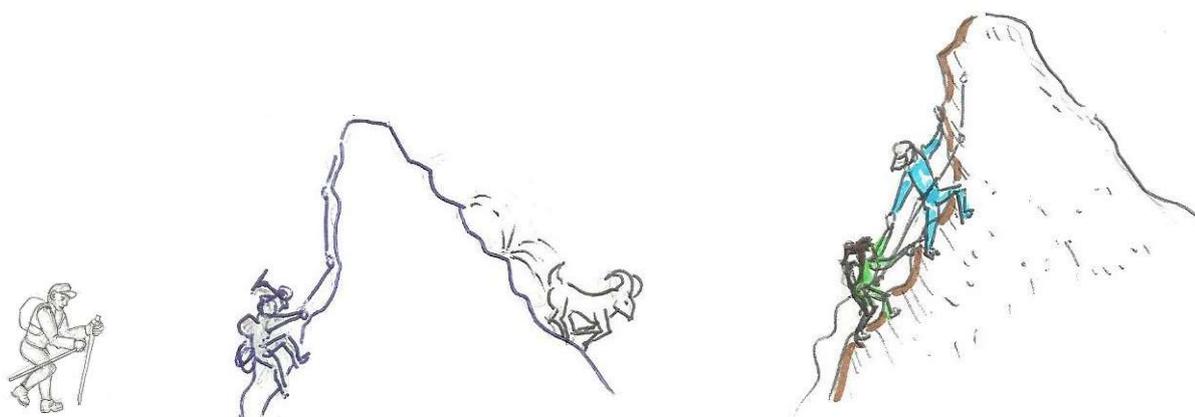


Mentoring and Pre-Departure Training in European Voluntary Service (EVS)

Ideas, tools and suggestions for practice

Written by *Laura Pierfelici*



Editorial information

Mentoring and Pre-Departure Training in European Voluntary Service (EVS). Ideas, tools and suggestions for practice

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Introduction

European Voluntary Service started as pilot action in 1996. Then, thanks to successful results, the European Commission launched the European Voluntary Service Action Programme on 1998.

Since that moment close to 100.000 young people, aged between 17 and 30 years old, have taken part in EVS, having the opportunity to develop their skills through international volunteering experience in the European Union and beyond.

For that reason, 2016 represents an important anniversary in youth field and it is the perfect time to highlight the success of EVS projects with several events taking place across Europe.

“This anniversary is a precious opportunity to create synergies and networking among public bodies, NGOs, youth and stakeholders in the field of volunteering in order to highlight EVS as a tool for personal development and a learning opportunity for the new generation” has been said by **Giacomo D’Arrigo, the Director of the Italian National Agency.**

Then, speaking about the Italian participation, He affirmed:

“Italy is one of the most active country regarding the initiatives realized for the 20th anniversary of EVS. More than 60 local initiatives were organized in the first half of 2016 involving more than 10.000 youngster, 232 local politicians, 86 decision makers and 200 youth workers and trainers”.

The Director proceeded explaining the reason of this massive interest on EVS:

“We focus a lot about Evs because we consider really important to promote it and to share with the youngsters the importance of this experience in the understanding of how life could be different and why it is important to know other cultures and people. Our aim is to spread a message on the value of EVS to implement it as a tool of cultural, social and economic development”.

For that reason, among all the initiatives dedicated to EVS, the Italian National Agency dedicated the month of May to ensure a high quality level of support for volunteers' learning process organizing 2 international events in Rome; a Seminar for Pre-departure Trainers and a Training Course for mentors took place in Rome with the aim to share the expertise and the professionalism developed during these 20 years.

Fabiana Di Carlo, Responsible of EVS for the Italian National Agency says: *"We decided to organize these activities to explore with PDT trainers and mentors the meaning of these key roles in the EVS and to share knowledge, tools and experiences"*.

Indeed, despite the fact that a huge number of factors in each personal EVS story may influence it, it does not mean we have to improvise. There is not a magic formula in youth work, but at the same time there is a lot of knowledge, which could be useful to support your work with EVS.

"There is nothing as practical as a good theory", affirmed Kurt Lewin, and this is valid in youth work as well. For this reason, the experience gained during these initiatives and the need to share these outcomes led to the idea to collect these outcomes and create this manual.

"Now everything is blurry" has been said by one participant of the seminar, and this sentence could easily sum up what still needs to be developed even after 20 year of EVS experience.

Ada Corasaniti, colleague of Fabiana for the EVS action, said: *"We would like to clarify the role of the mentor and we would like to share what he should do or not do"*.

And she continues: *"Also, as Agency, we noticed the SO are not really stressed about PDT in real practice during the implementation of the project; it seems it is something like "yes, if we have time". In reality, PDT is fundamental. It is the real moment when you start to know the person and when you have the possibility to know him/her better and to match him/her with the project"*.

Fabiana: *"One of the results of the training suggests us we - as National Agency - should ask for more info about the mentor during the accreditation phase (how to recruit him/her, the competences required, etc.) and be sure that the organization could be more aware of the mentoring phase"*.

Ada added: *"It could be important to do a final evaluation also about PDT in order to ask the volunteer what we missed in it and what could be useful for a volunteer"*.

Are you wondering what happened then? Ada gave us these feedbacks about the results:

"I feel the participants of both events learnt the importance of the PDT and the role of the mentors. They went through a deep learning process. Now they are aware of the importance of the PDT and they are stronger as mentors. It means we achieved the goals".

What is relevant is that the value of the result not only regards the amount of knowledge and tools disseminated – that increase the impact and the quality of youth work - but it also regards the recognition strategy of youth work, by increasing the professionalization in the EVS field through a better clarification of the role and the awareness of the value of mentoring and PDT.

Well done Italian National Agency!

How to read this book

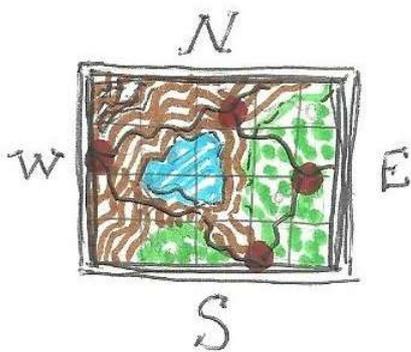
This guide is for you!

If you are searching for some answers **as mentor or PDT trainer** this could be the right place!

This manual means to be a **practical guide** for your work with your EVS volunteers and here you can find some guidelines and advices to guide your actions.

“As a mentor we should prepare our mentee, but it’s up to him how he is going to use his potential”.

This has been said by a youth worker and it is one of the key points of being a mentor.



For this reason, this book wants to be also a learning practical exercise where you can experience the journey of a mentee: I am mentoring you with my writings by providing support, guidance and connection, but there are no rules or solutions you can copy and paste.

It is your responsibility to find answers to your questions and how to deal with PDT and mentoring. Every method and tool has to be adapted to each story and context by you because each story is different. Like a dress, you can find the methods that suits most to your way of working and to your EVS story and you can adapt to that shape. There is not a common dress for everyone, sorry.

For this reason it is important to look at what others do: we can learn a lot from our colleagues from different NGOs and from their stories, getting new inspiration to develop original tools and solutions to adapt to our context and stories.

In the end, what you will find here is a helpful **set of tools and methods** to support your daily work with EVS volunteers **and inputs** to let you reflect about some aspects related to this experience.

Most common terminology used in this field by professionals:

Who?	Programme
YPFO: Young People with Fewer Opportunity	EVS: European Voluntary Service
HO: Hosting Organization	PDT: Pre-Departure Training
SO: Sending Organization	OAT: On-Arrival Training

There is no need to read all the chapters but you can start working immediately from the point you like most.

Here for you a briefly overview of what you can find here!

Intro and preliminary info

These pages want to help you to orientate in this adventure. Here you can find a method - the Hero's Journey - to represent EVS cycle with all the relevant phases and factors and of course, your place in the story and the impact you may have on it.

Additionally you can find some good reason to motivate your involvement in the EVS field.

Indeed, in every adventure there is time when the challenges seems useless and you may be tempted to refuse the call. Before to do that, read these pages!

If it is not enough, you can refuse your involvement as easily as you can close this book, or if you can decide to proceed with the reading, passing the threshold of this introduction and jumping into the extraordinary world of the mentor and PDT trainer.

Pre-Departure Training (PDT)

In this section, you will find the reason to organize a Pre-departure Training, the guidelines on how to structure it and which content take into account, the competences you should be aware to and some useful tool you can use.

Mentoring

Here I will explore the identity of the mentor, the tasks and the most relevant issues (learning aspects and problem solving), the relationship with the volunteer together with the boundaries and ethics to keep in mind.

This part will end with tips and advices on case studies regarding some of the most usual problems, which may occur in each EVS stories.

Technical background of this booklet

The appendix provides the technical information about the events where the content came from:

- Seminar "Sharing best practices on pre-departure training", 16-19 May 2016.
- Training Course "Mentoring in EVS", 24-26 May 2016.
- My 2 articles regarding each initiative publish also in
- the Italian National Agency website.
- The list of the participants of both events.

Good reading!

Laura Pierfelici

Reasons to invest in EVS in time of economic crisis

EVS is considered a tool to **enable more people to enter into the Labor Market**, especially youngster at the first job placement or NEET - Not (engaged) in Education, Employment or Training - by increasing their chances due to the development of new skills and competences.

This statement is supported by the results of several researches done by the National Agencies and European Commission.

For example, a recent impact study shows that between 50%-80% of respondents affirms that the Youthpass Certificate issued at the end of the EVS service enhances chances of young people especially when they apply for a traineeship or internship, employment or further education (*"Youthpass Impact Study. Young People's personal development and employability and recognition of youth work"* TARU M., KLOOSTERMAN P, 2012).

Personally, I was also running a research for my PHD studies based on the development of soft skills within EVS service. It was address to 200 former EVS in the year of 2015.

By the results, over 40% of the respondents affirm to have learnt a lot and 98% of them believe it will be useful in future: learning outcomes will be transferred into the working place (65%) but as well in other context like daily life (66%) or university and formal studies (12%).

These goals are not only impressive but they could be even crucial for the socially or economically disadvantaged people or less qualified, drop-out or people already out of educational cycle.

This is possible because EVS provides an **alternative learning experience** to achieve skills and competences.

Indeed, EVS is considered a learning opportunity even if there is nothing related to schools or traditional educational system.

It is common agree that learning is not only regarding the knowledge we got at school. It happens in everyday life and in every contexts: it happens even when there is any intention to learn something.

For example, we can learn foreign language singing a song or we can develop teamwork skills by playing volleyball!

This is what is called **informal learning**.

Thinking about learning in this new perspective, it is clear that what we learn at school is only a little part of the whole learning happening in our life.

Some research shows that more than 70% of the learning comes from informal learning: we learn even more in alternative ones than in school system! (*"The Anholt project. The informal adventure that makes people grow"*, PETERSEN, LIND et al., 2014).

Already more than 80 years ago, an educational reformer called John Dewey claimed the need of a radical change in the educational field based on reducing the distance between the learning happened in the school system with the one happened out of this setting.

Now, the current focus of the **European debate about learning** is moving from the classical educational system based on schooling (formal education) towards alternative ones (non formal education and informal education).

The redefinition of places and of timeframe in which learning happens, it gives spaces to alternatives learning experience like informal learning. This is the frame that make it possible to define EVS as a learning experience!

Indeed EVS projects create a setting where a young person can learn from everyday events, through carry out various activities, by exploring another culture or by connecting with other people, etc.

This is an attractive way to understand and to give values of what young people are **already good at** and a way to gain new competences and life skills.

Evier says: "young people have a lot of abilities they are not aware of. Tell them that EVS is helping them to show their competence and to do positive experience. It is not that you go and work for free".

Do we need this?

Yes, because this alternatives learning experience can be crucial especially for the socially or economically disadvantaged people or less qualified, drop-out people or the one who may be at risk of low levels of attainment in formal learning or who is already out of educational cycle. In few words, this is an attractive way to gain competences and life skills when school failed.

Helena: "Without education there are more obstacles in managing own life."

These results should make us clear the **importance and complementary of the informal learning with the formal education** and the necessity of more recognition.

At the European level, the needs to recognize and to validate the non formal and informal learning is taken into account by the European Strategy since 2000 through the "Lisbon European Strategy" and it's reinforced today with new political-institutional aims through "Europe 2020" which it clearly promote the recognition of the non formal and informal learning.

For all this economical, civic and pedagogical reasons, **EVS is important!**

Inclusion and EVS

Some people are excluded in our society depending on a variety of factors.

*Sanita: “Sometimes there are even **hidden social obstacles or sometimes obstacles come and grow together**: for example, economical ones usually are not alone and they could be linked to unemployment or social problems.”*

There are young people who are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more of the exclusion factors.

