

EVS Competences for Employability

Project narrative report
November 2012 – August 2014



Illustration Aline Rollin

The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the National Agencies involved in the project.

All the data presented and used in this report are initial findings of the first analysis of the surveys of the projects. For final data and results, please refer to the survey report elaborated by Ozgehan Senyuva, PhD.

This report has been elaborated with the help of the core team and partners of the project 'EVS competences for employability'.

Report by Darko Markovic & Gisele Evrard
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I| Background of the project

1.1 Aim and objectives

The idea of the project was born in 2012 and further developed by eight National Agencies (hereinafter NAs) of the Youth in Action programme, together with two SALTO¹ Resource Centres. The common motivation and focus were to explore the relevance of competences² developed during a European Voluntary Service project (hereinafter EVS) for the labour market. In the past years, employability, employment, and entrepreneurship gained importance and visibility on European political agendas, particularly in the perspective of an increasing youth unemployment rates, in spite of the very recent *youth guarantee*. Further developed during the first preparatory meeting in January 2013, the **aim** of the project was therefore defined as to look into competences that EVS volunteers have gained in their EVS projects and their relevance for future employability and employment prospects.

The **objectives** of the project were as follows:

1. To find out more about which competences EVS volunteers typically develop in their EVS projects and which are perceived by EVS stakeholders to be of particular relevance for future employment and/or employability and/or entrepreneurship. Specific attention was given to competences developed by EVS volunteers from inclusion target groups;
2. To evaluate how the EVS competences are perceived by stakeholders from the employment sector (which are the competences the employers (valued/recognised) look for?);
3. To map national commonalities and differences in this field and which aspects could be characteristic for the broader European situation;
4. To identify what is needed for the development of learning processes for EVS volunteers. Moreover, to elaborate fields where additional support is needed, as well as possible follow up.
5. To improve communication/connection and mutual understanding between the stakeholders within/outside the field.

1.2 Structure

The project was divided into four main phases, implemented within a period of 18 months. The phases were (*see point 2 for more information about each phase*):

1. Research:

- a. Desk research: to check what is already there, what has been done and what is known on the topic of competences acquired through non-formal learning activities (hereinafter NFL);

¹ SALTO-YOUTH stands for Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the European YOUTH programme (now E+/YiA)

² Competences in this project are to be understood as an overall system of values, attitudes and beliefs as well as skills and knowledge, which can be put into practice to manage diverse complex situations and tasks successfully. Self-confidence, motivation and well-being are important pre-requisites for a person to be able to act out his/her developed competences.

- b. EVS focus groups: to be implemented for countries that aren't part of the RAY network³ and SALTO South-East Europe (hereinafter SALTO SEE);
 - c. Survey to different stakeholders (ex-EVS volunteers, EVS organisations and employers).
2. **National meetings** involving ex-EVS volunteers, EVS organisations, employers, job centres, career centres, to:
 - Talk about the surveys → present & discuss the results, having qualitative data;
 - Exchange and explore with the stakeholders on issues that were not tackled in the survey.
 3. **An international symposium in Slovenia (May 2014) to:**
 - Discuss differences and similarities with some of the participants of the national meetings and/or who have been involved in some phases of the project;
 - Work on proposals for a possible follow-up (point to tackle or which deserve more attention).
 4. **A report** to present and use outcomes: a general narrative report at the end of the project as well as an analysis and compilation of the results of the surveys. The aim is to be able to use those tools for future developments of the project (possible follow-up) and to support different actors in this field.

1.3 Participating countries

The countries involved in the project were (per alphabetical order):

British Council
London, United Kingdom
www.britishcouncil.org/youthinaction.htm

IUVENTA - Slovenský inštitút mládeže
Bratislava, Slovakia
www.mladezvakcii.sk

European Union Programmes Agency
Santa Venera, Malta
www.yia.eupa.org.mt

JINT v.z.w.
National agency & SALTO Inclusion RC
Brussels, Belgium
www.jint.be

Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji
Warsaw, Poland
www.mlodziex.org.pl

MOVIT, Ljubljana
National agency & SALTO SEE RC
Ljubljana, Slovenia
www.salto-youth.net/see

Institut National de la Jeunesse et de l'Education
Populaire (INJEP)
Paris, France
www.jeunesseenaction.fr

National Institute of Family and Social Policy
Budapest, Hungary
www.yia.hu | www.erasmusplusz.hu

With the launch of the Erasmus+/Youth in Action programme, Ecorys UK partnered up with the British Council and thus became partner in this project as well: <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk>. Two SALTO Resource Centres were also actively involved in the development and implementation of the projects: SALTO Inclusion and SALTO SEE (with a focus on Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina).

³ RAY stands for Research-based analysis and monitoring of the Youth in Action Programme (YiA).

The project involved three experts: one researcher and in charge of the survey report (Ozgehan Senyuva) and two facilitators of the international seminars and contributors to the narrative report (Darko Markovic and Gisele Evrard). Aline Rollin was the graphic recorder of the International symposium.



At the beginning of the process and to ensure a common understanding of the partners' experiences and motivation, space has been dedicated to an exchange on these aspects.

In terms of experiences and previous projects we might highlight:

- The Inclusion strategy of the Youth in Action programme (in the process of being revised in the frame of E+/YiA);

- 'Inclusion' is one of the priority topics of some of the partners for several years;
- Several partners have started to work on employability and on its link with youth work / the contribution of youth work to employability;
- Previous initiatives developed on the issue of recognition of youth work;
- Experience in youth work and in particular in training (and EVS training cycle), mentoring, and research on the issue of recognition, short and long-term mobility (including EVS) and on the contribution of youth work to employability.

The motivation of the partners to engage in this project – in addition to pursuing previously set objectives and further build upon previous outcomes – was as follows:

- 'Employability' of young people became a priority topic for several partners and some are actively working on it already;
- Some of the partners need more resources, tools, and data to start working on employability;
- Depending on the national realities, in some cases there is a real need to improve the number of EVS volunteers sent, prove the necessity of volunteering, bridge formal and non-formal learning, how do qualifications link, reach new audiences (employment world, job centres, career guidance centres), etc.;
- Recognition should be looked at from a different perspective (not only through Youthpass);
- EVS ought to be made more visible to the 'outside world' and in particular to the employment sector;
- Inclusion needs to be tackled from different perspectives and there is a need to explore and address the specific needs of young people with fewer opportunities in EVS;
- The project will contribute to the new 3-years strategy on improving chances of young people with fewer opportunities in the labour market.

1.4 Time frame of the project

January 2013 →	1 st Preparatory meeting
January to March 2013 →	Development of the question to address the focus groups with Start of the focus groups for 'CHARLES' (non-RAY countries). Elaboration of the questions for the three surveys
March to May 2013 →	Launch of the surveys online
April 2013 →	Elaboration of the concept paper for the national meetings & reporting (common red line for comparability: what, why, who?) Elaboration of the concept of international symposium & reporting Skype meeting to discuss first outline of international symposium, feedback from process until then Draft list of names of speakers/experts for international symposium
April 2013 to April 2014 →	Implementation of the national meetings to discuss results of survey (the available statistical indicators per country are sent at the least two weeks before the meetings, especially for those taking place in 2014)
December 2013 →	Development of promotional materials for the international symposium
February 2014 →	2nd prep meeting, using preliminary results to adjust the draft programme of international symposium Adjustment of the national meeting report template to fit the new programme elements of the symposium
March 2014 →	Call and application form for the international symposium Sending the draft programme to participants Share of the RAY focus groups' reports with the facilitating team Recruitment of speakers/experts for international symposium
April 2014 →	Closing of the surveys Provision of the topline data from the three surveys to the facilitating team Finalisation and sharing of the national meetings with the facilitating team Recruitment of a visual facilitator/rapporteur
May 2014 →	International symposium in Slovenia
August 2014 →	Elaboration of the reports (narrative and data) Evaluation and follow-up meeting in the UK

2| Phases of the project

2.1 Research

Desk research

The elaboration of the desk research and what it should focus on started looking at what we knew about and what existed. For instance, the questions asked in the framework of the European Youth Forum's Research Study on '**The Impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young People's Employability**' were of particular relevance for the project:

- *Soft skills and competences recognised by the labour market?*
- *Soft skills and competences developed in EVS?*
- *Awareness about these skills and transferability?*
- *To what extent accept skills and competences acquired?*
- *Other ways skills are developed in youth work?*

The European Youth Forum study therefore served as a basis for it addressed the same question as those that were at the very origin of the project, even though they nonetheless needed to be fine-tuned to fit the sole frame of EVS. Other studies and research processes such as the project of NAPOR (Serbia) on recognition of competences acquired through youth work were also considered good sources for 'food for thoughts'.

The importance of a **desk research** independent of the actual existing surveys was underlined, especially with regard to youth unemployment. For instance, many analyses did not yet include skills employers are missing or that they would give a higher priority, among others. Hence, this project had a specific role in explaining or highlighting what EVS is offering with regard to some of the challenges identified. Speaking the 'evidence-based language' about competences developed is something that employers could understand and the project intended to approach them in a very open and 'partnership' manner, taking into consideration the fact that the degree of their knowledge of youth work (and what they understand by 'youth work') wasn't always very clear, in addition to the fact that such knowledge depended on sector of activity/work and country.

Therefore, the desk research was meant to provide basic information of existing research material on competences developed in youth work (and more concretely through volunteering) and how far the link with what employers are aware of, in need of and ready to acknowledge and recognise was made.

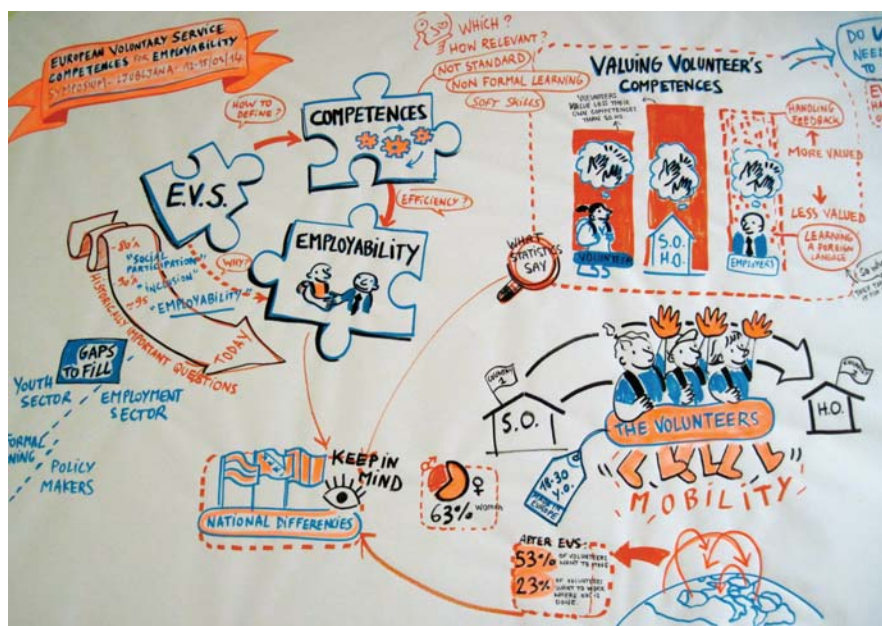
Focus groups

Because focus groups can reveal a wealth of detailed information, deep insight and – when well executed - create an accepting environment that puts participants at ease allowing them to thoughtfully answer questions in their own words and add meaning to their answers – a number of focus groups were planned in addition to the online surveys that were being conducted. Indeed, surveys alone were good to collect information about people's attributes and attitudes but understanding certain dimension more in depth required using approaches such as focus groups.

Hence, to reach this objective the research process had to particularly take into account implementing a number of EVS focus groups for partners that were not involved in the RAY network. Indeed, the RAY network had already performed a series of focus groups on this topic (or beyond) which would be made available for the preparation of the project and in particular for the national meetings and the international symposium. But for countries that were not part of RAY, these focus groups would therefore have to be organised.

The focus groups generally involved from 8 to 10 participants (8 being the ideal number). They solely involved ex-EVS volunteers, who had completed and returned from their project abroad, came from different regions or environments (e.g. urban/rural), giving also a proper space to those who were involved in projects with young people with fewer opportunities (or were considered as such themselves). Where possible, the gender balance was to be respected when selecting participants. The number of ex-EVS volunteers with short-term projects (max 2 months) and who was part of a group EVS were to represent a minor part of the group (max 2 for a group of 8). The focus groups had duration of approximately two hours (max). In the case of SALTO SEE, the focus groups have been organised during the Annual EVS Event in Belgrade in March 2013.

All organisers have been provided clear guidelines to conduct the focus groups with different types of questions to address participants with, including opening and concluding ones.



Surveys

Three different questionnaires (surveys) were developed for three target groups: ex-EVS volunteers, EVS organisations and employers/the employment sector. Those surveys were online though they could also be submitted via e-mail if necessary (e.g. for employers).

The first sample of questions for each survey was developed in English and later on translated into the national languages of the partners of the project.

While brainstorming on the important aspects to keep in mind while elaborating the surveys, it is worth to highlight the following:

- The importance to link the surveys with the outcomes of the focus groups that took place in the frame of RAY, keeping in mind that some of them don't have data for employers, among other points for attention;
- The harmony of the terminology used in the different results that already exist (skills vs. competences, competencies vs. competences, etc.);
- The fact that some existing national survey or outcomes of focus groups are developed based on specific listed skills (e.g. the UK or Serbia);
- The relevance to perhaps approach the survey with EVS specific questions about the competences gained and then ask employers their opinion about it?
- The need to have country specific data on EVS and employment
- The needs to tackle young people with fewer opportunities in all the stages and aspects of the survey but to also have specific questions about this.

For the employers, the points requiring specific attention were as follows:

- Who follows them up? In case of data protection, the owner of the data (the NA) had to send the results directly to the researcher;
- The need to developed specific questions for them;
- Would different employers in different countries demand different things? And if so, how to deal with that aspect?
- The necessity to perhaps have a country approach with employers' associations;
- To keep in mind multinational, regional & local employers.

At the end of the brainstorming that led to the development of the questionnaires for the surveys, partners decided to:

- Get the contacts of the main stakeholders (to send them to the researcher) and motivate them to participate. In the case of ex-EVS volunteers, the focus was on those who took part in projects in the past seven years of Youth in Action as well as of those NAs had contact details for;
- Check whether contacts of ex-EVS volunteers could be shared. If not, the link to the questionnaire will be sent directly to them by the NA;
- Not opt for a minimum numbers of respondents for the surveys but 'the more, the better' as to have useful data;
- Where possible, encourage answering the surveys in English;
- For each NA to translate the questionnaires (surveys) in their national language(s);
- Copy and paste possible answers to open questions to the NAs for translation;
- Elaborate an introductory letter in the national language(s) of the partners.

→ For more information about the research part of the project, please refer to the survey report dedicated to the compilation and analysis of the results of the research process.

2.2 National meetings

Aim and objectives

The **aim** of the national meetings was to gather the main actors and stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in an EVS project (in the complete project cycle) to exchange on the results of the surveys as well as to explore what is missing and what needs to be further developed/explored in the future (the later was also tackled during the international symposium). In this case, 'actors and stakeholders' also include employers.

The **objectives** of the national meetings were as follows:

- To present and discuss the results of the surveys;
- To highlight and further reflect on specific points resulting from the surveys;
- To identify missing points or dimensions to be brought to the next phase of the overall project;
- Where possible, to provide general information about the situation at national level from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives (unemployment rates, strategies in place or under development, main regulations, recognition of non-formal learning and volunteering experiences, country specific EVS statistics, etc.);
- To share stories and/or testimonies of ex-EVS volunteers with regard to entrepreneurship and/or employability;
- To open the space for dialogue and the elaboration of concrete proposals towards a more consistent and cooperative approach, including cooperation with employers where possible and relevant;
- To ensure a transversal approach to inclusion strategies.

The national meetings could also serve for screening & recruiting potential participants for the international symposium.

Target groups

The **main target group** of the national meetings was defined as including EVS volunteers leaving the country/SEE region and organisations hosting or sending volunteers in the country/SEE region. Nonetheless, the **overall target group** of the national meetings-related process was as follows:

- **EVS organisations:** short & long term, sending & hosting, link to volunteers, Ex-EVS associations (SO/HO in the countries involved in the research);
- **Ex-EVS volunteers**, from countries involved in the research;
- Representatives of the **employment field:** employers, HR departments, job offices, career guidance service, networks and chambers of commerce, employers of small and medium size companies, etc. (→ those who will be targeted from the countries involved in the research).

There wasn't any exclusive approach and even though a particular attention had to be given to young people with fewer opportunities and therefore to inclusion, the national meetings were meant to tackle not only disadvantaged young people who got a chance only through EVS, but also university graduates who boost up their CV with EVS.

Duration, format, methodology and related

The national meetings were supposed to last for about **one day** even though the duration was not totally or strictly limited; it could have been shorter or longer, or even linked to another meeting already planned (seminar, EVS meeting, etc.). It was therefore up to the NA/SALTO to decide according to their possibilities (human and financial resources). The same obviously applied to the content and programme of the national meeting.

The national meetings had to ensure an overall **methodology** based on the principles and approaches of non-formal learning, with a good mix of presentations (e.g. of the results of the surveys), exchange and participatory spaces, but also the possibility to reflect upon concrete proposals for the future. The overall approach had nonetheless to take into account the profile of the participants. For this reason and at the time to elaborate the concept paper of the national meetings, it was rather difficult to develop a 'must-do' list as each country would be responsible to organise the meeting and have different types of participants (or different degrees of representation). Still, the methodology had to make sure that everybody felt comfortable to talk, share, confront, propose, question, etc.

The **format** was close to a standard one-day seminar. As explained in the paragraph above, the format had to allow presenting and discussing the results of the survey from a national perspective (focus) to/with the three different target groups (EVS organisations, Ex-EVS volunteers and representatives of the employment field). The format also had to offer the possibility to tackle some topics a bit more in-depth.

Methods therefore included presentations in plenary, working groups/world café, a possible informative, testimonies, and/or [interactive] panel. The **facilitation** was to be decided by the NAs/SALTO RCs and could have been done either by one of the staff members or by an external facilitator.

National meetings had to take place in the **national language(s)**, where possible.

Elements tackled

A list of elements to be tackled in the national meetings had been developed by the facilitation team of the project. Even though such list wasn't exhaustive, the facilitators of the national meetings had to ensure tackling at least the points highlighted below. The reason for this approach was that the national meetings and the international symposium had to – as much as possible – be in line with each other and encompass similar elements to allow at the same time a smooth comparison and complementarity.



The list of elements proposed were as follows:

- Presentation of the wider context – employability in the given country;
- Presentation of the process (questionnaires and where applicable, focus groups);
- Presentation of the results of the surveys (topics) and deeper discussion on:

- Learning aspects of EVS projects (learning in short/long-term EVS, how to support learning to learn? How about the role of tutors/mentors? Balance of organisation needs vs. individual development – learning is most important, etc.);
 - Relevance of Competences (are some specific ones particularly useful? Important? Which ones appear in adverts/jobs? Impact? Etc.);
 - Recognition (validity of experience, non-formal vs. qualifications, gap between education/labour market, role/impact of Youthpass or similar certificates, etc.);
 - Seeking for employment (where to present the experience in a CV? How search for job/where to get the info? What about the support to young people with fewer opportunities? What is the employers' perspective? How to approach internships vs. volunteering? What are the obstacles to employment? How to increase chances to find a job? What about readiness for labour market? Etc.);
 - Life after EVS (what about the social recognition of the experience? What are the next steps for volunteers e.g. where do EVS takes you: education process or jobs seek? Any change of the sector you want to work in? Etc.).
- Exploring specific aspects resulting from the surveys and that require in-depth reflection;
 - Sharing examples of good practise and success stories;
 - Working on recommendations and proposals for further actions.

It was also desirable – if possible – to organise working groups or 'discussion table' to look at the different elements from the following perspectives:

- Young people with fewer opportunities / inclusion;
- National strategies.

→ Please refer to the Appendix 1 for a draft generic programme.

Dates and place

The national meetings that were organised took place **between April 2013 and end of April 2014:**

- SEE countries Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. April 2013.
- Slovenia: September 2013
- Hungary: December 2013
- Slovenia: March 2014
- Belgium Flanders: April 2014
- Poland: March 2014
- The UK: April 2014
- France: April 2014

2.3 International symposium

Aim and objectives

The **aim** of the international symposium was to gather about 40 participants (actors and stakeholders active in the fields of EVS and employment) to exchange on the results of the surveys and the national meetings. Moreover, the aim was also to improve understanding between the

employment and youth sectors, specifically with regard to competences developed within EVS projects through non-formal learning.

The international symposium was also seen as an opportunity to identify future needs and initiatives in this priority area.

The **objectives** of the international symposium were as follows:

- To present and discuss the results of the surveys;
- To present and further work on the outcomes of the national meetings and deepen awareness by conducting an 'on-the-spot comparative analysis' of the findings presented at national level;
- To share [success] stories or testimonies of ex-EVS volunteers with regard to entrepreneurship and/or employability;
- To explore and discuss the topic of inclusion, especially from the employers perspective;
- To link the project to recognition processes of NFL with a particular focus on inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities;
- To work on recommendations/proposals/strategies for concrete follow-up.

Target group

The NAs involved in managing this process identified three participants per country. Where possible, the participants to the international symposium also had to have taken part in the national meetings and equally represent the three subgroups of:

- Representatives of **EVS organisations**: short & long-term, sending & hosting, link to volunteers, Ex-EVS associations (SO/HO in the countries involved in the research);
- **Ex-EVS volunteers** from countries involved in the research;
- Representatives of the **employment field**: representatives of Human Resources departments, those responsible for employing, employers of small/medium or large companies, job offices, etc.;

Representatives of **NAs and SALTO Resource Centres** involved in the projects and closely dealing with EVS and/or inclusion projects were also be present, as well as representatives of the **Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport** and **European Commission**.

Format, methodology and related

The international symposium was meant to *build on the outcomes of the national meetings* and had to ensure an overall **methodology** based on the principles and approaches of non-formal learning, with a good mix of presentations (e.g. of the results of the surveys), exchange and participatory spaces, but also the possibility to reflect upon concrete proposals for the future. The overall approach had nonetheless to take into account the profile of the participants and various national/regional needs and priorities.

