in Germany). The TOG representative interviewed reported that some EVS volunteers with Turkish background have more prejudices about Turkey than volunteers from other countries and, although the process of intercultural learning may take longer for them, it is very beneficial.

## **Impact on EVS organisations**

### ***Perspective of TOG as both EVS receiving and sending organisation***

For the members of staff of the TOG organisation, the most significant benefits centre are in relation to intercultural learning. According to the interviewed representative of TOG, most of their staff benefit from the intercultural learning environment and have learnt new methods and tools from volunteers. For instance they were introduced to the mentorship system and many other methods (art, culture, etc.). They also learned about new cultures, perspectives and values of different cultures.

Interviewees from TOG mentioned that through EVS projects they learned and practiced working with young people on an individual basis rather than working with them in groups. Thanks to EVS they developed their capacity to provide mentorship. It has now become part of the organizational culture to offer mentorship to local volunteers involved in the work done by TOG.

Staff reported that they learned how to mentor volunteers and that they now have a better understanding of how to work with young people from different cultural backgrounds. The experience of implementing EVS projects contributed to breaking the stereotypes of staff towards people coming from other cultures. Furthermore, staff members who have been introduced to and implemented different youth work tools, methods and approaches are motivating TOG volunteers to also work at an international level. Moreover, the TOG representatives interviewed reported that by observing real EVS experiences, many staff members were motivated to participate in EVS projects abroad, contributing significantly to the development of the organisation upon their return.

Staff are more open to cultural diversity, but the change has not been dramatic since the organisation is located in a highly intercultural environment in Istanbul and so intercultural learning is integrated into the organisation's culture. However, the interviewed staff at TOG believe that some of the rules and values (gender balance, tolerance, interculturality, human rights, etc.) of the EVS programme taught them to embed these values into the organisational culture further.

The organisation expanded its network and started new partnerships thanks to its involvement in EVS. The youth workers at TOG experienced setting up projects by combining different values of different youth groups with different needs. This variety gave them the opportunity to become more aware of these differences. TOG staff also gained experience in working with international partners while expanding their capacities. For instance, the interviewed youth workers at TOG reported that they are now better equipped to work with different partners that have different perceptions, working styles, understandings and approaches. The EVS experience allowed TOG to establish a bigger and stronger network of international partners, gaining important information about the Erasmus + programme. In particular, the organisation finds the EVS process more helpful than short-term actions. For instance, in a 5-day training course they do not deal with their partners on a long-term basis, but during EVS projects they do. They also find

SOHO training modules very useful as these modules also contribute and support the networking processes.

According to TOG representatives, the impact of EVS is stronger on staff members that directly interact with EVS volunteers throughout the project, i.e. the EVS coordinators and mentors because they get to communicate more with the volunteers on a variety of issues. TOG representatives believe that the impact of EVS on the organisation can be expanded by putting more staff members in direct contact with the EVS volunteers. One method TOG has experienced was that EVS volunteers can rotate among different departments every week. In this way, more staff members have the opportunity to learn from the volunteers and vice versa. Secondly, TOG believes that if more time were allocated to the preparation of EVS volunteers by their sending organisation before departure, the impact of EVS experiences on both volunteers and on the host organisation could be bigger. In this way, EVS volunteers would have a better understanding of EVS and of what their personal project objectives they want to achieve through EVS are.

### ***Perspective of current EVS volunteers and of alumni***

In relation to the impact of their work on the host organisation, EVS volunteers reported some concrete examples of their contributions. For example, A. reported that thanks to her feedback on the EVS project, the organisation adopted some changes in the way they organise and manage EVS projects, in particular the tasks allocated to EVS volunteers: *'moving volunteers from one department of the organisation to another where volunteers' work is more needed and thus more useful'*. G. also stated that in addition to her learning from the organisation, the host organisation also learned from her by means of her contribution to the "Youth Bridge" Project as she was part of the team.

Only one in three volunteers interviewed reported to have had any impact on their sending organisations, the recurrent problem being the lack of follow-up after their EVS. The volunteer that reported some impact emphasising that staff in the sending organisation learned about Turkey and about different organizations and experiences in Turkey. G. explains: *'I always transfer all what I do here to my sending organization and they learn a lot out of this reporting. I have introduced them many people and organizations and their network in Turkey has been expanded now. This is very important for my sending organization because Turkey was not in their working list and now they have more diversified countries and organizations'*.

### **Impact at local community level**

#### ***Perspective of the members of the local community***

Living with an EVS volunteer from Germany was a very different experience for the local community members interviewed. She is Turkish but lived in Germany in the past. She had some difficulties in adapting to living with an EVS volunteer coming from a different country. For instance, they had to discuss and solve the issues several times where there were misunderstandings of meaning. The community member still thinks they had an important cultural interaction. They learned to share many things exchanging perspectives and views. *'We spend a very long time together and the differences started to become a joy for us. We discuss and share a lot about Germany and German Culture and this has created a huge learning achievement'*. *We always learn about each other's cultures, such as about the food from Germany. We share many stories and details about our lives, cultures and I do feel like she is a member of my family'*.

The interaction with the EVS volunteer had a big impact on the local community members' awareness of volunteering and of civil society and in fact it motivated her to volunteer herself. Before meeting G., she did not know about TOG organisation, but after the EVS volunteer introduced her to the organization and its staff. She has learned a lot

about this organisation and for the first time in her life, she learned about volunteering and now she also does voluntary work. She now volunteers in the TOG office and helps the organisation by using her professional expertise as a lawyer. As she was living in Germany for a while she was aware of the intercultural differences but still she can say that she *'learned a lot about this country and about Germans'*. Therefore, meeting and living with an EVS volunteer increased her awareness of youth work and volunteering and influenced her life choices as she is now regularly volunteering at TOG.

The local community member interviewed was invited by TOG to various activities organised as part of EVS projects and these invitations became a very important tool for her to familiarise herself with this process. For instance, she took part in a 'living library' activity. She really liked it and indeed she convinced other local community members to become involved in these activities. She saw it as a great opportunity empathise, discuss many taboo issues and help to destroy stereotypes. She decided to do voluntary work after these big social influence and she thought that more people should get involved in voluntary work.

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

The TOG representatives interviewed reported that members of local community became more open towards different cultures and people from abroad. *'They broke up their prejudices. They felt encouraged to travel and meet new people because EVS has been promoted and they know how to use it'*.