This situation often prevent them from taking part in employment, formal and non-formal education, trans-national mobility, democratic process and society at large.

This is what we mean when we say: “Youth People with Fewer Opportunities” (YPFO).

As youth workers we should be aware that everyone can be with few opportunities in life facing some obstacles, in some way, in any moment.

*Helena “There are not people totally included or totally excluded but there is a scale. We **should know the obstacles and what prevents from exclusion.**”*

We have to consider it in our EVS project.

The ambition of the Programme is to be accessible to all young people and EVS is “inclusion” too. It means that inclusive projects should have a positive impact on the situation of YPFO.

*Helena: “we made a survey and we discovered that a lot of activities are about them (YPFO) but without them. The survey identifies 19 key factors that influence social inclusion of young people within the Youth in Action Programme. They are not only due to the personal situation of the youngster but they are **results also of the organization procedures and some features in the EVS Programme**”.*

What we can do is to adopt a inclusive approach, which means we have to focus our work not only on the volunteers but also on our organizational procedures.

There are '**keys to success**' serving as a guide for organizations to improve the quality of their projects, to improve the situation of YPFO and to reduce obstacles for a variety of target groups:

- Keeping young people at the center
- Dealing with diversities of all kinds
- Using non-formal learning
- Keeping eyes on the long-term impact
- Ensuring a holistic approach and partnership

Annarita is experienced in working with people with visual impairment and she share with us her working method which can be adapted in several cases:

*“You should **focus first on the person, then on the disability. Don’t pretend to know what the disability means but be open-minded, listen to your volunteer and focus on what the person is trying to communicate to us. it’s clear that it is not so easy. It is essential, of course, you know the target because you have to adapt the methodology to that. That means, in few words, to realize a tailor-made project”.***

Inclusion is not something that happens by itself; inclusive projects need efforts and active actions. In few words, it means time, money and resources to invest on it.

Novella: “Some volunteers take so much time which in reality should be dedicated to our own job. How many resources can be addressed to only one volunteer among all the tasks you have to do?”

This is a common question for the youth worker regarding time and resources management. Again, there is not a standard answer or defined amount of time to dedicate on it but, if needed, you can implement an additional resource: the “Reinforced Mentorship”.

The **Reinforce Mentorship** is a measure to provide additional mentoring to increase individual support by the sending and hosting organizations.

Be aware that it represents an additional task to the daily work so the suggestion is to find a resource totally dedicated on it.

Other way you get the opposite results: the Reinforce Mentorship is even harder because you give even more tasks to the youth worker and it become something more s/he has to do.

Best practices: **10 years of Adapted EVS**

Even it is 20 years EVS is active, youngsters with visual impairment had to wait 10 years to participate to EVS because there were not placements able to provide the necessary support.

Thanks to Views International now it is possible through a project called “adapted EVS”: it consists in adapting the living and working place for volunteers with visual impairment. For example, it offers Braille or large print adaptations, daily living skills classes, mobility sessions, French classes, Reinforced mentorship, Accompanying services, etc.

In particular:

- **Orientation and mobility:** In the first 2 weeks of the EVS there is the special support of a qualified mobility instructors who will help the EVS to have better knowledge of the surrounding and its infrastructures, showing how to reach your working place, the closest bus stops, shops and everything else it is needed.
- **Adapted daily living skills:** There is a special person trained to help the EVS to get familiar and comfortable in his/her new EVS home. A special training is provided in order to learn how to use the adapted devices in the EVS house: the trainer can teach how to cook, to clean and can provide assistance for shopping etc.

Thanks to the adapted EVS, the visually impaired youngsters can increase their autonomy and become more independent, self-confident and ready to face daily living challenges but they can also have a first job environment experience, improve skills like language and social and professional development.

The EVS cycle

If you understand the process, you know better how to support your volunteer!

In project management we learnt that the way to represent a whole plan of actions in a project is divided in 3 main steps:

	<p>Preparation</p> <p>The departure Preparation (including PDT phase) & Separation (departure)</p>	<p>Implementation</p> <p>The service</p>	<p>Evaluation</p> <p>The return and follow-up Volunteers are back home and they bring new resources in their home community</p>
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This structure gives a clear picture of the project and it helps to describe activities and results.

On the other hand, if we focus our attention on the roles of the SO and of the mentor we could risk to have a limited perception of their involvement. What happens is that we could be tempted to place the SO in the first phase (limiting his function as travel support and related procedures like initial documents, as agreements, insurance, etc.) and the mentor in the second one (related to a regular evaluation of the volunteer during the service).

Actually, neither of both figures is responsible of only one-step; **their involvement is requested in all of the 3 steps** and their tasks are much more than it may appear at a first sight.

How is it possible to get the main picture of the EVS project including also the factors that influence the experience of each volunteer and, at the end, the success of it?

An alternative method is necessary and now it is getting popular to represent the EVS cycle like any of the tales of our childhood. It does not sound like a method but, actually, it is believe me!

It is called **“the Hero's journey”** and it is based on the concept introduced by Campbell in 1949 of a common template of a broad category of tales. In few words, it means that **in each story, EVS included, you can find the same elements.**

The core of this method is based on the process of comparing the EVS to an adventure and it works because it makes this story familiar to some pattern we know since the childhood, like a fairy tale. Indeed, the representation of the “hero” has a big power on the imagination of each person because of its deep symbolic effect.

The advantage of using it is represented by the fact that this method provides **a key to “read”** the complexity of the EVS and, at the end, we can easily analyze the elements of the story, like our role as SO or mentor.

In other words, it creates a kind of map which allows us to see all the actors, steps and phases in the journey of the volunteer and, based on that, we can easily plan which resources we should provide to better support each volunteer in any personal story.

Let's start from the beginning and follow me. Each story starts in a certain moment because something happens; then everything become an adventure out of daily life. A lot of new things happen as well as difficulties and challenges but there is an external guide to support and to give advice to the hero (the mentor). At a certain moment, there is a big challenge for the hero, so huge than s/he gets unsafe starting doubting about his/her own ability to solve it. Most of the time the problem is solved and the winning shows the hero empowered by the awareness of his own strengths. The success brings a final reward and the story ends with the return to daily life.

If you use your imagination and you reflect about the tales you know, you may discover they are all following this pattern, with only few exceptions. Now, if you try to adapt the EVS story on this frame you can better see at which phase your hero is living now, and even a complex story can become familiar.

Helena: "what I like is that it helps people to orientate and to understand which step you have to do in order to go on and to develop yourself. You know that maybe you are staying at home refusing all the calls for adventure in your life or, if you are into the adventure and you are tired or maybe something is going wrong, it can be quite normal because it is an essential step to do if you want to get the reward in your community."

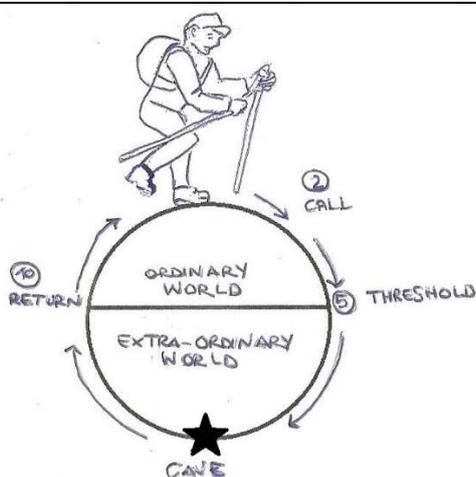
If we apply this methods (the process of framing each individual EVS story into something familiar to relate it) is easier **to "read"** better the whole story and, what is relevant for us, it allows us **to plan our intervention** in the EVS cycle to support better our volunteers.

The results is that we can understand better the complex experience and we can conduct deep analysis of key moments related to the EVS step, orientating our actions on that. In few words, to know how can we support the volunteers.

Campbell, described the basic narrative pattern as follows:

"A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man".

C. Vogler develop Campbell's theory proposing the 12 stages of the hero's journey:



1. The Ordinary World
2. The Call to Adventure
3. Refusal of the Call
4. Meeting with the Mentor
5. Crossing the Threshold: entrance to the "special world"
6. Tests, Allies and Enemies
7. Approach to the Innermost Cave
8. The Ordeal or turning point
9. Reward
10. The Road Back
11. The Resurrection
12. Return with the Elixir.



Exercise:

Every hero's journey fit very well into every EVS story. Let's check together!
Think about a story and follow each step!

STEP	STORY		EVS
<p>1 - Ordinary World The story starts from the daily life and it helps us to set the profile of the hero in the context and identify his/her needs.</p>	<p>Alice in Wonderland is not anymore a child but she is not a woman yet. As a teenager she wants to grow up but at the same time, she has fears and she wants to remain a little child. Pinocchio is a wooden puppet and he wants to become a good child.</p>		<p>For example, a young person finish high school and he/she does not know if going to university or not and, in a bigger perspective, he/she does not know what to do in life.</p>
<p>2 - Call for adventure At a certain moment, an event or an initial incident happens. Here the hero receives a "call" to something new. It could be a "inner" call like a sensation or an "external" like a sequence of happenings.</p>	<p>Alice is feeling bored due a book with no pictures, she gets distracted by an unusual white rabbit and she follows it. Pinocchio is on the way to school when he meets the Great Marionette Theatre and follows them going out of ordinary step.</p>		<p>It can be a inner sensation connected to the wish to change something in life or to a concrete happening like a public selection for a EVS vacancy.</p>
<p>3 - Refusal of the call Most of the times at the beginning the hero tries to find some reason to refuse a call in order to keep staying in the ordinary world (daily life), instead of jumping into an unknown world. Sometimes an extra support is needed like an additional call or a mentor talk.</p>		<p>Frodo (Lord of the Rings) refuses the call at the beginning.</p>	<p>Volunteers can have doubts: "Do I really want it?" "Is it really worth it?" "Am I strong enough for this experience?" Meeting with the SO could give some support.</p>
<p>4 - Mentor Every hero needs a guide and a magic "tool": it can be also knowledge, training or self-confidence, not necessary a material one. The mentor supports the hero giving advices: he can be an old wise person who did the same experience in the past. The relationship among them reminds to a parental one but it is possible that hero does not want to listen to the advices of the mentor and refuses him.</p>		<p>An old and wise man like Gandalf in Lord of the Ring. Pinocchio does not want to listen the advices of the Talking Cricket and he kills it. The Cricket comes back as a ghost to continue advising the puppet. Blue Hookah-Smoking Caterpillar is always making the right question to a confused Alice. Here you are! There is a specific step dedicated to your roles and this should clearly show how much there is need of you in the story! It may happen that: "In everything I offer there is something wrong".</p>	
<p>5 - Threshold When the hero embraces the call he usually does a physical step or a concrete action; this step brings him/her from ordinary life to the adventure in the extraordinary world and there is no coming back till the end of it. There could be figures trying to stop the hero but they have to be recognized and ignored.</p>		<p>Alice in wonderland falls in the hole.</p>	<p>The Evs steps literally in a new world: he/she concretely moves to another country crossing borders and changing language through a real travel. Family and friends could try to convince him that EVS is a dangerous situation or a waste of time.</p>

<p>6 - Test, allies and enemies</p> <p>There are a lot of new people who are stepping in (friends, enemies, etc.). The hero faces the first trials and troubles and in this way he/she learns the rules in the extraordinary world. This phase shows the character of the hero, the emotions, the values and the priorities.</p>	<p>Pinocchio meets the Fox and the Wolf, the Blue Fairy, the puppeteer and he lives several little trails.</p>	<p>EVS needs to orientate, settle down in the new world and get ready. EVS meets other EVSs and starts new friendship.</p>
<p>7 - Dark cave (most dangerous place). Now the hero has fears. It is a frustrating condition where s/he cannot move on and the way s/he travels is not easy. In this phase, the hero should stop to prepare himself to the battle gaining a new perception of himself. The mentor cannot replace him/her in the main challenge who has to be accomplished it alone with his/her own resources.</p>	<p>The prince doubts to be able to kill the dragon.</p>	<p>This is the moment when the EVS tells you: "I want to interrupt the project because I don't like the activities and I don't like to live here".</p>
<p>8 - The Supreme Ordeal</p> <p>This is the big battle where the hero faces his/her own fears and risks to die. The death represents the end of his/her previous personality and the re-birth of a new awareness and empowerment. Nothing will ever be the same anymore.</p>	<p>The Fox and The Cat try to kill Pinocchio. Gandalf cannot take the ring, only Frodo can. This is the moment when the prince faces the dragon.</p>	<p>EVS faces the problem and s/he finds solutions.</p>
<p>9 - Reward</p> <p>This is the moment of celebration and the hero gets an official reward for the success. S/he realizes s/he defeated fears and inner and (outside) monsters.</p>	<p>Prince can marry the princess and govern the kingdom.</p>	<p>That is the Youthpass certificate!</p>
<p>10 - Road back</p> <p>On the way back home there are some tests. The hero is not out of the adventure yet; He has to take the decision to get back to the ordinary world and not to remain there. S/he has to defeat the fear that the reward could disappear on the way back. It is another trespassing of the threshold.</p>		<p>This is the moment of goodbyes for EVS, to organize the travel back home. Family and old friends are waiting to celebrate the return.</p>
<p>11 - Resurrection</p> <p>This is not the biggest challenge, but it is the final one. There are new tests because the rules which made the hero winning in the extraordinary world may not work in the ordinary one. Is the hero able to transfer them into another context?</p>	<p>Like a Fenix. The Sleepy Beauty almost die.</p>	<p>When the EVS is back nothing is the same as before.</p>
<p>12 - Return with Elixir</p> <p>The hero is back bringing new knowledge to the ordinary world and this is the moment when the whole adventure acquires a meaning. The function of this phase is to end the story, but there are 2 possible scenarios.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> starting point: the hero stays in the ordinary world but the now world seems different and s/he is a new person. open-end: hero does not stay in the ordinary world so a new adventure starts again. 	<p>Sam (Lord of the Ring) got married, has 3 children and became a leader of his community. Frodo didn't feel at home anymore so he decided to start a new journey.</p>	<p>EVS goes back home and he has to integrate in the community again. It could be not so easy and this is the moment when s/he needs support. S/he needs time to realize that life is not Evs but EVS is only one of the adventures in life. Some former volunteers are not able to go out from EVS syndrome. They need to learn that there is a cycle and there is an ending.</p>

SO in the EVS project. Why and when you need a SO

The beginning of the adventure is not the travel (that is the 5th step)!