The **format** was a 3-day symposium (plus arrival and departure timeslots) with representatives from all the countries involved in the project. The format had to not only allow presenting and discussing the results of the surveys (main/topline data) from to/with the three different target groups (EVS organisations, Ex-EVS volunteers and representatives of the employment field), but also from three different perspectives: inclusion, regional and national.

The format had to allow offering the possibility for comparisons between countries, to tackle some relevant topics more in-depth and reflect on possible follow-up activities based on the results of the surveys and of the national meetings. Space was made within the programme to invite representatives of the employment field to contribute from their perspective.

Methods included permanent presentations on panels as well as in plenary, working groups/world café, testimonies, workshops and/or a [interactive] panel.

Two experts had already been selected for the **facilitation** and were fully involved in the preparatory process.

The **working language** was English.

Dates and place

The international symposium took place in **Ljubljana, Slovenia from 12th May (arrivals) to 15th May (departures) 2014**. The programme opened on a welcome lunch on Tuesday 12th May and closed after lunch on the 15th May. An optional city tour was organised during the final afternoon for those that will stay one more night.

Programme elements

A list of programme elements to be tackled in the international symposium had been developed during the two preparatory meetings of the project:

- Presentation of the wider context – employability in Europe;
- Presentation of the process (questionnaires, focus groups and national meetings);
- Presentation of the results of the surveys (topics) and deeper discussion on:
 - Learning aspects of EVS projects (learning in short/long-term EVS? Regional differences? How to support learning to learn? How about the role of tutors/mentors? Balance of organisation needs vs. individual development – learning is most important, etc.);
 - Relevance of Competences (are some specific ones particularly useful? Important? Which ones appear in adverts/jobs? Impact? Etc.);
 - Recognition (validity of experience, non-formal vs. qualifications, gap between education/labour market, role/impact of Youthpass or similar certificates, etc.);
 - Seeking for employment (where to present the experience in a CV? How search for job/where to get the info? What about the support to young people with fewer opportunities? What is the employers' perspective? How to approach internships vs. volunteering? What are the obstacles to employment? How to increase chances to find a job? What about readiness for labour market? Etc.);
 - Life after EVS (what about the social recognition of the experience? What are the next step for volunteers e.g. where does EVS takes you: education process or job seek? Any change of the sector you want to work in? Etc.).



- Exploring specific aspects resulting from the surveys and that require in-depth reflection;
- Sharing good examples of practise and success stories;
- Working on recommendations and proposals for further actions.

2.4 Reporting

...of the National Meetings

The main outcomes of the national meetings had to be documented. They were to be used for the international symposium and the final report. Hence, the documentation had to include:

- A summary of the data that has been collected;
- The main comments linked to the surveys only (insights? Disagreements/ Additional information? Etc.);
- A summary of the comments on additional specific points for discussion provided prior to the meeting;
- A summary of the main outcomes on the five elements to be tackled: learning aspects of an EVS project, relevance of competences, recognition, seeking for employment, and life after EVS;
- Action oriented proposals (what could/should happen);
- A list of potential persons to be invited to the international symposium.

If relevant, extra material could have been provided (e.g. good examples of practices, case studies, statistics, etc.).

A **template** of the report has been provided by the facilitators of the international symposium, prior to the meeting and sufficiently in advance for the facilitators of the national meetings to prepare their work accordingly. The reports had to be made **in English** and be ready by the 30th of April 2014 at the very latest in order to be integrated in the preparation of the international symposium.

→ *Please refer to the Appendix 2 for the template of the report.*

...of the International Symposium

The question of reporting from the symposium was intrinsically connected to the questions of the overall reporting from the project and was therefore to be decided based on the interests and needs of the participating NAs and SALTOS.

Three approaches have been considered:

1. **A shorter narrative report from the international symposium** covering the main insights mentioned by participants, the main questions discussed and the main outcomes/results/proposals for follow-up (as concrete as possible);
2. **A comprehensive project report from the whole process** (including all the phases) with summaries of the survey, desk research, outcomes from the national meetings and the international symposium and recommendations for the possible follow-up;

3. **A larger project report with the specific focus on the follow-up actions.** This report would then include an overview the overall process and summary of the main outcomes in each phase, highlighting the main questions and recommendations during the project and ideas/concepts for the future tool(s) and/or follow-up actions (e.g. a manual for support persons and EVS volunteers on how to use the competences acquired in EVS when seeking for employment, etc.).

Finally, based on the outcomes of the symposium, it was decided to have a **general stand-alone narrative report** that would summarise the whole project and its phases, with a bigger focus dedicated to the symposium and the main outcomes of each block or main sessions, also highlighting the recommendations or suggestions from participants that could be considered for a possible follow-up.

This document therefore constitutes the narrative report of the project. It tackles:

- The background of the project, the aim and objectives, the participating countries, etc.;
- The structure and timing of the project;
- The description of each of the phases (desk research, questionnaires, focus groups, national meetings, international symposium);
- A more extensive report from the symposium (programme, participants, topics discussed, summaries of the discussions, etc.);
- The main conclusions & impressions;
- The results of the evaluation of the symposium;
- Ideas for follow up – a look into the future.

...of the Surveys

Parallel to the narrative report, the **full results of the research process are to be covered in a separate stand-alone document** tackling:

- The input on employability in Europe presented during the symposium;
- The input on the research state in Europe on this topic;
- The background of the survey, the participating countries, methodology, etc.;
- A description of all phases of the research and main results of the main phases (desk research, focus groups, national meetings, questionnaires, international symposium);
- The full results and their critical analysis with general findings & conclusions, accompanied with main country specificities and/or similarities and possibly examples;
- An executive summary, which can be used for information & promotional purposes.

This report is meant to be informative, user-friendly & picturesque, with graphs and other interesting ways of representation.

3| The Symposium



3.1 Overall aim

As explained earlier, the international symposium was part of a greater process, which aimed at looking into the competences EVS volunteers typically develop in their EVS projects and their relevance for future employment, employability and/or entrepreneurship. Up to the symposium, the process consisted of national focus groups, surveys and meetings analysing this topic at national levels, while the international symposium was meant to enable mapping national commonalities and differences in this field and gaining a broader European outlook on the topic, to allow identifying future needs and initiatives in this area and hopefully improve communication and mutual understanding between the employment and youth sectors.

The international symposium **aimed** at offering an opportunity for participants to exchange on the results of the national surveys and meetings. Moreover, it aimed at improving the understanding between the employment and youth sectors, specifically with regard to competences developed through non-formal learning within EVS projects. The symposium was also an opportunity to identify future needs and initiatives in this priority area.

→ For a more detailed description of the background, aim, objectives and format-related questions, please refer to the description of this phase (page 14-15 – international symposium).

3.2 Programme elements: summary, insights and main outcomes

A competent opening

After an inspiring opening video and welcoming words by the facilitators (Gisele Evrard and Darko Markovic) the Symposium has been officially opened by Mr. Janez Skulj, Head of MOVIT - Slovenian National Agency and Ms. Barbara Zupan from the Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. Both Janez and Barbara have stressed the importance of working on better recognition of non-formal learning and competences gained in the youth work, in order to increase the self-confidence and enhance social inclusion of young people.

Although acknowledging the growing concern for employment of young people in today's Europe, the recognition of non-formal learning cannot be seen as magic solution when there is a general crisis in the labour market. They have underlined that better readiness for the job market (employability) of young people would come naturally as a side-effect of competence development through engagement in youth work project. However, youth work in general, and EVS in particular, have to safeguard aspects where they contribute the most - namely in supporting young people's participation, active citizenship, dealing with cultural diversity and inclusion.

The session has continued with an interactive 'Competent opening' exercise which allowed the participants to get to get into know each other and warm up for the topic of the symposium.

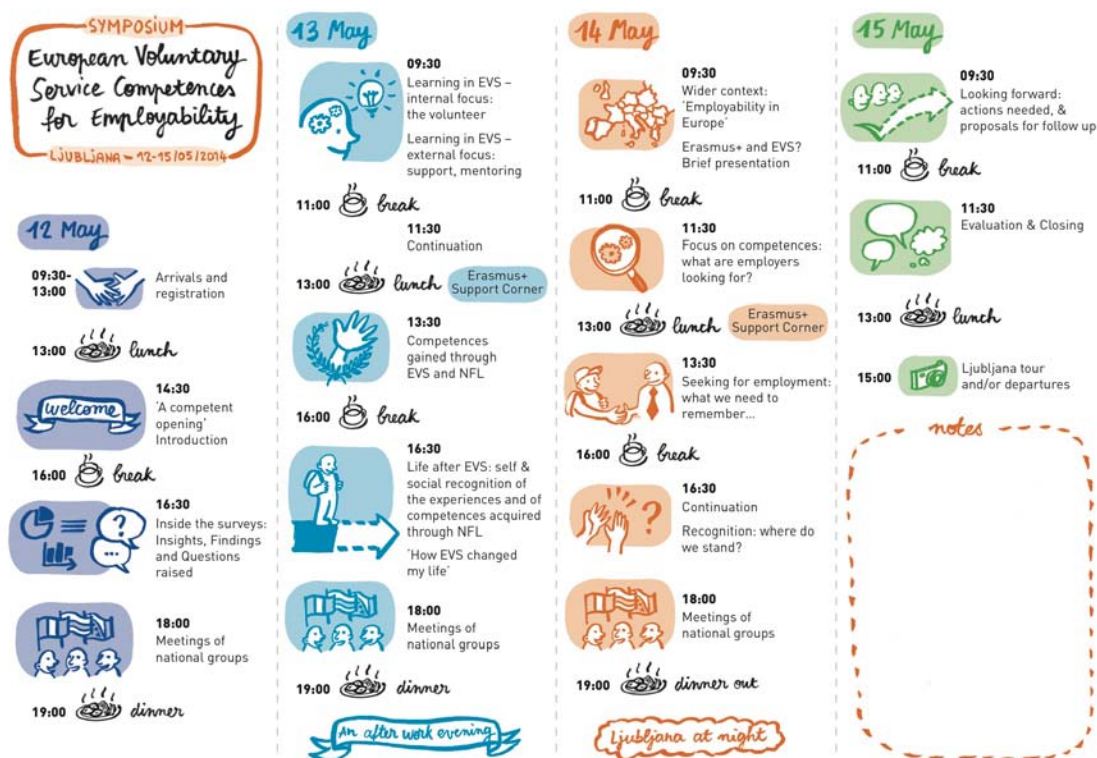


Presentation of the project (background, process, and phases)

This was followed by the presentation of Ms. Tinkara Bizjak (MOVIT) of the background of the project 'EVS Competence for Employability'. In her presentation, Tinkara has walked us through the key dates, main objectives and all the phases in the project.

→ Please refer to Appendix 3 for the complete presentation.

In the final part of the opening session, Gisele Evrard presented the aim, objectives and the programme of the Symposium.



Inside the surveys: presentation of the initial insights, findings, and questions raised

The session continued with the presentation by M. Ozgehan Senyuva, PhD, of the key results and insights of the online surveys conducted with three main target groups: former EVS volunteers (hereinafter VOLs), EVS sending/host organisations (hereinafter SOHOs), and employers. The survey was conducted in 10 European countries and gathered responses from 1340 VOLs, 218 SOHOs and 193 representatives of employers (including small and medium enterprises, multinational companies, public institutions and job search agencies).

With regards to the **learning aspect of an EVS project**, the survey tackled not only the outcomes of the learning process (e.g. competences gained), but also the 'HOW' question – what contributes to volunteers' awareness of their own learning and what are the main sources of support for it during an EVS project. As the results of the survey show, both VOLs and SOHOs agree that some of the most effective ways to become aware of one's learning is the ongoing self-reflection during the project and applying the newly gained competences after the EVS. Nevertheless, the SOHOs put more

emphasis on the role of feedback given to VOL by their host organisation, while the volunteers consider more important the reflection on the overall EVS experience upon their return to the home country.

In terms of the most important sources of support for volunteers' learning, the majority of both VOLs and SOHOs stress the utmost importance of volunteers' own openness and readiness for learning. However, these two groups differ in terms of how they perceive the effectiveness of other sources of learning support: while VOL place high importance on peer learning (from other EVS volunteers) and EVS trainings, the SOHOs rather value the 'organisational sources', like a supportive learning environment in the host organisation and the clear guidance and tasks by the project coordinator. It was striking that none of the two surveyed groups highly rated the importance of 'mentoring' for volunteers' learning.

EVS increases chances to get a job			
	EX EVS	SOHO	EMPLOYERS
AGREE	67 %	88 %	75%
DISAGREE	14 %	5 %	12%

With regards to the **impact of EVS on volunteers' career and life choices**, 54% of VOLs in the overall sample (80% in Bosnia-Herzegovina) report that their EVS had a positive impact on their plans for education, 70% on their career paths (84% in Belgium), and 53% on the decision where to live (72% in Hungary). 40% of surveyed ex-EVS volunteers have decided to work in the same field as their EVS project and 23% of them have decided to work in the country where they did their service.

In terms of their perception of the practical value of an EVS experience when searching for a job, SOHOs (88%) and Employers (75%) are more positive than VOL (67%). It is noticeable that 12% of employers does not believe that an international volunteering experience can increase the person's chances in the job market.

When tackling one of the core questions in the overall project, namely to what extent there is a match between the competences typically developed in EVS and the competences employers are looking for in their employees, the results of the survey show the following:

- An EVS experience can contribute to development of 21 competences included in the survey. In their estimations, SOHOs on average are more positive about the potential of EVS for competence development than volunteers themselves.
- The most developed competences in EVS are: foreign language skills, communication, intercultural sensitivity, cooperating and speaking. The least developed ones are: learning to learn, handling clients, respecting rules and handling authority.
- There is a significant match between the competences developed in EVS and the ones employers are looking for in their employees (e.g. cooperating, speaking, flexibility, planning and organising, taking initiative, acting independently, working in a team, communication).
- There is a clear mismatch with regard to competences that employers are finding extremely important (e.g. handling clients, giving and receiving feedback) and that are not so developed during EVS and the - surprisingly - foreign language skills that the employers in the sample do not seem to consider as particularly relevant.

As many volunteers stated, EVS is often not just about learning but also a significant life-changing experience and it was interesting to research to what extent the personal changes and development

occurred during the project was appreciated by the volunteers themselves and their immediate surroundings. The results from the survey show that 22% VOLs report that they felt a lack of appreciation and understanding with regard to how much they developed during the project. This percentage is significantly higher in some countries (in the BiH sample it was 60%, followed by 58% in France). In terms of **social recognition**, 71% VOLs (86% in Hungary, 53% in UK) report that their friends understood and appreciated their own development due to their EVS experience, 67% VOLs (82% in Hungary, 38% in France) said that they gained recognition for their development by their family, and 44% (64% in Hungary, 31% in Slovenia) by the society they live in.

When **seeking for employment**, 84% of VOLs (92% in Malta) have included their EVS experience in their CVs, 35% VOL (61% in France) would mention it in the letter of intent when applying for a job, and 37% VOLs (51% in Hungary) would mention it in a job interview.

On the other side, the 92% employers would suggest including it in the CV, 52% would include it in the letter of intent, and 66% believe that the EVS experience should be mentioned in the job interview.

In its final part of the presentation, Ozgehan mentioned the **obstacles for youth employment** as perceived by former volunteers and employers in the sample. When compared these two images differ quite a lot. The major *disagreements* between these two groups are in relation to the following obstacles for employment:

- No motivation for looking for a job;
- Not enough recognition of voluntary work as work experience;
- Young people are offered only lower-paid, temporary jobs and/or internships;
- Lack of equal chances in life, education, opportunities;
- Corruption and nepotism;
- Having skills labour market doesn't need;
- Having unrecognised skills (non or informally learned);
- Being over-qualified];
- Not knowing how or where to find information on employment issues.

At the same time, volunteers and employers *agree* that the following list of obstacles really affect young people when looking for a job:

- Information overload X;
- To get work you need experience, to get experience you need work ++;
- Economic crisis;
- Lack of self confidence;
- Severe competition;
- Lack of trust in young people;
- Sex-related discrimination (discrimination of younger women) X;
- Education vs Market;
- More diplomas.

→ Please refer to Appendix 4 for the complete presentation.

Questions raised

The presentation of results led to a Q&A session and raised important debates in the symposium. Some interesting questions that appeared were:

- *Is EVS part of your career path or part of your life path?*
- *Does the results defer in relation to the type of the employer?*
- *SOHOs might be more positive than VOL due to need for 'self-importance' or they have a more objective view than the volunteers (looking from the outside)*
- *There is also 'me-me-me factor': how we value and self-assess ourselves... how much VOLs themselves value and are able to translate their competences for employment.*
- *We are losing the volunteering spirit, while talking so much about the employability*
- *SOHOs have to guide the VOLs to translate their competences for employment (if VOL wish that so). The question is if the SOHOs are able to do so?*
- *According to the country, we don't value volunteering experience the same way in different countries. In France we don't put it on the CV. In some other countries EU logo on Youthpass gives more value to it. In some countries there are so many tools already.*
- *Volunteering in some countries (e.g. post-Soviet or former Yugoslavia) has a negative connotation*
- *Some issues are very country specific and need a national level approach rather than European level the same for all.*
- *I believe that the relevance of putting EVS experience in the CV depends on the employer or type of employer. It is not always valid to present your EVS experience.*
- *Volunteering spirit gets lost a bit, if we are constantly talking about becoming employable through volunteering.*
- *Perhaps it would be relevant to ask the volunteers in the survey about their motivation to go to EVS in the first place.*
- *In my CV, I did not mention my EVS as such, but I did mention the competences I developed in appropriate sections – I tried to translate it to the language of the employer.*
- *I could not work without my volunteers at all; I don't understand why people wouldn't hire them.*
- *These things depend much on the country. Things that are labelled as 'European' are not very valued in France.*

Meetings of the national/regional teams

The symposium was not only the opportunity to deepen the understanding of the results of the research, but also an opportunity for *sharing and learning mutually about the national realities* in relation to the related topics (EVS, non-formal learning, volunteering, recognition of youth work, youth employment). Therefore, as means of preparation for the symposium, the participants were asked to bring relevant knowledge (documents, quotes, statistics, pictures, articles, etc.) that were used for setting up a country presentation in the end of the Day 1.



The small national/regional teams (consisted of VOLs, SOHOs and employers) served also as a forum for sharing reflections about the symposium-related topics each day and for linking the symposium debates with the national situation.

National/regional meetings process

Ten national pin board presentations set in front of the plenary room have served as an important resource for learning during the breaks and other informal moments. The information they contained served as a source of inspiration and helped the participants get the bigger picture and points of reference/comparison when thinking about their own national or regional situations. The pin board presentations have been updated every day with the new insights and reflections of each national team.

Learning in EVS – internal focus: the volunteer’s learning

It is clear that EVS has a strong learning component in itself. It is not only about ‘service’ but also about learning and the development of new competences. Having said that it is no surprise that there is growing interest among the EVS organisations to learn more about *HOW* learning occurs in EVS and what are the best conditions for learning that need to be put in place during an EVS project. Therefore, with the help of World Café method on ‘Learning in EVS’ we have initiated sharing and discussion about how learning happens in EVS, using the survey results as the starting point.

The key questions discussed in the three rounds of the World café were as follows:

- Cards from ‘Learning Out of the Box’⁴ were displayed on the table. Participants were asked: if you would ask an EVS volunteer to pick a card representing learning in EVS for him/her, which card s/he would select? And why? Share your choice and reasons.
- The survey suggests that VOLs and SOHOs see ‘**volunteer’s openness and readiness for learning**’ a key source of support for learning during an EVS project. How do you understand this result? What are the ways to cultivate/support such openness and readiness in the volunteer? And what might block it?
- The results of the survey suggest that volunteers are most likely to become aware of their own learning by: ‘**continuous self-reflection during the service**’ and ‘**reflecting on their learning once back home**’. What are the consequences of this findings for the support needed from sending and hosting organisations in relation to volunteers’ learning process?

→ Please refer to Appendix 5 for the survey results used in the World Café.

Insights / main outcomes

Based on the outcomes of the first discussion round we could summarise that volunteers’ learning in EVS requires: **open-mindedness** and **readiness to be confronted** and question one’s own views; a certain degree of **courage** (‘learning is a small heroic act’); an **authentic interest** (‘when there is interest, then learning happens’) and a sense of **ownership** (‘taking responsibility for one’s own learning process’). But it also needs **the right support** in particular for becoming aware of one’s own

⁴ Evrard, G; Markovic, D; Nemetlu, G (2012): *Learning Out of the Box*, educational card game, SALTO TC RC, available at: <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/downloads/learning-out-of-the-box/>

learning and 'putting the things in the right context'. Ultimately, learning in EVS may lead to a significant **personal change** – that requires understanding and acceptance of it by the volunteer and the people around.

Nonetheless, the question remained how to cultivate these attitudes needed for learning in EVS and the outcomes of the second found has given some useful directions for practice. With regards to openness and readiness for learning, the participants stressed that it should not be required from the volunteers only, but also from the SOHOs who are engaged in their own learning process as well. Some suggested ways in supporting volunteers develop such attitudes were: **mentoring, valuing both positive and negative experiences** ('failure is an important part of learning') and **encouraging sharing**. However, the volunteers themselves can consciously or unconsciously end up blocking these processes or sources for support. Thus, there is a need to support the volunteers' self-awareness of the ways to block (sabotage) their own learning. The learning in EVS can be also blocked by certain attitudes and fears of the unknown, a feeling of being lost and/or over-challenged. In general, lack of awareness of how learning happens in EVS both on the side of SOHOs and VOLs can be a potential challenge to be addressed.

As the survey results suggest, the continuous self-reflection and support from peers (e.g. other EVS volunteers) are highly valued by the volunteers, as ways to become aware of own learning and receive needed support for it. At the same time, it was recognised that **the role of mentors and SOHOs should be strengthened in order to provide an adequate support for volunteers' learning**. Special focus should be put on mentors who should receive more training, more (and better) support and adopt the approach with 'more attention to learning and less on problem solving'. Additional special attention should be given to SOHOs who should in principle be able to provide more support after the volunteer's return. Moreover and in general, more frequent feedback should be encouraged during and after the service.

Learning in EVS – external focus: learning support and mentoring

After looking at *HOW* volunteers' learning happens in EVS, the following session initiated sharing and discussion around **mentoring and learning support in EVS**, building on the survey results and the discussions that already took place during the national meetings prior the symposium.

