

 léargasA stylized map of Europe is overlaid on a background of a person's legs in blue jeans. The map is divided into three vertical color sections: red on the left, orange in the middle, and green on the right. The text 'european voluntary service guide' is written in white lowercase letters across the bottom of the map.

european voluntary service guide

 léargas





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# introduction

The Youth Work Service of Léargas – The Exchange Bureau is responsible for the delivery of programmes and services to the non-formal education sector in Ireland. The Youth Work Service plays an important role in promoting access by young people, and those who work with them, to a range of transnational programmes.

Léargas - Youth Work Service administers:

- The Youth in Action programme 2007-2013
- The Causeway – British Irish Exchange Programme on behalf of the Department of Health and Children
- Eurodesk – the European information network for young people

The Youth Work Service offers a range of services to the youth and community sector including:

- Project development, assessment and grant aid
- Transnational partner-finding
- Training opportunities and training support
- Information and publications
- Advice and guidance

The participation of young people as active European citizens, fully aware of their rights and responsibilities, will contribute greatly to the process of forging an ever closer European Union. It is important that young people are given the scope to experiment with new ideas, to create and to participate.

European Voluntary service gives young people the chance to live and work in another country and experience the benefits to be derived from that opportunity.

This guide is divided into three separate sections that provide information relevant to the volunteer, the sending organisation and the hosting organisation respectively. The guide also lists the countries eligible for involvement in the programme. Finally, there is a section with frequently asked questions.

# Countries eligible for participation

The Youth in Action programme is aimed mainly at partners from Programme countries (EU Member States, EFTA/EEA countries and candidate countries). To a limited extent and under certain conditions, it is also open to partners from countries in other parts of the world, i.e. "partner countries".

## PROGRAMME COUNTRIES

### Member States of the E.U.

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

### Candidate countries

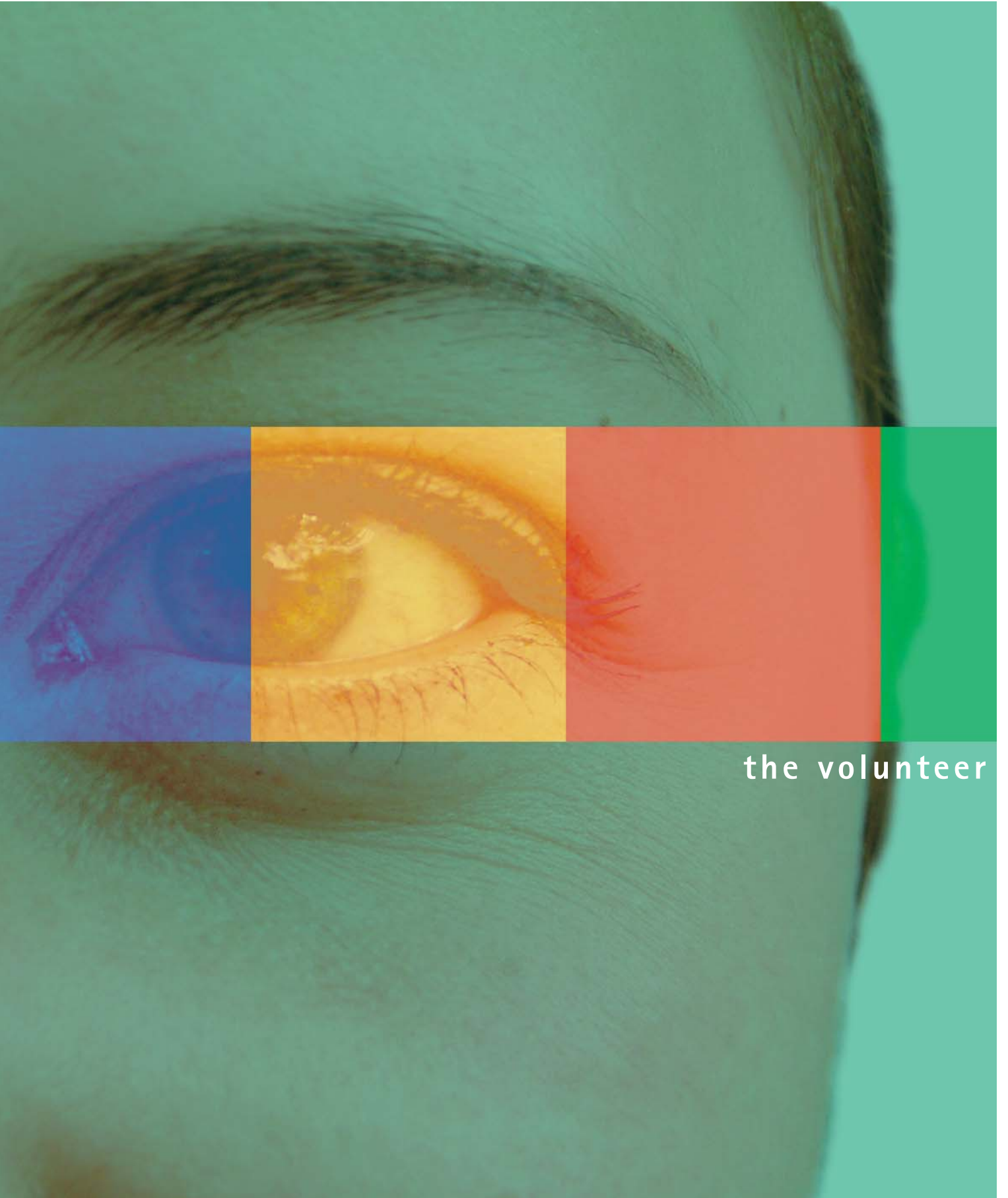
Turkey

### EFTA Countries

Iceland and Norway & Liechtenstein

### Partner Countries

Neighbouring Partner Countries	Other Partner Countries of the World
<b>Mediterranean Partner Countries</b> Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Palestinian Authority of the West Bank and Gaza Strip	Afghanistan, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo (D. R. of the), Congo (Republic of the), Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, East Timor, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Republic of Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Niue, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Sainte-Lucia, Saint-Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
<b>Eastern Europe and Caucasus</b> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russian Federation, Ukraine	
<b>South East Europe</b> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo, under UNSC Resolution 1244/1999	



the volunteer 5



## the volunteer

What is EVS?

Who is eligible to apply?

How do you get involved?

What are the rights of an EVS volunteer?

What is expected of an EVS volunteer?



## European Voluntary Service, what is it?

European Voluntary Service (EVS) is just one of the opportunities available to young people under the Youth in Action programme. An EVS project builds on a transnational partnership between youth organisations and the volunteer, and it supports local community projects, through the work of the volunteers.

## Volunteering, putting it all in context

People Volunteer for different reasons. It may be to make a difference in society, or perhaps to learn something new.

It might provide a way to escape, to be challenged, or to explore a new career. It may also allow the volunteer to feel needed, to test themselves, to belong, or possibly another reason entirely.

International volunteering may be motivated by some of the above, but more than likely it will also encompass an interest in working and living abroad, a desire to experience a new culture, a willingness to learn a new language or conceivably to improve upon the life skills already acquired.

The European Commission supports international voluntary service for young people by funding the European Voluntary Service, more commonly known as EVS. It does this because of a belief that the benefits to the young people who participate as volunteers in an International setting are enormous. These benefits are both concrete – such as improving a young person's language skills –



"TO TRY AND EVALUATE MY EXPERIENCE IN A FEW WORDS IS NOT POSSIBLE, I CAN SAY THAT THE EVS EXPERIENCE SHOULD BE REALISED BY ALL YOUNG PEOPLE. TO LIVE IN AND EXPERIENCE A DIFFERENT CULTURE AND THEIR METHODS OF WORKING IS SOMETHING THAT WILL ONLY HELP YOU IN THE FUTURE AND I BELIEVE, MAKE YOU A BETTER PERSON."

Alan Hayes, Irish Volunteer who went to the Netherlands – Engage Interact, Utrecht.

and less tangible, for example developing a young person's sense of self worth and self confidence. Interested? Okay well read on.

## Who is eligible to volunteer under EVS?

If you are between 18 and 30 years old\*, willing to dedicate two to 12 months contributing to a local project and gaining personal development, and if you are enthusiastic and full of dynamism, you are the right candidate. But perhaps you are interested in EVS but due to your situation or background, six months seems too much of a challenge? You might want to try a Group EVS or short-term project. This is open exclusively to "young people with fewer opportunities" and aims to give them access to the Youth In Action programme, and to EVS in particular. Individual EVS projects may last from two months to twelve months. However group EVS projects, where there is more than one volunteer being hosted in an organisation at the same time carrying out related work, can last from two weeks to twelve months.

\* In special circumstances, with the appropriate level of support, 16 and 17 year olds may partake in EVS for a period of between two weeks and twelve months.

"THIS IS SOMETHING EVERYONE SHOULD DO".