Everything begins in the moment the hero thinks about EVS!

This means also that a lot of things happened before the travel and you have to consider them.

Using the Hero's journey as a method to analyze every EVS project can help to identify the role of each actor involved and which actions can be implemented in any moment to support our hero.

*Alice: "As a mentor, I will try to better understand the EVS also **looking at which part of circle of life he is**".*



Here are some highlights selected for you!

*Novella: "As SO, most of the time we have control of the situation till the threshold. Then we are kind of lacking all the rest till the volunteers are coming back home. There are projects when everything is pretty much fine or the EVSs deal by themselves their challenges and we don't get any idea of what happened during the project until the end, when they finish it and they come back to do the final evaluation meeting with us. We miss all the struggles and everything the volunteers are passing through. So our role is **a lot into the ordinary world**: a lot in the beginning and very much at end".*

*Helena: "When the EVS is in the extraordinary world, the SO represents an important **connection with the ordinary word**, in a kind of **safe grounding** if needed. Even if they do not have much contacts, the EVS knows the SO is there. The dots of the SO means that the roles is small but it is still there all the time".*

*Carolina: "At their return, when they come back, we give them time to digest the experience, but then we try to involve the volunteer **at local level**. The Evs is finished but you can continue it with the things you learnt and things you want to do".*

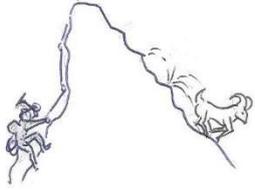
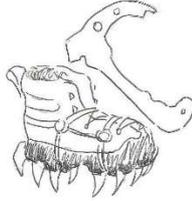
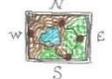
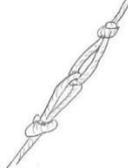
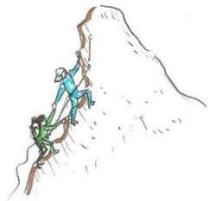
*Helena: "There should be integration of the new things, So to EVS would not say "it's over, good bye". There is an aim in EVS and it is the **contribution in the society and the use of the skills**. Otherways the whole EVS doesn't have sense".*

*Jan: "It is a crucial thing to support the Evs when they are back. As SO we can **keep them busy** even answering to their calls, as we usually get the request "do you have some tc?"*

Pre-departure phase

PDT plays an important role on equipping the volunteers to their adventure.

If you still doubt about the importance of the PDT, imagine the importance of the preparation for a trekking in the Alps mountains..

<p>Find the top to climb!</p> 	<p>The PDT should help the volunteer to identify the goal (the mountain to climb) and the motivation (the reason of this choice) as well as should reflect about the meaning of this experience (climbing) and on the aspects that make it a learning experience!</p> <p>A first discussion should be focused on personal motivations and expectations of the volunteers regarding this experience; this is a good starting point to focus on personal learning goals and to help the youngster to create his/her own personal project.</p> <p>In few words, PDT worker should help the youngster to define his/her own educational goals or, in other words, to make clear what the volunteer really wants from climbing a mountain called EVS.</p>
<p>Tools</p> 	<p>Once the volunteer has defined why and where s/he wants to go, the PDT should equip the volunteer to this EVS adventure providing the tools and the information to overcome the challenges of this adventure.</p> <p>You should prepare the necessary tools to climb without sliding down: Intercultural aspects, conflicts resolution and flexibility are always good tools to bring in one own luggage to never fall down!</p> <p>Don't forget to provide a language preparation because now with the new programme the linguist support has become an obligation and it has to be done before the departure!</p>
<p>Info</p> 	<p>Let's know your mountain! What will you find there? Maybe a lake or maybe the snow.. so, during the PDT, you should provide project related information like Evs Agreement, Insurance, and administrative aspects and the roles of people involved in the project (mentor, coordinator, tutor).</p>
<p>Network</p> 	<p>What are you passing through is not an unusual experience and it can be a collective adventure.</p> <p>People are important, they can tell you how they managed or they can walk with you for a while in the same paths. That's why PDT should provide the opportunity to meet other volunteers (potential and former) to bring people in touch among them.</p>
<p>Trust & Teambuilding</p> 	<p>PDT represents the opportunity to strengthen the relation between coordinator & volunteers. If you build a relation based on trust, it will be easier for you to support your volunteer during the service abroad.</p> <p>In few words: PDT is a teambuilding activity between you and the volunteer. Well, sometimes with mom too!</p> <p>Keep in mind and put it in your agenda a meeting with the volunteer's family because they could need to know and to trust the SO too.</p>

Contents in the PDT

We invite you to follow the *guideline from the Guide* and the *EVS Charter*, where you can find the minimum standard regarding the topic to be discussed at the PDT. By our experiences, here the “unforgettable”:

Project related information (general):

Discuss on the meaning of the volunteering and the essence of EVS.

Explain the features of EVS: the project cycle, the methods (non-formal and informal education), the Youthpass certificate, the financial aspects and rules (Evs Agreement and EVS charter).

Regarding the agreement - Rights & Responsibilities, our tip is to make clear to the volunteer that Evs has a double value: it contains rights but also duties!

Project related information (specific):

Presents the HO, the context of work and main activities.

Read the info-pack and EVS related information (like accommodation, tasks, etc.)

Prepare the volunteer to know new faces introducing the people involved in the HO and their roles.

The roles of the youth workers involved on it: mentor, tutor & coordinator

Clarify the different roles and identify the tasks and meaning of each: in this way the volunteer will know how to direct his/her own needs to the right responsible.

Motivation, Expectation and Learning goals:

“Why this project?”: it helps the volunteer to express clearly the personal motivation and to not judge: there is no right or wrong motivation! Your task is to match the motivation of the volunteer with the Evs project content. This discussion should bring the volunteer to set own objective and stimulate personal project ideas. In this way the volunteer can benefit of learning and result oriented activities.

If possible, invite the volunteer to write a “letter to myself”.

Risk crisis prevention and “crisis package”

Make the volunteer aware of the challenges and present the “curve” of adaptation.

At intercultural level introduce the iceberg of culture and improve the intercultural awareness.

Let's equip the volunteer on conflict resolution issues and improve problem solving competences.

Cultural preparation

Provide a cultural guideline *regarding* the hosting country and a linguistic support.

Dissemination aspects

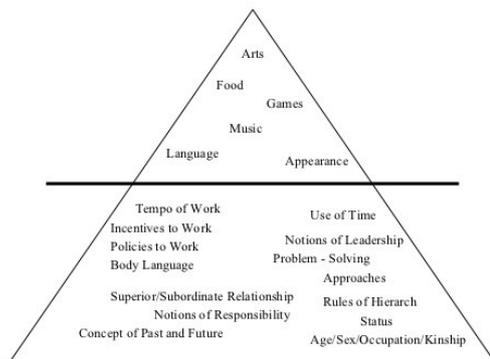
Invite them to share with peers using the digital channels (website, blog, etc.).

Additional topic suggested:

- Discuss about the issues of sense of initiative and pro-activeness
- Invite to adopt flexibility and sense of adaptation during the EVS.

Carolina: “Remember to stress about the flexibility. For me it is really important they understand the importance of being flexible when they have to face the challenges. You should be ready to not be too strict regarding what is going to happen to you but you should be ready for the unexpected”.

Iceberg Model



Iceberg of Culture

Culture has a deep influence on people and it has to be taken in consideration if you go to live abroad.

If we think that culture has an iceberg is easier to visualize its complexity:

On the top we find everything is visible immediately (arts, music, food, language, etc.) but the bottom is the biggest part where contents are invisible and also unconscious (different attitude and role models, notion of time and space, etc.).

Curve of Adaptation

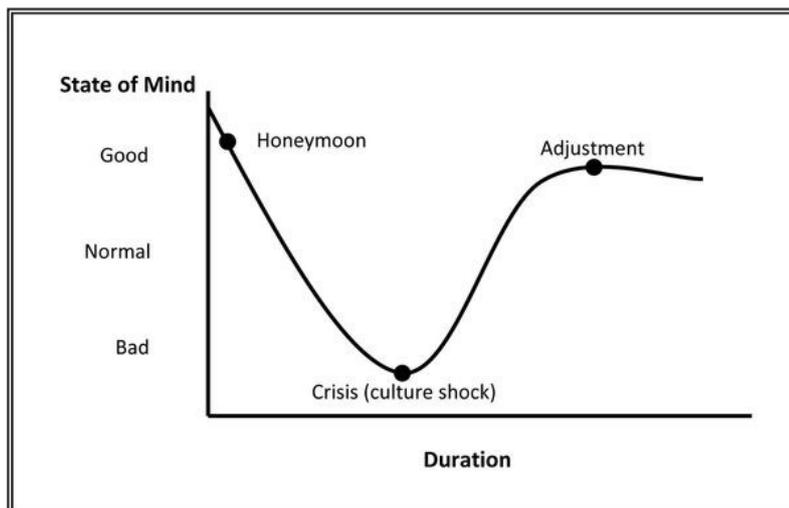
A long-term experience abroad has different phases: the "honeymoon", the crisis and the adjustment.

At the beginning everything is wonderful and exciting (honeymoon).

Then things get more and more difficult and you feel really bad, disoriented and unsatisfied.

This is called "cultural shock" and its impact depends on the way people react and reflect on it, to overcome the negative feelings and move on from there.

Then it turns to adaptation process and stability.



"I would have liked that someone warned me about the cultural shock that I was about to live. I don't think it would have changed something in the shock itself, but at least I could have understood what was going on to me".

Competences in the PDT

Competences developed by the volunteer during a PDT

The competences expected in the volunteers (or expected to be improved):

- conflict resolution
- intercultural awareness

The participation in non formal education has up and down and it is important to learn how to manage crisis package and which are the step to do.

Other knowledges are about:

- Youthpass and Key Competences
- Means of communication (benefit of a linguistic support)
- Non formal education setting and learning issues.

What you should **aim to**:

1. Empower the young person to take responsibility for own actions

2. Stimulate the self-reflection in the volunteers

3. Make them ready:

- for the challenges
- to learn

Jan: "Don't pretend to arrive in a different country or society and keep the same lifestyle: be ready for the change!"

4. Learn to ask for help and support (take advantage of mentorship sources).

How a **volunteer should be** (or should be ready to improve)?

- proactive attitude: don't be shy!
- open mind
- flexible attitudes
- realistic regarding the expectations
- good on self-awareness, also regarding own life plan, especially in a long term

Suggestions as **volunteers motto**:

- Keep it simple!
- Relax!

Competence in a PDT workers

As you can see from the long list it is not easy to train an hero, but keep this list as a guideline to develop your professional competences to fit as much as possible to the ideal profile of the PDT worker.