Four facilitated working groups have been set with the following questions:



WG1: The majority of the results of the national meetings suggests that there is *not enough support to volunteers, especially before and after the EVS and that SOHO should be better prepared to provide guidance and support* (also with a stronger focus on getting supported in 'translating' competences for employment purposes). Are SOHOs supposed to do all that? What can help them to become such as source of support?

WG2: Leaving aside the category 'others', surveys show that the use of 'learning support tools' are the least valued by volunteers and SOHOs (even though it might be a bit better

considered by the latter). Are existing tools (diaries, blogs, etc.) needed at all or are they simply not relevant/applicable to EVS?

WG3: How do you understand that SOHOs value more 'supportive environment in HO' (rank 2) than mentoring (and isn't mentoring part of the host environment?) and that volunteers value mentoring even less (proportionally - rank 8)? Is mentoring necessary at all and if yes, what kind of mentoring should it be? What are the competences mentors needed to support learning and competence development of the volunteer?

WG4: If we work on better employability of young people after their EVS, could we talk about emerging role of 'getting back home mentors'? What they would be supposed to do and how?

Outcomes from the groups

Working group 1 – supporting volunteers before and after EVS

Pre-departure training: pre-departure training should be compulsory for all volunteers. Already during the pre-departure training a special focus should be put on understanding the learning process in EVS and the potential for competence development.

Resources: more and better use of online resources (e.g. internet applications to stay in touch and communicate), involve the current EVS volunteers in the preparation of the outgoing ones, collect and provide volunteer with useful tools for learning support.

Promotion: there is a need for a close connection and better understanding of EVS by the employers; NAs and SALTOs should consider the promotional activities that should reach the employers as well, especially persons in responsible for CSR activities in the companies

After EVS: make the final evaluation training interesting enough to generate a real desire of the volunteers to come (e.g. we may consider involving other stakeholders like employers to provide an opportunity for networking). Final evaluation meetings should also provide a support to volunteers to 'translate' their competences for an employment purpose, if they want to. One of the suggestions was to involve coaches and career counsellors. NAs and SALTOs should serve as bridges between VOLs, SOHOs, job offices and employers. The European Commission should secure budgets for the pre-departure and final evaluation meetings/trainings.

Working group 2 – learning tools in EVS

The tools in EVS could be relevant for:

- Volunteers to keep track of their learning;
- Organisations to serve as means of evaluation;
- Future volunteers to learn about the project/place.

Each **tool must include a personal element** (the personalisation of a tool is crucial to generate a sense of ownership and its effective use). However, the tools themselves are not enough; there is a **need for personal support** to use them. When talking about learning tools for the volunteers' learning, mentors should be able to **match the tools and the personality of the volunteer** (e.g. writing-based tools are not effective for many volunteers).

Many good practices and tools already exist. Hence and before starting developing the new ones, there is a **need to exchange and share about the existing ones**. There are also already developed tools for evaluation that could be adapted to EVS reality.

Working group 3 – mentor role and competences

There is an overload of expectations as to what roles mentors should take on with EVS volunteers. To the questions ‘is mentoring necessary at all and if yes, what kind of mentoring should it be? What are the competences mentors needed to support learning and competence development of the volunteer?’, the group responded that **mentoring is needed and necessary but it does not really work as it is supposed to** (EVS volunteers value more peer support than the mentoring, as the survey suggests). At the same time, the **expectations with regard to the role of mentors have increased over the years** and mentors are not able to fulfil them.

One suggestion is that mentors should be **recruited outside the host organisation**, but the challenge in that case might be fewer contacts with the volunteers’ daily work. As said above, volunteers often turn to peers and speak to friends about personal issues rather than to their mentor, precisely because the mentor is outside the organisation and often not so close and not so involved with the volunteer. Perhaps this role could be split into **inside and outside mentors**. The ‘outside mentor’ (the ‘big brother/sister’) is not someone who can accompany volunteers’ learning process. The suggestion is that **the mentoring approach should be tailored for each particular volunteer/organisation/project**. Moreover, mentors should help volunteers think about what comes after EVS; this represents a big insecurity for the volunteers. The availability of the mentor is needed throughout the whole project, and in particular during the later stage of long-term voluntary service.

With regards to **mentors’ competences**, the suggestion is to have an educational (non-formal learning) background translated into reality, the ability to develop a tailor-made approach to the needs of the volunteers, interpersonal skills, know volunteer well (be in the position to closely monitor volunteers’ development), identify skills that the volunteers’ needs to develop and provide encouragement for their personal project. The working group acknowledged that **mentors do not get enough recognition** in real terms within the Programme at the moment.

A mentor is difficult to find! Mentors need to invest in people; it is not a role that can just be assigned. They need to get some emotional (rather than material) benefit out of their role. They need to be aware of the different stages of the service. As things are working now, learning support & working on the Youthpass should not be given to the mentor (especially if inside the organisation) but to a member of staff of the organisation.

Working group 4 – supporting volunteers’ employability after EVS

- **Team work**: a youth worker shouldn’t be doing this alone. **We have to create bridges and synergies between different sectors and stakeholders**: employers, employment agencies, former VOL, volunteers, youth workers.

- We need a **better flow of information between different sectors**.

- **Part of the final EVS event should be preparation for job seeking**: inviting people from the employment agencies to give some tips and advices about CV writing, job interviews etc. Former EVS volunteers could come and share their success stories and experiences.

- At the end of the EVS project the **HO should have a talk about this with the volunteer, provide some useful website links, some directions**, and help volunteers to look for the information. The SO

and employment agencies should do the same, as the national realities could be very different and volunteer needs to get different perspectives.

- There is a need for some **guidance and personal support** and not just handing over a list with useful references. Volunteers need **someone who knows EVS to help them understand their learning process and translate the competences gained during the project** because in most of the cases the employment agencies do not know what EVS is about.

- **NAs, SOHOs, and youth workers should promote EVS** and get in touch with the employment sector.

- Erasmus became very popular and well-known also thanks to the **movie 'l'auberge espagnole'**. Maybe something similar could be done for **EVS**?

- The first few months after EVS are crucial for the volunteers and the SO should help them in close cooperation with the employment agency. There should be one **youth worker in each organisation responsible for this 'translating competences guidance'**. This person should **be trained to do this** (attend some courses, etc). This guidance **doesn't have to be an ongoing thing; it can happen during 1-2 well structured and prepared meetings**. SO should **get extra funding** for this.

- **Youth worker** should be helping only with translating and understanding the experience and competences gained through EVS but **not be responsible for finding a job for the ex-EVS volunteer**.

- **SO** could help volunteers to get in touch with **former volunteers** and those could **give some tips or act as 'mentors'**.

- There is willingness from the **employment sector to attend youth events and give some advices, sessions, etc.** as that would **make their job easier** as well.

Competences gained through EVS and NFL

There is a common belief amongst the actors in EVS that volunteers develop a number of competences through their EVS experience and it is therefore relatively difficult to question the potential of EVS in terms of competence development. However, the survey clearly shows that some competences are more likely to be developed in EVS than others. **From the initial list of 21 tested competences in the survey, the ones that seem to be the most developed by the majority of the surveyed volunteers are: foreign language skills, communication, intercultural sensitivity, cooperating and speaking. The least developed once are: learning to learn, handling clients, respecting rules and handling authority.**

At the same time, taking part in EVS for the volunteers is becoming a more and more demanding exercise. Very often volunteers themselves have to find the HO themselves, establish the contact with them, negotiate with their SO, or even write part of the application, amongst other aspects. If so, **can we really speak about volunteers who have developed [some of] these competences through EVS? Or can we say that they already had acquired – partially or fully - these competences in the first place in order to take part in the programme?** In other words, are we here talking about an implicit barrier for participation in the programme that is supposed to be open for all young people regardless their education level, qualifications, etc.? Finally, what happened with **reaching young people with fewer opportunities in the programme when 70,9% of VOLs in the survey has post-secondary/university/higher educational level?** These were some of the questions addressed in the plenary discussion after lunch on day 2 in the symposium.

→ Please refer to Appendix 6 for the survey results used for this session.

Insights / main outcomes of the exchange

Some of the key points mentioned in the lively discussion were:

Identified challenges related to inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, support and selection of volunteers

- EVS has a short-term possibility when the SOHOs would like to develop it for young people with fewer opportunities. However, more and more, volunteers are applying for long-term placements and often having already better competences than their project managers. This leads only to creating further opportunities to develop already developed skills.
- There is need to work on the better outreach to young people with fewer opportunities. More money to sending organisations in the Programme would ensure that they can promote EVS with young people with fewer opportunities (providing a needed support and assistance with the applications)
- It is not the question of promotion of EVS to young people with fewer opportunities. It is rather about the regular work of sending organisation with this target groups. Advertising for the higher educated.
- It is true that there are more and more highly educated applying for EVS, but their education level does not imply that they don't need to develop these competences as well.
- We should be careful with labelling. What does it mean to have "extra difficulties"? who decides who is a young person with fewer opportunities, if they don't perceive themselves that way?!
- In general there are not enough placements for 'inclusion projects'. We need to create more opportunities for these young people.
- Did the youth programme fail in its inclusion purpose (that was originally designed for)?
- The question is how we really select volunteers in our organisations – by asking for existing skills set or who would benefit most from the learning and development opportunities that we create?
- Young people are usually motivated to apply, but then they are confronted with a demanding selection procedure. They need a certain level of education and level of English to write motivation letters, contact host organisations and help in writing the application. Unfortunately, the Programme does not give more money for supporting the young people who do not meet all these requirements.

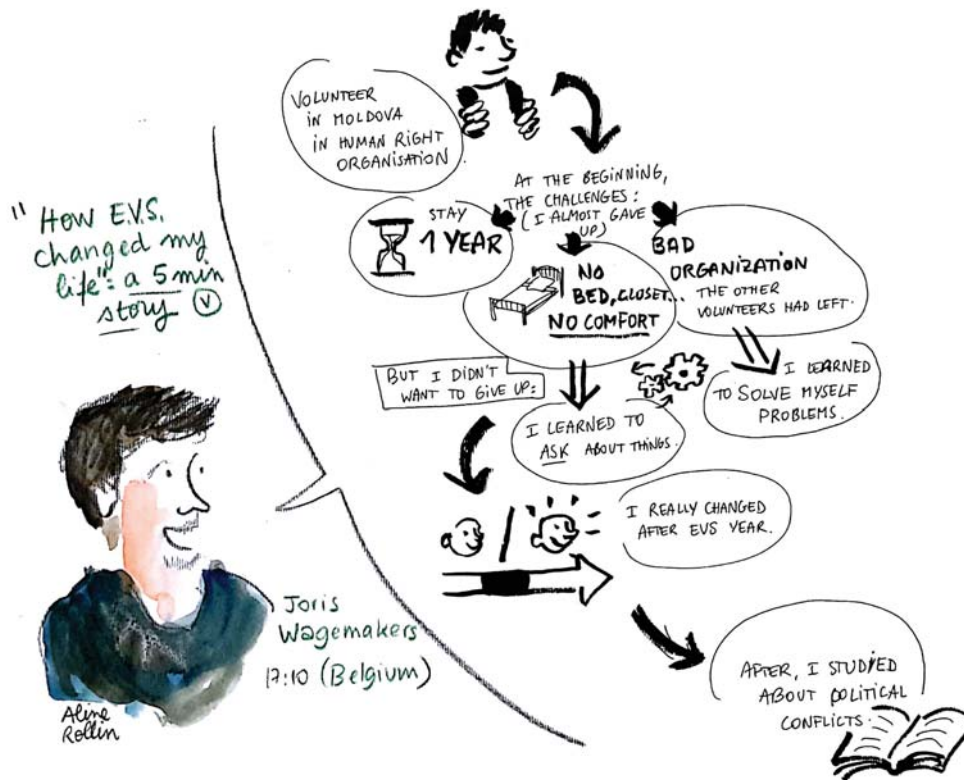
Suggested actions to address the identified challenges

- When organising a youth policy meeting (in UK) → try to get EVS to be taken more seriously.
- Include more people with fewer opportunities is to let them know about the Programme.
- There is a need to help overcoming the language barrier in applying for EVS.

How EVS changed my life?

In order to explore the impact of EVS on individual volunteers and related self and social recognition of these changes, we have invited the six former volunteers to share their 'EVS stories' with other participants in the symposium.

Below you can find some extracts of their experiences as shared with the rest of the participants.



"Facing many unexpected situations during my EVS, I gained a flexible attitude. I started realising that it's impossible to plan every possible situation or outcome of my decisions beforehand. This way I gained another perspective on life. Rather than planning and expecting everything to go according to plan, I became more conscious of the environment where I'm in. This perspective values what exists and recognises the possibilities connected to this situation instead striving to achieve something else."

(Joris, ex-EVS volunteer from Belgium).

"But the best thing of all is that I learned how to manage in totally unknown situations and still do my job successfully. Now I know that I can do anything. This EVS experience has taught me that different language is not barrier and if you are open for new people, cultures, traditions you can learn a lot and after that you can appreciate more your own culture."

(Amina, ex-EVS volunteer from Bosnia and Herzegovina)

"As our project involved 16 individuals from all over the Europe there was a lot to learn about different cultural habits and historical background. I realised that my capacity for learning is even bigger that I could have ever thought before."

(Tomas, ex-EVS volunteer from Slovakia)

"Since November, I am back in Slovenia, and I will stay here. I want to find a job, suitable for education, my skills, competences, personal characteristic, and me. It is challenging to go through this process, but I can clearly recognise how much I have grown and changed in last five years; specifically, how have I grown and changed during the year of EVS."

(Mojca, ex-EVS volunteer from Slovenia)

"Discovering another country and another culture, seeing life through someone else's eyes, learning new skills and new competences through sharing someone else's day-to-day life on a professional

and personal level... That's what made my EVS so significant and valuable! No book can teach you what you can learn from the European Voluntary Service. It is about being there, being part of a team, sharing skills and knowledge and all together making a positive contribution to make the difference..."

(Marion, ex-EVS volunteer from UK)

"My EVS changed my life: it open my horizons, helped me to rethink my way of thinking, helped me developing my language and interpersonal skills, helped me to develop tolerance and I think that developing my personal skills through interpersonal relations in the organisation were the most important. But the most important from my EVS for me in the moment was that I managed to see what I want to be in my professional life. It helped me to realize that I want to be in the area of education, and now I am studding pedagogy."

(Bozidar, ex-EVS volunteer from Serbia)

→ Please refer to Appendix 7 for complete stories of the volunteers.

Life after EVS: self & social recognition of the experiences and of competences acquired through non-formal learning

After hearing several volunteers' stories and being able to interview the former volunteers about the challenges they have faced in relation to self and social recognition of the impact EVS had on themselves and their lives, participants shared their insights on the 'silent wall'. The results of these sharing can be found in the text box below.

Reflecting on the challenges to self and social recognition, a quote from the Slovenian national meeting report was shared: "Changes [in EVS] happen on the level of attitudes and are not very visible in usual every day interactions with friends and the working environment". This statement has inspired an engaging debate concluding that *diverging from the common belief that attitudes are less tangible for an evaluation, a person's 'attitudinal change' might in fact be the most visible to other people and impact the immediate environment.*

To end the Day 2 with another source for inspiration for the reflections in the national/regional teams, the facilitators have drawn the attention to the results of the survey tackling self and social recognition. Even a quick look at the results available at that moment suffices to show that volunteers seem to face many more challenges with the social recognition of the learning impact

"How the EVS experience changed and developed me is understood and appreciated by..."			
	Disagree – average (disagree + totally disagree)	Disagree the least with the statement	Disagree the most with the statement
Me (self-recognition)	1,9%	BEFL, FR, HU, MT, and SI, the UK (0 or close to 0%)	PL (7%), SK (6,4%) and BiH 5,4%)
My friends (social recognition)	10,4%	HU (1,3%)	FR (51%)
My family (social recognition)	8,3%	HU (1,3%)	FR (59%)
Society (social recognition)	20,3%	HU (4%)	BiH (29,8%) (FR 21%)

and changes that happened to them during their EVS than with their own. At the same time, this does not automatically imply the ability of the volunteers to describe the occurred changes and translate them into a 'competence language'. With regards to experiencing social recognition, it is much stronger within friends and family than in the larger societal context. Finally, there are some clear national differences in relation to these issues: according to the results of the survey, it seems that the volunteers from France and Bosnia-Herzegovina are suffering the least social recognition upon their return.

Main challenges

Challenges for self-recognition

- Accept and employ the change in the best possible way for all;
- Find the way (basis) to self-recognition;
- Implement the new skills that you have learnt;
- Understand new patterns of behaviour in themselves;
- Be proactive;
- Implement the 'new self' in the 'old context';
- Not realise how much you changed. Wake up!;
- Even if your experience was not that successful, to try to find yourself things that you learned in overcoming some difficulties;
- Understand what I can/do/know;
- Put the right words on my learning;
- Accept the change;
- Find out what do I want after the EVS experience;
- The lack of self-awareness;
- Contribute to improvement of local community with the new skills set;
- If your parents or your peers belittle your decision to do EVS, it is probably rather demotivating and begins to affect the volunteers' thoughts about their experience;
- Doubt yourself too much;
- Find the job where the skills developed will be important.

Challenges for social recognition

- The society does not recognise the changes and/or does not value the experience of the volunteers;
- 'Normal' people seem to not understand one's desire to go away and learn about another culture or do voluntary work just because it feels good to help;
- Friends who ignore the attitudinal changes;
- Family and friends who do not understand the volunteer's experience;
- 'Skills acquired through non-formal learning' is something difficult to understand;
- In the first place people expect that you didn't change and treat you accordingly. In the second stage they noticed that you have changed as a person and they react (e.g. they like it/dislike it/ignore it);
- Accept and use the change in the best possible way for all;
- For the volunteers to explain to their family and friends that they have changed;
- Explain/convince about what they did NOT experienced;
- Not to talk about the EVS after the EVS;
- People not wanting you to change and remain where you are... and fit their expectations;
- Friends/family/social groups haven't experienced something similar; it is more difficult for them to

understand;

- Translate what one's has actually learnt during the EVS placement to others
- Have prejudices against non-formal education;
- Traditional patterns of thinking about how to organise one's life (study-university-marry-buy a house-get children) that are very difficult to break with;
- People that you left behind; they don't accept/like the 'New You';
- That not all changes are visible;
- Find links between learning, changes and concrete experiences;
- Find the good way (for you and others) to communicate and to choose with whom you want to share your experience;
- Explain people what one was doing during the EVS and motivate other young people to do the same.

The wider context – employability in Europe

The Day 3 of the symposium started with placing the EVS related debates within the scope of youth unemployment (and related policies) in Europe, as well as foreseen responses within the new Erasmus+/YiA programme. In order to provide food for thought on these subjects, an input about Youth Employment was given by Mr Ozgehan Senyuva and Ms Mariann-Ingrid Klingberg from the European Commission delivered a presentation on Erasmus+.



→ For more information about the content of Ozgehan's input on Youth Employment, see Appendix 8 or the policy sheet published by the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth:

<http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/1668235/Employment-2014.pdf/3a1d2ada-78a3-4443-b236-eeda1b4286c>

Alternatively, have a look at Prezi used in the symposium: <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/1668235/Employment-2014.pdf/3a1d2ada-78a3-4443-b236-eeda1b4286c>

→ Please refer to Appendix 9 for the presentation on Erasmus+ given by Mariann-Ingrid Klingberg.

Adjusted extracts from the policy sheet on youth employment

In most of the European countries youth unemployment rates have increased significantly between 2009 and 2014. Globally, a young person is 3 times more likely to be unemployed than adults (source: ILO). Youth unemployment cannot be isolated and addressed in a vacuum without

taking into consideration all different structures and institutions of the society, ranging from the market structure to the education system. Thus, any policy or 'remedy' targeting youth unemployment ought to have a systemic and holistic approach encompassing all relevant determinants. To do so, a good starting point is to explore the causes of youth unemployment: is it simply because there is no job? Or because of a lack of skills? Or because of a lack of coordination between the skills gained and skills needed? Or none of these?

The new European Commission initiative – the Erasmus+ programme – aims at boosting skills and employability, as well as modernising Education, Training, and Youth work. The seven year programme (2014-2021) has a budget of €14.7 billion. At this stage and when tackling youth unemployment, one should approach the potential of youth work and non-formal/informal learning with caution. While evidences clearly prove that projects and activities implemented in this context contribute significantly to the competence development of young people, it would be over-optimistic to think that the systemic causes of youth unemployment can be tackled – and partially solved - through increasing young people's mobility.

European Commission's own remedy to youth unemployment is indeed very accurate, and should remain high on political agenda: investing in jobs and people; improving labour market functioning; increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of tax and benefit systems; and supporting transitions away from unemployment and poverty. But a strict binary approach between *employed* vs. *unemployed* would be misleading. Poverty is a reality and once employed the problems of young people are not automatically over. Policies aiming at reducing unemployment must also take into consideration important issues such as work-life balance, freedom from all forms of discrimination; precarious working conditions; self-fulfilment and social and personal development, among others.

Focus on competences: what are employers looking for?

Based on the results of the survey, there is a good basis to claim that EVS can create opportunities for developing competences relevant for employment.

In other words, there is a significant match between the competences developed by EVS volunteers (in their own perception and the perception of EVS organisations) and the competences the surveyed employers value at their employees (see table below).



	<i>EX EVS</i>	<i>SOHO</i>	<i>EMPLOYERS</i>			<i>EX EVS</i>	<i>SOHO</i>	<i>EMPLOYERS</i>
Cooperating	86%	93%	96%		Handling authority	57%	71%	67%
Speaking	86%	92%	90%		Respecting rules	54%	78%	75%
Listening	78%	86%	94%		Handling clients	43%	67%	91%
Flexibility	83%	89%	88%		Taking initiative	82%	82%	77%
Planning & Organizing	74%	87%	88%		Acting independently	84%	85%	85%
Learning to learn	56%	79%	74%		Empathizing	70%	77%	82%
Giving feedback	64%	77%	88%		Intercultural sensitivity	86%	87%	76%
Handling feedback	66%	82%	91%		Dealing with stress or	64%	84%	85%
Self-reflection	81%	87%	77%		Working in team	81%	90%	95%
Networking	77%	84%	71%		Foreign language skills	97%	91%	40%
					Communication	89%	92%	95%

Original wording for the question for former EVS volunteers: *My EVS experience developed following competences that are important in getting a job*

Original wording for the question for sending and host organisations: *Being an EVS volunteer contributes to the development of following competences that are important in getting a job*

Original wording for the question for employers: *How would you rate the importance of following competences among your employees?*

All figures are percentages (Agree + Agree Strongly)

The survey shows that 74.5% employers believe that volunteering abroad increases a young person's chances to find a job. However 84.9% employers do not know much about EVS. When it comes to valuing EVS in the selection procedure only 2.1% say that they would be more likely to employ the candidate with EVS experiences (with lower formal qualifications), 20.3% that they would evaluate the candidate slightly more positively, 58.3% EVS would make a difference only depending on other qualifications and 19.3% say that they would employ the candidate with better formal education.