Inge Lise Hansen, Norwegian Volunteer who came to Ireland – YMCA Ballincollig, Cork.

## In which countries may I do EVS?

### *Programme Countries*

European Voluntary Service takes place in all the Member States of the European Union and the EEA/EFTA-countries and the candidate country of Turkey. Together they form the so-called Programme Countries. There are National Agencies, equivalents of Léargas, in each of these countries, which offer support to organisations and volunteers.

### *Partner Countries<sup>1</sup>*

Some EVS projects can take place in collaboration with partner regions of the European Union.

Those are:

#### **Neighbouring Partner Countries**

- Mediterranean partner countries
- Eastern Europe and Caucasus
- South East Europe

#### **Other partner countries of the world**

- As specified on page 4, with the priority areas being Africa, Asia and South America

- For how long are you ready to commit yourself in an EVS project, including the search for a project, the preparation, the administration, the training, the service, the follow-up? How much time do you have?

You need to find an accredited sending organisation that will assist you through the procedure, before, during and after your EVS. A sending organisation can be any non-profit organisation with which you have volunteered already, maybe a sports club that you are involved in, or an organisation with which you would like to become a volunteer. It also could be the local youth information service or a local youth organisation, to name but a few possibilities. Alternatively contact Léargas for advice and contact details of potential sending organisations.

You should co-operate closely with your sending organisation in order to develop details of your individual project. Start contacting potential hosting organisations through your sending organisation. Bear in mind that EVS is huge – with thousands of potential hosting organisations in most different areas of voluntary activity. You are entitled to choose your project from the whole list of EVS projects available (which appears in the on-line database)\*, and to receive information about the projects from the sending organisation so that you can work out – with the sending organisation – your suitability for a particular project.

As a volunteer you are entitled to clear information about the hosting organisation, its activities, living conditions and the tasks that you will be expected to carry out in that organisation.

## Before EVS

Before you start looking for a project and a sending organisation try answering some of these questions to help focus your mind:

- What is your personal motivation? It will account for your inner drive while completing your project.
- What is the area in which you want to commit yourself? We all have personal interests in one or more areas. Be realistic and truthful with yourself: it is the best way to get to a successful experience.

<sup>1</sup> Before getting serious with your search for a hosting project in these countries we would advise you to get in touch with Léargas – Youth Work Service

\* The European Commission database:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm)  
Youthnetworks: [www.youthnetworks.eu](http://www.youthnetworks.eu)

You also have the right to be properly prepared for your EVS experience, and you must not, in any way, pay wholly or partially, directly or indirectly, for your participation in the EVS programme, nor for any part of your project.

Keep your fingers crossed and persevere in your search as the challenge is not simply to find a suitable project, but to find a suitable project ready to host you within the time limit you have planned. Keep in mind that preparing an EVS project takes time, at administrative, organisational and personal levels. Therefore, plan ahead, try to think of everything, stay motivated and it will work out for you.

## Ready to go? Found a project? It is only the start.

After the initial euphoria has subsided, prepare yourself for the puzzle work to do for getting ready to leave. Contact former volunteers through the sending organisation to find out about their experiences. If your sending organisation is a first timer with EVS, Léargas can put you in touch with international volunteers currently being hosted in Ireland in your region or Irish volunteers who have completed EVS and returned home.

Figure out the administrative requirements both in your country of origin and in your hosting country (visa, residence permit, health insurance, etc.): you can contact Léargas for more information.

Gather as much information as you can about the country you are going to. Initiate personal contacts in your hosting organisation.

Keep on asking questions... Asking questions is better than not having the information you need. And if you do not get any further, feel free to contact us in Léargas at [evs@leargas.ie](mailto:evs@leargas.ie) or (01) 873 1411.

## And remember...

EVS is not a job or an internship, nor a work placement, a humanitarian mission or a holiday period.

Language learning within EVS is a consequence and shall not be the only reason for you to join.

Your sending organisation is still there to counsel and help you right through your EVS project.

Your hosting organisation will nominate a personal mentor for you. It can be very helpful to have somebody nearby with a good understanding of your situation and ready to give personal advice and support.

Communication brings common understanding, while lack of communication leads to false expectations and wrong interpretations.

Take care that you and your sending organisation ask your hosting organisation the right questions and are satisfied with the answers.

(Information is taken from SOS volunteer's website [http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/sos/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/sos/index_en.html) )

## Your rights as an EVS volunteer (before, during and after EVS)

For you as an EVS volunteer there are safeguards in place to ensure your safety and wellbeing during the course of your project. The information that follows relates to your rights as a volunteer before, during and after your EVS project, all as per the European Commission guidelines. While the following rights and responsibilities for EVS volunteers are many, and to avoid having to continuously add more rights and responsibilities in future to take account of the many different projects that can exist, there is a new EVS charter that captures the spirit of the programme and which should be followed by all parties involved in the project. However, these points are still useful as they provide clear examples of the type of regard that each party should have for each other during projects. For a copy of the EVS charter please see page 39.

- The participant's dignity must be respected and protected.
- The participant has the right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity.
- The participant shall not be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- The participant has the right to the protection of personal data concerning him or her.
- The participant has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- The participant shall not be discriminated against on any grounds such as gender, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, sexual orientation.
- The participant has the right not to participate in activities likely to harm his/her safety, health or physical, mental, moral or social wellbeing
- Volunteers participating in EVS will receive 100% of the travel expenses (for a return trip to the host

project) which is organised and paid for by the sending organisation.

- Every EVS volunteer is covered by obligatory insurance, paid for by the European Commission through the sending organisation.
- An EVS volunteer must not in any way pay wholly or partially, directly or indirectly, for participation in the EVS programme or for any part of the project.
- The volunteer has the right to an explanation concerning the grant received by both the sending and hosting organisation and the use of this grant for the benefit of the Volunteer's project.
- The volunteer has the right to language training where his/her language level is not sufficient to ensure full participation in the project.
- The volunteer has the right to job-specific training in the host project enabling him/her to carry out the tasks assigned.
- The volunteer will be invited to attend the on-arrival and mid-term seminars offered by the National Agency.
- The volunteer should have adequate supervision related to the tasks of the host and must be assigned a mentor with whom regular contact is possible.
- The volunteer is entitled to support from the mentor and the National Agency in the event of unforeseen difficulties.
- The volunteer may expect the sending organisation to stay in contact for the duration of the EVS project.
- The volunteer should not be coerced into participating in activities against his/her convictions which were not previously agreed.
- The volunteer has the right to receive pocket money from the hosting organisation on a weekly or monthly basis corresponding to the monthly rate set by the European Commission for each participating country in the EVS.
- The volunteer should assist in the process of drawing up an activity agreement for the EVS project. This agreement should cover the main issues of the project including the working tasks and hours of the volunteer, the support to be provided (accommodation, funding,

mentoring, training), the distribution of tasks between the project partners (i.e. who is to book the flights for the volunteer, who is to complete the final report etc.) and how the funding is to be distributed. This agreement needs to be drawn up and signed by all parties to the project and acts as a reference point for any problems that may arise during the project.

- All local travel costs related to the EVS project are covered by the hosting organisation.
- The volunteer has the right to free board and lodging.
- The volunteer is entitled to two consecutive whole days off per week and two days holiday per month of service (to be taken within the EVS period, with prior agreement of the hosting organisation); during this time off, the volunteer is entitled to receive the pocket money and all other allowances offered by the programme. Accommodation should remain available to the volunteer during this period.
- It is possible for the volunteer to end the EVS project for a good reason, after having consulted the hosting organisation, sending organisation and the National Agency.
- The volunteer is entitled to receive support from the sending organisation after the completion of the EVS project.
- Following the completion of EVS, the volunteer is entitled to a YOUTHPASS certificate attesting the skills and experience acquired during the voluntary service. This is an online certificate ([www.youthpass.eu](http://www.youthpass.eu)) where volunteers and their mentors can create a learning log of the EVS experience. It is a very individual document, specific to the learning of each individual volunteer. Volunteers can be as descriptive as they like under each of the 8 competences that are listed and the hosting organisation will sign off on the completed document to verify that it represents an accurate description of the learning that took place. In this way the volunteers will have detailed recognition of what took place on their EVS placement that could be of use to them in future.

## Your responsibilities as an EVS volunteer (before, during and after EVS)

It is important to remember that volunteers have responsibilities to their sending and hosting organisations. The following list may be used as a checklist to ensure that you are fulfilling your side of the EVS partnership deal.