Empathy		Creativity
Understanding	Positive energetic attitude	Ability to develop self-confidence of the volunteer
Active listening	Teacher (the good ones, don't tell them all the "secret" of the experience! they need to discover it by themselves, it's a path!)	Sense of humor
Motivation seeker & motivator		Good on mentoring
Patience	Realistic inspiratory person	Be able to ask the "good questions"
Ability to take distance when needed	Have practical examples when needed	Be useful
Flexibility	Be someone you trust	Be also provocative
Mediation skills	Ability to control personal emotions	Having a theoretical view on cultures and intercultural issues
Facilitation & coaching skills		
Communication skills	Well organized	Know the boundary because you are the trainer and not the mom.
NFE training	Ability to empowering youth	
EVS Erasmus knowledge	Able to delegate personal responsibility	
International mobility experience	Comforting	

Structure of a PDT

Monica: "we sent only 2 volunteers so far, so the preparation was homemade. I want to understand better how to structure a future PDT and to avoid difficult situations to deal with. I mean, I would like to give some frames and boundaries and clarify better what is the PDT in terms of contents, timing, etc. Now everything is blurry!"

PDT sometime it takes 6 months!

Here you can find some ideas regarding structure, content and purpose and some of the tools you could use and the competences you may need. You are not alone anymore in your PDT!

Some tips

1. Peer to peer education: Involve EVS and former-EVS!

If possible, invite former EVSs and your current EVSs to share their experiences with the youngsters and to interact with them: use the power of the peer to peer education!

It represents an important moment to share information, knowledge and tips with other volunteers as well as fears and motivation.

How should the Evs volunteer be involved in the process?

Our suggestion is to start the PDT from the experience and the explanation by our former EVSs or to invite the next generation of volunteers to make interviews to them.

So, don't miss the opportunity to provide interaction and to set proper space and time for it!

2. Adopt some tools!

Explanations and discussions are important to reflect and to analyze some concepts, but we invite you to make your PDT more effective and interesting using the methods of non formal education!

When possible use simulations and other tools to let the volunteers reflect and discuss about the experience and the concepts through experiential learning.

In the next page you can find some suggestions easy to be used in every PDT.

3. Involve locally!

Invite to do a lot of volunteering within your organization and stimulate to participate in a youth exchange or other international experiences to understand better what it is and what interculturality and non formal education is.

Successful practice -

Estonia national PDT events.

Janika, former EVS in Italy, now works for the Estonian National Agency delivering PDT. Even if the PDT is not founded anymore, Estonia is still providing 1 day of PDT at National Level.

It's an additional service and it does not replace the things the NGOs already do.

There is a double goal: one regarding contents and particularly the information regarding the EVS programme (Youthpass, etc.) and the logistic and administrative rights and duties (visas, insurances, etc.) that ensure to cover the essential topics of each PDT (motivation, goals, etc); additionally it represents a way to meet other volunteers with whom share experiences and be in contact.

The frequency depends on the number of volunteers (usually is around 100 each year) and when their projects start (basically 4 times a year).

Janika: "It's an additional value, it depends on finances and how it is difficult to organize it. Logistically, for example, in Italy could be harder than in Estonia because of the geographical difficulties (Estonia is small) but anyway I would recommend it!"

Tools for PDT

Writing and drawing methods

Give them a diary

Indre: "Give instruments to work on personal development, like a diary"

A diary is always a good instrument to reflect and document own personal development, it's easy to bring and to travel with and it's economically cheap! Not everyone likes to write down own emotions and stories or to draw them so don't worry and keep it voluntary. If you want a special diary, you can find some of them in Salto-Youth Tool Box with prefilled sections for EVS.

Letter to myself

The volunteer writes a letter to him/herself during the PDT or at OAT and leaves it to the SO to keep it for an agreed time, usually till the end of the service or in the middle of it. Regardless the timing of writing, thanks to this letter, the volunteer will discover the changes and the learnings happened during this experience in an emotional and unforgettable way. And you, are you going to introduce it during your PDT or are you waiting for the OAT?

Farewell postcard (bye mom)

There is a new proposal, to introduce a tool to let the volunteers reflect upon the reasons that pushed him/her to leave home for this kind of experience. Since the farewell is usually one important aspect of pre-departure time, the idea is to give some personal space to the volunteers, after most of the PDT activities, to let them reflect upon their reasons to leave by expressing it concretely through words - or other ways like any kind of art piece or symbolic mean - to address to their friends/family to let them know it too. The invitation for the EVS is to write the letter to the persons s/he must worried about and send it to them. It will give the possibility to understand and formulate why s/he wants to do EVS. It is super-cool to understand it and to let the others know about the motivation of your choice: **"I love you but I need to go"**.

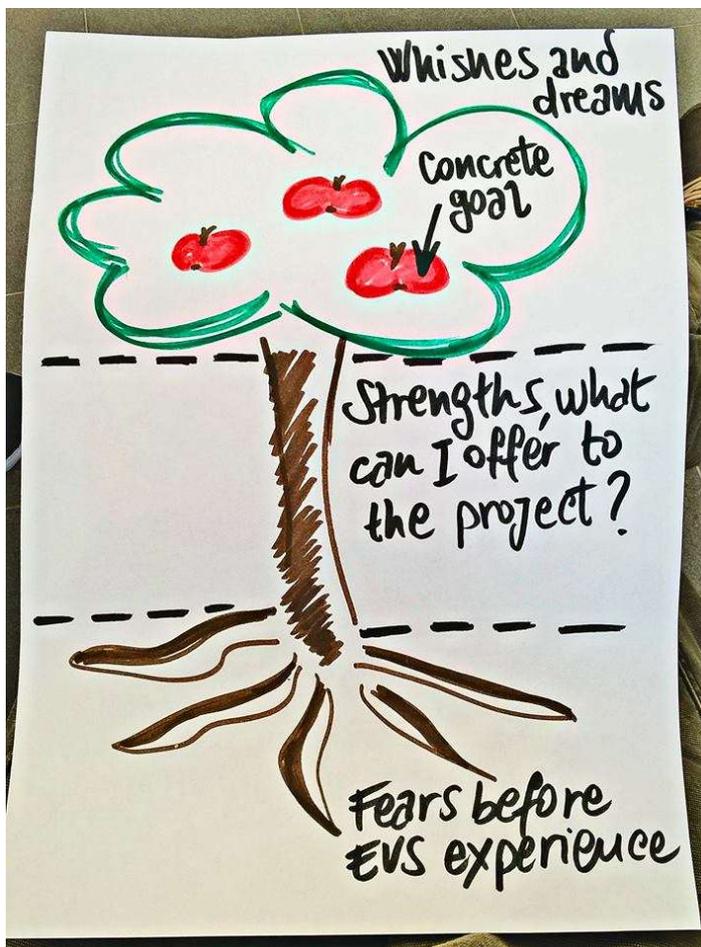
Expectations

Before to start EVS, it is important for the hero to reflect about expectations and fears that are moving or blocking his/her involvement in the adventure and to clarify the objectives to be achieved with the project. That's why is important to discuss it again when the mobility experience is going to the end; it make possible to check if the project was successful in matching them with objectives achieved.

Lucile: "It is important to define why they are going, there is no bad motivation but they really have to go for some reason. They should make it personal".

"Apple tree"

Presented by Indre



This tool aims to clarify the motivation of the volunteer and to identify their personal strengths and wishes by facilitating the process of setting up the personal goals.

It is enough to have a paper where the trainer can draw the shape of an apple tree. Roots, trunk and apples are symbols of motivation, fears and strengths.

This drawing can help the volunteer to express and formulate own thoughts.

The volunteer write in the roots all the possible fears - also ridicules, Indre says - and in the trunk everything that the project can offer. The leaves is the space to express hopes & dreams. 3 apples represents 3 goals of the volunteers to achieve with EVS. The limit of choosing 3 goals will make easier to identify specific goals and to focus on priority.

Invite the volunteers to lay their hands upon a sheet of paper, draw them and cut them out.

One hand concerns the "offers ": here the EVS draw or write anything that they can offer to the project.

The second one is the "receiving" hand: here they can draw or write the expectations regarding the project.

"Hands"

Presented by Renata

Cultural Awareness

If you want to tackle the issues of cultural difference, it is always a good strategy to plan intercultural sessions to reflect on it.

Abu: "I think is fundamental to discuss about intercultural game and use role-play and simulation activities. For example where a person pretend to be another person has a deep impact on intercultural awareness of the youngster".

"Cultural Awareness"

Presented by Francesco

How to increase the cultural awareness and the interest towards the culture of the hosting country?

One strategy is to increase the awareness and the curiosity about the hosting culture.

What you need to do is to collect information at cultural level regarding the hosting country, in particular choosing a book, a movie and a song to suggest to the volunteer.

The advantage of it is that the volunteers can be stimulated to approach to the culture in a less superficial way and to visit not only the usual thing. The intercultural experience became more intense.

Then, as youth worker, you can ask for a feedback and use the iceberg model to work on intercultural issues.

"Cultural Awareness"

Presented by Gunta

This method wants to invite the volunteer to find similarities and differences among the hosting country and his/her one.

To do that, the first step is to invite the EVS to prepare a research about the culture of the hosting country. It is not only about food or music but sometime is also about economic and political situation.

What is important is the motivation to find something new and this is important for the intercultural learning.



Problem solving

The following 2 games aim to make the volunteers aware about situations that may happen during the project and to reflect on strategies, skills and attitudes.



Presented by Emiliano



The SVEopoli game makes the volunteers aware of situations that may happen during EVS and turn the challenges in a positive learning opportunity: basically, It **simulates a EVS project through a board game**.

The general idea is to allow the participants to analyze some cases and possible critical situations that may happen during the project (like cohabitation, relationship with the tutor, foreign language, etc.) in a less theoretical and abstract way, and it makes them identify with the EVS and reflect on how they would act in the same situation. It will show examples of possible positive solutions, give theoretical inputs when necessary.

It also facilitates a debate about the general issues of EVS programme such as the volunteering concept, the life abroad, etc. At the same time it clarifies the different actors involved in an EVS project (tutor, mentor, SO, HO, etc.) and various important aspects (pocket money, insurance, AOT, accommodation, activities, etc.).

How does it work?

SVEopoli is a tool inspired by 2 popular games like Monopoly and Goose Game. Materials and resources needed are in the SVEopoli Kit (SVEopoli board, SVEopoli cards, Learning points and SVEuro and 1 dice). The duration can be from 60 to 90 minutes depending on the number of participants (maximum 8) and the purpose of activities and it is adaptable according to the event's needs.

Intercultural Issue

Two evergreen tools to deal with intercultural issues are “Abigale’s Tale” and the train.

“The train”

This activity is about looking at prejudice using an everyday situation: travelling together on a train.

“It’s really helpful that people start talking about prejudice, how much we judge each other and the appearance. After this activity we will explain the iceberg of culture.”

Instructions

Once everybody has made the individual choices, form groups of 4 or 5 and come up with a common list of the 3 most preferred and the 3 least preferred companions (the 3 pluses and the 3 minuses) by consensus.

During the discussion share also individual choices and the reasons behind. Compare all of them and check where there are similarities.

In plenary, ask each group to present its conclusions, including the reasons for their common choices followed by a debriefing.

The scenario

You are boarding the « Deer Valley Express » train for a week-long ride from Lisbon to Moscow. You are travelling in a couchette compartment which you have to share with three other people. With which of the following passengers would you prefer to share?

1. A Serbian soldier from Bosnia.
2. An overweight Swiss financial broker.
3. An Italian disk-jockey who seems to have plenty of dollars.
4. An African woman selling leather products.
5. A young artist who is HIV positive.
6. A Roma man (Gypsy or traveler) from Hungary just released from jail.
7. A Basque nationalist who travels regularly to Russia.
8. A German rapper living a very alternative life-style.
9. A blind accordion player from Austria.
10. A Ukrainian student who doesn’t want to go home.
11. A middle-aged Romanian woman who has no visa and a 1 year old child in her arms.
12. A Dutch hardline and aggressive feminist.
13. A skinhead from Sweden ostensibly under the influence of alcohol.
14. A wrestler from Belfast apparently going to a football match.
15. A Polish prostitute from Berlin.
16. A French farmer who speaks only French and has a basket full of strong cheese.
17. A Kurdish refugee living in Germany who is on his way back from Libya

“Abigale”

Abigale’s Tale is a story that shows how people view the world from different perspectives, have different values and reach different conclusions out of the same information which are not necessarily defined by their culture.

It’s a tool to discuss about values because this exercise show how similar people think differently, how they have different moral values and different ways of seeing reality.

Different views and perspectives are explored: culture, family ties, violence, friendship, loyalty, attitudes towards sexual activities. Additionally, it concerns the issues of the interpretations when the information may be not enough or not clear.

For example, some people interpret the sentence: "John walks away with Abigail" like a way to say they are in a relationship but it could simply mean as well they have just left the previous setting.

