

Stepping into EVS:

Accreditation of European Voluntary Service Promoters in South East Europe

**A guide for non-profit organisations based in South East Europe
wishing to become Host, Sending or Coordinating Organisations
within the European Union's European Voluntary Service
programme**



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Introduction

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) strand of the Youth in Action programme (2007-2013) of the European Union aims to support young people's participation in various forms of voluntary non-profit activities abroad. Any organisation in a Programme Country or in a country of South East Europe wishing to send or host EVS volunteers or to coordinate an EVS project must be accredited.

Accreditation of EVS host organisations based in one of countries of South East Europe was introduced in June 2006. Under the Youth in Action programme, it was enlarged to all EVS promoters, including sending and coordinating organisations.

Accreditation is carried out by the SALTO SEE Resource Centre for all organisations located in the Neighbouring Partner Countries of the Programme in South-East Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. Accreditation of EVS promoters located in Programme countries is carried out by National Agencies for the Youth in Action programme.

Since 2006, EVS promoters wishing to receive accreditation have contacted the SALTO SEE Resource Centre with a variety of questions related to the accreditation process. This guide has been published as a response to these questions, and it describes the different steps of the accreditation process.

What is accreditation?

Accreditation is a communication process in the early stages of the EVS project cycle connected to the beginning of the preparatory phase. At this stage, project leaders should already make basic decisions for future EVS projects within their organisations. Accreditation serves to gain access to EVS and to ensure that the minimum quality standards of the Programme are met.

Accreditation ensures a coherence of values, principles and objectives. All accredited organisations have demonstrated their overall capacities to implement EVS projects according to the values and procedures of the Youth in Action programme.

What is an Expression of Interest?

To be accredited, organisations wishing to become EVS promoters must submit an *Expression of Interest* (EI) describing their general motivation and ideas for EVS activities. EIs must be submitted in English on a standardised form, which is available at the website of the European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc411_en.htm. The same promoter may request one or more types of accreditation (as a sending, host or coordinating organisation).

The preparation of an EI is a good opportunity to think through the foundations of the project idea, and to put them into words that make sense to people outside the organisation.

Promoters wishing to receive accreditation as sending or coordinating organisations complete only the first parts of the EI form (parts I and II and themes for activities) providing a brief description of their organisation and their motivation for EVS.

Accreditation as EVS host organisation involves a more complex process. Promoters looking for accreditation as EVS host organisations must fill in the complete EI form, including information regarding the volunteer placement (environment, activities and target group). The Expression of Interest form always refers to the local placement, where the volunteers will be hosted and carry out their service.

Accreditation of host organisations has been developed as a part of the support provided by the Programme to promoters. It is a communication process that starts with the submission of an Expression of Interest and further on involves interviews, on-site visits, e-mail communication and phone calls between the EVS promoter, the accreditors and the SALTO SEE Resource Centre.

When does accreditation happen?

Expressions of Interest can be submitted at any time (there is no deadline) to the SALTO SEE Resource Centre. They need to be signed and must therefore be sent by post, but electronic versions are also requested. However, organisations are strongly advised to submit their EIs at least six weeks before they submit their grant applications. This is because grant applications can only be approved if all the involved organisations have been accredited at the time when applications are assessed.

How to receive accreditation?

All organisations must apply the principles of the *EVS Charter* at all stages of the project; this is a basis for accreditation. The *EVS Charter* is a part of the Youth in Action Programme Guide (Programme Guide valid as of 1 January 2008, page 68) and it highlights the roles of each organisation in an EVS project, as well as the main principles and quality standards of EVS. Each EVS actor must adhere to the provisions set out in the *EVS Charter*. Organisations decide jointly - in line with the *EVS Charter* - on how to divide tasks and responsibilities, as well as how to divide the grant within each activity of the EVS project. These divisions are formalised through an *EVS Activity Agreement* once a concrete project has been granted.

When an EI form as sending or coordinating organisation is submitted to the SALTO SEE Resource Centre, the Centre will assess the request and send a reply back to the applicant organisation.

When an EI form as host organisation is submitted to the SALTO SEE Resource Centre, the applicant organisation will receive a confirmation of their application (by email and post). Two impartial accreditors will be appointed by the Centre. Their roles are to assess and support the applying organisation.

Accreditors are the identifiers of quality. At least one accreditor will visit each host organisation in order to meet the responsible people and to get to know the organisation and discuss all the important EI elements. The accreditor assesses the proposed tasks for the volunteer and gets information about plans for accommodation, food and support for the volunteer. The second accreditor is informed about findings from the visit. Both accreditors may request further clarification. Usually that happens via phone or e-mail.

Both accreditors have to come to an agreement concerning the Expression of Interest. They make a recommendation to the SALTO SEE Resource Centre for the approval or the rejection of the EI. The accreditors may suggest improvement and possibly request a revised EI. If minor changes are

needed in the EI, the accreditors will communicate this with the applicant and inform the SALTO SEE Resource Centre. Revised EIs shall be submitted to the SALTO SEE Resource Centre in electronic and printed (signed and stamped) versions.