- The volunteer must help to develop, read and sign the tri-partite activity agreement.
- The volunteer must inform the sending and hosting organisation of the exact dates of his/her arrival at and departure from the hosting organisation.
- The volunteer has the responsibility to inform the sending organisation of any circumstances that may influence his/her compatibility or suitability for certain EVS projects.
- The volunteer should play a role in helping to disseminate the results of the project once it has finished. This involves evaluating what the main results and learning of the the project were (for all parties including both organisations and the volunteer) and promoting these results to a wider audience. The aim of this activity is to promote the best practice in the Youth in Action programme to new and potential users.
- The volunteer has the responsibility to provide accurate information to the sending organisation about health-related issues; this information shall be used for matching the volunteer to a suitable project and to ensure his/her well being.
- During EVS the volunteer is expected to respect the organisational policy within the host project as well as the internal health and safety regulations, and should not act in any way that could put him/herself or others at risk of being injured.
- The volunteer has the responsibility to fulfil the terms of the tri-partite agreement and is expected to remain in the project for the agreed duration unless there is a good reason for the volunteer to leave the project early.

- The volunteer is expected to be reliable, including notifying the appropriate persons (mentors, the National Agency) of his/her intention to withdraw from the EVS project.
- The volunteer must keep the mentor informed about his/her whereabouts during the EVS period.
- The volunteer has a responsibility towards the hosting organisation and should show willingness to adapt to his/her surroundings and to carry out agreed tasks. While the Volunteer will be involved in interesting activities, some of the tasks could be routine but important to the running of the organisation.
- The volunteer has the responsibility to seek guidance when necessary. If the volunteer has a problem s/he should discuss it with his/her mentor as the hosting organisation can only act when it is aware of a problem.
- The volunteer is expected to frequently meet with his/her mentor.
- The volunteer should report serious difficulties to the National Agency.
- The volunteer must take good care of the accommodation that has been provided for his/her use.
- The volunteer must attend all the activities foreseen by the programme and the events organised by the National Agency (on-arrival, mid-term meetings), in order to learn, share his/her difficulties and to exchange his/her experiences.
- The volunteer should respect the agreement with the sending organisation about reporting and returning experience to the sending organisation.
- The volunteer must complete a final report at the end of the EVS project.
- The volunteer must contact the sending organisation on his/her return or at the end of the EVS project.
- The volunteer should play a role in helping to disseminate the results of the project once it has finished. This involves evaluating what the main results and learning of the the project were (for all parties including both organisations and the volunteer) and promoting these results to a wider audience. The aim of this activity is to promote the best practice in the Youth in Action programme to new and potential users.

## After EVS

### Help from sending organisation

On return from the placements, the sending organisation will help the volunteers to make the most use of their EVS experience and also to readjust to their country of origin if necessary. Having had such an intense learning experience on EVS, returned volunteers often find that it is an anti-climax to be home again with all these new skills and new perspectives only to find that things are relatively unchanged at home. This is an important stage of the process and it is very useful to have a support organisation to help focus on the positives and on the opportunities that lie ahead.

### Network of returned EVS volunteers

All Irish volunteers will be invited to an evaluation event to discuss what they learned on their projects and to put them in touch with each other. This is where the idea of a network of returned volunteers will be raised to see if there is an interest in this among the volunteers. This network can apply for other projects within the Youth in Action programme.

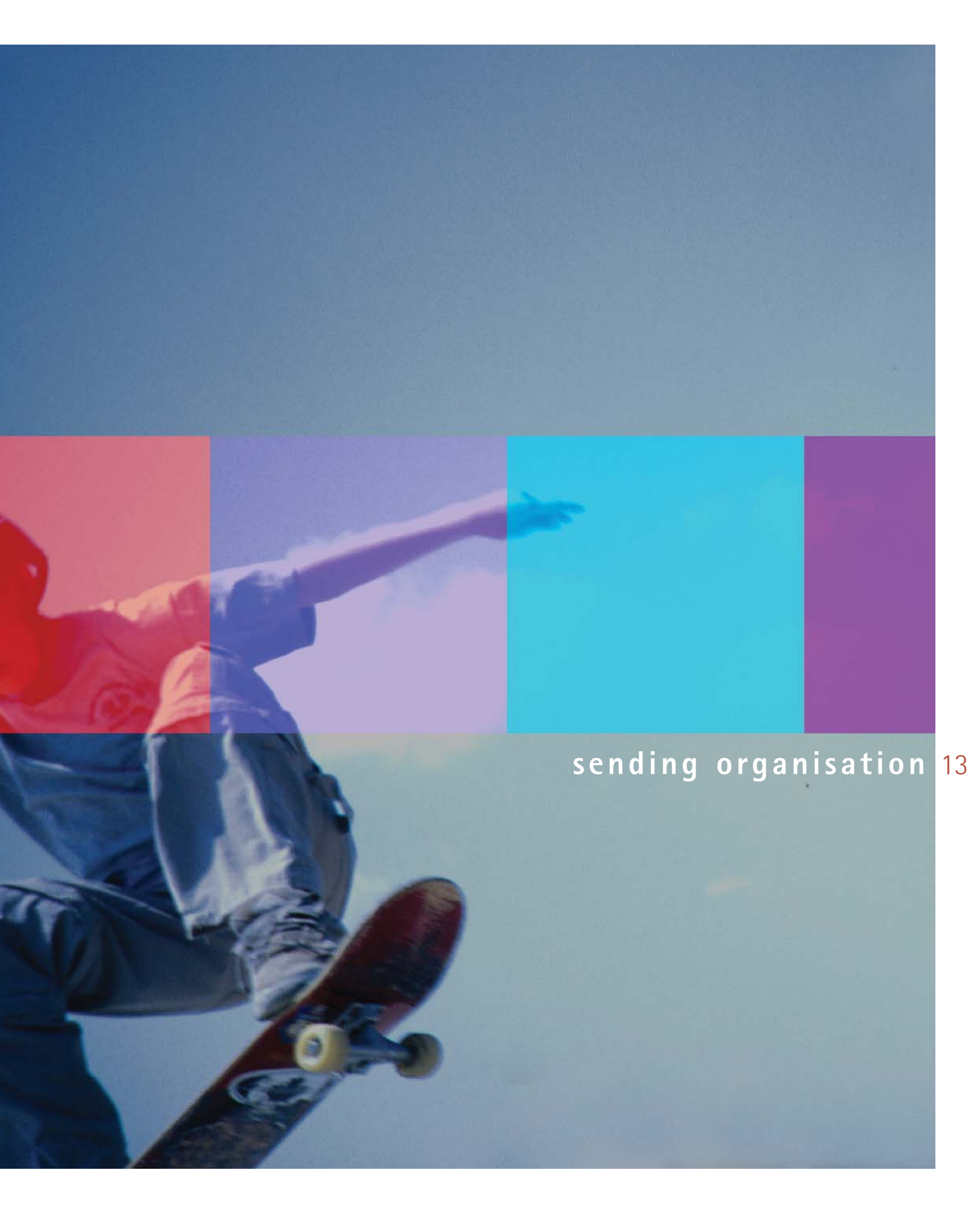
### Further possibilities within YiA programme

Although the volunteers may have finished their EVS projects it doesn't mean that the Youth in Action programme no longer offers any possibilities to them. Youth initiatives are open to groups of young people (at least 4 in a group) aged 15-30 to take on a project that they are interested in at either national or transnational level. So, if there's a topic that you and your friends have always wanted to explore some more then possibly a youth initiative project (with funding of up to €10,000, including all elements) would be of interest.

### Training and networking events

If your EVS experience has developed your interest in working with young people there may be opportunities for you to attend, or possibly even to host, a training course in a related area.

The Youth in Action programme offers a range of different possibilities to young people, and those supporting young people, across Europe. So, if you're interested in any of the above or just want to discuss the opportunities, please contact the Youth Work Service team at Léargas.



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## sending organisation

What is a sending organisation?

How do sending organisations find hosting partners under EVS?

What is important in recruitment and selection when sending volunteers?

What are the rights and responsibilities of a sending organisation?

Don't forget about supporting returned volunteers when EVS is over.

## Why is there a sending organisation?

A sending organisation is required under the framework of the Youth in Action Programme to facilitate participation in European Voluntary Service. The structure of EVS – involving not only a host but also a sending organisation – ensures the volunteer has help and support before they leave home, a constant anchor at home for the duration of their voluntary service and an organisation to assist them with re-integration on their return home. Sending organisations must be accredited by the National Agency, and the service they offer the volunteer must be completely free of charge.

## Why send a volunteer?

From the organisation's perspective getting involved in sending volunteers through EVS creates a networking opportunity to develop links, establish cooperation and exchange experience with a partner in another country. Before EVS sending organisations can help volunteers to do this they must first go through an accreditation process with their respective national agency (i.e. Léargas in Ireland) to ensure they can fulfil their responsibilities to support the volunteer at all stages of the process. Please see page 23 or contact Léargas for more information about how this accreditation process operates.

## How do I find a partner?

- All projects eligible to host volunteers within the member states of the European Union are listed on the European Commission's database: [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm)  
For a more up-to-date picture of the opportunities that exist for volunteers, however, it would also be worth registering on Youthnetworks ([www.youthnetworks.eu](http://www.youthnetworks.eu)). This is an extremely valuable tool that streamlines the process a great deal and will help volunteers to find projects with

less difficulty.