Years are passing by but so many generations of youngster grow up discussing her story.

She may change her name, Abigail, Abigale, Genoveffa and she should be now quite old.

Who knows if she is still the girlfriend of Tom and they are back together?

How to work with it?

Here a brief summary but for more info I invite you to check on salto-youth Toolbox.

Give to the volunteers a printed version of the story. Then invite them to define a list where the 5 characters are in order from the guiltiest to the less guilty one. If the group is not too small, join them in pairs or small group and ask them to share the list and create a new one.

Do a group discussion and debrief

The activity may take 45’ but also longer, depending how long and deep you are able to facilitate the discussion!

The story

Abigale loves Tom who lives on the other side of the river. A flood has destroyed all bridges across the river, and has left only one boat afloat. Abigale asks Sinbad, the owner of the boat, to bring her to the other side. Sinbad agrees, but insists that Abigale has to sleep with him in return.

Abigale does not know what to do and runs to her mother and asks her what she should do. Her mother tells Abigale that she does not want to interfere with Abigale’s own business.

In her desperation Abigale sleeps with Sinbad who, afterwards, brings her across the river. Abigale runs to Tom to happily embrace him and tell him everything that has happened. Tom pushes her away bluntly and Abigale runs away.

Not far from Tom’s house, Abigale meets John, Tom’s best friend. She tells everything that has happened to him as well. John hits Tom for what he has done to Abigale and walks away with her.

Who is a mentor?

Coming back to the Hero's Journey we discover that in each adventure, every hero has a personal mentor. What is interesting is that style, character and way of mentoring may change a lot in each story: Gandalf, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Morpheus, Merlin, Bagheera are so different each other and their profile depends very much on the reality of the fairy tale, the context where the story takes place and on the hero himself. It should not surprise us because also in EVS project it happens the same!

As well as there is not a unique pattern of mentor in the hero's journey, as well there is no a specific model for EVS mentor and there were so many changes in the years. There are different perceptions among the organizations regarding the mentor profile, the role-expectations and the relation with the volunteers in the practice of EVS project.

The role of a mentor is defined to be useful for different types of support and in different settings. For that reason it happens that sometime the tasks of a mentor are in charge of one person while in others there are more persons dealing with that.

That is clear now why the profile of a mentor depends very much on the reality of the project, the organizational context and on the volunteers themselves.

Ada from Italian NA: "It's hard to set a common profile because the role of a mentor is flexible and there may be changes because each volunteer is unique".

Among all the differences, there is a collective image of the ideal mentor that can be resumed by these words (according to the participants of the TC):

Curiosity: "Present" here as a double meaning: more than "being there", it underlines that some mentors are really a gift. "Punctual" regards "to be there when there is a need/problem", not only to have time	patient, very-very flexible person, good role model, inspiring person, strong character, mindful, able to understand the culture of the volunteer, punctual, present person, having time, supportive, helpful, honest, good problem solving skills, practical, well organized, knowing what is doing, creative, interested in personal development, reciprocity, friendly, welcoming, positive person, with life experience, trustable, confident, listener / active listener, emphatic, good communication skills, good in examining, great observer, tolerant, open, assertive, open minded, diplomatic, mediator, with the desire to know more about everything, no judging, curious about other culture and willing to learn something new, good understanding skills.
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It is clear that being a mentor is a personal experience which has to be constantly defined and agreed with each EVS and it can be lived with diverse levels of balance, expectations and intensity between the two actors involved for every project and organization: every EVS is different and every mentor is different too!

Adelina: "I realized that there is not an ideal profile for a mentor, but that it is absolutely necessary that the mentor knows very well his responsibilities, as well as his limits".

Indeed, flexibility doesn't mean improvisation. There are **common ground of rules and tools** to adopt as a mentor. You can find some in the next pages that can guide you.

Be a wise mentor

The role of the mentor is complex and it requires a lot of competences, abilities, knowledges and, at the same time, experience enough to be flexible and to be able to adapt methods and styles to each particular hero's journey.

That's why often the most common symbol of the mentor is a wise old man.

Luckily, to be a wise mentor in EVS there is no need to wait so long: a lot of former EVS are involved as mentor once they are back and, thanks to their experience, they can immediately work for the new generation of hero!

This is possible because they can benefit of their previous EVS experience, which facilitate empathy (the capacity to place ourselves in another's position and to understand other's feeling). As former EVS should be easier to understand other's EVS journey!

As a mentor, you should have the experience and the knowledge to be more aware than the volunteer about what is going on **under the surface of this experience** and you can have a better vision of the whole experience.



The logo of the TC symbolize it perfectly:

Here each flower represent an EVS and you are the one who can see under the grass, not only the most visible results outside.

You know that the volunteer will meet obstacles - like hidden stones - and you know how to guide to find alternatives – for example how to reach the water and avoid the stones.

As you know the EVS cycle, you can see from external point of view the development of the volunteer, the curve of adaptation and challenges, you can better see when the dragons arrives (problems) and when it is time to get the reward (outcomes).

Tasks of the mentor

While the tutor is the responsible of the task within the EVS Service, the mentor should help the volunteer to deal with problems and situations and s/he should facilitate the integration in the new community.

Supporting, guiding and connecting could be the three task most representative for each mentor.

That means that: *“The tasks of the mentor are not limited on calling the doctor.”*

Let’s see more in details what they means.

<p>Supporting</p> <p>If we use the metaphor of the mentor as gardener and education as the way the three grows, we can see mentor as the pole that support the three till it became bigger. Then the three is big enough and knows how the get to the water or avoid the obstacles (stones, etc.).</p>	<p>Mentor supports the volunteer till this one is strong enough to do by himself.</p> <p>Then he has to “fly” by himself.</p>	
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	<p>Guiding</p> <p>Mentor facilitates the way by showing possibilities and facilitating choices.</p> <p>The mentor should not give answers to the volunteer but “guide” them to find solution by their own.</p> <p>Mentor does not replace the volunteers: simply guide them in the way the Evs decide to go!</p>	<p>Cat: Where are you going? Alice: Which way should I go? Cat: That depends on where you are going. Alice: I don’t know. Cat: Then it doesn’t matter which way you go.</p> <p>Lewis Carroll, <i>Alice in Wonderland</i></p>
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<p>Connecting</p>	<p>Mentor facilitates the interconnection among people helping to strength relationship with as much people as possible (young and local community).</p>	
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Issues for mentors: Learning aspects

1. Learning awareness

Mentor is in charge of support and guidance of the EVS learning pathways and recognition of the competence acquired by the volunteer: in few words, the **learning aspect of EVS**.

Indeed, any action of the mentor (guiding, supporting and connecting) should be addressed towards the possibility to **maximize the EVS learning outcomes**.

The learning aspect in EVS is gaining more and more interest in the recent year by the EU Commission because this project represent a valuable experience not only at personal level but also in job perspective. (For more details, read pg. 10-12).

The main problem is to **find a way to let the volunteers aware** of their learning and of their personal development.

Indeed, learning might not be the first idea the volunteers come up with when they talk about their EVS experience and often what they got in the experience it is not even seen as a learning result.

In reality, everything is going to happen in Evs, including the informal elements of the daily life, has an impact and it represents a valuable learning opportunity.

For example, Evs learn by meeting new people, by simple task like shopping in a foreign country or by managing the pocket money. It is learning too!

In our everyday life is not so common to take time to reflect on everything we learn. Usually there is a teacher to tell us and everything else that happen out of school remain unknown. Mentors can help on this and this is what we means when we say: **“mentor facilitates the self-assessment of the volunteer making the learning more visible”**.

Jaanika: “ As EVS, sometime we don’t see things we learn, we need someone to tell us: “you know how to do it” or “your English is really better” and then we understand all the rewards. When we go home we understand and recognize what we get: we are much more smart! Our luggage is much more heavy with the things we understood and we learnt.”

Competences are often acquired in different moment and situation during the whole project, it could be hard to immediately recognize them and there could be the risk the remain hidden.

Mentor can guide to look on what EVS did as a learning process and to describe the results as learning outcomes. In few words, the mentor helps the EVS **to see and to recognize the “happening” as learning opportunity** and to give value to that and words to express it.

Anita: I would call it the “Power of awareness”

As a result, not only the volunteers avoid to forget some learning outcomes but also it makes them aware about what they are able to. In few words, volunteers can get aware of own competences and their values and, as a result, this has an impact on their self-esteem and their empowerment.

2. How Learning happens

The work on the learning aspect of the EVS experience facilitates the development of awareness also regarding the personal way of learning and, building upon that, it allows to define a learning path to follow to reach own objectives. In other words, volunteers learn to learn.

It is a complex process, that's why one of the tasks of the mentor is to help the volunteers to get responsible of own learning and to organize it.

First of all, it's good to be aware of the different learning moments:



The **“comfort zone”** is a safe and a comfortable place where we usually operate using the skills and abilities we already have. There are not specific challenges and at the same time we cannot make progress or develop new skills because we do tasks we can already do easily. If new experience happens here the new knowledge is superficial because personal values, convictions and perceptions remain relatively untouched. Regardless that, It is still an important zone because it gives us a place to return from the other zone, to reflect and find a sense of what happen.

The **“stretching zone”** is where the learning is most effective. In this zone, questions are involving also personal perceptions, attitudes or behavior, that's why the change is possible. At the same time we can become uncertain and vulnerable as our personal values and convictions could be under discussion.

If particularly sensitive points have been touched, convictions and perceptions have been weakened, the stretching zone goes too far and it starts the **“panic zone”**. Here people panic, they bloc, they fall back on comforting certainties and the learning become impossible because all the energy is used up for managing/controlling the anxiety. Even if anxiety can be a valuable learning experience, it is not recommended to go there because at this stage they might undergo emotional processes that cannot be contained and dealt in a project like this one.

EVS should be supported and stimulated to reach the stretching zone but it should be avoid to push the volunteers into the panic zone where all the action are stopped and situation is blocked.

3. Learning recognition

EVS volunteers are entitled to receive a **Youthpass Certificate**. Often presented as “more than a certificate”, it is also a tool to self-assess the learning outcomes.

Indeed, Youthpass gives the possibility to write every ability of a volunteer, in few words, everything s/he can do successfully in a specific field.

Jannika: “It is easier when we are informed at the beginning, and we fill the Youthpass little by little and not only at the end, because we could forget something on the way.”

For that reason, the volunteers should work on the learning aspect by **using Youthpass already during the Evs**. In this way they can take benefit of this tool dealing with the whole learning to learn competence and they could avoid the risk to forget some learning outcomes!

Mafalda: “how can you put your life in Youthpass?”

The problem is how to express the learning outcomes in an accessible way and how to put into an official framework that can certificate the value of the experience.

It is not easy, that’s why the mentor should facilitate the use of Youthpass and help the self-assessment of the volunteers on the competences, but also let them practice how to communicate it in an official document.

It is also important to discuss with the EVS about their expectations about Youthpass: if they want to use it as a tool to reflect on learning to learn competence is different than the use of it as a certificate to add in the CV.

It changes who is going to read it and the way to work at communication level: in the first case it is not a matter of putting a right title in the right box (the most important part is to find the essence of what the EVS wants to communicate) while the second one requires **a different language**: the jargon of the Competences.

It is important to translate the learning in concrete experiences and understandable concepts. Indeed, it may happen that EVS express it in this way: *“I learn how to give lesson on how to fuck about things”*. In this case, the mentor should help the EVS to define the outcomes more formally and in line with a vocabulary which is understandable for the rest of the world and for the Labor Market. Can it be “translated” in this way: “I learn how to teach others to avoid to stress themselves”?