For beneficiaries of TOG's activities, EVS projects promoted young people's active participation in non-governmental organisations. It has developed solidarity and promoted tolerance amongst individuals and in the local community. It has also fostered mutual understanding among people with different backgrounds, especially among volunteers from two very different countries (Armenia and Greece) who had never been to Turkey before. This experience helped both parties, volunteers and locals, to overcome their prejudices and to understand each other beyond the tumultuous historical relations between their countries.

In the wider community, EVS projects increased awareness of international youth mobility projects such as EVS and the understanding of other cultures for the wider community. The interviewed local community member reported to have learnt about existing mobility opportunities and these had led her to become more involved in civil society. This was possible because she saw first hand the impact of EVS to the volunteers and organisations, as she was living with the EVS volunteer.

However, TOG representatives reported that the language barrier is the biggest obstacle in the interaction between locals and EVS volunteers. They stated: *'locals are generally too shy to speak in English and this has been an important obstacle.'*

### ***Perspective of the EVS volunteers and alumni***

The EVS volunteers interviewed reported that their presence had an impact on beneficiaries' awareness and motivation to engage with EVS. F. explains: *'The participants in my workshops many of them were really young, after I meet them and after I told them about EVS they were very interested and they came to me and asked me about the EVS projects. How they can learn a foreign language and all relevant details. So my experience was very interesting and motivating for them.'*

EVS volunteers also believe that they had an impact on increasing the locals' motivation to learn English. One volunteer recalls: *'In my home my flatmate cannot speak English but since I came to his home now he is very motivated to learn English and he tries his best to learn English and now he decided to attend the TOEFL test because his English has improved.'*

Another impact reported by EVS volunteers on the local community is related to raising interest of locals to go abroad to travel, work or live. One volunteer reported: *'In the long-term, friends of my friends will hear about my experience of living abroad, so I do believe I contributed to motivate young people to live abroad and it is not only about the direct beneficiaries, because they will also tell their friends. Also people see me on the street and know I am not a tourist but I live here and they started to contact me and ask me how I perceive their society and it creates a lot of intercultural learning and it changes their mentalities'.*

Presence of EVS volunteers also increases the openness of the host community to foreigners and their acceptance of the cultural diversity, especially for those who have had contact with people from other countries for the first time. A volunteer explains: *'Meeting with us, spending time and working together was a valuable experience. Many of them started learning foreign languages, become more interested in different cultures and build tolerance towards differences.'* G. also reported: *'the people I work with (both volunteers and staff) are very open and tolerant. I do not believe that I contributed much as they are already very competent, all have been abroad but I think they have learned from me about the German educational system and living in Germany. I got a lot of questions about living or studying in Germany and I do believe I transferred so much information to them although I do feel I learned more.'*

Young people who are involved in projects can be seen to influence other people they are in contact with in the local community. One example of this is in young peoples ability to influence stereotypes or prejudices of locals towards other cultures, as explained by one volunteer: *'For instance, after they get information about me and my culture they tell me that they broke up many stereotypes about Germans or Turks living in Germany. These influences our communication in a positive way. Also during the activities that I took part in we discussed many sensitive issues that were taboo in the society and these discussions impacted the hosting local community. I got very positive feedback'.*

#### Interviews conducted

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Job title	Date of interview
EVS alumni	Not affiliated	Young person from PL	06/09/2016
EVS volunteer	TOG-Federica Zucchi	Volunteer	31/08/2016
EVS volunteer	TOG-Gizem Özcan	Volunteer	31/08/2016
EVS hosting organisation	TOG-Nilay Küme	Global Affairs Coordinator	31/08/2016
EVS sending organisation	TOG-Sevcan Koç	Youth Centre Coordinator	31/08/2016
Local community	NA-Maral Güneş Arlı	Lawyer	31/08/2016



## Impact of EVS in Lviv, Ukraine

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** Green Cross Society
- **Size of organisation:** 10 full-time staff
- **Location:** Lviv is the largest, middle-income city in western Ukraine, located approximately 70 kilometres from the Polish border. It is one of the main cultural and education centres in the country. Lviv's economy is diversified, with tourism and the information technology sector taking the lead. It has a population of approximately 735,000 inhabitants, out of which approximately 13.7% are young people under 15 years, and 17.6% of people are 60 years old and over.
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 2007
- **The organisation is accredited for:** Sending and receiving volunteers
- **Volunteering sector:** Youth and social inclusion (disabled people)
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** Ecology, integration of disabled people into society, sport- and eco-tourism
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** People with disabilities (from 20 up to 70 years old)
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** Yes (2 blind people and 2 people with cerebral palsy)
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** Limited to contacts in EVS (involved in other youth exchange programmes as well)
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** Union of Blind People, Boarding School for Blind Children

### Background of EVS in Green Cross Society (GCS)

Founded in 1994, Green Cross Society (GCS) is an independent, non-governmental organisation (NGO) aiming at '*educating children and bringing them up as engaged and critically-thinking citizens of their countries*'.<sup>50</sup> In order to achieve this, the organisation engages children in a range of activities in areas such as: ecology; sport-tourism; research and preservation of places of historical and cultural significance; and integration of disabled people into society. The first EVS volunteers came to GCS in 2007. Encouraged by a partner organisation to take part in the EVS programme, GCS decided to apply for accreditation to join the scheme, considering it as a '*good experience to have a foreigner at the office for a year*'. Since then, it has been sending and hosting EVS volunteers from various countries, including people with disabilities (e.g. blind people or people with cerebral palsy).<sup>51</sup>

Young people who visit the organisation under the framework of the EVS programme are engaged in daily activities and projects run by GCS, depending on their experience. While most of them are involved in providing translations of the organisation's website or documents into their national languages, some of them also teach foreign languages or carry out tasks resulting from projects implemented by their sending organisations. It is worth mentioning the role played by EVS volunteers with disabilities, who teach the organisation's beneficiaries who have similar impairments how to live without constant support from others. They have meetings where they discuss how to make young people with disabilities more independent (for example to cook, shop, and move around the city on their own).