- Projects interested in collaborating within the framework of the Youth in Action Programme in Euromed Countries are listed on the Euromed Youth Platform website, <http://www.euromedp.org>. The two SALTO resource centres for South East Europe ([www.salto-youth.net/see/](http://www.salto-youth.net/see/)) and East Europe and the Caucasus countries ([www.salto-youth.net/eeca/](http://www.salto-youth.net/eeca/)) respectively can facilitate finding partners in those regions.
- For volunteers interested in doing EVS projects with any of the 'other partner countries of the world' it is best to try to rely on existing contacts and networks in these countries as there are no official offices representing the Youth in Action programme there. For more information on these types of projects, please check out the Executive Agency (EACEA) at [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/index\\_en.htm](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm)

Other methods of finding partners include:

- attending contact making seminars (events organised by National Agencies to assist organisations find partners),
- attending international training events,
- using existing partnerships perhaps from a youth exchange,
- and/or being part of an international network.

Organisations should check the calendar of events on the Léargas Youth website (<http://www.leargas.ie/youth>) to stay informed about training and events which could assist them in making contacts.

Funding is available to meet potential hosting organisations before sending young people on EVS: contact Léargas Youth Work Service for more information about this possibility.

## Before sending

Before a sending organisation considers developing international contacts it is important to clarify what it requires in a partner. Is the organisation happy to work with any hosting partner, or does it have specific requirements in terms of suitability?

To assist this process it would be useful to reflect on the questions below:<sup>2</sup>

- What are the aims behind the exchange of volunteers? To what extent should they be similar to the aims of the hosting organisation?
- What type of young people is the organisation working with, and what kinds of hosting organisations is it likely to be interested in?
- Is the intention to send volunteers to a range of organisations or only those working in the same field?
- What support and practical arrangements are on offer to the volunteers prior to departure, for example training in the field of work of the hosting organisation, language courses etc.?
- What level of involvement in managing the project will be expected from volunteers sent on EVS?

## Recruitment & Selection of volunteers

Hosting organisations will apply their own selection criteria relevant to the target group with whom they work. However there is still a need for the sending organisation to conduct an initial screening of volunteers to assist in the matching process.

The most popular methods of selecting and screening volunteers are to use an application form, an interview or observation.

It is a good idea for sending organisations to use an internal application form to establish the volunteer's current status, motivation for pursuing EVS, type of work in which he/she is most interested, linguistic ability (this may not be used discriminatorily but for information purposes) and country of preference for EVS if any.

An interview between the potential volunteer and the sending organisation may be used to clarify details as a follow-on from an application form. Or in the case of volunteers with literacy difficulties the interview may replace the application form as the basis for a first point of contact.

Observation provides the sending organisation with an opportunity to assess the volunteer's strengths and weaknesses in ways that neither an application form nor an interview can reveal. This method works best when the volunteer is known to the sending organisation before looking for a host placement, but may be used as part of the sending organisation's pre-departure training for a Volunteer.

In some EVS projects there is no recruitment and screening involved, as the volunteer self-selects him/herself to participate in EVS, and the sending organisation merely provides itself as a vehicle for the process. However even in this scenario the sending organisation has obligations to know who it is they are sending and relay this information to the hosting organisation.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from International Voluntary Service Training Kit (page 35) [www.TRAINING-YOUTH.NET](http://www.TRAINING-YOUTH.NET)

## Involving parents

Meeting parents is not something that all Sending organisations do. This may arise as a necessity to allay the fears of parents in some cases, especially if the sending organisation is working with a vulnerable target group. If meeting parents is going to be part of the process, it is important the sending organisation meets the potential volunteer independently also. The sending organisation should ensure the volunteer has passed its contact details to parents in the case of serious accident or other during the EVS project.

## Confidentiality of information

In cases where a volunteer is applying for an EVS placement with a particularly vulnerable target group, or the volunteer him/herself is particularly vulnerable, extremely good communication is required between the sending and hosting organisations to share relevant information in a manner which respects all concerned.



## Your rights as a sending organisation before EVS

While the following rights and responsibilities for sending organisations are many, and to avoid having to continuously add more rights and responsibilities in future to take account of the many different projects that can exist, there is a new EVS charter that captures the spirit of the programme and which should be followed by all parties involved in the project. However, these points are still useful as they provide clear examples of the type of regard that each party should have for each other during projects. For a copy of the EVS charter please see page 39.

- Being responsible for the sending of volunteers, the sending organisation has the right to recruit volunteers on the basis of their motivation, interests and skills. The aim is to allow the volunteer to gain valuable and enriching experience through the voluntary service period.
- The sending organisation has the right to expect adequate support from National Agencies and/or National Coordinators at any stage of an EVS project.
- The sending organisation has the right to obtain information on major changes (administrative, political, etc.) in the implementation of EVS activities; as such changes may alter the nature as well as the cycle of the organisation's activities.
- The sending organisation should encourage and is entitled to expect the volunteer to take an active role in the implementation of his/her EVS project
- The sending organisation has the right to expect any information communicated to the hosting organisation for ensuring the wellbeing of the volunteer to be properly considered and complied with.
- The sending organisation should assist in the

process of drawing up an activity agreement for the EVS project. This agreement should cover the main issues of the project including the working tasks and hours of the volunteer, the support to be provided (accommodation, funding, mentoring, training), the distribution of tasks between the project partners (i.e. who is to book the flights for the volunteer, who is to complete the final report etc.) and how the funding is to be distributed. This agreement needs to be drawn up and signed by all parties to the project and acts as a reference point for any problems that may arise during the project.

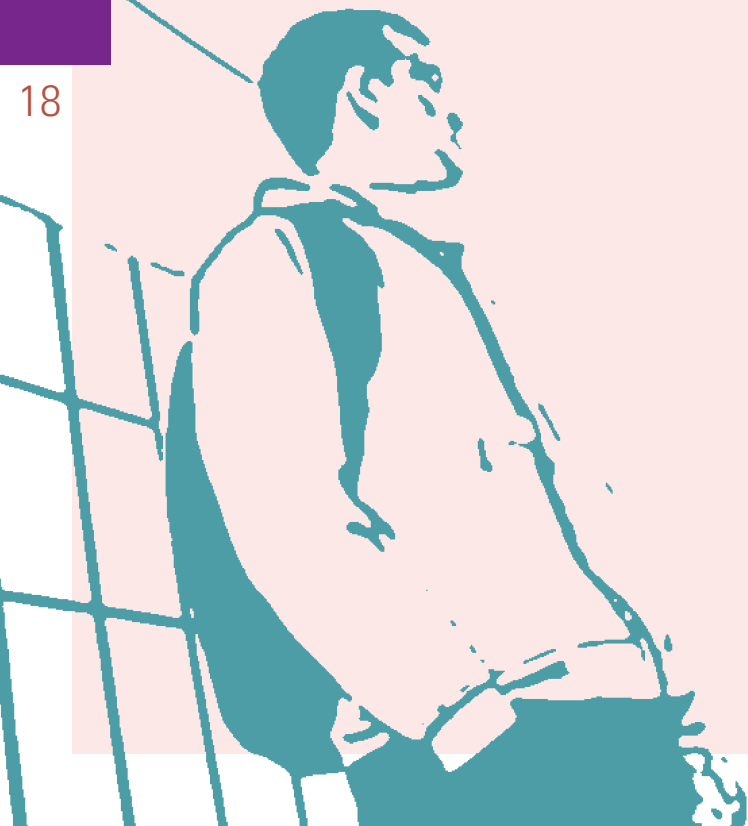
## Your responsibilities as a sending organisation before EVS

- The sending organisation should clarify with the volunteer his/her motivations for pursuing EVS, sign the tripartite agreement, and work closely with the young person to prepare them for EVS.

- The sending organisation should find out whether the volunteer is suffering or has suffered from a physical or mental condition which may affect their participation in EVS. This information should be shared with the relevant person in the hosting organisation to facilitate setting up supports as required.
- The sending organisation should check the profile, activities and practices of the hosting organisation to double-check the integrity of the organisation.
- The sending organisation is responsible for assisting the volunteer in arranging his/her health insurance which is provided by the European Commission.
- The sending organisation should inform the volunteer of the rights and responsibilities for EVS volunteers in this document, under the section 'the volunteer', see page 11.
- The sending organisation should also make the volunteer aware that s/he may consult Léargas ([youth@leargas.ie](mailto:youth@leargas.ie)) in the event of a problem during their period of service.

## Your rights as a sending organisation during EVS

- The sending organisation has the right to expect regular feedback on the situation from the volunteer as well as from the hosting organisation.
- The sending organisation has the right to participate in the decision-making process in the case of modifications to the implementation of the project, especially if decisions will have an influence on the nature of the project (duration, activities, tasks, etc.).