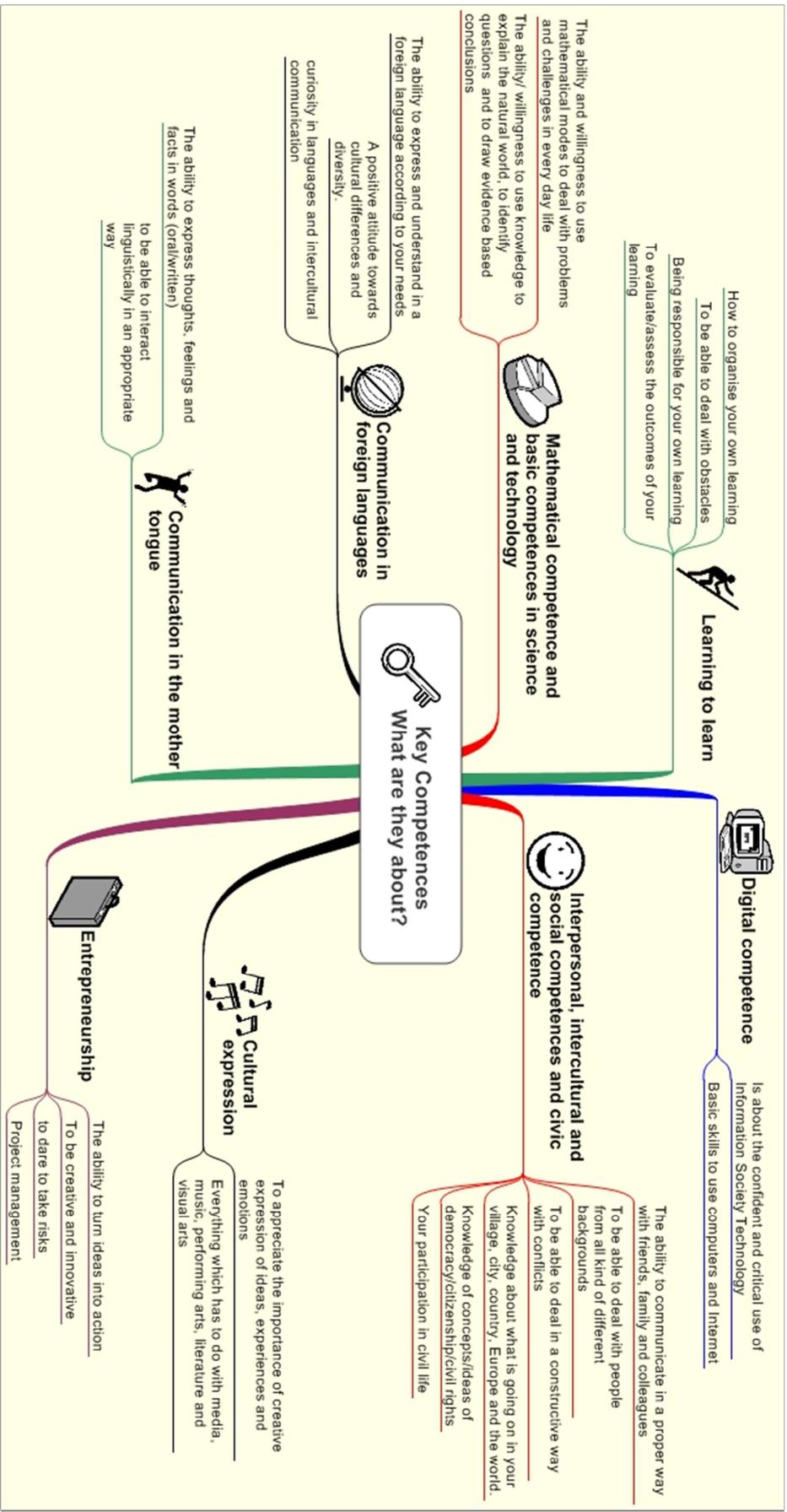
In the second case, Youthpass uses the Key Competences as categories which provide a frame where the volunteers can describe abilities with own words. At the same time EVS can decide where to allocate own learnings according to personal choices: for example, the ability above can be considered a civic competence but it can be expressed even in more categories!



exercise

How to make easier to understand and to explore the meaning of the Key Competences?

We propose you to play a mime game: while playing with words, the volunteers will explore and they will discuss the meaning and the core of the competences.



Issues for mentors: Problem Solving

The image of a mentor often reminds a hero faces **difficulties**. The same happens in the reality of the mentor in EVS field.

As a mentor, we have to deal with problem solving and usually it is not an easy work.

The complexity of this task is not to find solutions but the fact that we cannot solve it! It is important to remember that is responsibility of the volunteers – not of the mentor – to do it: we cannot replace them.

As mentor and experienced person, they may asked directly your opinion but still, they **should do by themselves** because It is crucial for their development to draw conclusions by themselves.

It means that as a mentor, we should facilitate and empower our EVS but at the end, it is up to them how they deal with problems: your impact is important but the EVS has to keep the ownership of the challenge.

Elvira: “I tell them my “parenting ideas” but then they decide by themselves. They have solutions and they know better than me the solution for their problems. I feel I don’t have to be their babysitter, they are really mature adults. As mentor, I try to give them their opportunity to decide according to their interest and needs”.

Your help concerns **“guiding” actions** which helps the EVS to see a problem and to focus on the results (what would they like to achieve? Which are the possible steps they can do to be closer to that solution?). You also should facilitate the process of understanding the context and all the factors involved in a problem. In few words, what we can do is to help the EVS to reflect by **asking the most helpful questions**.

Mafalda: “I define mentoring like: always ask the right question and never give the right solution”.

Another action is **“Exploring other possibilities”** and it can bring to different directions: it can lead to a more in-depth analysis to understand better the situation or it can open alternative perspectives to see it differently. You should help the EVS to search for possible solutions but do not focus on fault or excuses: they block the actions!

If a proposed solution seems too difficult, you can also **empower** the volunteers by reminding their strengths and previous success: in this way, they increase their self-confidence on their ability and they get to know which ones can be activated to manage difficulties and challenges.

At the same time, mentors should help the EVS to do not focus only on themselves but also to see the complexity of each situation by facilitating the understanding of the context and all the factors involved, cause and consequence of their action.

Marta: “Our role is also to be the one to decrease the relevance of a problem which seems so big to the volunteer but it is not”.

Last but not least, don’t be frustrated if the volunteer is not tacking the right step. Sometime could be fine to do not have any plan or strategy but simply let it goes. It can be part of the experience.

Mafalda: “They go where they want to go”.

As a mentor, you should be assertive, in the way that you **“go with your idea but in a way you tolerate other ideas”**. Sometime there is no sense of “pushing” because a mentor cannot help the EVS if s/he do not accept help.

Dilruba: “You cannot help everyone if they do not want”.

Key competence of a mentor: Communication skills

Most common way of mentoring is based on good communication skills.

It is crucial to be able to ask good questions as well as to listen effectively. It is part of the process of “guiding someone somewhere”, both in problems solving support than in recognition of learning outcomes.

There are **several levels of difficulties in communication**. To make it easy here you can find some easy tips to improve your communication skills:

1. How to ask? It is not necessary to create a lot of new questions. More than creative you should avoid to be superficial: encourage your volunteer to go deep in the reflection in order to let him/her to develop the understanding about the situation and to gain a personal insight. Think of different ways to deepen the volunteer's story and broaden his/her perspective.
2. Do not assume: ask.
3. Listen carefully. Try to ask for confirmation “what do you mean? Do you really mean what I understood?”
4. Timing: try to catch the right moment for the right question!
5. In moments of silence don't jump to the next question: silence provides valuable thinking time. If silence you can wait or ask “What else comes to your mind?” or “What else?”
6. Listen actively and let your volunteer do most of the talking.

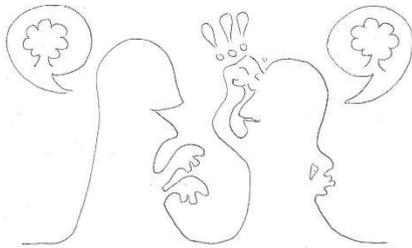
A key quality for a mentor is to be a **good listener**. When a volunteer tells you a story you are not only listening the content but also to the feelings, the underlying reasons and motivations of the volunteer.

If you listen carefully you can:

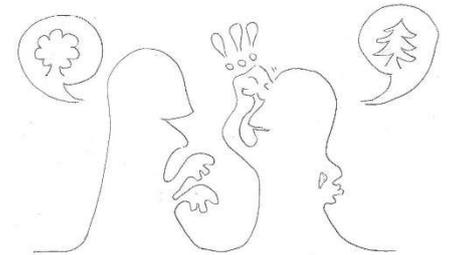
- **discover strengths and resources** within the story-telling of the EVS. Later, when the volunteers will find themselves troubled by a problem situation, in a conflict or in a crisis, you can “remind” them their own strengths and ability to activate certain resources. It will help them to resolve, overcome and manage difficulties and challenges.
- have a clear **understanding of the other point of view**.

As you can see, it is not only important to ask good question but as well to be able to listen and to understand what other people say. Mentoring is not only finding the right words but also to be a good listener.

These 2 skills are both essential in the communication process: when the volunteers tell us a problem, they should be able to explain it correctly but at the same time you should be able to understand what they mean. On the other side, when you say something to your volunteers, you should formulate the message in a way that they can understand correctly.



The sender should be a good communicator (able to send the right message) and the receiver should be a good listener (able to understand the right message).



If I say “tree”, are you thinking about the same one?

It happens because the communication process is made of 3 parts:

1. codifying by the sender
2. sending the message
3. decodifying the message by the receiver.

How much do we pay attention to the message of our EVS? Are we good in decodifying?

Here you can find 2 simple mirroring exercises to practice our listening skills and in particular to experience the obstacles due to different perceptions of the reality (exercise 1) and the difficulties of listening without making assumptions or judging (exercise 2).

Are you able to receive the message correctly?

Make a couple: one is the mentor and one is the volunteer. A third person is drawing on a flipchart.

The mentor cannot see the drawing but s/he can ask questions to the volunteer who sees it.

The mentor draws it by following the description and the explanation of the EVS.

After 5 minutes the couple can check both drawings: are they the same?

- Some of our mentors were frustrated and you?
- Did you ask the right question?
- Did you and your volunteer have the same perception of the things?

Are you able to receive the message correctly... and to repeat it correctly?

There are 3 people involved: a talker (EVS), a listener (mentor) and an observer.

The talker is telling a long story in 5 minutes. Then the listener is repeating it to the talker.

The observer takes notes on changes and missing parts in the story of the mentor and then tells it back to both.

- How was the feeling of listening and getting the message back?
- Did the mentor skip details or add little things to the story?
- Did the mentor get a personal interpretation like: try to explain “this is the reason why” or try to get to conclusions which were not expressed by the volunteer?

How to choose a mentor?

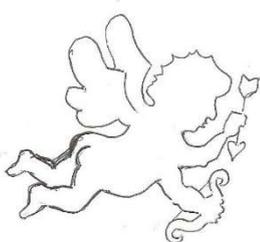
A very common strategy to recruit mentor is to ask to **former Evs** to be a mentor.

This choice has two positive aspects. It represents a good way to include the former EVS to their community once they finish their project and to benefit of their learning outcomes in the society.

Additionally, the previous experience is considered a benefit because people who did the hero's journey could better know what EVS means.

Regardless of that, there are different strategies to recruit mentors and their involvement in the organization because it depends a lot by several factors like the context, the resources available, the NGO structure, etc.

These choices may influence the way to invest in that position and it depends on the resources that each NGO wants to dedicate on it. In few words, time and money needed.



While you are searching to build you perfect mentor profile there is another aspect to take in mind: the **compatibility** with the volunteer.

- How much is important that the mentor match with the mentee?
- Is it possible to mentor everyone or only to the one who can manage to create a good relation with?

There are cases when there are difficulties in establish a good partnership between mentor and meentees and volunteers do not "use" the mentor. In this case the EVS is going to live this experience without an important person like a mentor and s/he going to face all the challenges alone without any help or tools.

The experience could be successful even without a mentor but life could be harder! Sometime happens also cases in which the volunteers found by themselves an **"informal mentor"**.

For example, mentors can be **external** of the NGO or they could work directly with the staff. They can be **payed** and they can be professional mentors or they can do it voluntarily. It can be a single experience or a regular involvement in a long-term.

Indeed, it can be a career opportunity within NGO or a professional development to transfer in other job context based on several practical experiences or as a results of training courses participation.

At opposite direction, the choice could be done in favor of fresh energy and **pure motivation** by former EVS who could be establish a peer to **peer dimension**.

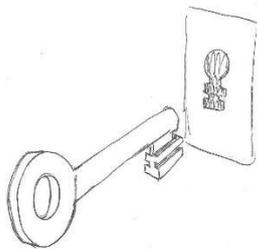
Last, but not least, does the **gender** matter?

Mafalda: "I didn't trust my mentor so I was without mentor and I was passing the down phase of my curve of adaptation. Then during the Mid-term I met a EVS who told me a couple of sentences which bring me up again. He had such an impact! So we decided to buddy each other. Even if he was not an official mentor he was the best mentor in my life: he was an inspiration. That is how a mentor should be: after all the discussion about qualities and roles. Example of free giving help without any request."

Mentor-Mentee Relationship

Relationship between mentor and volunteer usually starts when they meet for the first time at the beginning of the service (when the hero already pass the threshold).

An interesting idea is to let them **know each other in advance** so the mentor can also help the mentee in the preparation phase: they



That means that mentor can still work on creating a relationship with the volunteer by searching ways to establish a good connection with him/her.

Elvira: "A mentor should not generalize. He should deal with EVS in different way because they are very different. I have 4 volunteers and they have different issues to deal with. I know which topic I can speak or not with each of them like feminism, etc. I found 4 different approaches and I follow my feelings."