In order to deepen the understanding of these somewhat controversial findings the facilitators organised a **fishbowl exercise**, where in four discussion rounds former volunteers, employers and SOHOs had an opportunity to share their perspectives and arguments.

The four **discussion questions** for the fishbowl were:

- Q1: What is the real value of international volunteering for getting a job?
- Q2: Would employing a 'young person with fewer opportunities' and perhaps with less [formal] qualifications have some advantages for employers?
- Q3: The survey shows that EVS supports developing competences employers value. Still, are we necessarily talking about the same thing if we are using the same terms? Do we all understand 'learning to learn' or 'teamwork' in the same way (for instance)?

- Q4: To what extent the competences gained in EVS (and civil sector) can be transferred to other sectors (e.g. private sector)? What might be the challenges for this transferability?

Exchanges during the fishbowl

Note: what follows are basically a literal transcription of what has been said during the fishbowl (most of it). The names of the persons who spoke have been voluntarily omitted but their country of residence and their role (ex-EVS-SOHO-Employers) were left since this could have had a certain influence on the type of debate they engaged in and on the type of arguments put forward.

Question 1 – What is the real value of international volunteering for getting a job?

- *Employer from BE:* The magic word is ‘translation’. As a volunteer you gain many competences, but you have to make a link with the required competences for the job.

- *VOL from SI:* I agree. Recognition of one’s learning outcomes by the person itself is very important. It is mostly about the soft skills.

- *Employer from HU:* High school does not help you acquiring all the skills you need. They don’t teach you practical skills like how to communicate at the work place, how to write a good CV, etc.

- *SOHO from UK:* I have a question for both employers: Do you want volunteers to be creative or sticking to timetables?

- *Employer from BE:* It depends on the post and the type of skill. How is one’s creativity shown? Where and how did volunteers learn it?

- *VOL from SI:* After EVS, the role of the SOHO is not so important anymore.

- *SOHO from UK:* What do you think about Youthpass?

- *Employer from BE:* In BEFL it has no value.

- *Employer from HU:* In 2 years I never received a Youthpass but it would be great, it would stand out.

- *Employer from BE:* I am always interested in people who have been involved in youth movements. For instance: were they leaders of youth organisations? This is important information for me as an employer.

- *SOHO from SRB:* Young people put too much information in their CVs and application forms. They should more carefully select what they share. What we say to volunteers is: think about the job you want to do later, after your EVS, and what competences this job requires, and then focus on these during your service.

Question 2 - Would employing a ‘young person with fewer opportunities’ and perhaps with less [formal] qualifications have some advantages for employers?

- *VOL from SK:* Who is for you a young person with fewer opportunities?

- *Employer from UK:* People with (different) disabilities or facing difficult social or economic situation. We have positive discrimination; it attracts funding to have such a member in the team to actually practice the equality policy.

- *Policy maker from SRB:* What about the legal framework to employ such people? Is it OK in your country?

- *Employer from UK:* We do not ask for funding from the government, as we do not want to be subjected to their cuts and policies.

- *SOHO from PL:* Young people from rural areas, with social or psychological problems, etc. don’t want to take part in these projects. They are very attached to their local environment; they don’t want to leave. This is not good for EVS, but it is also not bad for employers as they will stay and build

a house – they represent a stable work force. And it is true that they don't want to go to EVS because of the language barrier, amongst other.

- *Policy maker from SRB*: If they have all the information and it is their informed choice not to participate in such programmes – then everything is OK, of course.

Question 3 - The survey shows that EVS supports developing competences that employers value. Still, are we necessarily talking about the same thing if we are using the same terms? Do we all understand 'learning to learn' or 'teamwork' in the same way (for instance)?

- *Employer from BE*: Competences should be explained in the context of different sectors.

- *SOHO from UK*: I have to help volunteers to apply what they have learnt to the job context or sector they want to work in.

- *VOL from BE*: It is not always good to use Europass; it can also not be appreciated.

- *SOHO from SK*: It is difficult for volunteers to recognise what they are actually learning. That's why the coordinator needs to have a really good overview over these things to help them and guide them.

- *VOL from BE*: It is too bad that we can't change our Youthpass after some time, like when you realise what you have actually learnt.

- *SOHO from UK*: I don't know if there is really some timeline after which you cannot change it anymore... It is also true that with time some things will become clear, but some will also disappear.

- *VOL from SK*: It is difficult to convert the Youthpass to another 'language' after you have just spent 2 weeks filling it in.

- *VOL from UK*: I don't want to have a steady job; I want to have my options open for the future.

- *Employer from BE*: Applying for a job will always put you in a box, but you are not working for me 24/7.

- *VOL from UK*: I don't fit into these competences. I am not flexible. I don't like obeying rules.

- *VOL from SI*: There are other competences; for sure you can fit into some. You just need guidance.

Question 4 - To what extent the competences gained in EVS (and civil sector) can be transferred to other sectors (e.g. private sector)? What might be the challenges for this transferability?

- *VOL from SRB*: I could not be a good seller, as I could never lie to my client that this product is the best.

- *SOHO from PL*: Employers are not interested in your EVS, but they do want to know if you did your job well and if you gained some experience.

- *SOHO from MT*: We should keep in mind that we want to have a sustainable society.

- *VOL from SRB*: EVS is not an internship. It includes work, yes, but it is also many other things, like living in another country, dealing with cultural differences, etc. But with all these debates, I am afraid that it is moving more and more towards being an internship, so I am afraid that in the next programme, this is what it will become.

- *SOHO from PL*: It is sad that people with a holistic approach have to disguise themselves as sharks to be able to get into the tank.

- *VOL from SI*: I am a very holistic person and I need stability. As an average person I want to have a job and stability, but I will not disguise myself as a shark to get it, I will not pretend and lie.

- *SOHO from SK*: I have seen many projects focusing on entrepreneurial skills in the recent time.

- *VOL from SI*: The employers will rather hire somebody with a self-employment status than to employ somebody and that is a problem here in Slovenia.

Seeking for employment: what we need to remember...

In order to further build on the reflections started in the previous days and particularly in the earlier fishbowl exercise, a **panel debate** was organised with five speakers:

- Rudi Klanjšek, assistant professor, researcher of youth employment
- Sonja Markic, director, Institute for new age education
- Anna Varga Radnoti, International recruitment assistant, EU Jobs
- Carolina Pontt, EVS host organisation, Gaia Foundation
- Mojca Mayr, former EVS volunteer



After brief introductions of themselves and their relation to the topic of youth employment, the panellists have shared and confronted their ideas on the real value of competences gained in non-formal learning and volunteering in the labour market and generally in relation to the obstacles for youth employment in Europe.

Insights / main outcomes

The panellists have stressed once more the need for better cross-sectorial understanding and creating the 'common language' when addressing the issue of competences gained in EVS and relevant for the employment.

With regard to the practical value of these competences, some of the panellists stated that for small and medium enterprises that are young and dynamic, the profile of the person who has an experience abroad is something that they can value, or even that they look for. They want young and mobile people, flexible, who have had experiences abroad, who can face different situations.

At the same time, the panellists took the critical position towards the general employability focus in youth work (and EVS), pointing out that the pressure for better employability cannot solve the youth unemployment challenges, when reality is that there are less and less jobs in the market. They have also agreed that competences gained could be definitely relevant for employment and especially for the youth entrepreneurship, even though we should not expect everyone to be entrepreneur.

Recognition: where do we stand?



This session consisted in a general overview of the recent developments at European level with regard to recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education.

What was presented was the result of several compilation processes by different partners and institutions or in the frame of different projects.

The main sources of information were:

- SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre's overview of European-level developments related to recognition of youth work and non-formal and informal learning in the field of youth: <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/recognition/>
- The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy of the EU-CoE youth partnership: <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/ekcyp/youthpolicy.html> and its part dedicated to recognition: http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/Youth_work_non-formal_learning/Recognition.html

→ Please refer to Appendix 10 for the full overview.

Sharing good examples of practice and success stories

One of the main challenges repeated several times during the symposium was the question of 'common language' and cooperation between the youth field and the employment sector. Having this in mind the two best practices have been presented:

- How the language of competences is approached by an employment agency and possibilities to interlink it with the competences gained in EVS. This presentation was given by Marc Troch from VDAB Belgium-Flanders.

→ For more info about VDAB approach to competences, refer to Appendix 11.

- How to work in more concrete and practical terms on recognition of non-formal learning in the youth field by the employment sector, using the example of the national KomPrax project in Slovakia presented by Andrej Dudač from IUVENTA.

→ For more info about the KomPrax project in Slovakia, please visit the prezi presentation:

http://prezi.com/fc-in_2d6jx/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

3.3 Main conclusions and recommendations

Working on recommendations and proposals for further actions

In the concluding part of the Symposium, five working groups have been set. Each group has received a topic to develop recommendations and proposals for action, based on the debates in the symposium and survey results.

The 5 Working groups were as follows:

- WG1: Learning in EVS and how to support it
- WG2: Self and social recognition of competences gained in EVS
- WG3: Seeing for a job after EVS
- WG4: Inclusion aspect in EVS
- WG5: Internal group for National agencies, SALTOS, Ministries and European Commission

Recommendations and proposals for actions

WG1 – Learning in EVS and how to support it for better employability

- Develop a systematic approach to learning in EVS from the very beginning and repeatedly throughout the whole project.
- If this is the 'focus', present the employers' needs (demanded competences) in the very beginning to the volunteer, so the VOLs can choose their project accordingly.
- Explain the concept of competences in the frame of the development of a personal learning plan.
- Do all the above already when the volunteer is looking for a project should be the responsibility of the sending organisation.
- Make training for the representatives of SOHOs in order to be accredited for EVS compulsory (once a year for two persons from each SOHO. If one person leaves, another person should be identified and trained).
- Keep in mind the responsibilities of the volunteer for his/her own learning process as well.

WG2 – Self and social recognition

- SOHOs have to be really clear on their approaches and ways of working at the very beginning of the cooperation.
- Introduce Youthpass and related self/social recognition tools right from the beginning of the project
- Support the volunteers in getting to reflect upon what they want to achieve/learn through EVS and why
- Conduct initial and ending interviews with the volunteers, with pre-prepared guiding questions.
- Make sure that the learning process starts even before the volunteer departs.
- Divide the role of the mentor between the one focusing on volunteers' learning and the one accompanying the volunteer in daily issues.
- Have a sort of 'learning coach' who would ask the 'right questions', look at the learning journals, help in translating the learning outcomes into competences.
- Make mentoring compulsory and secured an adequate budget for it (in the Programme's budget).
- An annual meeting after EVS is not enough; the SO should support volunteers more in getting aware of their learning, how to put it in the practice, how to share it. SOs are responsible to close the full cycle.
- Create the opportunity for the volunteers to show what they did during their EVS in terms of local

impact, organisational impact, European impact and impact on their own development.

- SOHOs should think how to adapt the many existing tools for self and social recognition to their own reality and how to personalise them for each volunteer.

WG3 – Seeking for a job after EVS

- You need certain skills before start looking for a job and those are not so known especially by EVS volunteers who focus on their own competences. They need to learn how to translate what they have learnt into a 'labour market language' and/or how to connect their experience with a specific job offer (not to be too general). In other words, they need to learn how to 'sell themselves' to a potential employer.

- Volunteers have to learn how to acknowledge, appreciate and communicate their competences.

- In the job seeking process volunteers should try to 'think as an employer'.

- Volunteers have to prepare themselves and research a bit about the company, etc. All those skills can be learnt, but for that there is a need for support either from the SO or through training, to encourage volunteers to look at all that on their own.

WG4 – Inclusion aspect in EVS

- EVS is an important tool for inclusion and this aspect should be strengthened in the Programme by providing more funding/training to support SOHOs working with young people with fewer opportunities, in order to create more hosting place for the volunteers from the 'inclusion groups'.

- There should be more systemic collaboration and cooperation with employment offices to work on this issue together with EVS organisations.

- Social entrepreneurship could be one thing to particularly explore as a tool for inclusion in EVS with young people with fewer opportunities.

WG5 – Internal group for National agencies, SALTOs, Ministries and European Commission

- Elaborating and sharing the report of the symposium & of the survey;

- Evaluating and future planning meeting in UK, August 2014;

- Follow-up activity (to be decided in August 2014) at the beginning of 2015;

- Including some elements of the preparation for job seeking into the training & evaluation EVS cycle (sharing volunteers success stories, getting input from the employment sector, etc.);

- Collecting good practices from the NAs that have been doing this already. Slovakia has a pull of coaches/secondary mentors for ex-EVS, to help them with job seeking process;

- Bringing ex-EVS volunteers in touch with each others through SO and creating local/national networks. This also could be done on the European level by using some of the existing online tools to create: EVS Alumni;

- Organising more training for EVS mentors on how to coach the learning processes;

- Supporting the creation of the national EVS mentors networks;

- Making pre-departure training compulsory;

- Discussing Youthpass trainings with SALTO TC and see how to incorporate some parts on translation of competences;

- Linking the symposium results with some other events, e.g. 'Mid the Gap' (November 2014, Turkey).

3.4 Evaluation



The evaluation took place on the spot and included sharing feedback and impressions through comments on thematic pinboards. What follows is a summary of each theme tackled during the written feedback as well as some samples of comments by the participants.

→ Please refer to Appendix 12 for the full feedback / evaluative comments of the participants.

Main achievements

In general terms, the symposium seemed to have provided a new source of motivation and inspiration to not only keep on working with and on EVS but also to look at it from different perspectives, e.g. in terms of personal and professional development. It also helped connecting different partners around a single project or volunteering activities and somewhat demystified the roles and responsibilities, even if at the same time it paradoxically expanded the 'to do' list of each partner in an EVS project, opening questions for the 'after EVS'. The sharing and networking aspects were also considered as very important and very beneficial, as well as the possibility to talk very openly about some issues that could have been considered slightly 'taboo'.

[Now I feel included in the recognition process!

Contacts and networking

Sharing + inspiring to really work on and implement recommendations and challenges into our own organisations

Open discussion space based on the real survey

Closer connection with the different participants of the action

To identify some common problems (volunteer's motivation, clear mentor role)

Great sharing. Practical tools to improve learning]

Highlights

The symposium certainly raised a number of points and questions that were considered extremely important to not only better understand the different roles in an EVS projects (before, during and after), but also the different aspects it explicitly and implicitly tackle. Clearly, most of the highlights focused on having gained a much better understanding of the importance of quality support mechanisms (at all stages) and particularly on the roles of mentors. Additionally, the space provided

to exchange with different actors and stakeholders through the fish bowl exercise was also highly valued, so was the part dedicated to recognition.

*[Discussion about: EVS – education of volunteers – less opportunities – employability
Focus on mentoring process, focus on further development
Fish bowl!!! And all the discussions that we had...
Role of mentor must be clarified
Volunteers must be explained what competence is
Supporting EVS and promoting is very, very important
Offering solutions to identified issues
“High quality” participants, everybody really had something to say about the topics]*

Lowlights

The symposium was also a moment for information sharing and it seemed that at some point it was just too much ‘food for thought’ in a too limited time with too many very specific information to deal with and digest. Moreover, the complexity of some topics made it difficult to really take the time to open and close them properly. In some cases, the participants also had the feeling that in spite of very common issues and concerns to deal with, they tend to end up focusing on their own or even on themselves, with some difficulties to take distance and go through a more ‘detached’ reasoning process. Lat but not least, the lack of ‘real employers’ (different than employment agencies) and the fact that some of the countries involved in the project were not represented was also underlined and seen as a missed opportunity in the frame of the symposium and what it positively generated.

*[Spreading of participants over different countries. Understandable, but maybe a pity that countries where youth unemployment is highest/lowest were nor present
We could get more specific with the panel
Difficult to summarise all the content
There were lot of agency for employment, but not areal employer (e.g. director of some firm, law office, etc.). Info we would get from employers would be more correct
Sometime too many new things to process at once
There are some important problems we are not able to solve in a short time]*

Organisation and logistics

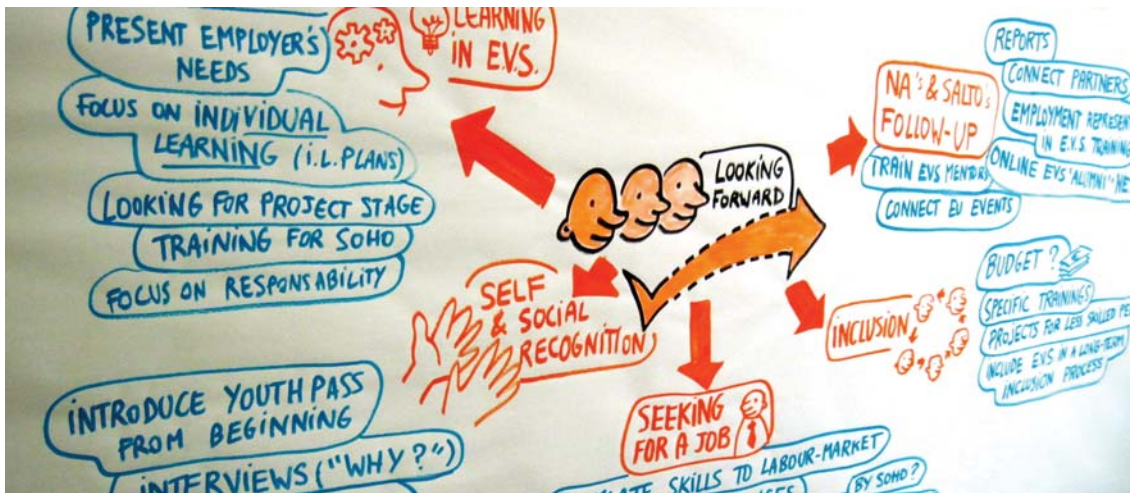
The symposium was seen as very well organised, implemented by a competent team and in a relax atmosphere.

*[I know how much work was involved in making the symposium run smoothly. Congrats! You guys rock!
Great! No comments, was perfectly prepared and flexible to actual needs and facilitated in a way we can learn from
A lot of different methods – perfect!
Perfect city placement – Ljubljana rocks!]*

Any other comments

Finally, the feedback session also provided the space for additional comments. Participants were once more generally positive, though few comments tackled methodological preferences.

[Keep up good work! Really hope that some point from this symposium will be useful for the future organisation and planning of Erasmus+
 I would much prefer to have a semi-circle format instead of separate tables. Thank you for all your work!
 More energisers
 Wonderful time! Thank you all ☺
 Thank you for organizing everything from the logistic to training. It takes a lot of skills to make it go so smoothly.]



4| Main conclusions & impressions of the project

While looking back ‘over their shoulders’ and examining the project through different lenses, the partners involved were able to draw general conclusions, identify highlights and challenges the project shed light on, and pinpoint what remains to be tackled at a later stage or in a possible follow-up (please refer to Chapter 6 for ideas and proposals).

4.1 Highlights

The research

For all the partners who have been involved in the evaluation process, the research undoubtedly gave tangible content that was clearly used as substantial ‘food for thought’ during the international symposium; it represented an added value to solely using participants as resources/source of information. Moreover, it gave the event and the whole project ancillary ‘credibility’ *vis-à-vis* the employment sector, which prefers to hear about conclusions or proposals rooted in data and previous studies or researches.

The research also meant that there is now evidence that EVS represents a real benefit for young people’s [professional and personal] development – meaning that it has an impact on their competences development, even though it is still relatively complex to *prove* that EVS supports *competences for employability*.

The participants

A clear highlight was the level of motivation and engagement of the participants in the process (especially with regard to the international symposium since it was in some cases harder for the national meetings). In the case of Hungary, for instance, the project allowed creating a longer-term relation with the participants who – at the time of evaluating the project – were still in touch with the NA and ready to engage in topic related-activities.

Participants could recognise and value their input and contributions to the research, particularly during the international symposium where they could see how the outcomes were being used (most of the participants to the national focus groups also took part in the symposium). This naturally reinforced the way the research was perceived: valid and credible.

The employers

With the exception of the UK where it has been difficult to reach and engage employers in the process (surveys and focus groups), the partners were positively surprised to see how open and eager employers were to contribute, once they understood what the project was about and what was the type of projects tackled. Indeed - even though not new but reconfirmed during the project, one of the main problems remains the employers’ lack of knowledge and understanding of youth work and of the types of projects to be developed in the field (especially with regard to mobility projects). Nonetheless, once that barrier removed or made less ‘opaque’, the cooperation seemed

not only possible, but also desirable from both sides. This was even truer for the employers who took part in the international symposium.

Another positive facet of the project was that generally – though with national or even regional nuances to take into account – employers seem to not primarily explore whether competences are acquired through formal or non-formal education, should they differentiate them at all. In most cases what matters are the abilities; the knowledge; and the attitudes people have developed. Still, this is not 100% applicable to all sorts of situations and does not mean that all prejudices towards young people with lower level of formal education vanished.

Learning

The research and the exchanges during the international symposium shed light on the importance of the learning process during EVS. Responses to surveys, contributions and debates allowed understanding better the challenges faced by volunteers and by those supporting them with regard to learning: what are we referring to? How to approach it? How to support it? If this can be put in the part dedicated to the challenges, it is also an accomplishment since it raised bigger awareness on the issue.

Moreover, the project also made more visible the fact that there are many possibilities to make the learning (competences development) fully part of the whole EVS cycle, and that there are several good examples of practice from other NAs can be shared.

The reflection around learning also highlighted that EVS is not only about learning; it is also about engaging in a project, in an initiative.



EVS, EVS cycle and the link with competences development

EVS coordinators have seen several of their opinions confirmed thanks to the available data and information: there are a lot of players in the EVS cycle and the relation between them is getting relatively complex. The project seems to have succeeded in identifying them and in openly questioning their interconnectivity (what, how, who).