## Your responsibilities as a sending organisation during EVS

- The sending organisation should provide support and maintain contact with volunteer and hosting organisation on an ongoing basis during the course of the EVS.
- In situations where the volunteer requests support, the sending organisation should respect the volunteer's wishes as to whether it should just advise the volunteer or intervene directly with the hosting organisation. If the volunteer requests such intervention, the sending organisation should act in the interests of the volunteer.
- In situations where the hosting organisation requests support from the sending organisation, and bearing in mind its knowledge about the volunteer and its experience of EVS, the sending organisation should consider the situation from a neutral point of view.
- The sending organisation, as the priority contact point for the volunteer, should remain neutral for as long as possible and should focus on helping the volunteer and the hosting organisation to consider the situation from a different point of view.
- When there is a serious incident the sending organisation should be the immediate contact point for the volunteer's relatives and should also take care of any administrative requirements. The sending organisation should also help the hosting organisation and mentor to deal with any administrative requirements.
- When there is a serious incident, the sending organisation should contact Léargas (youth@leargas.ie or (01) 873 1411) for assistance.

## Your rights as a sending organisation after EVS

- The sending organisation has the right to obtain documents from the hosting organisation on project evaluation, as well as final reports.
- The sending organisation has the right to evaluate the overall project together with the volunteer on his/her return.

## Your responsibilities as a sending organisation after EVS

- Ensure follow-up with the volunteer in order to evaluate the EVS project in terms of personal gain.
- Complete a final report and submit it to Léargas along with receipts for travel to the hosting project together with visa, vaccination costs or other approved costs.
- Support the volunteer with re-integration in the home country, be that assistance in contacting administrative services such as for example social welfare, tax office, FÁS etc. and or providing guidance or counselling in personal projects.
- Inform the hosting organisation regarding the volunteer's progress, future plans etc.
- Staff in the sending organisation should stay involved in training activities or evaluation seminars to benefit from the experience of other organisations and to help them in keeping their practices up to date. These may be in-house Léargas training events or courses being promoted by Léargas.

## After EVS

The points pertaining to "After EVS", for the sending organisation are very important. When volunteers conclude their EVS and return home, if they return home, they can experience reverse culture shock making re-integration difficult.

During this period the ex-volunteer will need the support of their sending organisation. Therefore it is important that the sending organisation maintains a good relationship with the young person during EVS, to be in a position to assist them in the re-integration process.

It is a good idea to involve returned volunteers either in the preparation of future potential volunteers or in the broader activities of the sending organisation.

The sending organisation may be the place for the volunteer to turn to if they wish to develop employment or volunteering links back home.

The sending organisation should play a role in helping to disseminate the results of the project

once it has finished. This involves evaluating what the main results and learning of the the project were (for all parties including both organisations and the volunteer) and promoting these results to a wider audience. The aims of this activity are to promote the best practice in the Youth in Action programme to new and potential users.

The sending organisation has an obligation to evaluate the experience with the young person and complete the Final Report for Léargas. The volunteer has an obligation to the Sending organisation to make themselves available for project evaluation. This exercise and the completion of the Final Report should be used to benefit both the returned volunteer and the sending organisation in considering next steps.

To assist with the evaluation process the sending organisation may ask the hosting organisation for documents relating to the evaluation of the project on that side.



"MY DURATION IN IRELAND WAS THE BEST SIX MONTHS IN MY LIFE... I LEARNED HOW TO DEAL WITH LESS MONEY AND LIMITED LIFESTYLE... I GOT TO KNOW NEW CULTURES, FRIENDS AND OTHER ESSENTIAL THINGS FOR LIFE. I THINK EVERYBODY SHOULD DO THIS KIND OF SERVICE, IT (IS A) GREAT CHANCE TO GROW UP AND WATCH THE LIFE FROM ANOTHER POINT."

Oztem Akpinar, Austrian Volunteer who came to Ireland – Barrett Cheshire Home, Dublin.



hosting organisation 21



## hosting organisation

What is a hosting organisation?

What is involved in becoming a hosting organisation under EVS?

What are the rights and responsibilities of a hosting organisation?

Some tips on problem solving during EVS.

What is involved in mentoring EVS volunteers?

## Hosting organisation, what is that?

Hosting a volunteer under European Voluntary Service allows an organisation to host a young person to volunteer within the organisation for periods from two weeks (projects for young people with fewer opportunities and group EVS) up to 12 months. The organisation decides what length of time suits best and devises the project accordingly.

Volunteers must be between the ages of 18 and 30\* years when the application for funding is submitted. The hosting organisation receives a contribution towards the volunteer's accommodation and food costs, as well as an allowance for the volunteer's pocket money. (In cases where extra money is required for a particular young person to access EVS – for example the costs associated with a personal assistant for a young person who has a disability – these costs will be considered for eligibility under what is called Exceptional Costs.)



## Why host a volunteer?

By welcoming a volunteer, hosting organisations can benefit from new ideas and introduce an intercultural dimension to the work of their organisation and their local community.

EVS projects can create networking opportunities for organisations to build upon for future projects. By participating as host the organisation offers a great opportunity to young people to learn new skills via their voluntary commitment.

Any type of non-governmental organisation, association, local authority, community initiative or non-profit making body can host a volunteer. (Please see the section below).

## Accreditation of organisations participating in EVS

Organisations that wish to host or send volunteers must undergo a preliminary screening process whereby their relevant national agency assesses the suitability of the organisation to participate in EVS. Potential EVS organisations complete the Expression of Interest form with the assistance of Léargas (in Ireland). Projects are then assessed by an assessor appointed by Léargas. Should the organisation be accredited, their project description is added to an online database where other organisations and volunteers search for potential EVS partners. The entire process takes between 4–6 weeks. Some organisations work within an existing network or with existing contacts, for example contacts made through a youth exchange, or as a result of attending an International training course etc.

\* In exceptional cases, and with the necessary support in place, volunteers aged 16 and 17 may participate in the programme for periods of between two weeks and 12 months

Unless specified otherwise this accreditation is valid for three years from the approval date. It is strongly encouraged that organisations continue to look for ways to improve their capacity as hosting and sending organisations at all times. From each EVS project there should be many positive lessons learned that can be used to develop the service provided to the next volunteer(s). There should be a particularly strong emphasis on the mentoring support to help the volunteers during there projects. The mentor, together with the supervisor the rest of the staff team and the sending organisation, can do much to ease the volunteer into their new environment and to settle in their new country. This will, to a large degree, determine whether the volunteer has a positive or negative experience during EVS and therefore it is such an important aspect of projects for all organisations to focus on. Please contact Léargas for more information about how to develop a mentoring plan, including training sessions to assist the process.

## Before hosting

Taking an international volunteer into your organisation is something that requires deliberation. Many things need to be considered, such as the practical living arrangements of the volunteer, mentoring the young person, how they will integrate into the organisation, what opportunities they will have to develop a social life, and so on.

After an organisation obtains accreditation they will receive many queries of interest from prospective volunteers. In Ireland, hosting organisations tend to receive many more queries of interest than the voluntary positions they have available.

For this reason, as well as ensuring that EVS adds to rather than detracts from the effective and smooth running of the hosting organisation, some selection and screening procedures need to be adopted.

## Recruitment and selection of volunteers

Projects are advised to create an initial application form which they ask interested volunteers to complete. The purpose of this form is to obtain basic information needed to make a short list of volunteers. Organisations can adapt such a form to their own needs.

Questions may include some of the following: personal contact details, desired length of EVS placement, areas of interest for work, personal motivation for volunteering, why they are interested in your specific host organisation, their expectations of EVS.

The host organisation should remember the right to privacy of personal information when creating the form and it should not contain any questions that may be considered inappropriate or off-putting for potential volunteers. It is also important to remember that EVS is open to all young people and the form should not be used to discriminate.

As an alternative, hosting organisations may ask volunteers to forward a letter of motivation regarding the position being applied for. Organisations also use an interview when screening volunteers, usually as a follow-up to the form. In the majority of cases this must be a telephone interview, as volunteers will normally be in their home country at the time of interview.

Only in the case of volunteers with fewer opportunities is it possible to go an Advance Planning Visit (APV) before the project starts to check out all of the details. It is highly recommended that this option is taken up as support for volunteers in this type of project is vital.

If organisations wish to host or send volunteers with fewer opportunities (i.e. one who may require additional support at all stages of their project), the nature of this support should be considered carefully to determine whether the organisations are in a position to provide this to the volunteer.

The hosting organisation is entitled to obtain information about the volunteer relevant to the EVS project, and information also about what preparations the volunteer is making in advance of realising the EVS project.

## Visa entry requirements to Ireland

Volunteers coming to Ireland on EVS from certain countries require entry visas.

It is the joint responsibility of the sending and hosting organisations to assist the volunteer with the process of obtaining a visa. For more information and advice regarding visa applications for EVS volunteers coming to Ireland you may contact Léargas Youth Work Service, or check out the official website of the Department of Foreign Affairs at: [www.foreignaffairs.gov.ie](http://www.foreignaffairs.gov.ie).