This experience shows the effort of a mentor to build a relationship regardless personal match but simply going in the same direction of the mentee: it is not only a volunteer task to accept us and our way of mentoring but we have also to adapt us to each volunteer.

Saja: "You have to figurate yourself for each EVS, no rules".

could organize skype meetings where the mentee can have the possibility to ask questions about the new context, the travel and so on. In this way the mentor can provide support since the very beginning and s/he can be clearly identified as a resource by the volunteer to count on once s/he will arrive in the extraordinary world where everything is new.

This is also a good way to approach the new volunteer and to break the ice.

Unfortunately, it is not always love at the first sight but it does not mean any mentoring is possible. A mentor should have the **capacity to interact** and to create a **fruitful relationship** with the volunteer finding **the right approach**.

The volunteer is like a door. As mentor, we have to find the **right key to open it** because each volunteer is different and sometime it took long time before to open it.

Riina: "We have to find the right question to open it"

In few words one possible motto could be: **"let's meet in the middle-way"**.

To adopt this process you have to take in mind the rules of the "comfort zone".

If you do not try to go out from your comfort zone, even in communication side, the other person could not be able to step in.

Indeed, it may happen to be sticky to personal values and ideas and the way you speaks can clearly show it.

For example, sentence like: "The volunteers have to understand: this is how it works in MY place / home" are blocking the dimension of going out of the safety zone, "in the middle way".

Going out represent a way to meet and to have a learning experience also for you as a mentor, but you should be aware of your limits in order to avoid to fall into the panic zone.

Boundaries in the relationship

Each one has own limits and it is not something wrong or something to get embarrassed. It does not mean you are a weak person. Simply you are human.

Alice: "You are not superhero and you should be aware of your strengths but also your limits".

Working as a mentor you should be aware of your boundaries which are a good safety net from **stress and burnout**.

Diana: "As a mentor you should have a strong character because you should set your boundaries".

Indeed, it is hard to put a frame: sometime you have to say "this is too much" and volunteers have to accept when you cannot give more help. Sometime you have to stop the volunteers demand: "This is not my task but you are going on continuing asking".

Marta: "Mentor is not 24 hours, is human person, they should not depends too much from the mentors".

In the moment of building a relationship with your mentee, it is crucial to know what the volunteer expect from you and to define the limits of your relationship. Discuss it!

This is the only way to know about the expectation regarding your role, your relationship and limits that will help to set your boundaries.

Some issues to reflect about relationship are the following:

1. **Openness and honesty:**

As a mentor, you should be yourself, you should be authentic but where are the limit? How much can you encourage mutual trust? How much can you and the volunteer be open and be honest with each other?

2. **Are we friend or not?**

Does the mentor has to go out with EVS? Is it ok to start as a friend and try to be professional later on?

3. **Confidentiality:**

Which contents has to remain only between the mentor and the volunteer?

What can/has to be communicated to the organization?

A mentor says: "*Sometime I feel I gossiping*"

Mafalda: "She broken my trust when she tell to her colleagues my personal stories that I felt to share with her. Since that moment I refuse her as a mentor".

Establishing the limits together: boundaries and expectations

How to set a relationship respecting your boundaries and the expectations of your volunteer?

Here you can find a good exercise that shows the **cooperation** among you and the mentee. It will help to discuss your limit, the way to communicate and interact each other and the expectations of your volunteers regarding your role in their experience.

How does it work?



There is no need of materials and you can do this exercise with your mentee.

It is based on the ability to reach a stable balance in a couple pushing each other by the hands stretched in front of them.

The research of balance symbolize the mentoring relationship and it make visible the personal and variable limits to be taken into account in each relationship.

If there is **no listening** it is so easy that you **push too much** or not enough.

On the other side the volunteer **could pretend** to the mentor to push too much.

The results is that each couple can foresee differences in the level of responsibility based on the different way of pushing.

As we can see, the responsibility is shared in the couple: It's responsibility of the mentor to try to find the balance but also the volunteer has a role on it and s/he has to cooperate on it.

Indeed, it happens also in real life that even if you try to reach the balance you could not find feedbacks or suggestions from your volunteer: the door is closed and even if you try all the keys you have in your hands there is no possibility to enter.

On the other side, looking at your position, you can discover how much you push (and how much you get involved in the relationship). You could realize that maybe you do not want (or feel) to push more or you are pushing too much than you should.

Case studies

The participants of the training course discussed some case studies and here you can find some of their ideas that may inspire you.

1. The Volunteer is not going back home for Christmas. Are you **bringing him to your home**?

It's a way to know other cultures and to be in the culture.
I come from a small town where there is nothing to do during Christmas so I would probably take the EVS at home.
It is an experience to us to open the doors too.
We go to them but we are not always opening so it's a way to open our life to them, to let them know us.
I do not bring the EVS at home because there are not good relations among the members of my family.
I do not bring the EVS at home because for me Christmas is family ones.

2. Your volunteer **doesn't manage well the pocket money**. Would you borrow money to him/her?

I give some money but I will show how to do the next month.
To say no "close" the learning process.
I will tell him "Everyone can manage it so you can do as well", that's why I do only one time.
It depends about our relation because it is connected to trust.
It depends if it's the first time or the fourth time.
No, I would give the food or giving something else because I want him to experience the consequences.

3. Using drugs is illegal. At one party someone bring some joints. Would you stay at the party or would you immediately leave the party? Would you feel comfortable to stay in a party where the volunteer are **breaking the law**?

I will be fired if my boss discover it so I would tell them to stop that.
I will not interrupt the party but I will have a meeting with them the day after.
I make it clear, it is their responsibility: I cannot decide if they drink alcohol or smoke joint because they are over 18 and there are a lot of situation that I cannot agree, not only drug abuse.

We discuss also some other cases which may happen. And you, how would react?

4. It's your day off and your volunteer has an **accident at home**. He damage his staff in the room (something like bed broken, water floating, etc.), would you host him in your place?

5. How much are you comfortable when speaking about **sexual and hygiene** with your volunteers? What happen when they are asking about your sexual life?

Does someone mentor the mentor?

“Be a mentor. It is much harder than I thought”, this is what a mentor said at the end of the training course. As you can see from all the factors influencing your work, this role is complex indeed.

There may come a time when, as a mentor, you also need to reach out for support: you may feel the need to exchange advices, share problems and to explore together possible solutions in a peer to peer setting among mentors. Sometime you need as well to work on your motivation too because the adventure of the volunteers, their challenges and their problems can be similar and repeating during the years.

Lili: “There should be cooperation among mentors related to competence so they could help each other when some knowledge are missing and they could be complementary”.

In few words there is a need of a mentor community.

The situation is different according to the country and the context where you work.

For example, the EVS organizations with several volunteers and mentors often have a support network for them.

In other cases, when the EVS reality is smaller, mentors could be quite alone. In this case usually they are in touch with their organization and they have at least the chance to share experiences with other staff members of the organization even if there are no mentors.

However, regardless how you establish a support network of mentor, an efficient method to support and to improve your work is to do **“Case supervision”**.

This method is used to explore a situation, real or imaginary ones, proposed by a single member of the group. The group members explore the case, put themselves into the shoes of this person and s/he suggests solutions based on their own experience and competence in that field.

Everyone can learn from the discussion: not only the person introducing the case can discover alternative solutions and new point of views but also the group members can learn from other’s experience gaining new insights into their work.

This method is used in many educational and social professions and it can be organized among colleagues who work in the same field and who share similar experiences.

It can be self-organized or be facilitated by a coach.

Peer supervision among mentors can be organized within an organization or in cooperation with several organizations.

It can take place face-to-face (during regular meetings), but it can be also carried out online.

Best-practice

Facilitating the networking.

In previous years, in Czech Republic it was known who was working with EVS: the NGO were organizing initiatives at local level for volunteers and mentors.

Also the National Agency was inviting often the volunteers to support their projects and the feeling of the EVS was to be really supported.

Tips and advices for mentors in a hero's journey

Equipping the hero.. EVS and **Local Language**

Evs don't want to learn local language. Should we change the activity?

Evs get bored to learn local language in longer period. How to keep the good motivation?

1. Show the advantage of learning the language and work on concrete situations where you can use it. "How to invite a girl to go out with you for a glass of wine?"
2. Reverse: create the situation when the volunteers are teachers of local community of their own language. It stimulates the interaction and it increases the need to use the local language to help their "students".
3. Split the volunteers during the language course in beginning and advanced groups.
4. Get them involved into several interactive activities with locals.
5. Focus more on simple words, useful vocabulary and sentences and less on grammar.
6. Do simple questions in your language and give them simple test: for example, ask them to buy something in your language. It shows they can do it and they get more motivated.
7. Change methods: act and play. Use simulation and role play. Be like children when they play to be at the shop or restaurant. In few words: use non formal methods!
8. Stimulate their interest with culture (share films, books etc. in local language).
9. Ask them to write a diary / blog in local language.
10. Do not have volunteers from the same country. In this way they have to use foreign languages to communicate among them.

Ordeal.. **daily conflict**

How to support volunteer to live together & to find cleaning solutions?

In everyday life of EVS there are a lot of contacts (with mentors, other volunteers, landlord, colleague, etc.). Conflict can happen. Often they concern living together, cleaning issues and organization of task or management of guest.

1. General rules of the house should be provided before the EVS project starts and be part of the partnership agreement.
2. All the conflict should be managed by dialogue, expressing feelings and trying to understand each other. Indeed, most of the problems can be easily solved with a little discussion between the 2 sides.
3. Conflict management tools: know them and use of it now to reach Win-win situation!

Approach to the innermost Cave.. EVS and demotivation.

What to do when a volunteer loses the motivation and s/he wants to go back home?

Often happens that a volunteer is not happy with the project and s/he wants to interrupt it. This is the moment of the Innermost Cave and, instead of dealing with the situation, the reaction of the volunteer can be the decision to go back home.

It is always a complex situation, it may change a lot for each volunteer depending on the character of the volunteer and his/her resilience (the ability to recover and become healthy or successful again after something bad happens) and other factors.

A good PDT can make the difference at this moment. It can make EVS aware of what they are passing through and stop them from falling into the Panic zone.

First of all, you should reinforce the relationship and the communication with the volunteer: provide psychological support and try to understand the EVS.

Then, let them understand that each crisis is a different situation and it is not possible to generalize. They should take care of it but at the same time they should face it with optimism.

What you can do is to:

- Guide: search for the reason (why the volunteer is not ok with the project?), try to find solutions (what could be done to change) and go back to initial personal motivation (what was the reason to do EVS? Is it still important for you?).
- Support: show possibilities to manage and to solve the problems.
- Connect: Give alternatives: move the focus on free time and try to find something the volunteers can do to get satisfied and motivated. If the project doesn't fit with the expectation, s/he still can make his EVS experience meaningful by being involved in other activities outside the HO, finding informal mentors, taking personal initiatives, etc.

Motivation: here some tips to work on it and to give reason to stay.

- Volunteers need real tasks other ways they could be tempted to stay in the room. Make them busy. Avoid also the boring feeling to waste time.
- Motivation can be supported by extra-activities out of the service and informal ones like connection with the locals or volunteering in different local NGOs. In this way they start to know new people, they make new friends and they start to get integrated in the new community.
- Work on objectives adopting the "S.m.a.r.t. theory" (Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic, Time-related): fix the goal, facilitate the plan to achieve it and the step to do.
- Stimulate to take initiatives: Say: "I can't do things instead of you, you need to do the first step".

The mentor is not alone, other actors should help to support the EVS to see the light in the cave:

- The SO: they should be in touch to support him from distance
- Family and friends of the volunteers: they can motivate the volunteer to stay and try.

Nevertheless, there are cases when as a mentor you do not manage to avoid the interruption of the project. If it happens you should accept the volunteer choice. Take in mind that not always the volunteer need to finish the project or maybe s/he was not prepared since the beginning.

Sarah: I was the first one volunteer of the NGO and in the town. When I was down in my curve, I remember I had a SO. I didn't have any contact the first 3 months. They replay to me: "This sounds really bad but what do you want to do? You have to find a way to make it works. Maybe you can find some alternatives, travel around a lot.." So basically what she gave me some ideas. I wrote down what I could do. My HO was not good at all but that does not mean than my EVS should not be good too. Now I can say It was great time because the not-official mentor gave me a good idea so I stayed and I enjoyed and I learnt a lot".

Reward.. Failing in **Learning outcomes**

If a volunteer did not develop any skills, how is possible to fill the Youthpass?