Usually, the assessment of the EI and the accreditation process are carried out within six weeks after receipt of the EI. After accreditation, applicants are informed by the SALTO SEE Resource Centre of the result of the accreditation.

In the case of approval, the SALTO SEE Resource Centre assigns an EI reference number and communicates it to the relevant organisation. This number must be stated in all grant applications relating to EVS projects the organisation is involved in.

Organisations also receive a certificate as accredited EVS host, sending and/or coordinating organisation.

It may happen that accreditors do not support the accreditation of a project. In this case, the organisation will receive information about the reasons for the rejection of approval. They can re-apply for EI accreditation when they consider themselves ready.

The SALTO SEE Resource Centre may withdraw the accreditation at any time in case of non-compliance with the *EVS Charter*.

Accreditation is valid for the period indicated in the EI. However, the maximum validity period is three years. After the validity period has expired, accreditation can be renewed by submitting a new Expression of Interest.

What is being assessed?

Before submitting an Expression of Interest, it is strongly recommended to consult the Youth in Action Programme Guide (http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc443_en.htm). Of particular relevance are Part A 1 (objectives, priorities and important features of the Youth in Action Programme) as well as Part B Action 2 (European Voluntary Service). Further, it is useful to take a look at approved EIs in the database of EVS promoters (see “what happens after accreditation” below).

Accreditors take the following aspects into consideration when determining the value of potential host organisations:

<p>1. Knowledge of the Youth in Action Programme and compatibility with the aims of the Programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of the wider frame of which European Voluntary Service is just one of the components • Awareness of the Programme's objectives, priorities and principles • A clear link between the objectives of the Youth in Action Programme and the activities of the host organisation
<p>2. Understanding of and potential for intercultural learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity with the concept of the intercultural learning and defined opportunities for intercultural learning within the EVS project, for the volunteer and others involved • Awareness and readiness to involve the foreign volunteer in the daily work of the organisation (focus on the potential impact of the EVS project on the staff and the members of the organisation)
<p>3. Balance between service requirements and learning experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly identified learning opportunities for the volunteer (opportunities to gain new skills and knowledge) • Opportunities for the volunteer to carry out a well-defined set of tasks, allowing flexibility for the volunteer's ideas,

	<p>creativity and experience to be integrated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced programme (e.g. a typical weekly agenda) for the volunteer, combining service oriented tasks for the organisation and opportunities for the volunteer to gain knowledge and experiences • Language learning opportunities aimed to support the volunteer in communicating in the local language and experiencing the culture through the language
4. Recruitment and practical arrangements for the volunteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open accessibility to EVS: host organisations must ensure that their placement is open to volunteers of any ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, political opinion, etc.; and they may not require specific qualifications, competencies or education • Understanding of the financial contribution provided by the Programme, knowledge of the total expenses of an EVS project and how co-funding might be obtained • Accommodation and meals (or a food allowance, covering also holiday periods) for the volunteer • Available local transport for the volunteer • Regular weekly or monthly allowances to the volunteer • Understanding of insurance requirements, visa issues and all other administrative issues that the host organisation is responsible for (possibly in cooperation with a coordinating organisation) • Understanding of the importance of the volunteer's participation in the training sessions for volunteers organised by the SALTO SEE Resource Centre
5. Potential for the volunteer's integration into the host community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating opportunities for the volunteer to interact with the local community into the volunteer's overall tasks and activities • Encouraging opportunities for social integration at local level, including possibilities to meet other young people and to participate in leisure activities, as well as opportunities for contact with other EVS volunteers whenever possible
6. Availability and suitability of personal support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacities of the local staff and/or volunteers to provide information about the organisation and its activities and to support the volunteer in carrying out his/her tasks (supervision and guidance) • Capacities of the local staff and/or volunteers to support the volunteer on a personal level, including support for devising a learning plan (key competences and Youthpass) • Understanding the different roles and responsibilities of the mentor and supervisor
7. Awareness of all parties' rights and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding of the EVS Charter • Understanding the roles and responsibilities of all actors involved

What happens after accreditation?

The SALTO SEE Resource Centre is responsible for publishing the accredited EI (as host, sending and/or coordinating organisation) in the online database of approved EVS promoters on the website of the European Commission. The database contains all accredited EIs (in Programme

countries and South East Europe) and targets in particular organisations and young persons who would like to have an international voluntary experience within the framework of EVS and are looking for partners or potential host or sending organisations.



Information is published as it is formulated in the EI application. It is therefore paramount that applicant organisations write their EI so that it enables outsiders to the organisation to get a good impression of the nature of the organisation and EVS placement.

The database can be consulted at: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm

Where to find further support?

Youth in Action Programme: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm

Education, Audiovisual, and Culture Executive Agency (Youth Department): <http://eacea.ec.eu.int>

SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre: <http://www.salto-youth.net/see>

Expression of Interest form: <http://www.salto-youth.net/EIsee>

Accreditation does not ensure financial support, but it is a prerequisite for an application for a project grant at a later stage!