## Welcoming your Volunteer

It is important that the new volunteer feels welcome on their entry into the organisation. Other staff should be aware of the Volunteer's arrival and make an effort to help the Volunteer feel at home in the hosting organisation.

The hosting organisation shall appoint a volunteer mentor: this will be the person to whom the volunteer should turn if they have any concerns or problems. The mentor may be the same person as the supervisor of the volunteer's work but ideally it would be a different person, depending on the size of the hosting organisation. Léargas Youth Work Service can provide help and support to mentors who need it, by offering training courses, mediation etc.



"I WANTED TO COME TO IRELAND TO IMPROVE MY ENGLISH AND TO WORK IN THE PROJECT WHERE I'M BASED, AUNGIER ST. A 'WET SHELTER' FOR 23 HOMELESS ALCOHOLICS AND IT'S OPEN 24 HOURS A DAY. I ALSO WORK IN RENDU APARTMENTS FOR ONE DAY A WEEK IT'S A TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROJECT FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE."

Nathalie Creach, French Volunteer who came to Ireland – De Paul Trust, Dublin

## Avoiding problems and problem solving – the importance of the EVS Activity Agreement

It is important that during the EVS project neither the volunteer nor the host organisation feel they are being taken advantage of, leading to problems down the road.

A new feature of the EVS programme is the Activity Agreement. This is a contract drawn up with the input of all parties (hosting organisation, sending organisation and volunteer) that will form the working agreement of how the project will operate. Issues such as the working tasks of the volunteer, the hours of work, the time off, the identity of the mentor and supervisor, the accommodation arrangements will all be covered in the Activity Agreement. In addition certain issues of concern to the hosting organisations, such as the financial (i.e. who applies for funding and who distributes what funding to whom and when) and reporting arrangements will be addressed. All parties sign the document and retain a copy for reference should there be any issue that arises during the project. In this way many problems can be sorted out before the project even starts and the needs and expectations of everyone can be discussed and (hopefully) met. This constitutes an excellent opportunity to plan in detail for how the project will run, however it does not mean problems will not arise.

Sometimes problems may arise due to a lack of clear communication between the volunteer and mentor causing tension. Also discrepancies between the description of project tasks versus the reality on the ground, or very practical problems relating to the volunteer's food, accommodation or working conditions may be a source of anxiety. It is important to remember that in the majority of cases volunteers will not be native English speakers so concerted efforts must be

made to ensure communication is effective.

It is important to get to know the volunteers in order to match their needs with the opportunities available within the project and to sense when problems are brewing in order to alleviate them sooner rather than later.

Another factor to consider in relation to EVS is that sometimes the volunteer may not have the language or the confidence or in some cases the maturity to outline honestly the problems they are encountering, requiring the hosts to be vigilant in their mentoring.

## Warning Signs

We have included below some indicators or red flags to watch out for, which may indicate your volunteer is not entirely satisfied with their EVS project.

### RED FLAGS<sup>3</sup>

- The volunteer is absent more often than he or she used to be.
- The volunteer starts surfing the internet when supposed to be working.
- Phone calls to the home country increase significantly.
- The volunteer is easily offended and takes things personally.
- The number of sighs per day soars to previously unknown heights.
- The volunteer remains silent and does not react anymore.
- The speed of his/her work is slowing down.

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<sup>3</sup> The International Voluntary Service Training Kit  
[www.TRAINING-YOUTH.NET](http://www.TRAINING-YOUTH.NET)

- The volunteer breaks down and starts crying.
- The quality of the volunteer's work hits rock bottom.
- Complaints from the client group start coming in.
- The volunteer does not join friends or colleagues for common lunches anymore.
- Going for alcoholic drinks seems to be the main pastime of the volunteer.

Ideally motivational issues will be dealt with before they get to the point of causing problems. The following is a list of practical tips that motivate and may be useful in your project.

- People like to feel good (a word of thank you, a little present, a compliment, taking them into account as part of the team, asking their opinion etc).
- Make sure you give more positive than negative feedback to volunteers.
- Negative feedback is best given by someone that the volunteer has a good relationship with or looks up to.
- If volunteers make a mistake, do not take it out on them, just explain and ask them to learn from it for the future.
- Deal with "Dissatisfactions", for example stressful working conditions (noise, no access to computer, unusual working hours, etc.), lack of interpersonal relationships (no time for talking during work, no coffee break, etc.)

## After EVS

When the voluntary period concludes, the hosting organisation and the volunteer should consider the objectives set out at the beginning of the project and assess whether or not the aims of the project have been met; in summary the hosting organisation and volunteer need to evaluate. This evaluation can be useful for the hosting organisation in considering the EVS project and

in making improvements. It is also a good time to consult with the volunteer about whether the project description as per the HEI is an accurate representation of the reality. If the volunteer is dissatisfied at the end of the project it may be time for serious consideration of what's what!

It is important to consider the evaluation processes as a positive dimension of the project, and one which is as useful for the volunteer as it is for the hosting organisation.

Evaluation is an ongoing element of any EVS project. It is not enough to evaluate only at the end to discover that a volunteer was desperately unhappy during the course of the project, when the focus for that dissatisfaction is something that could have been rectified earlier.

A new feature of the EVS programme is the possibility for volunteers to receive recognition for the learning they have gained in the form of a Youthpass certificate. This is a web-generated document that is drawn up by the volunteer and the hosting organisation during the project that describes the learning the volunteer has achieved in eight key competencies. The mentor will have a role in assisting the volunteer with developing this document and the host organisation will verify that it reflects the learning that took place. It means that the volunteer will be able to show the benefits of their EVS experience in much more detail to potential employers in the future. In addition the YouthPass certificate can be worked on from very early in the project and can allow the volunteer to plan ahead for the rest of the placement with a view to setting and meeting specific goals that are of interest to him/her. The YouthPass certificate is not compulsory but every volunteer has the right to receive one. Many volunteers have found it to be rewarding and worthwhile. For more information check with Léargas or go to [www.youthpass.eu](http://www.youthpass.eu).

## Your rights as a hosting organisation before EVS

While the following rights and responsibilities for hosting organisations are many, and to avoid having to continuously add more rights and responsibilities in future to take account of the many different projects that can exist, there is a new EVS charter that captures the spirit of the programme and which should be followed by all parties involved in the project. However, these points are still useful as they provide clear examples of the type of regard that each party should have for each other during projects. For a copy of the EVS charter please see page 39.

- A hosting organisation may establish internal criteria for recruiting volunteers in accordance with their motivation, interests and skills. Nevertheless, these criteria should be transparent and follow the philosophy and rules applicable to EVS activities.
- The hosting organisation has the right to obtain information about the volunteer that may be relevant to the EVS project.
- The hosting organisation has the right to obtain information on the format and contents of the pre-departure training that the volunteer has attended. On-arrival training can then be adapted to the volunteer's needs and previous training.

## Your responsibilities as a hosting organisation before EVS

- The host must sign the partnership agreement section of the application form which copperfastens the tripartite agreement.
- In recruiting volunteers, the hosting

organisation should use an open policy, which is non-discriminatory and favours offering all young people access to EVS.

- Practical arrangements such as accommodation, food and work schedule should be in place prior to the arrival of the volunteer.
- Staff and other volunteers should be informed of the imminent arrival of a new EVS volunteer to ensure they welcome the volunteer when he/she arrives.
- The volunteer should be integrated into the project from both work and social perspectives.
- The hosting organisation should be aware of the visa requirements, and ensure that the volunteer is hosted in line with the legal requirements for Ireland.

## Your rights as a hosting organisation during EVS

- The hosting organisation has the right to remind the volunteer to respect the rules and regulations applicable in the workplace.
- The hosting organisation has the right to initiate changes within the volunteer project, in line with internal or external decisions. The volunteer and the sending organisation should, however, be informed as soon as those changes have been introduced.
- The hosting organisation has the right to consider terminating the volunteer's project if the volunteer's behaviour has been inappropriate or caused danger to himself/herself, colleagues or any other persons involved in the project. In such a situation, the sending organisation – as well as the National Agencies in the sending and host countries – should be included in the decision-making process.

## Your responsibilities as a hosting organisation during EVS

- The hosting organisation should provide the volunteer with a "memo-kit" (see below) and any changes to the list should be communicated to both the volunteer and the sending organisation. The memo kit should include:
  - Working hours per week
  - Name and location of the main workplace
  - Location of the accommodation
  - Specific Instructions to be followed
  - Rules to bear in mind
- The hosting organisation should also make the volunteer aware that s/he may consult Léargas ([youth@leargas.ie](mailto:youth@leargas.ie)) in the event of a problem during their period of service.
- The hosting organisation should assign the volunteer a mentor, with whom it is possible for the volunteer to have regular contact during his/her EVS.
- The hosting organisation should take into consideration the volunteer's values and background when involving him/her in project activities.
- The hosting organisation should ensure that health and safety regulations are observed at the workplace where the volunteer will be carrying out his/her activities. First aid must be provided on site.
- The hosting organisation should provide the volunteer with the correct monthly allowance, as per the Commission's guidelines. This may vary from year to year so contact Leargas Youth Work Service to check the current rate.
- The hosting organisation must provide the volunteer with a decent standard of meals as well as safe and clean accommodation.
- Board and lodging should remain available to the volunteer during both vacation and volunteering periods.
- The volunteer accumulates two days off per month for the duration of the project. The volunteer should





work only five days per week, with two consecutive days leave per week.