So far there have been two cases of EVS volunteers dropping-out from EVS, the main reason for which was finding employment. This caused considerable problems for the

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.gcs.org.ua/eng/about>

<sup>51</sup> Volunteers are not asked about their level of education level.



organisation as it could not retrieve the money paid for a year in advance for renting an apartment for volunteers. Given that GCS has no control over such situations (and on volunteers), it finds itself in a helpless position should similar incidents occur in the future. Other challenges related to EVS include: difficulties for volunteers in obtaining visas (e.g. one staff member specified *'volunteers from Poland had to cross the border to Poland every two weeks, while volunteers from other countries have a problem with staying longer than three months'*). Equally important is the fear among potential volunteers of choosing Ukraine as their EVS destination country, due to the military conflict in the eastern part of the country. A decreasing number of young people from abroad who come to provide volunteering services has been observed over the past years - *'only one organisation in Lviv hosts volunteers now, while there are at least ten organisations who could host them'*, said the head of GCS. Other issues reported by GCS include problems for volunteers with disabilities (e.g. motor skills problems) to move around the city (e.g. by public transport) which is not adapted to the needs of disabled people - *'even for those young people who are used to moving around the city, it causes problems'*. Additionally, finding housing for volunteers that would suit their expectations poses an issue.

As for the future, the organisation is motivated to continue its participation in EVS, also because it is increasingly pleased with the young people who arrive as part of this programme. It appears that volunteers are increasingly better matched to the needs and activities of the organisation; they are eager to be engaged in many activities and have already been to or know Lviv and Ukraine, as well as its surroundings. Perhaps this results from the efforts of partner organisations, as suggested by GCS staff.

## Impact on volunteers

### ***Perspective of EVS volunteer 1 from Poland doing EVS in Ukraine in 2016 - 2017 (8 months of EVS mobility)***

A. is a 31 year old, well-educated woman from Poland who is doing EVS for eight months (2016 - 2017). Prior to her EVS experience, she had worked in the EVS sending organisation for three years. Even though participating in EVS had been in her plans for a long time, for various reasons A. had been postponing the final step to join the programme as a volunteer - as she explained, *'I've been working as a volunteer and I had access to many interesting programmes. However, it's been difficult to decide to take part in such a long-term project'*. Her previous knowledge of the EVS programme had a considerable impact on her decision to join EVS as a volunteer, and - more importantly - on forming her ideas on what exactly she expects from this experience. As A. revealed, she wanted to take part in *'a quality project, not random activities'* which are not linked to her experience. Therefore, she created an EVS project for herself (i.e. a project she now carries out in Ukraine), which is in line with her interests and allows her to realise ideas she has always wanted to implement. Apart from this, time has also been an issue when deciding on volunteering through EVS, as she reached the upper age limit imposed by the programme.

During her EVS, A. was involved in both her own project activities and other tasks done for the receiving organisation. For instance, she carried out interviews with women from local communities, recorded them, and prepared and edited write-ups. All this was part of the *'Stories about global education'* project that A. prepared at her sending and coordinating organisation. As for her other commitments for GCS, these included translating the website and documents, as well as teaching Spanish.

For A., EVS has had a large impact on her life. Firstly, it has changed her perspective of how she sees her own country and broadened her horizons - *'before, I used to see things superficially'*. Secondly, it allowed her to return to her once abandoned interests, which she could not realise earlier for economic reasons. Finally, she learnt Ukrainian language

and changed her approach to life in general. Thanks to EVS, A. considers herself now to be a person who is *'more relaxed and more satisfied with life'*. This personal change came from her observations that despite the many difficult issues in Ukraine (such as the war in Donbas), people still remain cheerful in this context.

According to the volunteer, all aspects of her work in Ukraine were important. However, she revealed that the most significant aspect was the fact that she had concrete, project-related goals to achieve which kept her engaged. She explained that *'perhaps more important is what I am doing here, rather than who I am doing it with. I have a task to do here, it is not an excursion'*. Whereas A. assessed her experience of EVS positively, she also pointed out that formalities related to applying for a residence card and for a visa were the most frustrating moments. Also, the process of acclimatization at the beginning of her stay in Ukraine, as well as a long waiting time for the financial support that was to be transferred from Poland, were described as challenging stages of her participation in EVS.

### ***Perspective of EVS volunteer 2 from Poland doing EVS in Ukraine (10 months of EVS mobility)***

N. is a 25-year old Polish woman who is doing an EVS for ten months at GCS. She has previous experience with volunteering in various cultural organisations and is about to complete her Master's degree.

N. learned about EVS from her friends. One of them was A. (whose experience is described above), who has been working at the EVS sending organisation for a while. N. decided to participate in EVS when her studies were coming to an end and it was time to make a decision about her own future, deciding between a *'full-time job or some kind of 'adventure''*. N. decided to go for the second option.

Her main activities during the EVS experience have been similar to the tasks mentioned above by A. Being involved in the same project – *'Stories about global education'* – N. has conducted qualitative research on the stories of women from local communities. The volunteer has also contributed to the work carried out by the receiving organisation.

In terms of the impact EVS has had on her life, it is too early for N. to assess it. For now, she believes that a change of context, as well as having a goal to achieve, are critical factors that make EVS an enriching experience. As for other benefits, an improvement in her Ukrainian language skills was also mentioned by the volunteer. She is not sure whether similar gains could be obtained while staying in Poland – *'I don't know if I would even think about doing such things [as I do in Ukraine] in Poland'*. N. also admitted with certainty that she plans to use her EVS experience when looking for employment opportunities. As she explained, *'I will boast about it'*, as she sees it as *'an important experience, which can make you change your career path'*.

Finally, in terms of challenging factors during the EVS period, the formalities related to visa and resident card proceedings were rated as somewhat difficult. Nevertheless, they seemed less disturbing for N. than for A., because by applying first A. had paved the way and made it easier for her friend to go through the process.

### ***Perspective of ex-EVS volunteer from Poland doing EVS in Lviv in 2012 (6 months of EVS mobility, twice)***

M. is a 35-year old woman coming from an industrial part of southern Poland, with no previous experience of volunteering. A few years ago she went on EVS to Lviv twice, for six months each time. M. is blind, but she does not consider herself at a disadvantage compared to her peers. She holds a Master's degree in Ukrainian philology.

M. found out about the EVS opportunity from her friends from the Association of Blind People, which sent an e-mail to its members about such a possibility. Finding out about

the programme, M. thought it was *'a unique chance to go to Lviv for half a year for free'*, particularly given her educational background.

Among the tasks carried out as part of her EVS, M. worked at the library for blind people and at the school for blind children, where together with another volunteer she carried out rhythm lessons. She also taught Polish at the Polish parish, did some translation work for the receiving organisation, and took part in meetings with the Association for Blind People from Lviv. In the case of the latter, M. wanted to show the Association's members that *'it is possible to do something on your own if you are blind'*.