With regard to the link between the EVS cycle and the employment sector, the project highlighted (as other initiatives before it) that employers primarily need individuals able to *show* that they have the competences they claim to have and/or are able to *explain* how they developed them, instead of just writing about it in their CVs. Being aware of this actually represents for employers and job candidates an interesting point to latch onto during interviews, for instance. Moreover and even though this isn't true in all contexts and realities, involvement in EVS can be a sign of proactivity.

4.2 Challenges

Inclusion

The overall process did not manage to capture all the challenges faced by young people with fewer opportunities or to explore in depth the contribution of EVS to their competences development. This did not necessarily mean a failure but highlighted the ineffectualness to try approaching certain groups in a standardised manner. To involve young people with fewer opportunities in the focus groups, for instance, it wasn't enough to send them a mail; those groups should have been organised with them, in their daily environment, and in ways that were more appropriate.

The project also highlighted that in spite of being a priority of the E+/YiA programme and at policy level (nationally and at European level), EVS didn't, so far, succeed in being fully inclusive⁵. With the exception of those solely dedicated to working with young people with fewer opportunities, far too many organisations would require additional resources (human and financial ones) and better conditions to send or host young people from/in vulnerable situations. Moreover, the project and the debates during the international symposium clearly questioned the fact that to simply *start the process of looking* for a project requires already a series of competences *per se*.

Learning and competences development

One of the biggest challenges that came out of the project is the one related to learning and the lack of resources of SOHOs to properly accompany volunteers' learning process, in order to not only better guide them during the project (e.g. with regard to the reflection process) but also to better prepare their return. Indeed, it appeared – especially for the volunteers who did want to use their experience for employment purposes – the challenge to translate the competences gained during the EVS experience into 'employers' language' remained very high.

The project clearly demonstrated that gaining competences seems to be a substantial topic, even though it is a difficult process to focus on the individual facets of the EVS experience. This also led those involved in the project to question the supposedly benefits of an individual approach vs. a perhaps more holistic experience.

EVS and EVS cycle – focus on mentoring

"Mentoring doesn't work" stated one of the participants. Indeed, this is another of the biggest challenges put forward during the project. SOHOS and partners involved in EVS need a much clearer definition of the role of the mentor and of the concept of mentoring as such, in 'today's EVS world'. Mentors training courses also seem to be important pre-requisites for 'good EVS projects' and are too often missing. Linked to this, the issue of the mentors' competences also came out and several

⁵ It is nonetheless important to recall that short-term EVS volunteers/young people with fewer opportunities were not highly represented in the surveys or focus groups, which might require softening the conclusions drawn about the inclusiveness of EVS.

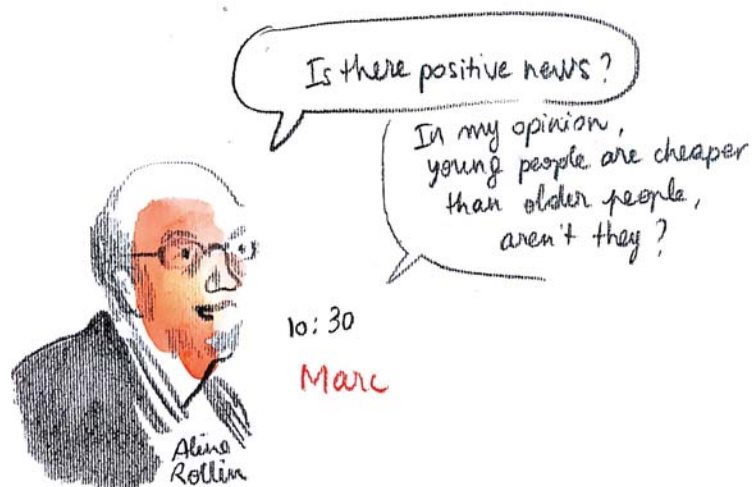
exchanges questioned a perhaps growing necessity to have 'competence framework' for mentors. Mentoring should be seen as something systemic that needs a systematic investment in mentors' competence development. In addition to that there is a need to not just increase the demand and to professionalise the mentor's role, but also to increase its recognition, including the available resources in the programme.

It seems that not only EVS mentoring needs re-thinking, but also EVS as whole. 'EVS is going through an identity crisis': perhaps in its nowadays context, EVS failed to reach its original aim, i.e. to provide community support and international voluntary opportunities to young people who could not register in or be eligible to participate in other programmes (in other words: to support social inclusion of young people with less opportunities). At the same time there is a significant shift from voluntary opportunities for young people to individualised learning mobility programme, with a specific emphasis on employability of the returnees. Is that the right direction EVS should take? There is certainly a need - almost after 20 years after the very first steps of the programme - to re-think and re-discuss where does the European Voluntary Service stand in the future.

Moreover, the EVS cycle and particularly the volunteer's support need to be reconsidered. An international project can be an amazing experience with buzzing volunteers but when the placement ends, it may also lead to a state of 'shock'. What is preparation offered for this? What kind of support needs to be put in place for the volunteers before, during, and especially after their project? In case of international initiatives on the employability of former volunteers, the question is how do we strengthen the skills that are sought after by employers? The question remained open whether this is the role of the sending organisations to provide such support or if it needs to be considered in a possible revised EVS training cycle (including the employability topics in the Annual EVS event).

Employment sector - employers

With regard to contact and communication with the employment sector, national differences (economies/education/culture/employment protocols) are very significant and make it difficult to draw an overall conclusion. There is a need to analyse why the differences exist at a national level. Perhaps, instead of the common approach to employers, there is a need to explore different national strategies.



5| Evaluation of the project

In the evaluation and follow-up meeting that took place in Birmingham on 28th of August 2014, the core team has evaluated the project in terms of:

5.1 Achievements per objective

In the very beginning of the evaluation exercise the members of the core team recalled the initial objectives of the project:

1. To find out more about which competences EVS volunteers typically develop in their EVS projects and which are perceived by EVS stakeholders to be of particular relevance for future employment and/or employability and/or entrepreneurship. Specific attention was given to competences developed by EVS volunteers from inclusion target groups;
2. To evaluate how the EVS competences are perceived by stakeholders from the employment sector (which are the competences the employers (valued/recognised) look for?);
3. To map national commonalities and differences in this field and which aspects could be characteristic for the broader European situation;
4. To identify what is needed for the development of learning processes for EVS volunteers. Moreover, to elaborate fields where additional support is needed, as well as possible follow up.
5. To improve communication/connection and mutual understanding between the stakeholders within/outside the field.

The team agreed that the initial project objectives were generally met though not all of them to the same extent. The project clearly shown a 'match' between the competences developed in EVS and the ones valued by the employers. As for the national differences and commonalities, some were identified but there is still a need to go more in-depth in what generates those differences or a certain form of cohesion. The same applies to competences related to inclusion groups. With regard to communication with other stakeholders, the team agreed that initial steps were made (in some countries, like Belgium-Flanders where some concrete partnerships with the employment sector were made) but there is a clear space and potential to further this cooperation in the future.

5.2 Key insights gathered during the project

The partners felt that they got more insights than expected, which serve as a good basis for identifying possible follow-up activities. The main insights mentioned were as follows:

- The project created a space for quality debates - at national and international level - on the purpose of volunteering and its recognition;
- There were not so much surprised about how and how far EVS contributes to competences development; the surprise was rather about how EVS in general is perceived;
- EVS seems to form part of a competence-building programme (objectives) though not being intrinsically built into the design of the programme as such and that therefore needs to be addressed and supported in a more concrete way;
- There was much more engagement from stakeholders than expected (in comparison to

previous youth events related to recognition of youth work by a wider range of stakeholders);

- The role of employment agencies should not be underestimated. Should they develop a good understanding of EVS, they could potentially be the ones promoting it.

5.3 Success factors and challenges of the project

The success factors in the project were underlined as follows:

- Data gathered in the surveys was one of the key success factors, though its potential still needs to be used to a maximum extent;
- Survey-based activity (e.g. the international symposium) was mentioned several times as a good practice to keep. The very fact that surveys were conducted and that national meetings took place preceding the international symposium allowed deepening reflections and exchanges in Ljubljana;
- The recruitment of trainers and experts was seen as very adequate, so was the participants' selection;
- The multi-stage process: from national to international level;
- A very well-planned (almost visionary) initiative considering the current political context, in terms of evidence-based reports and focus on competences and employability;
- The commitment from all the partners involved and their diversity.

The challenges mentioned were:

- The approach to employers in the surveys: it would have been more effective to use interviews rather than only online surveys). Moreover and with regard to the 'inclusion groups' of ex-volunteers, a different approach would have been necessary for they seem to be left out the picture;
- There were some minor comments related to the English language used in the surveys - rather confusing for native speakers, as well as some chosen terms and their translation in different languages (e.g. learning to learn, handling authority, etc.).

6| Follow up – a look into the future

What follows are the **results of a brainstorming session** during the evaluation meeting in Birmingham about possible follow-up activities and not a defined or agreed upon action plan. The final decision about the follow-up plan was to be taken by the partners in the weeks following the evaluation & follow-up meeting.

Inclusion-focused actions

- Gather data from young people in vulnerable situations to supplement the current surveys' data;
- Collect quantitative data from the EVS insurance programme (AXA);
- Explore researching on the EVS experience of young people with fewer opportunities;
- Implement activities to support EVS organisations working with young people with fewer opportunities;
- Establish links with the renewed inclusion strategy of SALTO Inclusion.

Mentors/Mentoring

- Explore joint TCA activities (or join other TCA activities) for EVS mentors;
- Develop a competence framework for EVS mentors at European level and design specific modules for mentors' training;
- Develop train-the-trainers course (training module) for EVS mentors to be multiplied at national level;
- Organise a seminar on tools/methods/practices in EVS mentoring → collected in a handbook (toolbox) for mentors;
- Make having a trained mentor a requirement for the EVS accreditation process;
- Ensure resources and adequate recognition for the mentors and their role in the programme.

Promotional activities

- Make flash short reports on '1' finding of project i.e. "put your EVS in CV!" says the employers';
- Find ex-EVS volunteers who used their experiences to get a job and make a 'successful stories collection';
- Extract national differences from the survey results and look for possible explanations at national levels;
- Develop promotion and presentation of the research results (e.g. in the frame of 'Mind the Gap' or other conferences);
- Work on the 'Promotion Strategy' → what to say/share (what are the needs), where and how?

Tools → practice related

- Make a mapping of good examples of practice (linked to mentorship/coaching/learning);
- Link up the learning journey: sending organisation - pre-departure training - host

- organisation- on arrival training – mentor - volunteer;
- 1st step: developing recommendations for the entire support for EVS competences gaining:
 - For sending organisations (pre and after support);
 - For volunteers (for EVS training cycle);
 - For hosting organisations.
- 2nd step: developing concrete support tools & materials for all target groups mentioned;
- Communicate with the European Commission on developments of the EVS guidelines;
- Raise awareness of the European Commission/decision makers about the role of the mentors' → action-oriented proposals.

Links to employers

- Elaborate on strategic links with employers/employment agencies;
- Involve experts in the process from the employment sector to tackle the topic of presentation of competences in the job application process;
- Develop guidelines on how to 'translate' competences gained in EVS for employment purposes (to be used by SOHOs & in the annual EVS event);
- Get UK businesses interested (country specific).

Policy

- Focus on young people in vulnerable situations/on the inclusion aspect;
- Organise a conference/seminar on "the identity crisis of EVS": what is EVS now & what it should be[come]? → link it to 20 years of EVS in 2016;
- Contribute to the preparation of the next programme: clarify the role and 'weight' of short-term and long-term mobility projects and ensure consistency between the programme implementation and the programme objectives, as well as realistic programme priorities.

Synergies with other initiatives

- Link the project with other training courses and events, e.g. 'Mind the Gap' or the 2nd European Youth Work Convention in April 2015;
- Revise the handbook 'Hopscotch to Quality in EVS' that could include references to the survey results (to be published in 2015);
- Adjustments of Youthpass to E+ /YiA and Youthpass beyond initiatives.

Appendix 1 - Draft generic programme of a national meeting

What follows is just an example of a programme for a one-day meeting, which was meant to be adjusted or modified according to the needs, realities and context.

From 8:00	Registration
9:00	Opening and introduction (who is there, aims and objectives, programme)
9:15	General information about the situation at national level (focus to be decided upon by the NA/SALTO).
9:45	Presentation of the results of the surveys from the three target groups' perspectives and with a special focus on the 5 elements: learning aspects of an EVS project, relevance of competences, recognition, seeking for employment, and life after EVS. Q&A
11:00	<i>Break</i>
11:15	working groups on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Specific points for further discussion- What is missing- How to bring this further?
13:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00	Sharing the results of the working groups + silent floor to add items or issues throughout the rest of the day
15:30	<i>Break</i>
16:00	Testimony of an ex-EVS volunteer
16:30	Working group or World Café on next steps: what do we want to concentrate on <ul style="list-style-type: none">- At national level from practice, research and policy perspectives- To improve cooperation and dialogue with the employment sector (including recognition of NFL)- During the international seminar
18:00	Results of the groups/tables
18:30	Main results and closing plenary

Appendix 2 - Template of the national meetings report

1. Background information

The **aim** of the national meetings is to gather the main actors and stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in an EVS project (in the complete project cycle) and to exchange on the results of the surveys as well as to explore what is missing and what needs to be further developed/explored in the future. The later may be tackled during the international seminar. In this case, 'actors and stakeholders' also include employers.

The **objectives** of the national meetings are as follows:

- To present and discuss the results of the surveys;
- To highlight and further reflect on specific points resulting from the surveys;
- To identify missing points or dimensions to be brought to the next phase of the overall project;
- Where possible, to provide general information about the situation at national level from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives (unemployment rates, strategies in place or under development, main regulations, recognition of non-formal learning and volunteering experiences, country specific EVS statistics, etc.);
- To share stories or testimonies (successful or not) of ex-EVS volunteers with regard to entrepreneurship and/or employability;
- To open the space for dialogue and the elaboration of concrete proposals towards a more consistent and cooperative approach, including cooperation with employers where possible and relevant;
- To ensure a transversal approach to inclusion strategies.

The national meetings should be also used for screening & recruiting potential participants for the international symposium.

2. Reporting process

Considering the fact that national meetings will be adjusted to the target group, contexts and realities of the participants and that outcomes will also be directly related to the results of the surveys, the report will mainly consist in a narrative one with some guiding questions, which you can find in the different sections below.

Nevertheless and even though the extent of such narrative might vary from country to country, there are a certain number of issues which ought to be tackled, such as:

- Summary of the data that has been collected;
- Main comments linked to the surveys only (insights? Disagreements/ Additional information? Etc.);
- Summary of the comments on additional specific points for discussion provided prior to the meeting;
- Summary of the main outcomes on the five elements to be tackled: learning aspects of an EVS project, relevance of competences, recognition, seeking for employment, and life after EVS (*see the frame below for more detailed information*);
- Sharing examples of good practise and success stories;
- Action oriented proposals (what could/should happen);
- If relevant, a list of potential persons to be invited to the international seminar.

- If relevant and possible, extra material can also be provided (e.g. good examples of practices, case studies, statistics, etc.).

Learning aspects of EVS projects

Learning in short/long-term EVS, how to support learning to learn? How about the role of tutors/mentors? Balance of organisation needs vs. individual development – learning is most important, etc.

Relevance of Competences

Are some specific ones particularly useful? Important? Which ones appear in adverts/jobs? Impact? Etc.

Recognition

Validity of experience, non-formal vs. qualifications, gap between education/labour market, role/impact of Youthpass or similar certificates, etc.

Seeking for employment

Where to present the experience in a CV? How search for job/where to get the info? What about the support to young people with fewer opportunities? What is the employers' perspective? How to approach internships vs. volunteering? What are the obstacles to employment? How to increase chances to find a job? What about readiness for labour market? Etc.

Life after EVS

(what about the social recognition of the experience? What are the next steps for volunteers e.g. where do EVS takes you: education process or jobs seek? Any change of the sector you want to work in? Etc.)

Reports have to be elaborated **in English** and will be an important source of information not only for further work at national level but also to prepare the report of the overall project as implemented until the end of the international symposium in May 2014.

The **deadline to produce the reports is the 30th of April 2014 at the latest**. Reports have to be sent in Word format (no PDF, thank you) to gisele.evrard@gmail.com and darko@innside.co.rs.

Template for the report

1. Content-related information

a. Programme overview

What was the general programme of the meeting: main topics, key issues, etc.?

b. Brief summary of the presented situation at national level from (where possible, from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives and if applicable, with the sources of information).

Please also indicate whether the dimension of inclusion was tackled and if so, how and what were the main data/results?

c. Summary of the surveys' data

How were the outcomes presented? What were the reactions? Comments?

Please try to be as specific as possible and to illustrate the narrative part with some quotes or reactions. The most important points should focus on insights and on what is missing on the survey. To some extent and if relevant, try to also highlight the difference between the comments from ex-EVS volunteers, EVS organisations and employers/representatives of the employment field. Also try to highlight the aspects related to inclusion.

d. Main comments linked to the surveys only

Insights? Disagreements? Additional information? Etc.

e. Summary of the comments on additional specific points for discussion provided prior to the meeting

What were the specific points that deserved extra attention?

What were the reactions? Comments?

Please try to be as specific as possible and to illustrate the narrative part with some quotes or reactions. To some extent and if relevant, try to also highlight the difference between the comments from ex-EVS volunteers, EVS organisations and employers/representatives of the employment field. If not explicitly tackled through the additional topics proposed, also try to highlight the aspects related to inclusion.

f. Summary of the main outcomes on the five elements to be tackled: learning aspects of an EVS project, relevance of competences, recognition, seeking for employment, and life after EVS

Learning aspects of an EVS project
Relevance of competences
Recognition
Seeking for employment
Life after EVS

g. Action-oriented proposals (to national level and to be taken into consideration by participants of the international symposium).

This part should mainly focus on the main recommendations to be taken into consideration for further related initiatives at national level, being for policy, research or practice fields.

Please try to be as specific as possible.

To some extent and where relevant, try to also highlight the recommendations coming from ex-EVS volunteers, EVS organisations and employers/representatives of the employment field, as well as those which met consensus. Also try to highlight the aspects related to inclusion.

h. General impression

What were the general impressions and feedback from the participants about the whole meeting? What were the main insights, highlights and outcomes in relation to the meeting? What was missing?

--

2. Data and general information

Country		
Place		
Date		
Facilitator(s)		
Participants	<i>First and last name</i>	<i>Please specify if they come from EVS organisation / if they are ex-EVS volunteers / if they come from the employment field / other stakeholders.</i>
Suggested participants for the international seminar (if applicable)		

Thank you!

To be sent in Word format (no PDF, thank you) to: gisele.evrard@gmail.com and darko@inside.co.rs by 30/04/2014.

Appendix 3 – Presentation of the background of the symposium

Erasmus+

EVS competences for employability

About the project


Tinkara Bizjak Zupanc, MOVIT



Erasmus+

EVS – European Voluntary Service


= a supported opportunity for volunteers aged 18-30 to develop skills through community activities in another country, for 2 to 12 months. It is currently supported through EU Erasmus+ programme under Key action 1 – Learning mobility of individuals.



Erasmus+

Brief history of EVS


- EVS was first introduced as a pilot scheme in 1996.
- Due to its success, it grew in scale and was later integrated into the Community Action Programme YOUTH (2000-2006) as a separate Action
- Part of Youth in Action programme (2007-2013)
- Part of Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020)



Erasmus+

Purpose of EVS


-> enables volunteers to express their solidarity, acquire a valuable international experience and bring benefit to local communities and develop new **competences**.



Erasmus+

Competences

= overall system of values, attitudes and beliefs as well as skills and knowledge, which can be put into practice to manage diverse complex situations and tasks successfully.



Erasmus+

Employability, employment, entrepreneurship

- High on political agendas in the past years
- Emphasis on young people
- Competences - labour market



Erasmus+

Project idea

- 2012 – idea was developed among 8 national agencies + 2 SALTOs to look into the relevance of competences developed during EVS for the labour market
- 2013 – 1st preparatory meeting, questionnaires were developed and distributed
- 2014 – 2nd preparatory meeting, data analysis, focus groups, national meetings, international symposium

Erasmus+

Aim

The **aim** of the whole project is to look into competences that EVS volunteers have gained in their EVS projects and their relevance for future employability and employment prospects.

Erasmus+

Objectives

- To find out more about **which competences EVS volunteers typically develop** in their EVS projects
- To see **which competences are of particular relevance** for future employment and/or employability and/or entrepreneurship
- To evaluate **how these competences are perceived by the employment sector**
- To **map the national commonalities and differences** in this field and identify aspects characteristic for the broader European situation;
- To **identify what further support is needed** for the development of the learning processes of EVS volunteers & define suitable follow up actions
- To **improve communication/connection** and mutual understanding between the stakeholders within/outside the field.