- Vacation periods as well as weekly days off should be agreed by the hosting organisation and the volunteer.
- Any changes in the project which may affect the volunteer's insurance cover must be communicated as soon as possible to the insurance company.
- Last but not least, there should be discussion with the volunteer at the outset and throughout EVS about their objectives for the project, goals which they wish to realise etc.. This type of discussion from the beginning is crucially important to the successful ongoing and final evaluation of the project.

## In the case of a serious incident or conflict situation

- In the case of a conflict situation, the hosting organisation must consider the volunteer's opinion and the mentor's advice.
- In the case of a conflict situation, the hosting organisation should always try to find a suitable solution for and with all the partners involved. Termination of a project should be the last option.
- In the case of a serious incident involving the volunteer, the hosting organisation should support the mentor and help him/her perform any administrative tasks.
- If, in carrying out the tasks as outlined in the EVS project, the volunteer would be exposed to a personal risk, the hosting organisation must take all the necessary action to guarantee his/her safety.
- In the case of a serious incident or conflict situation with the volunteer, the hosting organisation should report any major problems to the sending organisation and keep it updated on the situation.
- In the case of a serious incident, the hosting

organisation should inform Léargas and request further support as necessary.

- In general, there should be close cooperation with project partners so as to avoid communication problems.

## Your rights as a hosting organisation after EVS

- The hosting organisation has the right to ask the sending organisation for the final report on the overall project in order to evaluate the impact of the experience, taking account of all parties involved.
- The hosting organisation has the right to ask the sending organisation for information on the follow-up to the volunteer's activities, in particular with a view to improving the arrangements and conditions for the placements offered by the host.

"I'M 23 YEARS OLD AND I'M FROM HASSELT, A CITY IN THE FLEMISH PART OF BELGIUM. I ARRIVED IN DUBLIN LAST DECEMBER AND I AM STAYING HERE ONE YEAR. THE REASON WHY I WANTED TO COME TO DUBLIN WAS THE PROJECT WHERE I WORK, TÚS NUA – A TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROJECT FOR HOMELESS WOMEN LEAVING PRISON. SO FAR, VOLUNTEERING HAS MADE [ME] MORE CONFIDENT AND I HAVE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT LIFE IN GENERAL BUT ALSO ABOUT [MYSELF]. THROUGH THE EVS PROGRAMME[I] HAVE MET LOTS OF PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND IN THIS WAY TOO HAVE LEARNT A LOT ABOUT EUROPE AND BEING 'EUROPEAN!'"

Ine Goovaert, Belgian Volunteer who came to Ireland – De Paul Trust

## Your responsibilities as a hosting organisation after EVS

- The hosting organisation must complete a final report providing details of the activities and tasks carried out by the volunteer and the overall development of the project and submit it to Léargas. (The report should include the receipt of the volunteer's signature for his/her pocket money).
- The hosting organisation should keep its staff involved in training activities offered by Léargas so it may benefit from the experiences of other organisations and keep its project practices up to date.
- The hosting organisation should make clear and determined efforts to disseminate the results of the EVS project. The first step is asking themselves what were the results of the project (i.e. the achievements and learning that took place). The next step is informing as wide an audience as possible about these results so that there is a sustained impact of the project beyond the parties that were directly involved.

## For the mentor

The mentor has a very important role within the EVS project. Mentors should be carefully chosen to suit the position of responsibility with which they are assigned. It is advisable to have a back up mentor in cases where the appointed mentor and volunteer do not get along. The volunteer should be made aware of who their mentor is from an early stage in the project and meetings initiated in the beginning by the mentor. The European Commission has compiled some rights and responsibilities for mentors in hosting organisations, as well as what to do in the case of serious incident or conflict situation, as outlined below.

Similar to the other parties involved in the project, there is a list of rights and responsibilities for the mentor's role. However the EVS charter (see page 39, annex I)

condenses the specific rights and responsibilities into a short document that defines the spirit of EVS which should inform the actions of all parties concerned.

## Rights of the mentor

- The mentor has the right to respect. The volunteer should respect the mentor and accept his/her role.
- The mentor has the right to obtain information concerning the volunteer to facilitate his/her supporting role.
- The mentor has the right to receive support and advice from the hosting organisation on the following matters:
  - how to recognise and cope with potential problems,
  - how to recognise and deal with suicidal tendencies and drug/alcohol abuse.
- The mentor has the right to receive full support from Léargas to help him/her perform his/her tasks.
- The mentor has the right to organise regular meetings with the volunteer as well as with the hosting organisation.

## Responsibilities of the mentor

- The mentor should be aware of youth and mobility issues or at least have experience working with young people and/or volunteers in an international context.
- The mentor should be familiar with the hosting organisation and its activities, philosophy and staff.
- The mentor should ensure that the hosting organisation has details of the young person's special educational or medical needs relevant to carrying out the tasks assigned.
- The mentor should facilitate the volunteer's integration into the organisation, project, country and new environment in general.
- The mentor should be available for the volunteer and

should introduce the volunteer to other people who might be helpful. The mentor should also act as the contact person between the volunteer and the local community.

- The mentor is expected to familiarise the volunteer with the national health system rules and accompany the volunteer to hospital in the event of accident or illness.
- The mentor should assist the volunteer with administrative formalities, should the volunteer be faced with any difficulties.
- The mentor should monitor the volunteer's activities and make sure that he/she receives enough support. The mentor should undertake a regular review, together with the volunteer, of his/her activities and advise the hosting organisation where adjustments might be needed.
- The mentor should have regular meetings with the volunteer and pay attention to the volunteer's behaviour and general wellbeing in order to provide the appropriate support.
- The mentor should counsel and help the volunteer, and give him/her an opportunity to speak freely. Open communication with the volunteer in this way should prevent conflict situations.
- The mentor should attend all the training provided or organised by the hosting organisation and Léargas.

## In the case of a serious incident or conflict situation

- In the case of a conflict situation, the mentor should facilitate communication between the volunteer and the hosting organisation. The mentor should be able to provide the partners involved with independent monitoring and evaluation.
- In the case of a conflict situation between the volunteer and the mentor, another person should be appointed as the volunteer's mentor.
- In case of a conflict situation or serious incident, the mentor must know whom to contact if he/she cannot solve the problem alone.
- In the case of a serious incident, the mentor should keep in touch with the sending organisation and the parents of the volunteer, if required by the situation, and should involve them in decisions on further action.
- In the case of a serious incident, and if the volunteer is not in a situation to do so, the mentor should contact and ensure communication with the insurance company.
- In general, the mentor should cooperate actively with all partners involved.



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## Volunteer Case Study

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### Guatemala – group EVS project for 3 weeks

A group of 6 teenage volunteers from Mayfield Community Arts Centre in Cork spent 3 weeks volunteering with an arts organisation in Guatemala in January 2008. The Irish volunteers had the opportunity to work with young people of all ages through the medium of art.

Although the placement was quite short at three weeks long, there was a huge amount of preparation required so that the volunteers were aware of the cultural differences they would encounter. "The preparation was really good as it gave me a chance to talk about what we would be doing while over there and what to expect. We also had the chance to speak to people who had been to Central America the year before and who knew about the things we would need and what we should bring. The prep stage really gave me a chance to ask questions and really understand what we were getting ourselves into."

The volunteering experience left a lasting impression on the Irish volunteers. As one of the returned volunteers commented: "I learnt that some countries don't have what we have, for example in terms of technology or materialistic things, and yet they still get on with their lives. They don't need stuff like ipods and phones to make them feel happy and that was a huge learning experience for me."



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## Volunteer Case Study

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### Germany – 8 month EVS project

Etienne spent 8 months volunteering in an organisation that provides services and activities for people with disabilities in Germany. Despite being uncertain about whether he wanted to commit himself to this length of time abroad he was fully supported by his sending organisation in Ireland, Voluntary Service International (VSI), throughout and they waited for him to feel ready. Once this decision was made the rest of the project went very smoothly. At the end of the project Etienne says that "I was sad to know that a lot of the people, the friends I had made, I might not ever see again, BUT I will always remember them"



# frequently asked questions<sup>4</sup>

## What is the age limit to participate in EVS?

EVS is open to young people between 18 and 30 years. In special circumstances, with the appropriate level of support, 16 and 17 year olds may partake in EVS for a period of between two weeks and twelve months. This means that volunteers have to be between 18 and 25 years old at the beginning of their voluntary activity. Flexibility can be applied to the upper age limit if the volunteer belongs to the priority target group of young people with fewer opportunities and if this is clearly demonstrated in the project application. For details please contact Léargas.