She reported that volunteering has been beneficial for everyone: *'it serves as an eye-opener'*. Participation in EVS has made the largest impact on *'cognitive and decision-making aspects'* of her life. Above all, it increased her feeling of independence, far more than the experience of her studies did, which she completed in Poland. She also became more assertive – *'my whole life I have always been told what to do'* – and more open to people, because she felt she *'had to be an example [for blind people from Ukraine] of how life can be when you are blind'*. Becoming more responsible was yet another positive aspect of EVS for M., thanks to, for example, the activities she carried out with children. In addition, as a student of Ukrainian philology who has learnt a lot about Ukraine's customs, she had a chance to experience them in practice, taste the Ukrainian lifestyle, and use the language in daily life. Last but not least, she met her current husband as an EVS volunteer and she continues to live in Ukraine.

The most disappointing factor mentioned by M. was the lack of willingness on the side of local organisations and institutions (not the hosting organisation) to cooperate with EVS volunteers. For instance, it had been difficult to convince a school director to allow volunteers to get engaged in activities with school children. The reasons for this, according to M., were twofold: *'a director thought that children do not need our activities and she did not want to be disturbed by us'*. As a result, the ex-EVS volunteer had to invent her own activities to stay busy, while being left with a feeling that much more work and tasks could have been done, but *'people were not interested in it'*. Also, M.'s expectation to benefit from the EVS experience in obtaining employment has not been met. Although she still cooperates with her hosting organisation from time to time as a volunteer, she could not find a job afterwards. She explained that *'there are no jobs for blind people in Ukraine. One has to be lucky to get one'*. Apart from the above, there were not many challenging moments reported by the ex-EVS volunteer. In her view, the EVS has been well prepared and the head of the hosting organisation did a great job to organise her stay in Lviv.

### **Perspective of EVS receiving organisation**

According to GCS, participation in EVS gives volunteers a diverse experience. The main benefits listed by the head of the organisation include:

- Gaining experience on how to work with people with disabilities;
- Becoming more independent;
- Learning how to write project proposals and reports (*'after 1 year they know the whole project cycle'*);
- Learning Ukrainian language;
- Better employment prospects due to the knowledge of Ukrainian language.

Another GCS staff member said that EVS impacts volunteers' life-choices. Even though it is difficult to specify exact changes, he argued that *'it must have some impact on them, because often they cry when they have to leave'*.

At the same time, the extent to which volunteers benefit from EVS is an individual matter and it depends on volunteers' personality. For example, as suggested by GCS, those young people who are responsible for something or someone (e.g. 20 people during a workshop), develop the most.

The length of the scheme is also regarded as an influential factor. Usually, it takes from six to nine months for volunteers to begin to understand the local specifics and to learn the foreign language. This makes them feel more comfortable in their volunteering environment. During the first months of their stay abroad, they usually feel nostalgic and make constant comparisons with their home country.

## **Impact on EVS organisations**

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

The presence of EVS volunteers is beneficial for the whole organisation, according to the interviewed staff. The main advantages for the GCS from involvement in EVS include increasing language and technical skills of staff members. For instance, some of them learnt how to speak Polish, because there were philologists among the EVS volunteers. Another example is the new knowledge gained by GCS' bookkeeper, who had to learn how to prepare documents in English for foreign partners. Another important aspect is the possibility for GCS to provide practical examples of the issues they advocate for coming from other countries – such as integration of people with disabilities into society. EVS volunteers are presented as role models for young people from the local community in terms of the volunteers' work, development, growth and contribution to the organisation. In addition, former EVS volunteers maintain contact with the organisation and become engaged in joint activities as partners or volunteers.

GCS believes there are two factors that facilitate the impact of EVS on their organisation, both closely attributed to volunteers' characteristics. First, GCS' experience shows that young people with certain talents and skills are particularly well-positioned to add value to the organisation's work. For instance, it was very useful when they knew how to work with children or young people, how to organise workshops, or how to make short films. Therefore, according to an interviewed staff member from GCS, *'a volunteer should have some talents and be prepared and able to do something or know something that can be shared with others, to give something back'*. Second, it seems that volunteers from an older age group cope much better with the challenges related to volunteering in a new context. It appears that if a volunteer is a bit older (e.g. over 24 years old and having completed their studies), such a person proves to be *'more independent, knowing what life is, and not walking in the clouds'*. Finally, more benefits could be gained if the GCS could choose their own volunteers and apply for EVS projects - *'at the moment we can only say that volunteers are needed and we can ask partners for a careful selection of applicants'*.

### ***Perspective of current EVS volunteers and of alumni***

Current EVS volunteers and alumni had evident problems with articulating what impact their presence and work have had on their receiving organisation. The only examples they mentioned were: *'buddying up with the staff'*, *'having some ideas to do something together in [our] project'*, and *'doing translations for the organisation'*. The ex-EVS volunteer reflected that her presence as the first EVS volunteer hosted by the organisation has possibly encouraged GCS to invite more young people like her in the future.

As for the benefits for the sending organisation, those volunteers who carried out a project linked to its activities gathered information which was later published on the organisation's website - *'the whole idea [i.e. project] is linked to what our sending organisation does'*. Other volunteers could not specify any other benefits for the sending organisation, other than the information they provide in the final questionnaire and the activities finalising the EVS.

## Impact at local community level

### ***Perspective of the members of the local community***

According to the representative of the local organisation for blind people, EVS contributed to building a positive attitude towards the European Union (EU) and its volunteers in particular. Above all, EVS volunteers inspire the Ukrainian youth to volunteer. For instance, children from one school that hosted volunteers organised a charity concert. Therefore, the fact that volunteering is becoming more popular in Ukraine results, among other things, from international volunteering programmes such as EVS that promote this idea.

Another important aspect is the new knowledge gained by beneficiaries of the receiving organisation's activities, as well as by the wider community. For instance, as part of their responsibilities, EVS volunteers teach various courses such as English and other languages (also for blind people), Computer Science, and literature. They also share information about cultures and traditions from their home countries. This way they trigger a desire among the community members to learn more about the life and cultural values of other countries: as an interviewed GCS staff member explained, *'Our NGO consists of more than 2,000 members and volunteers who were taking part in different events and discussions. Thanks to this, we found out not only about volunteers' work in Ukraine, but also about the lives of blind people in Europe'*. It can be observed that over time the stereotype of people with disabilities, such as blind people, **as** being **helpless** and dependent, is slowly fading and EVS volunteers make a great contribution to overcome this perception.