Erasmus+

Phases

- Desk research
- Online questionnaires to ex EVS volunteers, SOHOs and employers in all participating countries
- National focus groups with ex EVS volunteers
- National meetings
- International symposium

Erasmus+

Structure

You are here 😊

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graph TD
    International[International] --- National1[National]
    International --- National2[National]
    International --- National3[National]
    International --- National4[National]
    International --- National5[National]
  
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Erasmus+

Co-organisers

<p>British Council London, United Kingdom www.britishecouncil.org/youthinaction.htm</p> <p>Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji Warsaw, Poland www.młodzież.org.pl</p> <p>Institut National de la Jeunesse et de l'Education Populaire (INJEP) Paris, France www.jeunesseinaction.fr</p> <p>ILUVENTA - Slovenský inštitút mládeže Bratislava, Slovakia www.mladevskci.sk</p>	<p>European Union Programmes Agency Santa Venera, Malta www.yfa.europa.org/mt</p> <p>JINT v. z. s. National agency & SALTO Inclusion RC Brussels, Belgium www.jint.be</p> <p>MOVIT, Ljubljana National agency & SALTO SEE RC Ljubljana, Slovenia www.salto-youth.net/see</p> <p>National Institute of Family and Social Policy Budapest, Hungary www.mobilitas.hu</p>
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Appendix 4 – Presentation of the surveys and their main initial findings



EVS COMPETENCES FOR EMPLOYABILITY

Online Surveys Results
Ozgehan Senyuva, PhD

Method, Sample, Questionnaire

- Target Group
 - EX-EVS vols from 10 Countries
 - Sending and Hosting Organizations
 - Employers of all kinds
- Contact System
 - Online Survey in 9 languages
- Questionnaires
 - 27 questions – EX EVS
 - 16 questions – EMPLOYERS (E)
 - 16 questions – SOHO (S)

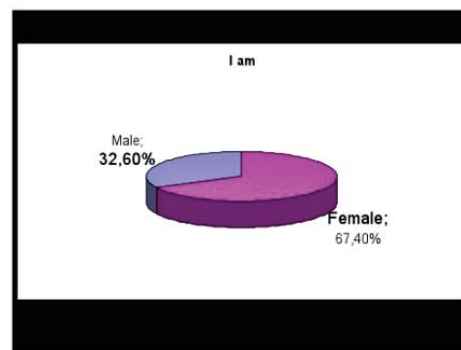
Structure of the Questionnaire

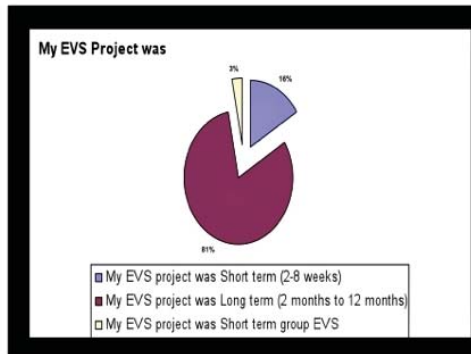
- EVS Experience
 - Who; Where; when; how long
- Employment Status
 - Before and After
- Learning in EVS
 - How; Support (S)
- Impact of EVS
 - Plans for life; Plans for employment
- Life after EVS
 - Chances of employment; Readiness; Competences (S) (E)

Structure of the Questionnaire

- Recognition
- Presentation of EVS experience (E) (S)
- Obstacles for Youth Employment (E) (S)
- THE RESPONSES:
 - EX EVS 1070 (798 FULL) + 542 Fr
 - SOHO 305 (218 FULL)
 - EMPLOYERS 265 (193 FULL)
- Cleaned & EX-EVS & SOHO weighted

WHO?





LEARNING

- I became aware of my learning in EVS by...**
- | EX EVS | SOHO |
|---|--|
| 1. Ongoing self reflection during project | 1. Ongoing self reflection during project |
| 2. Reflecting on my EVS once back home | 2. Receiving feedback from people in his/her host organization |
| 3. Applying my newly gained competences | 3. Applying his/her newly gained competences after his/her EVS |

- Most important sources of Support for learning in EVS**
- | EX EVS | SOHO |
|--|--|
| 1. My openness and readiness to learn (50%) | 1. The volunteer's openness and readiness to learn |
| 2. Peer support (e.g. from other EVS volunteers) | 2. Supportive environment in his/her host organization |
| 3. Attending EVS trainings /seminars/ events | 3. Clear guidance and tasks by the project coordinator |

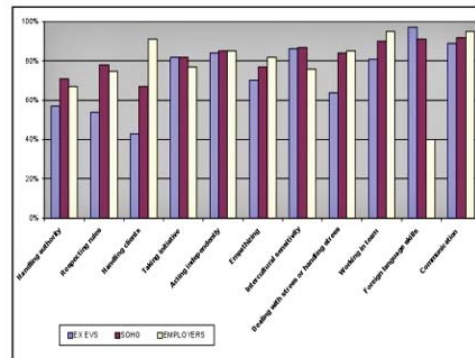
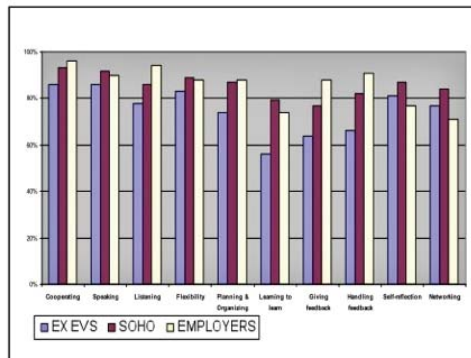
OH, EVS! YOU ROCK MY WORLD

- EVS CHANGED MY LIFE**
- Plans for Education: 54% (BiH 80%)
 - Plans for Career: 70% (Belgium 84%)
 - Where to Live: 53% (Hungary 72%)
 - Work related to EVS exp.: 40% (BiH 60%)
 - Work where EVS is done: 23% (BiH 50%)

EVS increases chances to get a job

	EX EVS	SOHO	EMPLOYERS
AGREE	67 %	88 %	75%
DISAGREE	14 %	5 %	12%

COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT



RECOGNITION

- Lack of appreciation:
 - 22% Agree ; BiH 60% France 58%
- They understand me:
 - My friends 71% (Hungary 86% - UK 53%)
 - My family 67% (Hungary 82% -France 38%)
 - The society 44% (Hungary 64% - Slovenia 31%)

Job Seek

- EVS experience
 - In the CV: 84% (Malta 92%)
 - Letter of intent: 35% (France 61%)
 - Job interview: 37% (Hungary 51%)
- Employers suggest;
 - In the CV: 92% (Hungary, Malta, Poland, UK 100%)
 - Letter of intent: 52%
 - Job interview: 66% (Hungary 100%)

OBSTACLES FOR EMPLOYMENT

DON'T STOP ME NOW

- No motivation for looking for a job
- Not enough recognition of voluntary work as work experience
- Young people are offered only lower-paid, temporary jobs and/or internships
- Lack of equal chances in life, education, opportunities
- Corruption and nepotism
- Having skills labour market doesn't need
- Having unrecognized skills (non or informally learned)
- Being over-qualified]
- Not knowing how or where to find information on employment issues

United we stand...

- Information overload X
- To get work you need experience, to get experience you need work ++
- Economic crisis
- Lack of self confidence
- Severe competition
- Lack of trust in young people
- Sex-related discrimination (discrimination of younger women) X
- Education vs Market
- More diplomas

Appendix 5 – Survey results used in the World Café on ‘Learning in EVS’

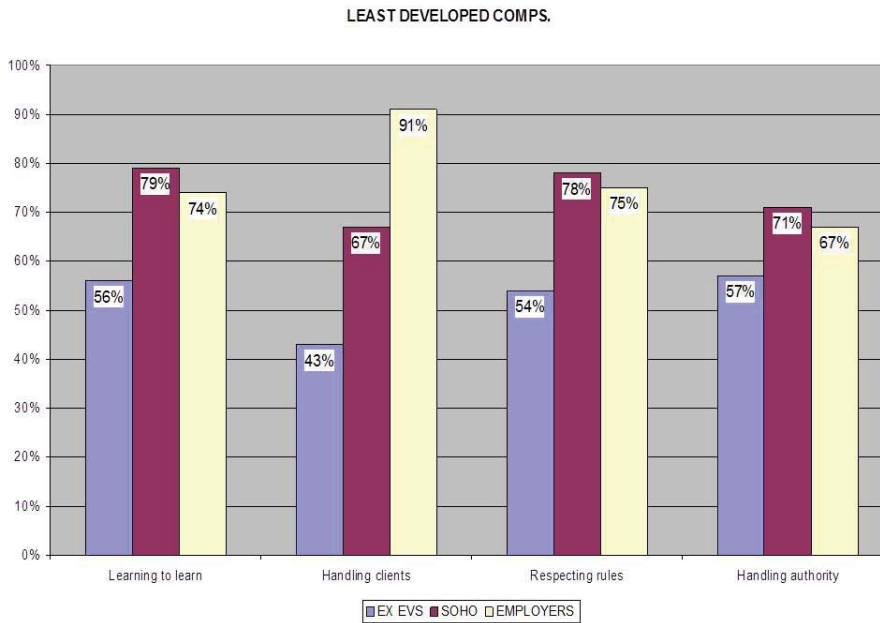
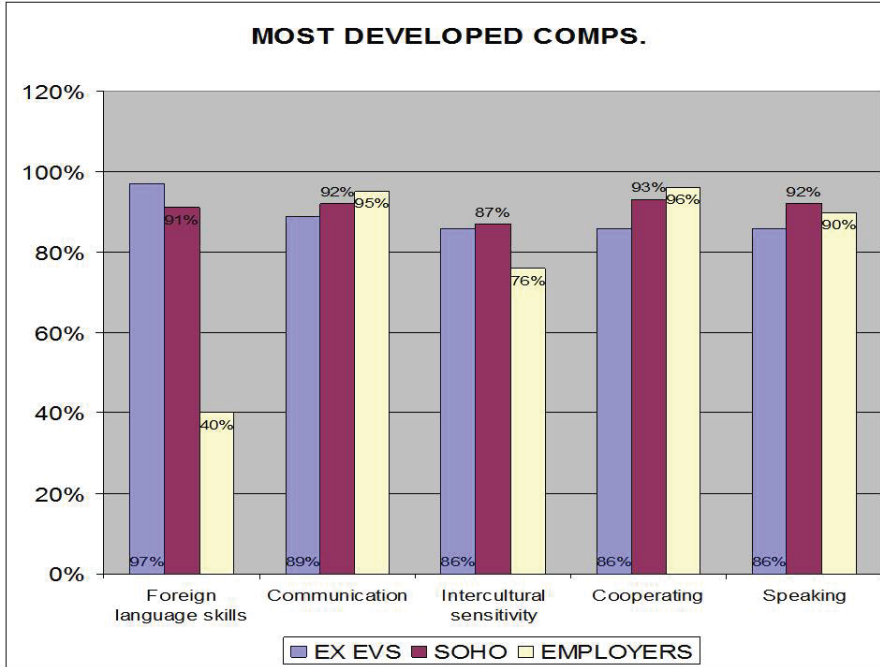
EX EVS	COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE BEFORE EVS											Total
	Belgium	Bosnia and Herzegovina	France	Hungary	Malta	Poland	Serbia	Slovakia	Slovenia	United Kingdom	Other	
[Rank 1] The most important sources of support for my learning during EVS were...	38,9%	87,9%	23,8%	39,5%	59,7%	48,6%	58,9%	53,1%	47,4%	26,0%	48,6%	46,5%
My openness and readiness to learn			15,0%	7,4%	13,4%	4,1%	9,6%	6,2%	5,1%	13,7%	8,1%	8,4%
Mentoring / tutoring	11,1%		7,5%	3,7%	4,5%		1,4%		1,3%	2,7%	2,7%	2,2%
Use of learning support tools (e.g. diary, blog...)			23,8%	13,6%	13,4%	14,9%	6,8%	9,9%	15,4%	20,5%	9,5%	15,3%
Peer support (e.g. from other EVS volunteers)	27,8%	13,6%		14,8%		9,5%	8,2%	6,2%	7,7%	15,1%	12,2%	8,0%
Supportive environment in my host organization	5,6%	8,6%		2,5%		2,7%		12,3%	7,7%	11,0%	5,4%	3,8%
Clear guidance and tasks by project coordinator												
Informal networks with local community	5,6%	4,9%	15,0%	8,6%		12,2%	4,1%	6,2%	7,7%	4,1%	8,1%	7,1%
Attending EVS trainings /seminars/ events	11,1%	4,9%	15,0%	7,4%	9,0%	6,8%	9,6%	6,2%	7,7%	6,8%	5,4%	8,2%
Other...				2,5%		1,4%	1,4%					0,5%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

SOHO	Please indicate the country where your organization is located at:										Total
	Belgium	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Hungary	Malta	Poland	Serbia	Slovakia	Slovenia	United Kingdom		
[Rank 1] The most important sources of support for an EVS volunteer's learning during the EVS project are	53,8%	88,5%	30,8%	24,1%	76,0%	45,8%	41,7%	60,0%	46,5%	50,7%	
The volunteer's openness and readiness to learn				24,1%	4,0%	4,2%	12,5%	8,0%	9,9%	8,3%	
Mentoring / tutoring	7,7%										
The use of learning support tools (e.g. diary, blog...)	7,7%									0,7%	
Peer support (e.g. from other EVS volunteers)			7,7%		4,0%	4,2%	4,2%		7,0%	3,6%	
Supportive environment in his/her host organization	30,8%	11,5%	19,2%	37,9%	8,0%	33,3%	29,2%	12,0%	29,6%	24,6%	
Clear guidance and tasks by the project coordinator			26,9%	13,8%	4,0%	4,2%	8,3%	12,0%	7,0%	8,3%	
Informal networks with local community			15,4%				4,2%	4,0%		2,2%	
Attending EVS trainings / seminars / meetings					4,0%	4,2%		4,0%		1,1%	
Other...						4,2%				0,4%	
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	

EX EVS	COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE BEFORE EVS											Total
	Belgium	Bosnia and Herzegovina	France	Hungary	Malta	Poland	Serbia	Slovakia	Slovenia	United Kingdom	Other	
[Rank 1] I became aware of my learning in EVS by...	44,4%	32,1%	62,5%	46,3%	27,9%	48,0%	54,1%	27,8%	32,5%	41,3%	59,5%	43,4%
Ongoing self-reflection during the project												
By reflecting on my EVS once back home	11,1%	8,6%		5,0%	13,2%	18,7%	12,2%	10,1%	22,1%	18,7%	9,5%	11,6%
Receiving feedback from people in my host organization	16,7%	18,5%	15,0%	12,5%	36,8%	10,7%	9,5%	24,1%	13,0%	17,3%	13,5%	16,9%
Receiving feedback from people once back home	11,1%	13,6%		7,5%	4,4%	1,3%	2,7%		5,2%	4,0%	4,1%	4,9%
Applying my newly gained competences after my EVS	11,1%	27,2%		20,0%	13,2%	8,0%	12,2%	34,2%	16,9%	12,0%	9,5%	15,1%
Filling in the Youthpass self-assessment			15,0%	5,0%	4,4%	6,7%	4,1%	3,8%	6,5%	4,0%	2,7%	4,8%
Other...	5,6%		7,5%	3,8%		6,7%	5,4%		3,9%	2,7%	1,4%	3,4%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

SOHO	Please indicate the country where your organization is located at:										Total
	Belgium	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Hungary	Malta	Poland	Serbia	Slovakia	Slovenia	United Kingdom	Total	
[Rank 1] In your opinion, an EVS volunteer becomes aware of his/her learning process and outcomes in EVS by...	44,0%	48,1%	26,9%	24,1%	52,0%	50,0%	43,5%	30,8%	48,6%	41,9%	
Ongoing self-reflection during the project											
By reflecting on his/her EVS once back home	8,0%	25,9%	3,8%	13,8%	4,0%	23,1%	8,7%	11,5%	4,3%	10,5%	
Receiving feedback from people in his/her host organization	48,0%	7,4%	19,2%	62,1%	16,0%		8,7%	30,8%	28,6%	25,6%	
Receiving feedback from people once back home			7,7%			3,8%	4,3%			1,4%	
Applying his/her newly gained competences after his/her EVS		18,5%	42,3%		16,0%	11,5%	30,4%	19,2%	15,7%	16,6%	
Filling in the Youthpass self-assessment					12,0%	11,5%	4,3%	7,7%	2,9%	4,0%	
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	

Appendix 6 – Most and least developed competences in EVS



Appendix 7 – The volunteers' stories - EVS has Changed My Life: how learning in EVS made impact on my life choices and employability?

Note: what follow are the original texts produced by the ex-volunteers.

Tintin in Moldova (Joris, Belgium)

My EVS journey started at the moment that I decided to apply for a project of one year in Moldova. Knowing almost nothing about the country, knowing little about the project and even not being sure if EVS would be right for me, it was a step into the unknown. This step was one of the many that I took during my EVS experience. Every step I took was a step towards a greater level of self-consciousness and ability to self-development.

When arriving to my flat in Chisinau, the capital of the poorest country of Europe, I experienced a first challenge. The room where I was supposed to live for one year had very basic living conditions (a desk without any chair to sit on, a mattress on the floor without any warm blankets and a closet without any shelves). After sleeping in my winter jacket for one week, I requested to have better living conditions which I also received. Many moments while living in Moldova requested me to be assertive, one of the attitudes I learned during my EVS.

A bigger challenge was that the project where I was working for was not challenging to me. More precisely, there were very little tasks available to me. Rather than only complaining or leaving the project early, I decided to apply for European funding and to organise a youth project related to human rights. As project manager of an international youth exchange, funded by the former Youth in Action Programme, I was responsible of all stages of the project: from application to implementation and financial accounting. This experience taught me to have a pro-active attitude towards work and to find the best solution in a difficult situation.

Facing many unexpected situations during my EVS, I gained a flexible attitude. I started realising that it's impossible to plan every possible situation or outcome of my decisions beforehand. This way I gained another perspective on life. Rather than planning and expecting everything to go according to plan, I became more conscious of the environment where I'm in. This perspective values what exists and recognises the possibilities connected to this situation instead striving to achieve something else.

My EVS experience also taught me to be more tolerant. I gained a better understanding towards other people, mainly because of this new attitude that I described above. To me cultural differences are not some kind of obstacle, but an opportunity to learn from people with different backgrounds, different kinds of strengths and perspectives.

My EVS experience started with a difficult decision and becoming assertive to request better living conditions in my flat. In the beginning I was somehow chocked by the different mentality, culture and living habits of Moldovans. Towards the end I started appreciating this culture and how Moldovans go through life. Now my EVS story still hasn't come to an end. I'm still gaining understanding of all the things I learned and I'm applying the competences I gained to my life in Belgium. I'm even trying to convince others of the value of EVS and stimulate them to go through a similar experience. My EVS begun with a cultural chock but evolved into a process of self-development.

Untitled (Amina, Bosnia and Hercegovina)

I was in Rotterdam for six months for my EVS project, I was 22 years old when I participated in it. I was volunteering for foundation Lava Legato which was working with other organizations in Rotterdam and every day in a week I was working on something else.

I was learning by doing and I think that is the best way to learn. I was totally open-minded to differences and that's way I learned more than I expected. My project demanded from me to work in several different organizations and that means I got a chance to learn more things.

Mostly I was working with children but also I was working on lots of events where I needed to present or talk about EVS, I always done it successfully. Variety of my project was so useful that I even learned to work with animals - birds, hedgehogs, you name it. But the best thing of all is that I learned how to manage in totally unknown situations and still do my job successfully. Now I know that I can do anything.

This EVS experience has taught me that different language is not barrier and if you are open for new people, cultures, traditions you can learn a lot and after that you can appreciate more your own culture. I embraced diversity of culture of my host country and of course I try to represent mine as good as I could (everyone was interested in history of Bosnia and Herzegovina because of the war and everything).

To be honest I always loved to travel and to meet new people, cultures and traditions, but this was totally different. Feeling when you are sitting on the beach with ten people from different countries in Europe, watching wind kites flying around and chatting about differences between yours countries is just incredible. This makes me think about my country and it motivates me to find a way and chance everything that I can change (in good way of course). These experiences have exposed me to great responsibilities and given me the opportunity to challenge myself in ways which have vastly developed my character and maturity.

I really can say that this experience taught me many things but more important of all I think it changed me in nice and positive way. Not because of the country or city, because of the people. I meet beautiful people (from inside) who shown me a bigger picture. I learned many things about different cultures and that helped me respect more my culture, country and people in it.

Bug The Pilgrim (Tomas, Slovakia)

Firstly, I have to note that I am never going to forget what I have lived during my time of Voluntary Service.

Secondly, the EVS has really made me mature in a short period.

I arrived to the country of different cultural background and different language. I had to adapt as quickly as possible to make my stay smooth. To overcome the initiative problems it was my companion, the EVS partner, with whom we supported each other. Having had the EVS companion made the things easier. The situation at the beginning was a bit difficult because the winter was still present and our main tasks were designed for outdoor terrain. So we spent the first moments just exploring our possibilities and getting to know each other. We cooked together, we exchanged our culinary 'talents', we explored our national cuisines.

I had a sufficient time to prepare my own little projects, to involve myself in things that I would not have thought I would be capable of at my home place. I was forced to be independent out of

sudden, big cultural shock without preparation. I just had to seize for the things. I had to impersonate myself into multidisciplinary worker, learn new language, improve my English, teach English, teach Biology in English, learn about the natural heritage of our hosting organization, but mostly think about my own insertion to the project. The place we occupied did not have the scale of free time possibilities we would immerse ourselves in. Either we had to educate ourselves on our own or stabilize. We could develop our inner skills and brush them up.

The environment where I spent time consisted mostly of people from different countries. As our project involved 16 individuals from all over the Europe there was a lot to learn about different cultural habits and historical background. I realized that my capacity for learning is even bigger that I could have ever thought before. I liked being in international environment. I looked for the possibilities in what collaborate after the end of the service. I came to know about the existence of other internship projects. I was really happy that my EVS experience helped me to do it and make me sort of relevant for it. I subscribed for AIESEC and I was selected for the work in Colombia. I had the opportunity to travel in Latin America and learn Spanish.

I consider EVS as a very good start for travel keen people who endlessly want to improve their abilities and discover new dimensions.

Learning to land (Mojca, Slovenia)

After successfully finishing University in 2008, I had started to fly. I had planned a four months travel, but extended it to fifteen months in SE Asia, and another year in Europe; the sky at the end of the road had been my destination, art and creativity my travel buddies, and the only constant of that time - the change. It had truly been a 'hero's journey' in epic and symbolic sense, with intense and special learning outcomes, nevertheless with consequences: it had become increasingly difficult for me to settle down or even stay at one place for longer than few weeks. This kind of lifestyle gives you one annoying consequence: you stop dealing with challenges, because you always just leave them behind.

I got lost in life, with all its beauty although instability as well. I became aware of this, and got a good opportunity to tackle it in the most organic, gentle and at the same time firm way, when a non-verbal theatre organisation *FIRE Theatre-Art-Culture FOUNDATION* from Bulgaria, which I have met during my travels, invited me for one year lasting EVS project. They are cooperating with artists, being artists themselves; they are down to earth serious and firm in their work, at the same time perceptive (though not forever forgiving) of high flying, hardly landing dreams and thoughts of travellers, performers and artists alike. They were my best opportunity to land again, and ground myself in somehow much more real environment than travel is.

I made friends there, friends and teachers, brothers, sisters. A family made not by blood but life ties. I have learned so much from them, and with them. After the EVS, we continued to cooperate. Together, we made some really beautiful performances and countless smiles on children faces. I have learn a lot about performing art, as well as about European project networking, international and intercultural team working, also leaders skills, etc. All these skills and competences are of great importance for me now.

Since November, I am back in Slovenia, and I will stay here. I want to find a job, suitable for me, my education, skills, competences, and personal characteristic. It is challenging to go through this process, but I can clearly recognise how much I have grown and changed in last five years; specifically, how have I grown and changed during the year of EVS. That year, it was a turning point between two of my life cycles. Before it, I have learned to fly and see the world from greater

perspective; after it, I have learned to land and to employ this bigger perspective back here, where I truly originate.

