EVS Pre-departure training report
July 30, 2010, Donetsk, Ukraine

The training was organized for 2 volunteers from Ukraine coming from the same sending organizations and planning to do their EVS activities in France within the same project but in different Hosting organisations. The EVS activities are to be started in August.

Working language: Ukrainian, English
Trainer and reporter: Andriy Donets

List of participants

Name and Surname	Sending organization	Hosting organisation
Maria Siemushyna	Multiculti, Kharkiv	Foyer departemental de l'Enfance, Strasbourg, France
Anna Siemushyna	Multiculti, Kharkiv	Communaule Urbaine de Strasbourg – Service Famille et Petite Enfance

Background of the volunteers:

Both volunteers are quite experienced in international youth activities, particularly those organised within Youth in Action Programme. Both were the participants of youth exchanges and training courses, Maria participated in ToolFair 2009. Both are involved in promotion of Youth in Action in their home town and keep in touch with former EVS volunteers.

The main goals of the training are:

- Assist to the better understanding of the EVS, its philosophy in the framework of Youth in Action Programme, EVS main actors and their rights and responsibilities, as well as technical details;
- Prepare the future volunteers to the integration in the new community, new country and to the new culture; and give chance for learning and appreciation of own culture;
- Assist to a greater understanding and appreciation of the voluntary work, clarify the motivation and expectations from EVS;
- Provide the participants with other information and tools which may necessary during the EVS.

The training consisted of the following elements:

- Expectations from the training;
- Sharing motivation for the EVS;
- EVS philosophy;
- Exploring expectations of volunteers for their EVS activity;
- EVS project cycle;
- Rights and responsibilities of EVS actors (SO, HO, volunteer and mentor);
- EVS support systems and crisis management;
- Basics of intercultural learning – the concept and the process;
- Dealing with culture shock;
- Practical tips (AXA insurance, visa issues, communication with sending and hosting organization);
- Meeting with EVS volunteers from EU countries in Ukraine, exchange of experience in working with children and teenagers;
- Training evaluation.

The training started with getting to know each other (as soon as the volunteers knew each other for many years it was acquaintance between volunteers and trainer) and sharing the volunteers' backgrounds and their "ways" to EVS. The volunteers shared about their previous experience of work with and for young people and children during local and international youth activities, particularly those organized within Youth in Action Programme, cooperation with French cultural centre in Kharkiv and communication with their friends – former EVS volunteers. The volunteers shared that they started to think about EVS while they were students and were volunteering in orphanage in Kharkiv. The main motivation for voluntary service is to learn how to work with people and to widen world view.

Among the expectations of the volunteers the main were to find out more about EVS; to get to know more about the Youth in Action Programme; to get to know experience of other volunteers; to get to know how to work with small children and how to benefit most from their projects.

As it turned out both Anna and Maria were fairly well acquainted with Youth in Action Programme and are involved in promotion of the Programme in their home town we focused on the concept of EVS, its history and philosophy. Later on we moved on to the motivation of the volunteers and their hosting organizations making projections and matching of motivations in order to create suitable working atmosphere both for volunteers and hosting organizations and to prevent possible misunderstandings and potential conflicts. The motivation of the volunteers was "evaluated" according to the questionnaire adopted from the T-Kit 5 on International Voluntary Service and examined against spectrums (Employability – Citizenship and Personal growth – Organisational benefit). The volunteers were encouraged to make the exercise upon their arrival to the hosting organization in order to unfold and match mutual expectation, to modify the work/working conditions, to make the EVS a mutual benefit. This session followed with the discussion about conflict resolution and the practical tips on how to avoid and deal with

possible conflicts were worked out. The participants got handouts from the session.

Together with the rights and responsibilities of the main actors involved into EVS the group got to know the support system of European Voluntary Service. The volunteers already had contact with their project coordinator and are quite positive about the communication. Participants got the handouts.

Considerable attention was paid to preparation for living abroad, particularly intercultural communication and intercultural learning; as well as practical tips on how to deal with cultural shock. The concept of intercultural learning was examined with the help of "onion" model of culture. All were sharing their personal experiences in communication with representatives of different cultures and developing recommendations for each other on how to deal with the challenges of intercultural communication. The volunteers demonstrated an advanced level of preparation and intercultural awareness, nonetheless this session brought some advice to the volunteers on how to present their culture, the vision of Ukrainian culture, the interrelation between their culture and what is considered to be traditional culture of Ukraine.

The practical tips on visa and insurance issues, what to take for EVS and how to travel were the issues of the least concern. Both volunteers are registered by their coordinating organization for AXA benefit system and are in contact with the CO for visa issues.

The most extensive part of the training was dedicated to the project related issues, in particularly on working with children aged 2-4 years and 6-13 years. Ukrainian volunteers together with volunteers from Programme countries tried out several games, exchanged expectations from EVS, exchanged origami skills and discussed it as possible activities with children, and discussed how to deal with different situations i.e. when children don't want to play the proposed games, when they are bored, when the recourses are limited.

As the last, but not least element of the training we discussed opportunities for promotion of EVS in Ukraine and in Europe using Internet opportunities (blogs for volunteers, opportunities for creating own blogs, opportunities provided by www.yia.org.ua)

Feedbacks from the volunteers

How much this training fulfilled your expectations?

I liked pre-departure training in Debate Centre in Donetsk. I got sure that I'm ready for European Voluntary Service. I expected also to meet nice people here and it was so! I also got contacts of other volunteers, with whom I would be interesting to talk about EVS. And very useful materials!

This training absolutely fulfilled my expectations and it's a very good theoretical basic for me. I also got many practical tips, so now I understand better what I expect and what I can expect from my project, to make the project better and more useful for all people involved in it.

How much has this training been a learning process for you?

On the pre-departure training I have found out the directions in which I should move forward my preparation for my EVS. Now my further preparation will be much more efficient. I have learned basic practical points in the work with children, without which I would feel uncomfortable. With the help of pre-departure training I learned Youth in Action Programme deeper.

This training gave me a lot of useful information on the whole project and its stages, who and how is involved. How I should get ready for it to get more from and to give more to the project. I also made sure that learning happens not only during the activity itself, but also during preparation and evaluation, at all stages. Now after this training I think that I have better understanding of intercultural learning.

What was the most interesting point for you during this training session?

Not only the training itself was good, the meeting with other volunteers was enriching, as we shared some of our experiences and made friends. It was also interesting to me to know about the process of integration of volunteer in another country. And the theory of identity and of culture will help me to understand better the French culture and the French people, I will live in for almost 1 year.

Every moment of the training was precious. For me it was important to be able to meet volunteers from other countries who work in Ukraine. This enriches and share experience with them. This enriches my view on volunteer work in general and also my view of Ukraine as these volunteers share their impressions about their stay in my country.

What did you miss during the training?

Nothing :) Thank you very much!

I think that I got what I expect and discovered some new things about which I haven't thought enough beefier. Everything was very good. Thank you!