Generally, it is youth that benefit the most from contact with EVS volunteers. However, since EVS volunteers have also been working with specific groups of people, e.g. children with disabilities, members of such groups have a chance to obtain greater benefits than others. In addition, those people who want to learn something from volunteers also make good use of their experience. Situations when both volunteers and the local community members (or their families) share similar problems are regarded as a facilitating factor that makes EVS volunteers fit better in the local community. The only barrier identified is the language. Yet, if volunteers come from neighbouring countries, such as Poland or Slovenia, there are almost no difficulties in communication. Besides, as it has been highlighted by interviewees, the willingness to understand each other *'helps to find ways to cope with every situation'* (*'One word in English, the second in Polish - that is how we understood each other'*).

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

The presence of EVS volunteers has a positive impact on the local community and everyone benefits from their presence, as reported by the head of the receiving organisation. Their knowledge of Ukrainian language and belonging to certain group considered as disadvantaged are the main factors that facilitate the impact of the EVS on the local community. Thanks to EVS volunteers with disabilities, representatives of the service sector, such as waitresses or city guides, can learn how to work with people with various impairments. This is particularly important as it is usually a shock for local people to see that EVS volunteers with disabilities can do certain things outside their homes, which is not common at all for disabled people from Lviv (e.g. activities such as going to a restaurant, theatre or a museum). For instance, when encountered by a blind person, local community members do not know how to behave (e.g. one mentioned that *'one city guide lost his voice, when he was approached by a blind person'*). By this time, there are courses for city guides on how to work with disabled people, as well as foreigners, which has been inspired to a vast extent by EVS volunteers who took part in such trainings.



As for the direct beneficiaries of activities of the receiving organisation, e.g. children with disabilities, EVS volunteers teach them how to live with a disability without constant support, how to move around the city, and how to be more independent. They also show to parents that their children are able to do some things on their own and that they should not be afraid to give them more freedom. This is particularly important in the context of Ukraine, where there is strong stigma and discrimination against children with disability, and they remain marginalised and isolated from society - *'people from small communities are frightened of disabled people to such an extent that they close their shops or cross to the other side of the street when they see them approaching'*.<sup>52</sup> Experience with EVS volunteers shows that foreigners with disabilities are less afraid of going outside their households. Examples of such can attitude can change society's and the disabled community's way of thinking about disabled people – one staff member from GCS explained that *'EVS volunteers demonstrate that people with disabilities can also be helpful for the community'*.

Another benefit from EVS for the local community, which stems from the interaction with people from different countries (and cultures), is the broadening of knowledge about people's preferences that are not so popular in the local context. For instance, they learn about different eating choices or practises, such as vegetarianism, which are not so popular in their surroundings.

### **Perspective of the volunteers**

According to EVS volunteers, the presence of foreigners in Lviv makes the local community re-evaluate their concept of other countries and life in those countries. It also serves as an example that *'having a disability is not the end of the world'*.

### Interviews conducted

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Job title	Date of interview
EVS alumni	Not affiliated	Young person from PL	16-Jan-2017
EVS volunteer	Green Cross Society	Young person from PL	20-Jan-2017
EVS volunteer	Green Cross Society	Young person from PL	20-Jan-2017
EVS hosting organisation	Green Cross Society	Head	09-Jan-2017
EVS hosting organisation	Green Cross Society	Staff member	18-Jan-2017
Local community	The Ukrainian Association of the Blind	Head of Lviv's regional office	09-Jan-2017

### Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in Lviv, Ukraine

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
<b>I M P A C T</b>	<b>Personal and social development</b>	■ Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem	√
		■ Broadened horizons	√
		■ Increase in autonomy,	√
		independence	√

<sup>52</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/SitAn\\_NationalCons\\_Adv\\_EXTENDED.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/SitAn_NationalCons_Adv_EXTENDED.pdf)



Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
T O N T H E I N D I V I D U A L V O L U N T E E R		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Learning about oneself (self-discovery)</li> <li>■ More friends and contacts from other countries</li> <li>■ Increase in cultural capital</li> </ul>	
	<b>Learning and competence development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in all 8 key competences (foreign language skills, learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, etc.)</li> <li>■ Acquired new skills (i.e. how to plan finances)</li> <li>■ Increase in awareness and knowledge of non-formal learning</li> <li>■ Plans to engage in further education</li> <li>■ Intention to learn foreign languages</li> </ul>	√
	<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Developed professional skills and attitudes, matching employers' demands</li> <li>■ Acquired experience and contacts for work</li> <li>■ Increased chances to find a job</li> <li>■ Obtaining a job by using EVS experience</li> <li>■ Clearer idea about career aspirations and goals</li> </ul>	√
	<b>Increased participation in civic and political life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in participation in voluntary activities</li> <li>■ Increase in voter participation</li> <li>■ Increased participation in civic / political life</li> <li>■ Better prepared to participate actively</li> <li>■ Increase in participation in similar youth projects</li> </ul>	√
	<b>Stronger sense of belonging to the EU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More aware of common European values</li> <li>■ Higher interest in European topics</li> <li>■ Improved image of the EU</li> <li>■ Feeling more European than before</li> </ul>	√
	<b>Further mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved readiness to work / study/ live abroad</li> <li>■ Plans to move abroad for work / study / live</li> </ul>	√ √

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased confidence to travel to other countries</li> </ul>	
	<b>Increased intercultural learning and dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures)</li> <li>Better understanding of other cultures</li> <li>More receptivity towards multiculturalism</li> <li>More tolerance and respect for other cultures</li> <li>Improved intercultural dialogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> </ul>
	<b>Improved social inclusion and solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher positive values (tolerance, solidarity)</li> <li>Increase in social awareness</li> <li>Awareness of global issues</li> <li>Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society</li> <li>Increased commitment to work against discrimination, racism and intolerance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> </ul>
<b>R G A N I S A T I O N</b>	<b>Organisational development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More human resources support for NGOs</li> <li>Increase in competence of youth workers (project management, fund-raising etc.)</li> <li>New ideas, tools and methods of working with young people and with non-formal learning</li> <li>Increased cultural diversity in NGO</li> <li>Increase in tolerance and openness of staff</li> <li>More projects on inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities</li> <li>Increased promotion of the participation of young people in organisation</li> <li>Enhanced image and reputation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> </ul>
	<b>Internationalisation of the organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More and new international contacts and partnerships</li> <li>More international projects</li> <li>Motivation to organise more EVS projects</li> <li>Higher involvement in European activities</li> <li>Transfer of know-how and good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√</li> </ul>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>practice</li> <li>■ Increased attention to including an international dimension in youth work</li> </ul>	
<b>L O C A L  C O M M U N I T Y</b>	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness about volunteering</li> <li>■ Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Fostering learning mobility of other youth</li> <li>■ Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> </ul>
	<b>Community cohesion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased awareness of volunteering and EVS</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the European Union</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of the concerns and interests of young people in society</li> <li>■ Enriching the cultural diversity of the hosting communities</li> <li>■ Increasing interest of local community in multilingualism and multiculturalism</li> <li>■ Overcoming stereotypes and prejudices</li> <li>■ Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</li> <li>■ Stronger civil society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> <li>√</li> </ul>