Not all those who wonder are lost! (Marion, UK)

The 6th May 2008.

On that day, I took the plane that would change the course of my life. I can still remember my anxiety to move in this country on my own:

For 12 months! Without knowing anybody! In a country that I didn't know! With a different culture and above all a different language! Someone would have told me that 5 years along the road I would be living in UK I would have laughed at them!!

I gave up a flat, a job, a life for the unknown and yet it felt right in a way...

My EVS was every day a new challenge: learning the language, meeting new people, understanding the cultural differences but also the work itself.

My hosting organisation was The Haven, a charity organisation which supports women and children affected by DV and homelessness.

Janet, Joanne, Linda, Antonia, Kay, Michelle, Rosemary, Josephine, Caroline, Amber, Sarah, Hardeep... and so many others. Here are some names of amazing, strong, marvellous women that I met during my EVS. They escaped domestic violence and fought to move forward regardless of the pain and difficulties until they found a safe place for themselves and for their children.

Thus, through my EVS, I had the opportunity to support courageous women full of drive, energy and aspirations who were for years minimised and humiliated by the people who were supposed to love and cherish them. They fought really hard to flee domestic violence, find a place of safety for themselves and their children and build back their lives.

The journey from victim to survivor is not without obstacles. It is a long, challenging and arduous journey. These women and the women who dedicated their time in supporting them at The Haven were a real inspiration and changed my way of thinking.

Discovering another country and another culture, seeing life through someone else's eyes, Learning new skills and new competences through sharing someone else's day-to-day life on a professional and personal level... That's what made my EVS so significant and valuable!

No book can teach you what you can learn from European Volunteer Service. It is about being there, being part of a team, sharing skills and knowledge and all together making a positive contribution to make the difference....

When I arrived in United Kingdom, I was lost.
Lost as I did not know the language,
Lost as I did not the place,
And lost because I did not know where I wanted to go with my life.
I was lost in my thoughts...
Always wondering what I should do, if this was the right move...

But I know now that it is ok to wonder and reflect on experiences as it is through these experiences that you learn new skills.

Nothing happens by chance (Bozidar, Serbia)

Since I found out about EVS in my third grade of gymnasium, I knew that I want to do it immediately after I finish gymnasium. And I did it. After many struggles, and a year and a half of project applications it came to me, I didn't chose it. But, although I personally didn't apply for my project, but my friend that couldn't go, Youth center of Kalamata accepted that change, and I started my EVS adventure in august 2010.

I already had some experience with EVS volunteers - I was EVS mentor and language teacher for about a year, and I already knew the possible problems of volunteering during my EVS, and I, more or less, knew what would I do if I had any problems.

But, I think that the most important is the attitude that I had – that I didn't expect anything. Generally I know that I can expect something just from myself, and that attitude of mine was very useful.

I was working on a project that included work on website, blogs, and design on materials for the organization. But, when I didn't have anything to do, I was doing something else: like teaching Serbian, or working on therapeutic horse riding with disabled children, different creative workshops and small theatre plays also. Working on that many activities helped me to more develop my proactive attitude, and to show me the opportunities in the society.

My EVS changed my life: it open my horizons, helped me to rethink my way of thinking, helped me developing my language and interpersonal skills, helped me to develop tolerance and I think that developing my personal skills through interpersonal relations in the organization were the most important.

But the most important from my EVS for me in the moment was that I managed to see what I want to be in my professional life. It helped me to realize that I want to be in the area of education, and now I am studding pedagogy.

Appendix 8 – Expert input: Youth Employment in Europe (by Ozhegan Senyuva, PhD, Pool of European Youth Researchers); originally published by the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth

Young people and employment became an important and equally controversial topic over the last decade, particularly with the ongoing global financial and economic crisis. According to the European Commission's own assessment, structural unemployment and labour market mismatches have been growing. Net job destruction has been coinciding with an increase in precarious jobs. Young people are facing increasing levels of atypical, and often precarious, working conditions as well as the number of young people working in temporary, part-time, especially involuntary part-time, jobs have been increasing. According to the European Commission, more than 40 % of young employees in the EU are on temporary contracts. Overall youth unemployment rate has reached worrying unprecedented levels in many of the European states. The youth unemployment rate reached new historic high of 23.5 % in February 2013, more than twice as high as the adult rate, with some 5.7 million young people affected. Certain countries were affected the worst, in 2012 youth unemployment rate for those aged 15-24 was 55.3 % in Greece, and the projections indicate that these figures are getting worse. Europe is being affected as a whole, while the disparities in employment rates between countries and even regions within countries are also prone to a larger scale of challenges such as population movements or new forms of migration. The increasing rates of youth unemployment, particularly in certain regions, are considered by many as a potential source for instability and threat in social cohesion and politics. The EU recognizes that the EU is struggling with many challenges such as high unemployment, labour mismatches, and increasing numbers of young people not in education, employment and training⁶. Poverty and social exclusion has increased, especially for the working age population, and household incomes declined. Social expenditure has been reduced significantly throughout Europe, with more negative consequences to follow. What is noteworthy is that, this is not a limited European crisis. Whole world is in the grasp of unemployment crisis, and young people are the ones who are being affected most adversely. According to International Labour Organization –ILO, young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults (The global youth unemployment rate reached 13.1%) and almost 73 million youth worldwide are looking for work. In developing countries, six out of ten workers in the 15-29 age group lacked a stable employment contract, six out of ten had below average wages and eight out of ten were in informal employment in 2012.

The socio-demographic studies and projections also imply that young people are among the most vulnerable group to be affected from the global socio-economic trends. The analyses establish that European states are the most vulnerable group on youth issues. Under the current trends, the median age of population in 2030 will be 44.7 in the European Union member states, making it the oldest, 10 years older than the world (33.2 years). Same projections indicate that *old age dependency ratio* (ratio of individuals aged 65 or above to working age population) will reach 38.3% for EU 27 in 2030 and 50.2 % in 2050, up from 26 % in 2010. Old age dependency ratio is a crucial measure for a society, particularly for young people, as rising dependency ratios bring higher burdens to economy for pension and social security systems to provide for a significantly older, non-working population. In short, in the future, European youth will have to

⁶ The author deliberately avoids using the abbreviation *NEETs*. Although popular in official documents, the term is approached with caution by a large group youth workers / researchers, arguing that it is a new form of discriminatory categorization.

deal with increasing challenge from the society to provide higher costs for social security and pension systems, which are already over stretched in many EU member states.

While the future projections and the current figures illustrate a negative situation, certain issues should be highlighted: the youth unemployment *problem* is not a new phenomenon, over the last two decades it has been slowly growing and has always been significantly higher than general unemployment rates. The figures have reached historic highs and reached critical levels as a result of the global developments over the past few years. This demonstrates the crucial fact that youth unemployment is not a *youth problem*, but a repercussion of the social-economic structure and is not the *cause* but *outcome* of socio-economic problems faced by the society. Youth unemployment cannot be isolated and addressed in a vacuum without taking into all different structures and institutions of the society, ranging from market structure to education system. Thus, any policy or remedy targeting youth unemployment should have a holistic approach encompassing all relevant determinants. A good starting point is the exploration of the causes of youth unemployment: is it lack of jobs, or lack of skills, or lack of coordination between the skills gained and skills needed? For instance, an extensive study showed that in Europe, 74 percent of education providers were confident that their graduates were prepared for work, but only 38 percent of youth and 35 percent of employers agreed. Thus, this proves that the level of analysis should move up from youth-only level, investigating the shortcomings of the young people to a more systemic level, exploring the inputs, process and outputs of the whole socio-economic system, which is clearly failing over time. The debate on over-education for instance, is also interesting. The link between education and employment seems to be weaker for two groups particularly; unskilled or low-skilled young people in Europe are among the most vulnerable groups, regardless of financial crisis. Due to global division of labor, manual and low-skilled jobs are being significantly reduced and outsourced in Europe. Another dimension would be that amongst the low-skilled are more often young people from migrant or socially disadvantaged backgrounds, and the education systems are not able to compensate.

The European Union, to its own credit, has been rather alert and engaged in youth unemployment issues. The White Paper – A New Impetus for European Youth and the European Youth Pact (2005) are two important EU documents that attempt to address the issue. It is also important to acknowledge that the EU and the Council of Europe have been trying to adopt a holistic approach, integrating different policy areas when addressing the youth issues. This is particularly clear in two key European mission statements: the European Commission's An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering and the Council of Europe's Agenda 2020. As Jonathan Evans asserts in the previous edition of the Employment Policy Paper, "The European Commission document makes links across the full range of policy domains: education and training; employment and entrepreneurship; health and well-being; participation; voluntary activities; social inclusion; creativity and culture; and youth and the world". However, the difficult times also require stronger commitment and action, as recognised in the 2013 Annual Growth Survey (AGS) and in the European Council's Youth Employment initiative there is need for strong efforts to reduce youth unemployment and to promote young people's participation in the labour market. The YEI funding will comprise EUR 3 billion from a specific EU budget line dedicated to youth employment and another at least EUR 3 billion from the European Social Fund national allocations. Youth Employment Initiative is also highly linked with The Youth Guarantee Council Recommendation which was formally adopted on 22 April 2013. The youth Guarantee aims to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four

months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. However, while the European Commission initiatives are promising, one should keep in mind the past record, which did not always produce the most efficient outcomes, such as the flexicurity model launched in mid 2000s.

The role of the youth work and contribution of non-formal and informal learning in tackling youth unemployment is also under discussion. As Ms. Androulla Vassiliou, Member of the European Commission responsible for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth asserts in a speech to the EP, the most urgent challenge Europe faces is that its education and training systems are falling short when it comes to equipping people with both basic skills – such as reading and writing – and transversal skills – such as civic participation, cultural awareness and expression, media literacy, digital and ICT competences, an entrepreneurial attitude, or proficiency in foreign languages. Therefore, the new European Commission initiative, Erasmus+ programme aims to boost skills and employability, as well as modernising Education, Training, and Youth work. The seven year programme (2014-2021) will have a budget of **€14.7 billion**. At this stage, one should approach the potential of youth work and non-formal-informal learning in tackling youth unemployment with caution. While evidence clearly proves that such projects contribute significantly to the competence development of young people, it would be over optimistic that the systemic causes of youth unemployment can be tackled through increased mobility of young people. It is also important to bear in mind that while youth work and non-formal and informal learning are significantly contributing to the competence development of young people, there is still the challenge of recognition of these competences gained. The Strasbourg Process, initiated with the Symposium on Recognition of Youth Work and Non-formal Learning in 2011, and its action plan should be integrated into the future mobility and learning schemes if youth unemployment is going to be addressed more efficiently. How recognition of youth work and NFIL will be integrated into the new mobility and learning schemes and what further process will be taken at national and European levels is yet to be seen. The European Youth Forum also issued a comprehensive policy paper on youth employment in 2013, where the members have drawn attention to the Long Term Unemployment as a growing risk faced by European young people. The Youth Forum policy paper also demonstrates the contribution of non-formal learning to the development of some soft skills through their own commissioned research and calls for more extensive recognition of youth work as well. In addition to the list of possible measures recommended tackling the youth unemployment, the Youth Forum policy paper also rightfully criticizes the negative consequences of certain severe austerity measures put in place in some countries in Europe, young people being affected the most.

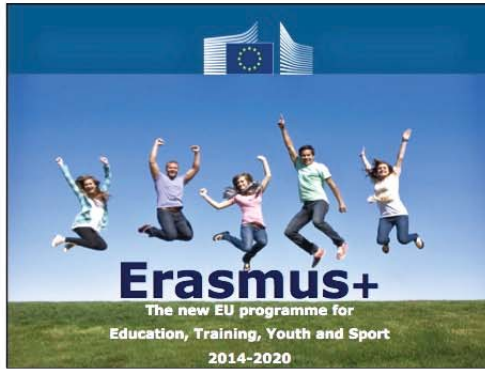
The European Commission's own remedy to youth unemployment is indeed very accurate, and should remain high on political agenda: Investing in jobs and people; improving labour market functioning; increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of tax and benefit systems; supporting transitions away from unemployment and poverty. A strict binary approach between *employed* vs *unemployed* to the issue would also be misleading. In work poverty is a reality and once employed the problems of young people are not over. The policies aimed at reducing unemployment must also take into consideration important issues such as work-life balance, freedom from all forms of discrimination; precarious working conditions; self-fulfilment and social and personal development.

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Appendix 9 – Presentation of Erasmus+ by Mariann-Ingrid Klingberg



Erasmus+: Why a new approach?

Education, training and youth: a changing landscape

- Deep **economic crisis** and high **youth unemployment**
- Vacancies exist, but **skills gaps** and low employability of graduates
- Growing requirement for **high skilled jobs**
- A global competition for talent: **internationalisation of education**
- Extraordinary broadening of learning offer and **potential of ICT**
- Complementarity between **formal, informal and non formal learning**
- Need for **closer links with world of work**

Erasmus+: a new approach

We needed:

- Closer links between programme and **policy objectives**
- More **synergies and interaction between formal, informal and non-formal learning**
- More **cross-sectorial partnerships** with world of work
- A **streamlined**, simpler architecture
- Stronger focus on **EU added value**

Link to policy objectives

- **Europe 2020 targets:**
 - Raising higher education attainment from 32% to 40%
 - Reducing the share of early school leavers from 14% to less than 10%
- **Education and Training 2020 strategy**
- **The renewed framework for the European Cooperation in the youth field (EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018))**
- The European dimension in **Sport**/EU Work Plan on Sport
- The strong **international dimension**, particularly as regards higher education and youth

Policy objectives: Volunteering

Voluntary activities as one of the eight fields of action in the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018):

"Many Member States quote the Youth in Action programme, particularly the European Voluntary Service (EVS) as an important, if not the main source for youth volunteering in another country"

(From the Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the Implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field)

Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the European Union (2008)

What's new? (1)

A single integrated programme

- **Covering all education, training and youth sectors in a holistic manner, and adding sport**
 - by bringing 7 existing programmes into a single coherent framework
- Seeking to achieve **greater systemic impact**


European Commission

What's new? (2)

- **Substantial simplifications**
 - Fewer calls and large reduction in number of actions
 - More user friendly programme, easier to navigate round
 - Simplified financial management: greater use of unit costs
- **Substantial budget increase**
 - 40% increase, benefiting all sectors
 - Additional funding from external action instruments to support international dimension of higher education

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European Commission

Erasmus+

Previous Programmes

- Lifelong Learning Programme: Grundtvig, Erasmus, Leonardo, Comenius
- Youth in Action
- International Higher Education programmes: Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink, bilateral programmes


One integrated Programme

Erasmus+

1. Learning mobility of individuals
2. Cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices
3. Support for policy reform

Specific Actions:
• Jean Monnet
• Sport

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European Commission

Budget allocation 2014 - 2020

- Education and training (77.5%)
- Youth (10%)
- Student loan facility (3.5%)
- National agencies (3.4%)
- Administrative costs (1.9%)
- Jean Monnet (1.9%)
- Sport (1.8%)

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European Commission



Erasmus+

**Non-formal learning opportunities for young people:
European Voluntary Service**

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European Commission

Youth – objectives of Erasmus+

- To improve the level of **key competences and skills of young people**, including those **with fewer opportunities**, and youth workers, as well as to promote **participation in democratic life** in Europe and the labour market, **active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity**
- To foster **quality improvements in youth work**, in particular through enhanced cooperation between organisations in the youth field and/or other stakeholders
- To complement **policy reforms** at local, regional and national level and to support the development of knowledge and evidence-based youth policy as well as the **recognition of non-formal and informal learning**
- To enhance the **international dimension** of youth activities

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European Commission

Key Action 1: Youth mobility

Main activities:

- **Youth Mobility projects for young people & youth workers:**
 - Youth Exchanges
 - European Voluntary Service
 - Structured courses: training courses, visits abroad
 - Job shadowing or observation period in a youth organisation abroad (at youth organisations, education and training institutions, companies, etc.)



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European Commission

Key Action 2 : Cooperation and innovation for good practices

Capacity Building in the field of youth

Aims:

- To **foster cooperation and exchanges in the field of youth between Programme Countries and Partner Countries** from different regions of the world

Possible to organise European Voluntary Service activities if the activity brings added value to the project as a whole.

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European Commission

European Voluntary Service



- EVS allows young people to express their personal commitment through unpaid and full-time voluntary service within or outside the European Union.

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European Commission

European Voluntary Service

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8brziVLy9Q&feature=youtu.be>

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European Commission

European Voluntary Service

- Duration between 2 weeks and 12 months
- Age of the participants: 17-30
- No prior qualifications demanded – EVS is open for all
- For youth organisations (including informal groups), public bodies, private bodies engaged in CSR, a.o.
- Minimum two partner organisations from two different countries (Sending organisation and Receiving organisation).
- Novelty in Erasmus+: Large Scale EVS
- YOUTHPASS

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European Commission

Results so far (1)

Survey from 2011 (Youth in Action):

- 76% replied "definitely" when asked if they felt more confident about moving around in their own or in other countries for purposes of study, internship, work, travel, etc.
- 76% have a clearer idea about their professional career aspirations and goals
- 90% improved ability to communicate in another language
- 75% believe that their job chances have increased

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European Commission

Results so far (2)

- 1996: EVS introduced as pilot action
- 2001-2006: Part of the YOUTH Programme
- 2007-2013: Part of the Youth in Action Programme
- 2014-2020: Part of the Erasmus+ Programme

Close to 10 000 volunteers went abroad in 2013

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Some key words for the future

- Transversal skills (soft skills)
- Bridging the skills gap
- Novelties in cooperation: Cross-sectorial as well as profit-making bodies active in CSR
- Recognition of informal and non-formal learning
- Inspire development of transnational volunteering schemes

- **Increase the number of volunteers year by year**
Goal of 20 000 volunteers going abroad in 2020



- Mariann Klingberg
- mariann-ingrid.klingberg@ec.europa.eu

**DG Education and Culture
Youth Unit**

Appendix 10 – Overview of recent developments at European level with regard to recognition of youth work and non-formal learning

Overview of policy-related documents and events

The political agendas of the European institutions such as the Council of Europe and the European Union in the field of youth are based on a series of documents that have been developed throughout the past 12 years and that served as a basis for policy developments and related initiatives and educational programmes. Nonetheless, this overview will start with processes initiated from 2006 onward. As much as possible, what follows is presented on a chronological order (updated up to March 2014).

Key competences for lifelong learning (2006)

The [Key competences for lifelong learning](#) highlight the role of the key competences in the *shape of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to each context* and states that they are *fundamental for each individual in a knowledge-based society. They provide added value for the labour market, social cohesion and active citizenship by offering flexibility and adaptability, satisfaction and motivation. Because they should be acquired by everyone, this recommendation proposes a reference tool for European Union (EU) countries to ensure that these key competences are fully integrated into their strategies and infrastructures, particularly in the context of lifelong learning.* Based on [“Key competences for a changing world”](#), the joint progress report of the Council and the Commission, and the independent study [“Key competences in Europe”](#), the [key competences framework](#) is being further developed mainly in regards to its implementation. A [Commission Staff Working Document](#) was published in 2012 in connection with the *Rethinking Skills* strategy that illustrates assessment practices of key competences and suggests further ways to ensure coherent assessment.

The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020 (2008)

The [Resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe](#), adopted in 2008, sets priorities for the Council of Europe youth policy and action for the following years, and describes the approaches, methods and instruments to achieve these. Among other priorities, the following is mentioned: social inclusion of young people, with special emphasis on ensuring young people’s access to education, training and working life, particularly through the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning; and supporting young people’s transition from education to the labour market. Working with multipliers and supporting the development of quality youth work and its recognition are emphasised as necessary approaches.

EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering (2009)

Within the [EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering \(2010-2018\)](#) the EU Member States set themselves and for the Commission the following objectives and activities, among others:

- Complementary to formal education, non-formal education for young people should be supported to contribute to Lifelong Learning in Europe, by developing its quality, recognising its outcomes, and integrating it better with formal education;
- Support youth volunteering, by developing more voluntary opportunities for young people, making it easier to volunteer by removing obstacles, raising awareness on the value of volunteering, recognising volunteering as an important form of non-formal education and reinforcing cross-border mobility of young volunteers;
- Youth work should be supported, recognised for its economic and social contribution, and professionalised.

European Inventory on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning 2010 (2010)

Since 2004, the European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning offers, in regular intervals, an overview of the instruments and methods for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning within the European Member States and beyond. Until recently, the policies focused predominantly on the areas of general and vocational training. Since 2007, the third sector is being increasingly taken into account. [The current version of 2010](#) includes 34 country reports, 10 case studies and 4 thematic reports (validation for specific target groups). The youth sector has received particular attention through the [case study of Youthpass](#) that has been included in the inventory.

EU Agenda 2020, Youth on the Move (2010)

Within the [Communication from the Commission, COM \(2010\) 477](#) and here in particular within the [Youth on the Move](#) flagship initiative of the [EU Agenda 2020](#), the European Commission aims [...] *to expand career and life-enhancing learning opportunities for young people with fewer opportunities and/or at risk of social exclusion. In particular, these young people should benefit from the expansion of opportunities for non-formal and informal learning and from strengthened provisions for the recognition and validation of such learning within national qualifications frameworks. This can help to open the doors to further learning on their part.* The Council Recommendation from June 28, 2011: [“Youth on the move – promoting the learning mobility of young people”](#) encourages the Member States to use the full potential of the existing EU and Bologna instruments to facilitate mobility, including Europass and Youthpass.

Resolution of the Council on youth work (2010)

[The resolution](#) sets forward a broad definition of youth work, and among other suggestions, declares that competences developed through youth work need to be sufficiently valued and effectively recognised. It invites the Commission to enhance the quality of youth work, the capacity and competence development of youth workers and youth leaders and the recognition of non-formal learning in youth work. It also invites to develop and support the development of user-friendly European tools for independent assessment and self-assessment, as well as instruments for the documentation of competences of youth workers and youth leaders, which would help to recognise and evaluate the quality of youth, work in Europe.

The European Training Strategy of the Youth in Action programme (2010-2013)

The [European Training Strategy](#) (ETS) of Youth in Action builds a frame for the more effective realisation of training activities in Youth in Action. In comparison to the previous training strategy, it includes new fields of action (e.g. Strengthening actions aimed at recognition of youth work) and regards Youthpass as a tool to be developed for meeting the needs for recognition of youth worker and trainer competences. Among the first steps, development of competence profiles for youth workers and trainers has been undertaken (to be finalised in 2014).