## Where can EVS projects take place?

EVS concerns all countries involved in the Youth in Action programme. But there are some rules and conventions as to who can go where. For more information, see the Participating Countries section at the front of this guide.

## Where do I get contact details of Hosting organisations?

Contact details of potential Hosting organisations are available in the two project databases:  
The European Commission database:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm)  
Youthnetworks: [www.youthnetworks.eu](http://www.youthnetworks.eu). But remember that you need to collaborate with a sending organisation to make contact with potential Hosting organisations.

## Who can be my Sending organisation?

A sending organisation must be:

- a non profit/non governmental organisation; or
- a local, regional public body; or
- a body active at European level in the youth field; or
- an international governmental organisation; or
- a profit-making organisation (only when it organises an event in the area of youth, sport or culture).

Regardless of the type of organisation it is, all sending organisations must be accredited by the national agency in their country.

## Do I need to know the language of my host country?

The selection of volunteers should not be made according to language skills, unless a basic knowledge is needed for a specific task. Language training can be provided during the EVS in order to ensure the volunteers' integration.

## Are the language courses compulsory?

The hosting organisation is responsible for the linguistic support of EVS volunteers, where it is necessary. Linguistic support should be appropriate to the volunteer's needs and level but the type of support provided can be either formal language classes to more informal learning methods. This support is based on helping the volunteer attain a working knowledge

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<sup>4</sup> Taken from the SOS website: [www.sosforevs.org](http://www.sosforevs.org)

of the language so that he/she can carry out the EVS duties, not to insist on language fluency.

## When can I apply for my project and when can I start?

In most cases, once you have found a project that you would like to volunteer with and if they have agreed to host you, you will need to apply to Léargas for the funding. There are 5 deadlines each year (1st of Feb, April, June, September and November) and, if approved, you can start to volunteer 3 months after each deadline. For example if you want to start your placement in December then you will have to apply by the 1st September deadline. This really means that you should begin to plan your EVS project as early as possible so that you have the best chance of being accepted by an organisation that you are interested in. There is also the possibility of your host organisation applying for funding to their national agency. This is perfectly legitimate and you can check with your host and sending organisation as to what is their preferred method of application.

## Am I insured during my EVS project?

Every EVS volunteer must be enrolled into the Group Insurance Plan for EVS volunteers foreseen by the Youth in Action Programme, which complements the coverage by national social security systems. This policy covers the volunteer for his/her necessary medical treatment and other events/incidents during and up to 2 months after the placement. The coordinating organisation, in cooperation with the sending and host organisations, is responsible for the enrolment of the volunteer(s). This enrolment must be done before the departure of the volunteer(s) and cover the duration of the service. An insurance guide including all the information on the coverage and support provided, as well as instructions on

the online enrolment process, is available at [www.europeanbenefits.com](http://www.europeanbenefits.com).

## Do I need to have specific skills to take part in a EVS project?

The selection of volunteers should not be made according to the skills of the volunteers. EVS should be open to everybody. Nevertheless, a certain sensitivity or ability may sometimes be mentioned as being a plus for specific tasks.

## Will I get any training during my EVS project?

Sending and hosting organisations jointly assure the participation of their volunteers in a series of training events during an EVS project: pre-departure training, on-arrival training, mid-term evaluation and, if possible, a final evaluation session. Each type of training has several subjects that are useful or necessary to deal with before and during the service period. Typically the training includes such subjects as: Basics of social engagement and voluntary work; intercultural learning; conflict resolution; group dynamics; rights and responsibilities etc.

## Will I or my parents lose any legal rights or national allowances due to my taking part in an EVS project?

So far, taking part in an EVS project should not have any influence on legal rights. Certain allowances might not be cancelled, but rather suspended during the service period. National legislations differ from country to country. Talk to Léargas for more information.

## Can I change project if anything goes wrong?

Occasionally, things may go wrong during a voluntary service. Nobody is perfect. Misunderstandings or lack of communication may make a service period fail. Communication is often the key to solve a really difficult situation. Changing a project should be the last option if nothing else works, though it is not always possible to arrange.

## Can I withdraw from a project?

As with changing project, withdrawing from a project should be seen as a truly exceptional measure, if nothing else works. Consider carefully the alternatives before taking a final decision. Then bear in mind: this is not simply your personal decision. It involves all three partners of your EVS project: you as the volunteer, the sending organisation and the hosting organisation.

## Is it possible to prolong a project?

Unfortunately, it is not possible to prolong an EVS project. The only exception to this is in the case of a short-term EVS project (for a volunteer with fewer opportunities). Such a project may be prolonged up to a total of 12 months for the same volunteer. (Note: volunteers with fewer opportunities can also apply for more than one EVS project provided the total duration of their service is not longer than 12 months).

## When can I be sure that I will go?

Either your sending or hosting organisation will apply for the funding for your project to the national agency in their respective country. This will need to

be approved before the project can take place. This decision will be made by a grants committee approximately six weeks after each deadline. Only then you can be sure that the project can take place.

## Can my sending or hosting organisation ask me for financial contribution for my participation in an EVS-project?

Participation fees or financial contribution by the volunteer cannot be a condition to take part in an EVS project. This also includes any kind of deposits to get back after a completed project. Also bills for electricity, gas and water, as well as any taxes are the responsibility of the Hosting organisation.

## What are my rights and responsibilities as a volunteer?

Check the relevant sections in this guide for details of your rights and responsibilities as a volunteer. Similar information regarding the hosting and sending organisations is also included.

## Who can help me with visa problems?

Both the sending and hosting organisations have the responsibility to help you obtain a visa, if needed. Participating in EVS does not exempt you from following the national visa regulations. It is important to know that there is a big difference in those regulations from country to country. Therefore your visa request might be denied or you might only receive a short-term tourist visa. Léargas can issue a letter and an explanatory note in order to support individual visa applications. Ask your sending organisation to contact Léargas for further support.



## Useful Links/Resources

European Commission database of accredited organisations:

[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm)

The International Voluntary Service Training Kit

<http://www.TRAINING-YOUTH.NET>

Official home page of the Youth in Action Programme:

[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc74\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc74_en.htm)

Léargas Youth Work Service website

<http://www.leargas.ie/youth>

Volunteering Ireland website

<http://www.Volunteeringireland.com/>

Blogs of EVS Volunteers

<http://www.myevs.net>

Youth Networks

<http://www.youthnetworks.eu>

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## European Voluntary Service Charter

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) Charter is part of the 'Youth in Action' Programme Guide and highlights the roles of EVS sending, host and coordinating organisations and the main principles and quality standards of EVS. Each EVS organisation adheres to the provisions set out in this Charter.

### **EVS partnership**

A solid partnership between EVS sending, host, coordinating organisations and the volunteer is the basis of every EVS activity. An adequate match-making between the volunteer profile and the tasks has to be in place. An activity agreement is signed by all the partners before the beginning of the activity.

- The sending organisation is in charge of the preparation and support of the volunteers before, during and after the EVS activities.
- The host organisation has to ensure safe and decent living and working conditions to the volunteer throughout the entire activity period. It has to provide adequate personal, linguistic and task-related support, including the identification of a mentor for the volunteer.
- The coordinating organisation (applicant) has the role of facilitating the implementation of the project by offering administrative and quality support to all project partners and enabling their networking.

### **EVS principles to be ensured**

- The non-formal educational and intercultural learning dimension, through a clear definition of a learning plan for the volunteer.
- The service dimension through a clear definition of the non-profit making character and the volunteer tasks. Full-time service and active role of the volunteer in implementing the activities have to be ensured. EVS volunteer activities must not substitute any employment.
- The benefit to and the contact with the local community.

- EVS is free of charge for the volunteers.
- Accessibility and Inclusion: when recruiting EVS volunteers, the organisations maintain the overall accessibility of EVS for all young people, without prejudice related to ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation or political opinion. If the project targets volunteers with fewer opportunities, facilities and capacity in providing tailor-made preparation, support and follow-up have to be in place.

### **EVS quality standards to be ensured**

#### *Support to the volunteer*

- before, during and after the EVS activities, in particular in crisis prevention and management;
- for insurance, visa, residence permit, travel arrangements and all the EVS administrative procedures;
- by facilitating the volunteer's participation in the EVS training cycle (pre-departure training, on arrival training, mid-term meeting and final evaluation);
- by foreseeing proper evaluation measures;
- by encouraging a follow-up activity: every volunteer has the right to plan and implement a follow-up activity.

#### *Information*

- All EVS partners have the right to receive complete information on the activity and agree on all aspects.
- Visibility, dissemination and publicity measures have to be in place.

#### *Recognition*

- Each EVS volunteer is entitled to receive a YouthPass.



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