## Impact of EVS in the UK

### Basic facts

- **Name of EVS organisation:** Volunteering Matters (VM)
- **Size of organisation:** In total Volunteering Matters engaged 30,000 volunteers and assisted 90,000 beneficiaries through its 180 volunteer projects across the UK in 2015/16
- **Location:** This varies considerably across the UK, however the project visited is in a rural community in Norfolk, England
- **Implementing EVS projects since:** 1996-1997
- **The organisation is accredited for:** *receiving and coordinating EVS projects*
- **Volunteering sector:** *in the project visited, Crafts and Gardening*
- **The recurrent theme(s) of EVS projects organised by the organisation:** Gardening and crafts
- **Target groups of the organisation's activities:** young people, disabled people, older people and families
- **Previously received EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities:** Yes, a variety including single parent families, early school leavers, those from rural areas and low income families. They aim for around 50% with fewer opportunities
- **Size of international contacts of the organisation:** the organisation has broad international contacts outside of the EVS through Volonteurope network of organisations. They are a member of SOLIDAR and European Civic Forum (through Volonteurope) and are actively engaged in the Social Platform and the European Platform for Lifelong Learning, EUCIS-LLL.
- **EVS is typically implemented in collaboration with:** VM have a network of partners they collaborate with across the UK however in the case study in question they work with a charity called the Garden Science Trust.

### Background of EVS in Volunteering Matters

Volunteering Matters was founded in 1962 (and known as Community Service Volunteers until 2015), and has been working in UK volunteering in policy and practice for more than 50 years. They started as an organisation to promote British volunteering for British people however as they have expanded they have done increasingly more international work. They have been involved in EVS since the programme started in 1996-1997 and it was a natural progression for their work to become involved in the programme as they are dedicated to furthering volunteering opportunities. They now have a network of accredited sites across the UK and play a key role in co-ordinating the EVS volunteers across these sites.

Volunteering Matters works primarily with young people, disabled people, families and older people and all their projects work to meet the needs of these specific beneficiary groups. They see volunteering as an important way to serve the community and support vulnerable groups. EVS fits this mission and their work with volunteers, which also means that EVS projects fit seamlessly into their normal work.

Volunteering Matters are one of the largest organisations hosting volunteers and they have partners across Europe and well as further afield. However, certain projects and partnerships attract certain volunteers. Largely they find that volunteers are under 25, with a mix of educational levels. Many have come straight from schools whereas others have studied or have gained employment experience.

In this particular case study, Volunteering Matters was working with an organisation called the Garden Science Trust based in Norfolk. This is a small charity that works with people with learning difficulties or other barriers to education and training. Volunteers who work on this project are largely from Germany while some come from Italy, Austria and historically from some other EU and Non-EU countries.

As EVS volunteers work to support the service users as appropriate, this includes a range of tasks from facilitating travel in the morning to activities to undertaking a number of daily activities. For example providing guidance, encouragement and support in the crafts and gardening club offered at the Garden Science Trust. They work alongside both staff and non-EVS volunteers in doing this.

## **Impact on volunteers**

### ***Perspective of EVS volunteer***

A number of different motivations were cited by the volunteers interviewed. All agreed that they wished to live abroad and to interact with different cultures and nationalities. This was paired with interest in improving their English language skills. Some also mentioned the social aspect of their work and suggested that they had wanted to do volunteering with disadvantaged groups, *'wanting to change people's lives'*. One volunteer suggested that they had had difficulty getting into support work and saw EVS as a chance to gain experience and further their career. One volunteer suggested *'I want to work in support work so it just made sense to me. I can get experience'*. Another wanted to give back to society before moving into business as a career.

The current volunteers suggested that they had *'grown as people'* as a result of EVS. Several mentioned that as an individual they felt more relaxed as a result of EVS. This was because they had had to adapt to a new environment and quickly became used to situations that were outside their comfort zones. Some of the younger volunteers suggested that they had gained experience of managing their lives. Previously they might have relied on parents for arranging travel but they have learned to be autonomous and independent as a result of EVS. They found the support of living in a shared house together contributed to them feeling more relaxed because they felt supported by the other EVS volunteers suggesting *'we can be there for each other'*.

Two volunteers suggested that since starting volunteering they had become more patient. They described that sometimes traveling in such a rural area can be difficult and that often their volunteer work included helping service users travel into the gardening club in the morning and this involved getting up very early and spending a lot of time waiting around for buses.

A couple of volunteers suggested that their work had changed their perception of people with learning disabilities and made them more open to service users as a result of their work. One suggested that they had previously held some stereotypes about individuals with learning difficulties but that these had changed as a result of her EVS volunteering experience. One volunteer suggested *'I think I believed some clichés but now these have fallen down'*.

Another key benefit of EVS was being able to experience another culture. The volunteers enjoyed learning about English culture suggesting that it was the mannerisms and politeness that had made the biggest impression on them. One suggested that now they better understand the polite exchanges and are now better able to encourage the service users to follow their example.

The volunteers suggested that there was very little they would change about their experience with EVS. However, one mentioned that they would like a wider variety of nationalities of volunteer on the project. Some found that people the majority of the volunteers were German speaking that this meant that in the house they don't always practice their English as much as they would like.

### ***Perspective of EVS receiving organisation***

The receiving organisations echoed the volunteers' motivations suggesting that they are motivated to join EVS because of a desire to travel, to learn English, learn about other

cultures, work with those with learning disabilities and for some improve their career prospects.

The receiving organisations felt that the volunteering experience had had a big impact on their volunteers. One of the most important things they felt that volunteers gained was confidence in themselves and their ability. This was partly because they may not have worked with individuals with learning difficulties beforehand but quickly learn about the service users and become confident interacting with them.