Youthpass as a strategy

The strategy of validation and recognition of non-formal learning within Youth in Action is embedded in Youthpass developments. The aim of this strategic approach is to raise awareness and support a professional public debate concerning the individual, social, formal, and political dimensions of recognition of non-formal learning and youth work. The implementation of the tool and the strategy is described as a [case study](#) in the last edition of the European Inventory.

Youth in Action evaluation (2011)

In April 2011, the results of the [interim evaluation of Youth in Action programme](#) were published. The evaluators came to very positive conclusions on a number of aspects regarding the relevance, complementarity and added value of YiA, its effectiveness and its efficiency. Among the

recommendations for the future developments, suggestions were made to increase the focus on employability and to further promote Youthpass.

Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe (2011)

The document [Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe](#) is a working paper of the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, produced in collaboration with SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre and the European Youth Forum. The previous paper, which had been released in 2004, served as a basis for important developments concerning the recognition of learning experiences within the youth sector in the past years (Youthpass, Portfolio, Bridges for recognition, European Principles for Validation, etc.). The paper encourages the consolidation of the existing developments and proposes, in this context, ten recommendations for action:

1. Develop a common understanding and a joint strategy in the youth field and improve co-operation and communication
2. Visibility of the particular role of youth organisations
3. Assure quality and training in non-formal education/learning
4. Increasing knowledge about non-formal education/learning in youth work
5. Develop existing tools further and make them accessible and transferable
6. Reinforcement of political processes on the European level
7. Link youth to the lifelong learning strategy and vice versa
8. Involve stakeholders of the employment sector
9. Associating the social sector
10. Cooperate with other policy fields and with stakeholders of civil society

The Pathways 2.0 paper has inspired a European process, steered by the Expert Group on Recognition, to enhance further developments around recognition (e.g. the [symposium on recognition](#)).

European symposium for the recognition of youth work and non-formal learning – Getting there... (2011)

The partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, in cooperation with SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre and the German National Agency for Youth in Action, carried out a symposium for recognition of youth work and non-formal learning. The symposium brought together key actors on the European level and fostered a discussion on the recommendations for action of the *Pathways Paper 2.0*. As a result of the symposium, a [Statement and a draft Plan of Action](#) were agreed upon and published on behalf of the participants. The Statement describes 7 main challenges for recognition in Europe and provides recommendations for developments on different levels to deal with the challenges. The document includes an even more concrete Plan of Action as an annex to the statement. Since the Symposium, the Plan of Action has been revised and updated by the *expert group on recognition of youth work and non-formal learning*, which meets twice a year and is in charge to follow-up recognition's related developments and monitor the implementation of the various actions and initiatives proposed in the Plan of Action. The process initiated by the Symposium is called *the Strasbourg Process*, even though that name is not endorsed at political level by the European Commission.

Recommendation of the Council on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012)

On November 26, 2012, the Council of the EU adopted a [Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning](#), based on the European Commission's [proposal](#). The adopted Recommendation invites Member States to establish a national system of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes by 2018. The system would provide the opportunity for citizens to

have their skills, knowledge and competences validated, and to obtain a full or a partial qualification on the basis of these validated learning outcomes. The system should be connected to the [National Qualifications Frameworks](#) and create synergies between the existing European frameworks for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. One of the guiding principles outlined in the recommendation proposes that *the use of Union transparency tools, such as Europass and Youthpass, should be promoted.*

The EU Youth Report (2012)

The [EU Youth Report](#), adopted in November 2012 as a Joint Council–Commission Report, calls for youth employment, social inclusion, health and the well-being of young people to be top priorities in the next 3-year work cycle of the EU Youth Strategy (2013-2015). The report includes a summary of how the EU Youth Strategy has been implemented at national and EU level since 2010, and an analysis of the situation faced by young people. The report concludes that the EU Youth Strategy has served as a lasting and flexible framework for a whole range of actions, including employment & entrepreneurship, education & training, and social inclusion, and developing multi-faceted solutions in support of young people.

Rethinking Education (2012)

The European Commission launched a strategy called [Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes](#), to encourage Member States to take immediate action to ensure that young people develop the skills and competences needed by the labour market and to achieve their targets for growth and jobs. The emphasis of the strategy is on the knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired by students (learning outcomes) through the learning process, rather than on completing a specific stage or on time spent in school. The [European Economic and Social Committee's opinion](#) on such strategy states on point 3.8 that the EESC regrets that the Commission *has failed to seize the opportunity offered by this communication to recognise the role that non-formal education can play as a supplement to formal education and draws attention to the call made by participants at the Strasbourg Symposium for a common long- and medium-term process to be established to recognise non-formal education in Europe*, hence being the first EU official-related structure to make a reference to the so-called *Strasbourg Process*.

Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people (2013)

The Youth Working Party of the European Commission has prepared a set of [conclusions](#) with a view to their adoption at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 16-17 May 2013. Several priorities have been identified to ensure and enhance quality youth work for the development, well-being, and social inclusion of young people.

Recommendation of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly 'Young Europeans: an urgent educational challenge' (2013)

The [recommendation](#) adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly was based on a [report](#) of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media on the urgent need to rethink education taking into account nowadays needs and challenges. The report asks Member States to adopt a comprehensive approach to education and take action to set the right policy frameworks, create new learning opportunities and enhance the existing ones, ensuring inclusion and getting more young people engaged in their own learning and development. The report calls for specific measures to be taken at European level, in particular to improve access to education for young people from disadvantaged groups, as well as to encourage non-formal education and ensure greater recognition of competences acquired through non-formal learning, building on the proposals put forward by the *Strasbourg Process*.

Erasmus+ (2014-2020)

The [programme Erasmus+](#) (2014-2020) brings together seven existing EU programmes in the fields of Education, Training and Youth; it will for the first time provide support for Sport. As an integrated programme, Erasmus+ offers more opportunities for cooperation across the Education, Training and Youth sectors and is easier to access than its predecessors, with simplified funding rules. Erasmus+ aims at boosting skills and employability, and modernising Education, Training and Youth work. The seven year programme has a budget of €14.7 billion and provides opportunities to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad. In addition to providing grants for individuals, Erasmus+ will support transnational partnerships among Education, Training and Youth institutions and organisations to foster cooperation and bridge the worlds of education and work in order to tackle the skills gaps in Europe. Erasmus+ also supports national efforts to modernise Education, Training and Youth systems.

Overview of researches and studies

Study on Mobility Developments in School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education and Youth exchanges (2012)

The Study on Mobility Developments in School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education and Youth Exchanges ([full report](#) and [executive summary](#)) focuses on learning mobility in mobility schemes outside the European action programmes (LLP and Youth in Action), both outbound and inbound mobility, mainly with the countries participating in the above mentioned programmes. The study also describes recognition practices in these mobility programmes, as well as in what regards it is understood as a pedagogical tool.

Research Study on the Impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young People's Employability (2012)

Through desk research, consultation with youth organisations, a survey with young people, and focus groups with employers from across Europe, [this research](#) ordered by the European Youth Forum assesses whether the competences and skills obtained through non-formal education in youth organisations contribute to the employability of young people. It concludes that long-lasting and frequent engagement and participation in youth organisations brings high soft-skills development. Amongst the six skills mostly demanded by employers, five are also among those developed through involvement in youth organisations: such as communication, team work, decision-making, organisational skills, and self-confidence. For young people who participated in non-formal education activities abroad, this includes also higher development of language, intercultural and leadership skills.

Mapping of competences needed by youth workers to support young people in international learning mobility projects (2012)

Commissioned by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth in the frame of the European Training Strategy of the Youth in Action Programme, this [paper](#) provides the reader with information about potential national and European studies and researches with relevance for the European Training Strategy. It follows previous efforts of the Steering Group to identify, to analyse and to map studies and other relevant information on competences in international youth work. This mapping exercise pursues to improve synergies with the area of research in the youth field. Ultimately, the project is aimed at supporting the development of a list of competences needed for working at international level and for supporting young people in international learning mobility projects (currently in the process of being developed, alongside a competence framework for trainers active in international youth work).

Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Youth in Action (RAY) (2012-2013)

[Research-based analysis and monitoring of Youth in Action Programme](#) (YiA) aims at producing reliable and valid documentation and understanding of processes and outcomes of the programme and of the activities supported through the programme. In 2012 a transnational analysis of the RAY results from 2011 was published: [full report](#) and [executive summary](#). In 2013, the reports of two surveys have been published with a special focus on special issues related to YiA such as: the impact of participation on learning, learning mobility within YiA, and the development of [key] competences: [A study on the effects of participation in a Youth in Action project on the level of competences](#) and [Learning in Youth in Action](#).

Youthpass Impact Study (2013)

The European Commission has implemented a survey to investigate and highlight the impact made with Youthpass as a tool, process and strategy. The survey particularly examined the impact on participants' learning process, on the description and documentation of competences gained, on the link to employability and on the role of youth work and non-formal learning. The [study](#), released in summer 2013, explores the impact on different levels through both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Reinforcing links Experiences of cooperation between the formal and non-formal sector in training youth workers (2013)

Published by the SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, this [brochure](#) is a result of a small practice mapping exercise, which was carried out in the framework of European Training Strategy of the Youth in Action Programme (2007-2013). This compilation of experiences is not about mapping or assessing training offers available for youth workers but serves to motivate the training providers in different educational sectors to cooperate in order to better equip youth workers with the competences needed to work with and for youth. With these ten examples of cooperation, the authors hope to inspire new projects undertaken between different sectors, in their environments and realities.

Study on the value of youth work in the EU (to be released early 2014)

The European Commission's study on the value of youth work in the EU will among other issues consider non-formal learning in youth work. It aims to improve our understanding of socio-economic relevance and the visibility of the youth work sector in the EU. The study should identify how youth work contributes to achieving EU objectives in the fields of economic or social development (e.g. Social Agenda, Europe 2020 Strategy) and will provide evidence and selected case studies of national, regional and local realities of youth work in the 27 EU Member States.

Overview of other developments

European and National Qualifications Frameworks

The core of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) concerns eight reference levels describing what a learner knows, understands and is able to do – the learning outcomes, including those acquired from the non-formal and informal contexts. Levels of national qualifications will be placed at one of the central reference levels, ranging from basic (Level 1) to advanced (Level 8). This linking will enable learners and employers to compare the levels of qualifications awarded at home and in other countries. In the [EQF portal](#), relevant documents including national reports can be downloaded, as well as NQF levels of different countries compared. In autumn 2012, a stakeholder consultation on EQF has been carried out to investigate the effectiveness and added value of the initiative. In 2013, the work of the EQF Advisory Group has mostly focused on the development of a *Proposal for a structure of national reports on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning* and on a *Proposal for a roadmap for arrangements on validation of non-formal and informal learning*.

European Skills, Competences and Occupations taxonomy (ESCO)

The European Commission started to develop a [European Skills, Competences and Occupations taxonomy](#) (ESCO), which describes the most relevant competences and qualifications needed for several thousand occupations. A partial classification is already in use in the European job mobility portal EURES, which exists in 22 languages. A crucial input will come from the Dictionary of Skills and Competences (DISCO) that contains around 10.000 skills and competence terms and exists in seven languages. [ESCO](#) intends to build on and link with relevant international classifications and standards, such as the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), will complement existing national and sectorial occupational and educational classifications and enable exchange of information between them. A link to the EQF/NQF is also foreseen.

The European Skills Passport

The [European Skills Passport](#), designed by the European Commission in partnership with CEDEFOP and launched in December 2012, is an electronic portfolio which allows giving a comprehensive picture of the skills and qualifications that can complete a Europass CV. Built upon the experiences of the Europass Mobility, the European Skills Passport claims at recognition of skills and competences that have been acquired outside of formal education settings on local/national level. The tool is also developed in line with the European Qualification Framework.

Quality assurance of non-formal learning in youth organisations

The European Youth Forum has been developing a framework for quality assurance of non-formal education. To review performance and results within youth work, 11 quality indicators have been set up that should be reflected on within each organisation during a first internal step, followed by an external (peer review) step. On 19th April 2011, the [Network on Quality Assurance in Non-Formal Education](#) was officially launched during a European Youth Forum's conference on the subject. The network aims to increase the quality of non-formal education in Europe and increase the recognition of this quality by supporting the members in assuring the quality of their educational work, while increasing the understanding of it by other actors in society. The network works on three strands: expertise, capacity building and policy. Through continued, structured discussions between NFE providers and institutions, the European Youth Forum aims to have reached its main goal of agreeing on a Quality Assurance Charter for Non-Formal Education by 2015. A [Manual](#) to support the framework for quality assurance of non-formal education has been developed and published in 2013.

Revision of the Council of Europe's European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers

The [European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers](#) provides youth leaders and youth workers in Europe, volunteers or professionals, with a tool that can help them identify, assess and describe their competences based on European quality standards. Following the first meeting of the Steering Group established for the purpose of its revision, the work has started in November 2013 and is expected to be finalised in winter 2014, after the testing and feedback phase foreseen in summer 2014.

Appendix 11 – Presentation of the 'personal competences in the pathway to work' by Marc Troch from VDAB, Belgium-Flanders



9 + 2 (3?)

Attention for personal competencies in the pathway to work

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VDAB
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9 + 2 (3?)

- Why?
- What?
- How to observe?
- How to remedy?
- Prior conditions?
- Register?

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9

- Attention for personal hygiene
- Be able to deal with rules, respect rules
- Be persistent
- Be able to cope with stress
- Work safely, show respect for material
- Work carefully and accurately
- Pursue result
- Work efficiently, be able to concentrate ("see" work)
- Be able to plan and organize (work, day plan, private-work, ...)

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9 +1?.....

- Working together with others
Very important in many jobs, but not always observable in an training situation, where trainees often get individual assignments

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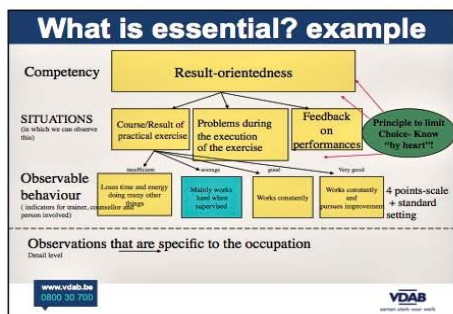
VDAB
samen sterk voor werk

+ 2 ...(3?)

- Mastering the language⁺ of the country (mainly understanding and speaking)
- Being able to deal with ICT functionally, in relationship to your job or job target
- Self-steering; being able to manage your own career....

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State of the art

- General basic documents and specifications, contextualisations per "sector"
i.e.: - building, trade, administration, sales, metal, transport etc.
- These competencies are NOT included in the automatic matching of job offers because they are more development-oriented
- Main condition for use: you must be able to observe participants during a certain period. Contact with them as a job counselor during 15 min. per month is not sufficient to reflect on their attitudes

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VDAB

What can we give in a project?

- Our vocabulary
- Our performance indicators
- Our scenario and script
- Addressess of other organisations in Flanders who have experience with assessment and remediation of generic competencies, mostly in settings with a simulated context, i.e. not based on observation during the daily vocational training

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VDAB

What about job offers?

- Generic competencies mentioned in job offers are slightly different.
- The "top 11" is on next slide

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Top 11 in job offers

- Showing the willingness to learn
- Having commercial insight
- Being creative
- Being flexible
- Working carefully and accurate
- Being able to cope with stress
- Pursing result, being not satisfied with "half work"
- Being able to work together (teamwork)
- Being able to function in a social way
- Showing respect for rules, instructions
- Being able to work independent, without help from others.

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Top 11 in job offers: state of the art

- Only the list of generic competencies.
- No behavior indicators

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Appendix 12 – Full feedback / evaluative comments of the participants

Main achievements

- Now I feel included in the recognition process!
- Contacts and networking
- Sharing + inspiring to really work on and implement recommendations and challenges into our own organisations
- I will return home with many questions that I will need to reconsider and answer to myself – mostly oriented on my life and staying in the CSO (civil society organization)
- Open discussion space based on the real survey
- Closer connection with the different participants of the action
- EVS becomes a guided process: how did the project contribute to my development?
- Inspiration to continue to work within EVS and improve the quality within new Erasmus+
- Fantastic facilitators, kept it interesting and engaging
- Exchange of experience. New ideas. New contacts.
- To identify some common problems (volunteer's motivation, clear mentor role)
- To give new view on future EVS projects
- A lot of information and plans for my county, Thank you.
- Great sharing. Practical tools to improve learning.
- Great contacts and a lot of food for thought as well as “food for practice”
- Tackling real issues

Highlights

- Seeing that so many people are working so hard to make EVS successful
- Facilitators really did a great job – they really implemented the topic “supporting of learning process” in the Symposium itself. Visually was really inspiring. + lots of different networks, great!
- Gisele's resume on recognition research
- Discussion about: EVS – education of volunteers – less opportunities – employability
- When we have spoken of some tools we can create and use
- Focus on mentoring process, focus on further development
- Fishbowl discussion: very focused and dynamic
- Fish bowl!!! And all the discussions that we had...
- Role of mentor must be clarified
- Budget must be increased (to support mentors better)
- Volunteers must be explained what competence is
- You did get enough info for the future, so I think symposium was success
- Supporting EVS and promoting is very very important
- Very well organized and professional
- Delicious food
- Loads of new and useful information
- Offering solutions to identified issues
- The communication between organisations. Excellent.
- The quality inputs in many of the sessions and facilitation process. The whole programme itself.
- “High quality” participants, everybody really had something to say about the topics

Lowlights

- After the panel, I felt disappointed because even with the surveys we still to focus on our own action and to complain about others, But we do all our best! 😊
- Information overload
- Panel discussion: the topic was too broad interpreted by the panel speakers, maybe a bit vague
- Spreading of participants over different countries. Understandable, but maybe a pity that countries where youth unemployment is highest/lowest were not present
- We could get more specific with the panel
- Maybe you could be exchange about our national teams
- Difficult to summarise all the content
- There were lot of agency for employment, but not areal employer (e.g. director of some firm, law office, etc.). Info we would get from employers would be more correct.
- Discussions (e.g. panel discussion) were sometimes not very focused, meaning that it was sometimes vague and no conclusion could be made.
- Sometime too many new things to process at once
- Little time for the meeting of the participants, but it was a symposium so it's understandable
- Fishbowl, felt like a lot of repetition. More employers from specific sectors.
- There are some important problems we are not able to solve in a short time.
- Less presentations would have been better
- The main "juice" of discussions was all too general. I would prefer to discuss more specific questions and look into solutions to improve in the new EVS programme

Organisation and logistics

- I know how much work was involved in making the symposium run smoothly. Congrats! You guys rock!
- Great! No comments, was perfectly prepared and flexible to actual needs and facilitated in a way we can learn from
- A lot of different methods – perfect!
- Good
- Perfect city placement – Ljubljana rocks!
- Perfect organization, thank you!
- Perfect!
- Everything was well organized and explained. No single problem.
- Excellent
- Excellent
- You were amazing 😊 !!!

Any other comments

- So many days of buffet = diet when I return home 😊!
- Keep up good work! Really hope that some point from this symposium will be useful for the future organisation and planning of Erasmus+
- I would much prefer to have a semi-circle format instead of separate tables. Thank you for all your work!
- More energisers
- Well done!
- Wonderful time! Thank you all 😊

- Thank you for organizing everything from the logistic to training. It take a lot of skills to make it go so smoothly.
- Thanks!
- More physical activities. We are still young 😊
- Thank you for inviting me!!!

Appendix 13 – List of participants

Name and Surname	Organisation	Country
PARTICIPANTS		
Marc Troch	VDAB (Public employment service of Flanders)	BE
Joris WAGEMAKERS	N/A	BE
Linde FRANSEN	AFS Intercultural Programmes	BE
Amina Purivatra	N/A	BiH
Gordana Varcakovic	Youth organisation Svitac	BiH
Florian LAUNAY	N/A	FR
Estelle CROCHU	Agence Erasmus+ Jeunesse et Sport	FR
Anna Krisztina Varga-Radnóti	EU-Jobs Kft.	HU
Lea Sinka	EU-Diakok - Student Work Hungary	HU
Katalin Majoros	ZF Leknsysteme Hungária Kft.	HU
Kitti Gerner	Landdevelopers for Countryside Association	HU
Carolina Pont	The Gaia Foundation	MT
Monique Agius	N/A	MT
Danjela Falzon	Inspire	MT
Sylwia Dąbrowa	Blueform	PL
Jennifer Crissey	Socio-Cultural-Education Association "Teatr Brama"	PL
Vesna Vidojevic	Ministry for Youth and Sport of Serbia	SRB
Bozidar Dimic	N/A	SRB
Jelena Glamocanin	Centre Jules Verne	SRB
Alenka Kraljič	Trenkwalder	SI
Mojca Mayr	N/A	SI
Taja Metličar	N/A	SI
Rudi Klajnšek	University of Maribor	SI
Štefan Simončič	Association Epeka, social enterprise	SI
Tomas Savkanic	N/A	SK
Katarína Kňazíková	Iuventa - Slovak Youth Institute	SK
Ondrej Strnad	Centrum volneho casu - JUNIOR	SK
Andrej Dudac	Iuventa - Slovak Youth Institute	SK
Marion Wachet	N/A	UK
Katie Lissamore	Inter-Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE UK)	UK
Sandy Ascenso Carreira	ASHA Volunteering Centre	UK
GUESTS		
Mariann Klingberg	European Commission	BE
Barbara Zupan	Office of the Republic of Slovenia of Youth (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports)	SI
Janez Škulj	Institute MOVIT, Slovenian National Agency of the Erasmus+ programme - Youth chapter	SI
TEAM		
Marija Kljajić	JINT, BE-FL NA	BE
Szőke Zsófia	NCSSZI, HU NA	HU
Tinkara Bizjak Zupanc	MOVIT, Ljubljana	SI
Jana Gruden	MOVIT, Ljubljana	SI
Aline Rollin	Graphic recorder	FR
Ozgehan Senyuva	Researcher	TR
Gisele Evrard	Facilitator	BE
Darko Marković	Facilitator	SRB

EVS Competences for Employability was a project aiming at looking into competences that EVS volunteers have gained in their EVS projects and their relevance for future employability and employment prospects.

It was developed and implemented between November 2012 and May 2014 by:

