



Education and Culture DG



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## **Evaluation of adapted EVS for vip from 2007 till now**

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**Youth  
in Action**



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## What is this booklet about?

This booklet is the result of our Evaluation Seminar of EVS held in December 2012 in Liege, Belgium. It is the fruit of one-week work of ex-EVS volunteers and hence, it is not a formal document.



The volunteers tried to define what EVS represented to them, then they described the role of each organisation that took part in such a project. An important aspect was also the support they received; in what follows each chapter describes a particular part of the EVS. Since good practices make a project successful

and bad ones should be avoided, the participating volunteers have chosen to write the most relevant ones. The booklet provides some suggestions for future projects and of course the most important conclusions.



The document also provides some nice thoughts, impressions from volunteers who did their EVS in Liege, Belgium and the volunteers who went to do their service abroad.

The booklet has an added value as all these projects, or at least the great majority of them, were done by persons with visual impairment.

## Chapter 1. Definition of EVS

**EVS is an opportunity for young people to go abroad and do social work.**

**EVS is an amazing and enriching experience.**

**Thanks to the non-formal education, EVS gives a chance to learn how to become independent and develop a variety of competences.**

The volunteers say:

- *"I learned the language and got acquainted with the culture of my hosting country, I developed my daily living skills, competences useful on the labour market, such as: listening to other people and finding positive solutions in conflicts, abilities useful in our daily life as well. Moreover doing your EVS, you can meet new people and enlarge your friends' network, developing new interests, new ideas, initiatives."*
- *"Personally, I've appreciated the steps forward I achieved in foreign languages as well as the other cultures and mentalities knowledge."*
- *"I learnt things I couldn't learn at school or in books."*
- *"It was a unique and unforgettable experience."*



## Chapter 2. Role of Sending, Hosting, and Coordinating organisations in EVS

To make a good EVS project all involved organisations—sending, hosting and/or coordinating— should do their best to cooperate in an effective way with each other, as well as with the volunteer.

## **Sending organisation**

*is the organisation which helps the future volunteer with all necessary information about EVS.*

It guides the young person through the application process and other procedures concerning the EVS project management (e.g. EVS insurance). It informs the volunteer about his or her rights and obligations as a European volunteer.

It can support the communication between hosting and coordinating organisation and follows up the project during the whole EVS project. Sending organisation stays in contact with the young volunteer while his stay abroad and offers him mentoring and guidance in all fields: personal life, work place etc.

## **Hosting organisation**

*is the association where the volunteer makes his service.*



This one has to provide young volunteer with practical information related to the voluntary placement and tasks to be done as well as information about the way of living in the hosting country. Hosting organization helps the volunteer to integrate as much as possible in the new environment. It has to design a responsible who assigns tasks to the volunteer.

Here is an example of a young Slovenian partially sighted girl who did her EVS in the RNIB, Northern Ireland:

*"I was working for RNIB 7 hours per day, 5 days a week. I had several responsibilities, but mostly I had to prepare and lead the activities for elderly people within the programme of the department called "Activity Team" ."*

## Coordinating organisation

*is the organisation which applies for the project and gets the funding, so it is in charge of all administrative part of an EVS project.*

If there is no CO the funding can be requested either by the sending organisation or by the hosting organisation.

The coordinating organisation is the organization that provides pocket money to the volunteers and informs about all necessary trainings (pre-departure, on arrival, mid-term) and it can provide other support in terms of safety and daily living issues. It monitors the EVS placement, assigns a mentor and arranges some feedback-moments during the EVS project.

## Chapter 3. Support

Support is all action taken to help the volunteer, it goes from trainings to assistance.

Here is a list done by the participating volunteers of different kind of support they got during their project:



**Reinforced mentorship;** a designated person by the CO to personally and morally support the volunteer and to help this one to fill in the personal part of the youth pass.

**Adapted language courses:** materials for the course in an accessible format, adapted methods if necessary or individual language courses.

**Mobility sessions:** a mobility officer helps the volunteer to learn the way from his home to his volunteering place, how to get to the closest shop etc.

**Daily leaving sessions:** a daily leaving officer helps the volunteer to learn basic daily abilities like to cook, do the shopping, clean the apartment etc.

**Mindful learning:** an officer helps the volunteer with this method to deal with mental images, improve memory when it comes to better organise the room, kitchen, or to fix a route learned with the mobility officer.

**Information about organisations for visually impaired person.**

**Assistance in administration at arrival;** Someone assists volunteers to the City Hall to help us to register as new comers.

**Provision of the documents of accessible format:** large print, Braille, electronic format. It can be informative documents, or documents that volunteers need for their activities.

Some of the participating volunteers told us about the support they got during their project:

*“All organisations involved in my EVS project provided me everything I needed and when I needed, I always knew someone who was available to support me. They made my experience absolutely great!”*

*“This support is very helpful, particularly mobility lessons necessary to learn the way to reach the working place, the supermarket, etc. In addition, I had individual French lessons. This way I could follow lessons that were adapted to my advanced level, I learnt much more than in group courses. I could improve my French skills, both verbal written ones.”*

A Belgian volunteer who did his EVS in Spain told us:

*“The essential thing I learnt was cooking. In fact, on Thursday, I received some courses, every time based on a new recipe. Unfortunately, I cannot qualify myself as a great cook!”*

**Suggestions** to sending, hosting and coordination organisations concerning support offered to EVS to make even better the future projects (made by the participants)

- ◇ Do your best to make all procedures necessary for successful project **transparent**. Do not promise things you could not realize after-

wards, and do not accept the volunteers with fewer opportunities without knowledge about the condition potential volunteers may have. If both, volunteer and organisations, are prepared properly for the EVS, and then the success for all is guaranteed.

Another suggestion is given by a totally blind Polish girl who did her 4-months EVS project in 2007:

*“I think that for the blind, maybe also for people with other disabilities, it is better to make long term projects. The blind people need time to know well the area. During the short term, they don’t have time to feel safe and self-confident and even if they do, they don’t have a lot of time to enjoy this independence.”*

## Chapter 4. Good and bad practices about EVS and adapted EVS

Good practices and bad practices are the key of a successful project. This is why our participating volunteers agreed to share some of such practices with all those who would like to improve their projects.

### Bad practices:

*“The worst experience for me was to **share a room** with two other volunteers. Although they were nice and we got along with each other, it was very difficult to share the same small space. In my opinion, it is very important to provide individual rooms where volunteers can relax. When they share one room, and they have different styles of life and somebody for example snores, it is impossible to relax and sleep well!”*

*“Another important clue is to **provide access** to internet to volunteers so that they can keep in touch with their family and friends in their country of origin. I needed internet also for my tasks as a volunteer and until we had internet connection it was quite difficult.”*

### Good practices:

*“During the preparatory visit before my EVS started, my mentors and I went to the supermarket to ask them if I could **get assistance** when I would go there to do my purchases. From that moment, I could go whenever I wanted. I got assistance, and moreover they made me feel there like at home! As they knew me, they often could guess what I needed!”*

*“Other good practices which have been said are living with other volunteers, finding new places for an additional voluntary work, having lan-*



*guage classes, having a mentor who facilitates relationships at home if needed, real and concrete support, mobility sessions, going to the theatre, being involved in the association life and having given some responsibilities. The clear goal I and my organizations had for my EVS was the key point for success!”*

*“Don’t hesitate to **ask questions!** The more we know, the faster it’s possible to get used to the new life and environment!”*

*“During the EVS it’s good to **listen to the others**, to be as **clear** as possible and to **solve conflicts immediately.**”*

*“As I became aware of what I was going to do at office, I realized that I needed some help from sighted people with lots of things, mainly when I informed people about voluntary service. In fact, I had to give them printed documents, and sometimes I had difficulty to recognize them. So one day, I **talked to my mentor** about it, and she gave me different files that I could recognize by the material or the format. Thus I could sort out all the documents and be more spontaneous with the people that I received!”*

## Chapter 5. Recognition of EVS according to the experience of ex-EVS volunteers

The EVS experience is not well recognized outside the Youth in Action programme. In the labour market we see that it’s not always considered and very often companies and enterprises are not aware about EVS and competences young people gain thanks to this opportunity.