As well as gaining confidence they also gain important skills necessary to work with individuals with learning difficulties. It was suggested that during their time as EVS volunteers they formed meaningful friendships with the service users and these relationships should not be underrated in their importance to both parties. One interviewee stressed *'it's the human relationships that you can't measure'*. Volunteers and service users both enjoy interacting with each other and sharing their experiences.

Independence and budgeting of personal finances were also mentioned as being big changes for the EVS volunteers. One interviewee suggested *'for lots of them it is the first time they've had their own budget to spend- it's a learning curve'*. The organisation often receives younger EVS volunteers (under 25 years of age) and the EVS experience is for many of them the first time that they have lived away from home and thus the first time they have had to budget from themselves or navigate a bus system for themselves. It was suggested that despite bus systems being in another language and not particularly reliable that volunteers adapt well and orientate themselves.

It was suggested that the impact of EVS was particularly prominent for those with fewer opportunities. The staff interviewed gave an example of one particular volunteer who had come from a difficult home situation and flourished in the EVS environment, grew in confidence and became an integral part of the team.

It was noted that there is no particular incentive for organisations to recruit those with fewer opportunities (financially). However, it is their aim to have about 50% of their volunteers with fewer opportunities. They rely on their partner organisations to be able to meet this as they have long standing relationships and have a recruitment process that helps them identify those with fewer opportunities. Volunteer Matters travels to their partner organisations in Germany (mainly German volunteers in this project) and conduct face-to-face interviews with volunteers to identify those with support needs. They ask potential volunteers about their personal circumstances so they are able to best support them. They also find that those with fewer opportunities do not identify as such. Previously they have undertaken surveys where they have asked volunteers to select the most appropriate criteria to them. They found that those volunteers who they knew had fewer opportunities did not report this in the form. It was suggested *'it's hard to know why people don't self-identify but I think it is likely in part embarrassment'*.

It was suggested that for some young people with fewer opportunities that the time frames and processes involved in application are a challenge. The application and selection process was seen as too long and inflexible and this may put off volunteers who are not able to navigate the system. For smaller hosting organisations it may also be more difficult to ensure volunteering placements are filled and there is financial risk involved in the application process but because Volunteer Matters is a large organisation there is less risk attached to the application process. Volunteer Matters manage and select all the volunteers and so there is no risk for the host organisation.

The host organisation echoed the volunteers concern that having several volunteers with the same native language could be a hindrance in terms of improving their English skills. They had one volunteer who finished their placement early for this reason. In response to this they have set up an informal exchange group with the community set up by the Garden Science Trust and a local church group (although there is no religious aspect to



the group). There has only been one meeting so far but they anticipate that this will be of benefit to both the community group and the volunteers to improve their learning of the English language.

## **Impact on EVS organisations**

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

The most important impact on the receiving organisation is that they are able to run an increased service. Interviewees suggested that without the help of the EVS volunteers they would not be able to run their current services saying '*we wouldn't be able to function. It's as simple as that*'. There are no full time members of staff who work at the Garden site and so they rely on volunteers to function. The majority of these volunteers are from EVS however, they have a small number of community volunteers who also assist them, with an average for four volunteers on site at a time. Volunteers work one to one with service users so numbers change according to who is attending the gardening/craft club.

Since the Garden project started they have always had EVS volunteers and so they are not able to compare to the situation before EVS. However, it was noted that in comparison to non-EVS volunteers the EVS volunteers were seen to be more committed and reliable than other volunteers and therefore they played a particularly important role in the organisation. This was particularly notable because the project was in a rural area where it was hard to find UK volunteers. It was also suggested that working with disabled individuals is a challenging role so needs full commitment from volunteers.

The profile of volunteers that the host organisation receive was also seen as encouraging new ideas and useful because the volunteers were often closer in age to the beneficiaries. Having young volunteers was seen as useful in encouraging new ideas and facilitates a good relationship between volunteers and beneficiaries.

Staff at the host organisation suggested that they benefited from the new ideas that the volunteers bring to the organisation. She suggested that this included new activities for the beneficiaries and new approaches to their activities in the garden and crafts club. Fresh ideas also resulted from the fact that with each new group of volunteers the organisation has to provide training and explanation of their processes. This gives the project leaders an opportunity to review and revise these processes and make sure they are up to date with current policy and legislation.

Intercultural learning was also noted as beneficial to the hosting organisation and for the staff working there. This did not have tangible effects but was seen to enrich the knowledge of staff and the diversity of the organisation. This was particularly notable because of the rural community within which the volunteers were being hosted.

Friendships between volunteers and staff were also important to the organisation with staff still keeping in contact with volunteers from previous years. These human connections should not be undervalued in terms of the benefits to the staff.

One area of improvement identified by the hosting organisation was in relation to the EVS mandatory training activities. They suggested that often the training can be arranged at short notice which was problematic because without the volunteers the service cannot run. If they know in advance when the volunteers need to go for training they can rearrange services but stopping them altogether is not ideal because of the nature of the beneficiaries who need a clear routine.

Volunteer Matters suggested that changes in the accreditation guidelines since they started EVS resulting in them having now fewer accredited projects. Some of their projects which they had previously run were with large organisations who now find it difficult to navigate the accreditation process. In large organisations with complex

hierarchy it is difficult to get the right permission from the right people whereas previously they had worked with project staff (e.g. in councils). They suggested that there could be a more detailed accreditation process for the co-ordinating organisation and then less strict accreditation from the direct host organisations which would allow them to expand their offer again.

### ***Perspective of current EVS volunteers and of alumni***

The EVS volunteers echoed the views of the hosting organisation suggesting that their greatest impact was on enabling the actual running of the service. They suggested that the organisation would not have the capacity to run without them and would have difficulty meeting the complex needs of the service users who benefit from one-to-one contacts. One volunteer suggested *'We help with everything, picking people up, supporting them in every way'*. It was difficult for the volunteers to assess the impact they had on the organisation because it was clear that without them the service wouldn't run.

The volunteers also suggested that they bring new ideas to the organisation including different approaches to crafts and new activities and they help to inform service users' development plans. They are often well placed to make suggestions because of the close relationship that they develop with the service users.

Most of the volunteers were unaware of any impact on their sending organisations. However, one individual suggested *'I've helped to promote EVS, they had people call me and ask me about their experiences before they decided to go themselves'*. She had given her time to promote EVS to other potential volunteers and this had been of great benefit to her sending organisation.

## **Impact at local community level**

### ***Perspective of the members of the local community***

Due to the specific characteristics of the beneficiaries (individuals with learning difficulties) there is limited evidence of the impact from their perspective. However, it was clear from conversations with some of the beneficiaries of activities they felt attached and had good relationships with the volunteers. Previous volunteers were remembered fondly. It was clear that the beneficiaries were now comfortable with some aspects of German culture having had conversations with volunteers about their traditions (for example Christmas). Beneficiaries showed enthusiasm for the activities being undertaken and for some they could be seen to be a creative outlet. For example, one individual would use the craft class to express their current mental state rather than communicating verbally. When they were doing well their drawings reflected this and vice versa.

### ***Perspective of the EVS receiving organisation***

The hosting organisation felt that the beneficiaries benefited from the interactions with volunteers from other cultures. Many do not travel and have insular lifestyles where they are unlikely to come across people from other cultures. EVS provides a critical opportunity for them to meet people from other countries and learn about their cultures. Cultural barriers had been broken down as a result of their interactions.

It was suggested that the EVS volunteers' support is what allows the beneficiaries to access the services and so the benefits of the services can be in part be attributed to the volunteers. Service users could be seen to grow in confidence, learning social skills and undertaking learning through the activities provided. The volunteers support the service users' growth within the service.

There were some examples of language learning with beneficiaries learning basic counting in other languages. There is a particular affinity between the volunteers and the service users as in some cases communication is non-verbal. This allows bonding on a level playing field between those service users who communicate in this way.

The volunteers were also seen to inspire other to volunteer. For example of one individual who started as a beneficiary but now works as a volunteer (not EVS) but was influenced by the volunteers to want to volunteer herself. The host organisation suggested '*we could see her potential to progress and now she works with the other service users as her volunteer herself. That's what we want to aim for- progression*'.

### **Perspective of the volunteers**

The volunteers felt that some service users were more patient as a result of their work with them. This feeling was mutual as for both parties communication could be difficult.

They echoed the feeling that service users benefited from the intercultural interaction by learning about different cultural practices (Christmas rituals, etc.).

Volunteers found it difficult to describe other direct benefits on the service users but it was clear that the relationships formed were meaningful to both parties.

### Interviews conducted

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Job title	Date of interview
3 current EVS volunteers		Volunteers x5	5/10/2016
EVS hosting organisation	Garden Science Trust	Project manager in charge of hosting / coordinating EVS	5/10/2016
EVS hosting organization	Garden Science Trust	Project co-ordinator	5/10/2016
Local community (3 service users)		Service users x3	5/10/2016
EVS coordinating organisation	Volunteering Matters	Project Manager	5/10/2016
EVS coordinating organisation	Volunteering Matters	Project Co-ordinator	5/10/2016

### Impacts of EVS on volunteers, organisations and local community in the UK

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
Volunteers	Personal and social development	Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem	
		Broadened horizons Increase in autonomy, independence Learning about oneself (self-discovery) More friends and contacts from other countries	

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
		Increase in cultural capital	
	<b>Learning and competence development</b>	<p>Increase in all 8 key competences (foreign language skills, learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, etc.)</p> <p>Acquired new skills (i.e. how to plan finances)</p> <p>Plans to engage in further education</p> <p>Intention to learn foreign languages</p>	
	<b>Improved employability and career prospects</b>	<p>Developed professional skills and attitudes, matching employers' demands</p> <p>Acquired experience for work</p> <p>Obtaining a job by using EVS experience</p>	<p>One individual who had been struggling to get work in Italy in support work who had had difficulty finding work who suggested that she had chosen EVS to help her with her career prospects.</p>
	<b>Further mobility</b>	<p>Improved readiness to work / study/ live abroad</p> <p>Plans to move abroad for work / study / live</p> <p>Increased confidence to travel to other countries</p>	
	<b>Increased intercultural learning and dialogue</b>	<p>Increase in intercultural skills (communicating with people from different countries / cultures)</p> <p>Better understanding of other cultures</p> <p>More receptivity towards multiculturalism</p> <p>More tolerance and respect for other cultures</p> <p>Improved intercultural dialogue</p>	<p>This was reported at a low level with discussions around cultural difference and practices including discussion of Christmas/ other traditional practices</p>
<b>Host organisation</b>	<b>Improved social inclusion and solidarity</b>	<p>Higher positive values (tolerance, solidarity)</p> <p>Increase in social awareness</p> <p>Increased commitment to support the inclusion of the disadvantaged in society</p> <p>Increased commitment to work against</p>	<p>This was particularly in relation to working with those with learning disabilities and volunteers suggested that they had learnt patience and tolerance as well as better understanding that stereotypes of this target group aren't accurate.</p>

Level	Impact area	Impacts	Evidence from interviews (concrete examples, i.e. quotations)
<b>Local Community</b>		discrimination	
	<b>Organisational development</b>	<p>More human resources support for NGOs</p> <p>Increase in competence of youth workers (project management, fund-raising etc.)</p> <p>New ideas, tools and methods of working with young people and with non-formal learning</p> <p>Increased cultural diversity in NGO</p> <p>Increased promotion of the participation of young people in organisation</p>	<p>Examples of new ideas for beneficiary development plans and new activities in the craft/gardening groups</p>
	<b>Internationalisation of the organisation</b>	<p>More and new international contacts</p> <p>Motivation to organise more EVS projects</p> <p>Higher involvement in European activities</p> <p>Increased attention to including an international dimension in youth work</p>	
	<b>Improved social inclusion of direct beneficiaries</b>	<p>Increased awareness about volunteering</p> <p>Increased tolerance and openness towards people from other cultures and countries</p> <p>Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</p> <p>Make services available (i.e. learning new languages) that would otherwise not be available</p>	<p>Example of one individual who started as a beneficiary but now works as a volunteer (not EVS) but was influenced by the volunteers to want to volunteer herself.</p> <p>Beneficiaries were seen to be very open and tolerant to other cultures.</p>
	<b>Community cohesion</b>	<p>Increased awareness of volunteering and EVS</p> <p>Enriching the cultural diversity of the hosting communities</p> <p>Increasing interest of local community in multilingualism and multiculturalism</p> <p>Fostering intercultural learning and dialogue</p>	<p>It was noted that one volunteer had been promoting volunteering through her sending organisation.</p> <p>Hosting organisation in a particularly rural community and so EVS provided a vital chance for cultural diversity.</p> <p>Example of language exchange group with the local community</p>







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