In order to raise awareness about EVS, all actors involved in EVS should realize more initiatives such as conferences, seminars, promotional materials etc. These practices may increase recognition of EVS as a university internship and a valuable experience in applicants’ CVs when they apply for job.

## Chapter 6. Jokes



The EVS is not only a wonderful and enriching experience, but it can be also sometimes funny. Read just through and see yourself:

*“One day, I got invited to have a lunch with the guide dogs association, thanks to a woman who participated in my English language club in the ONCE (association for Spanish visually impaired*

people). In the restaurant, one blind and hearing impaired guy, Pablo, asked me if I had a Spanish translation of my first name. But as I was speaking with someone else, I didn't pay attention to what he said. So, I answered another question. Later in the afternoon, we were having a drink with everybody and I had a seat next to another blind guy, Pedro. As I had been speaking Spanish for a long time, I tended not to be careful of what said, particularly if I didn't feel concerned with the conversation. Suddenly, Pedro said: "Escuchame... escuchame, Segismundo". (Remark: In Spanish, "escuchame" means "listen to me".) As "mundo" means "world", I thought that Pedro asked me to get more careful and go out of my own world. But directly, two women began to laugh, saying: "Segismundo, no! His name is Luck. Segismundo, Pablo invented it!" In fact, as he thought I answered his question about my name in Spanish, Pablo had understood that the translation was "Segismundo", which is a really old Spanish name. From that moment, every time I take contact with someone concerned by this anecdote, we use this nickname of Segismundo / Segis'. Moreover, if I want to tell them that I was absent-minded, I don't hesitate to say: "Ho sorry, I was Segismundo / Segis." Which means: "I was in my own world".



## Chapter 7. Comments, ideas, remarks

To go abroad for a longer period is difficult for everyone. Disabled people can sometimes have more fear and not dare to go and so miss such an opportunity. The volunteers who participated in this seminar would like to give some **hints** to those who are confronted with such situation:

*It's now or never; profit from it as it's time!*

*There is no obstacle which is impossible to overcome!*

*Even if you are afraid, go on EVS; you will meet new friends, learn a lot and won't regret your decision.*

Some very useful **recommendations** from volunteers, organisations and other persons who could take part in an EVS project:

- For a disabled volunteer, specially a visually impaired one, it's very important to **have a basic level of knowledge of the hosting country language** of the EVS. As the volunteer can not communicate through non verbal way, to have basic skills of the language will help him to integrate into the hosting placement from the very beginning of his

service. It's possible to apply for additional money for disabled people in order to provide them a basic skills language course before their departure for EVS.

- ***The advanced planning visit (APV)*** is strongly recommended for an EVS which includes a person with disability. Sending, coordinating and hosting organisations can meet and discuss together about the necessary measures to put in place in order to support the disabled young volunteer during his EVS.
- All organizations involved in EVS should encourage their YIA national agencies to ask the European Commission to ***change the rules of insurance***. When a volunteer is ill, he has to pay for medical appointments and medicines. The EVS insurance gives the money back after a certain time. It might be a problem, because volunteers receive only a small amount of pocket money. This issue is particularly important for disabled people, who might have more health problems and as a result more medical exams to pay.
- We suggest ***having a mentor from outside the hosting organisation***, particularly in case of conflict. This person is more objective and for the volunteer it's easier to say what he really thinks.
- ***Disabled people can be good mentors***. As in many situations they need help, many of them are open minded to different needs of other people and try to understand them.

## Chapter 8. Conclusion

To conclude we will just simply list what EVS was for this participants in one word:

|                         |                            |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| <b><i>Autonomy</i></b>  | <b><i>Independence</i></b> | <b><i>Adventure</i></b> | <b><i>Meetings</i></b> |
| <b><i>Challenge</i></b> | <b><i>Friendship</i></b>   | <b><i>Fun</i></b>       | <b><i>Language</i></b> |

**EVS is an experience that can gather all these characteristics in one, learning, personal development, and fun, accessible to everyone one shouldn't be just passed by.**



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