1. First, it is not the mentor who fill the Youthpass. S/He helps the volunteers to fill it through discussion, but s/he cannot do it instead of a him/her.
1. Self-assessment part is not obligatory. In general the whole certificate is voluntary.
2. If a volunteer does not achieve own learning goals in the project, s/he still can make his Evs experience meaningful by reflect on skills developed during informal time. Do not focus only on the learning in the scheduled service time!
3. For sure learning happened but they forgot it! A volunteer should write down the observation regarding their development during the whole project. It happens that memories of old picture can fade and it's hard to sum up skills at the end of a project. The importance of taking notes is relevant.

On the road **back..**

How to support the volunteer at the end of the project and afterwards?

"I always stress them to think about what is going to happen after. They don't have mentor when they are back and sometime they still look at their mentor if it was good".

In few words, make a plan and then option B .. and keep in touch!

It is important to plan what s/he is going to do after s/he arrives back home and also a plan B if the first one doesn't work.

For example: "Once back home, your volunteer is planning to start the university. If s/he will not be accepted he/she plan to go in Italy as Au-pair. "

It is important to help the volunteer to end the project and in the phase of coming back home because s/he may might face difficulties in readapting to its native country for example.

One mentor says: *"Oh god, I realize I don't know anything when my volunteers are back!"*.

Our relationship with the EVS is not ending with the end of the project.

Technical info on the initiatives

“Seminar to sharing best practices on pre-departure training”

16-19 May 2016 - Rome, Italy

Training course “Mentoring in Evs”

24-28 May 2016 - Rome, Italy

specific issues (How to prepare volunteer to different kind of problem situation or stimulate the motivation?) and how to increase inclusion strategy.

- At personal level, the main focus was on some kind of recognition of own competences at different level: individual, in the work field, personal in terms of self-confidence or as entrepreneurial vision. There were huge expectation of getting inspired and motivated by others (experiences, stories, tools) and to learn something new to bring back in own reality.

Results:

- Outcomes: participants reported deeper understanding of the EVS cycle and role of SO. They found also concrete tools and methods to be implemented in their work with EVS. Most relevant results were concerning time of preparation and evaluation/planning/integration and follow up. They affirm they are going to use concrete tools and methodologies during PDT and sharing them with colleagues - both in and out of the organization.
- Suggestion: they suggest to organize more trainings focused on young people with fewer opportunities.

Ada: *“We got the aim of the activities. The group was really attentive to the other experiences and they felt comfortable to share. There was a huge need of frame the PDT and a request for recognition of their role and values and impact of this phase. The results show us they got it”.*

Words used by participants to describe best the seminar:

Interesting, inspiring, useful, growth, easiness, self-development, inclusion, best practices, new tools, cheerful, deep, going-with-the-flow mood, inspiration, flow, group, connection, knowledge, original, emotional, interesting, flexibility, interesting, supportive, motivating, hero, learning, people, quality, sharing, collaboration, different perspective, new relationships, sincerity, enrichment, willing to improve.

Structure of the seminar and Programme

The process adopted, after a first identification of needs and expectation of the participants (Day 1), was intended to zoom out from the general philosophy of Evs and Volunteering to specific frame of it using the hero’s journey which highlight the role of the SO not only the PDT. Then it moves deeper into the practices in the NGO, country and experiences of the participants then exchanging tools & methods (Day 2). Next step was focus on the inclusion issues in terms of challenges but also sharing practical tips to allow more inclusive Evs project. The program ends with a vision to the future and evaluation process. (Day 3).

Methodology.

The methodology of the seminar could be easily resume using the quote of Emiliano to the Italian NA: Emiliano: *“how much can we be hippy?”*

	Day 1 16th May	Day 2 17th May	Day 3 18th May
Breakfast			
Morning session	Arrivals	Hero’s Journey, Role of the PDT	Inclusion Non formal education and EVS as a tool for inclusion
		Practises of our organisations and countries	PDT with youngsters with fewer opportunities
Lunch			
Afternoon session	Welcoming, Introduction & Getting to Know Each Others Mapping of needs, Expectations and Offers	Tools Fair	PDT in our organisations Evaluation and closing of the seminar Walking tour in Rome
dinner			
		Structured Activity	Dinner out & Farewell Time

Technical info on the Training Course

Training course "MENTORING IN EVS"

24-28 May 2016 - Rome, Italy



From the 24th to the 28th of May 2016 the Agenzia Nazionale per i Giovani (Italian National Agency for Erasmus+: youth) organized the training course "Mentoring in EVS", hosted at the "Campus X" facility, Tor Vergata, Rome.

The aim was to go deep into the mentor and tutor roles and tasks to support better this key part of the EVS projects and try to understand the peculiarity of them.

It brings to a wider reflection among youth worker about the importance of the role of the mentor as a key factor that improves the quality of EVS projects and that guarantee the learning of the volunteer.

Among all the tools available, non formal methodologies and Youthpass Certificate were presented as a tool to stimulate the self-awareness of the learning path of the volunteer.

Specific objectives of the TC were:

- understand the role of the mentor and the Tutor and their specific competencies;
- explore ways to support the learning process of the volunteers;
- understand Non Formal Learning and the use of Non Formal Methodologies;
- sharing of tools available for Mentors;
- share ways of supporting volunteers with fewer opportunities;
- exchange experiences, good practices, learn about practical issues.
- plan possible follow up peer support tools for Mentors

The TC explore the most common questions regarding mentoring. Some of them are the following:

- Which is the position and the involvement of the mentor in the organization? Is s/he external to the hosting organization or a member of it?
- What happen in case of conflict among the EVS and the organization? What is confidential and what has to be shared with the organization regarding the volunteer?
- Is the mentor payed or a volunteer too? Is it a job or is it based on a personal motivation?
- Should the mentor have the similar age of the EVS in order to guarantee the peer to peer education or mentor can be even older?
- Is it possible to be a mentor in long-term perspective? Can the organization invest on that position?
- Is it possible to mentor everyone or the mentor should match with the EVS?

The program was delivered by 2 trainers: Jan Lai, Mafalda Morganti.

Feedback and results:

Lili : *“My main learning is, that the most important sentences in this story is: it depends. Unfortunately, I was always the person who was too strict so it is a bit hard. Now I know how to handle different situations. The other thing is, I realized, that I am not alone with these kind of problems”.*

Marta: *“I meet my mentor only once a week for 5 minutes, living 2 hours far. Now, as a mentor, I put my personal problems in a side and I learnt I need to be flexible because small problems for volunteers can become huge. Meetings with volunteers based on quality, not quantity.”*

The TC increased the awareness among the participants of the mentor role: bringing them to reflect about their role in the HO or the level of responsibility and time requested by this role.

Regarding competences, the participants in some cases got aware of their lack of knowledge and they understood the obstacles in an EVS project.

As final results, it increased the needs to further specific training for mentors.

Words most used:

Sharing, reflection, tools, mentoring, learning, practical, respect, emotion, fun, friendly, support, comparison, exchange, peer-learning, development, Interesting, dynamic, rich, challenging, helpful, informative, social, active, interactive, interesting, intense, helpfulness, experience, hints, colorful, decision, motivation, effective, cozy and useful.

	Day 1 25th May	Day 2 26th May	Day 3 27th May
Breakfast			
Morning session	Exploring support role in EVS	Communication and Understanding	What's next
		Telling EVS Story	Final Evaluation
Lunch			
Afternoon session	EVS as a Learning Experience	Who mentor the mentors?	Free afternoon in Rome
	Reflection Space	Reflection Space	
dinner			
	Tales from EVS	Informal time	Dinner out & Farewell Time

Articles published

My job? Discover heroes and call them EVS

<https://vicolocortini.wordpress.com/2016/05/18/my-job-discover-heroes-and-call-them-evs/>

18 May 2016

by *Laura Pierfelici*

Have you ever dreamt to have the same superpowers of your favorite heroes?

And in real life, which are your superpowers?

Don't laugh, I am sure that you have some passions in which you are really good at, and you know things that I don't know!

How to cook a perfect lasagna, juggle with fire, organize a party, run for 10 miles, know how to repair a bike or how to be a supportive friend... these are only some of the surprising things you might do so well: that's clear that you are a superhero too!

Unfortunately, sometimes people don't realize to be so special and so they don't know how to use their own personal special powers.

Someone should tell them and that's why since 20 years there is someone in the world who is doing it as a job: the EVS mentors and EVS tutors!

Yes, that is our job and we use our competences and knowledge to help the volunteers to discover their potential and to support them in their exciting, but sometimes challenging, journey.

How do we do that?

Well, two seminars that are taking place in Rome in these weeks will focus exactly on that and I will be there, so follow me!

The first one is the "Seminar to sharing best practices on pre-departure training", from 16th to 19th of May, then we will continue with "Mentoring in EVS" from 24th till 28th.

Led by Helena Kosková, Emiliano Bon, Jan Lai and Mafalda Morganti, we will share best practices related to the special phase of pre-departure training and we will discuss the key roles of EVS Mentor and EVS Tutor.



Fabiana di Carlo, from the Italian National Agency of the Erasmus+ programme, says: *“We want to improve the quality of EVS projects and the number of those addressed to young people with fewer opportunities, and to increase the professionalism in the EVS field”*.

As this is the year of celebration for EVS, the Italian National Agency organizes so many initiatives that is hard to list all of them!

There are postcards to promote it, a spot video in collaboration with MTV ([click here to watch it](#)), two publications and a special project addressed to former EVS volunteers called Europeers, and much more.

Check the official web site of the Italian NA and, if you are curious about the new tools, methodologies and the final results of the seminars, follow me as I will be there to collect all these info and share them with you!

Greetings from Rome!

Laura

If heroes are like Luke Skywalker, I am Obi-Wan Kenobi.

<https://vicolocortini.wordpress.com/2016/05/26/if-heros-are-like-luke-skywalker-i-am-obi-wan-kenobi/>

26 May 2016

by *Laura Pierfelici*

“If the EVS volunteer is like Luke Skywalker, I am Obi-Wan Kenobi” – Jan says. “Or I am Gandalf and you are Frodo!”, Fabiana replies.

No, they are not talking about the rules of a role-playing game. I heard this discussion today morning while we all were organizing the project “Mentoring in EVS”.

Mafalda Morganti and Jan Lai are working hard to set the training course with the contribution of the Italian National Agency represented by Fabiana Di Carlo and Ada Corasaniti who are supporting this initiative.

21 mentors are coming from 10 different countries in Rome to discuss about their role and the peculiarity of it.



Fabiana says: *“We decided to organize this training course to explore the meaning of the mentoring role and to share the knowledges and the experiences among mentors. The European Voluntary Service is a valuable experience to live. It’s a good way to know different cultures and to meet new people. That’s why we want to promote it and to realize activities to improve the professionalism of the youth educators who work in the EVS field”*.

The Italian National Agency, in charge of Erasmus+ European Youth, is now really focusing on Evs activities: this year is the anniversary of Evs and we are going to celebrate 20 years at best. Last week, for example, there were a seminar about pre-departures led by the trainers Helena Kosková and Emiliano Bon.

Are you wondering what happened last week?

Ada Corasaniti from the Italian National Agency affirms: *“With the PDT (pre-departure training) a youth educator can meet who is going to become a volunteer and there’s the possibility to know better if he/she could real match to the project. The results of this seminar show us the participants understand this and I feel they are aware of the importance of the PDT much more than before. It means we have reached our goals”*.

All the results that we got will be edited soon in a e-book so.....keep following us!

Hugs from Rome.

Laura

Participants of the PDT Seminar

	Abdurrahman Parlar Adiyaman Turkey		Anna di Muro Xena Italy
	Anna Rita de Bonis VIEWS Italia Italy		Carolina Tenti Vicolocorto Italy
	Davide Orlandini IFOA Italy		Evija Eglite Aluksne youth center Latvia
	Francesco Quatrano Ad Arte Italy		Gianfranco Gatti Demostene Italy
	Gunta Grinhofa Added value Latvia		Indre Samytė Actio Catholica Patria Lithuania

	Jaanika Siiraja Estonian N.A. Trainer Estonia		Laura Pimentel Prados ARRABAL Spain
	Lucile Seguin I-Peicc France		Massimo Alessandra DASYC Spain
	Monica Mano Youth4Youth Italy		Nikolett Toth Okide Hungary
	Novella Bendetti Inco Italy		Renata Dolega Atelier Europeo Italy
	Sanita Liepina Talsi Foundation Latvia		

Participants of the Mentoring Training Course

	Adelina Toader ZURY Association Romania		Anita Silva Marques Associazione di Promozione Sociale Joint Italy
	Agnieszka Olszewska- BrusiŃo Municipal Public Library in Wrocław - branch 58 - Mediateka Poland		Alexandru Vadeanu ANMRF Louis Pasteur- Voltin Club Braila Romania
	Alice Bonello Progetto Citt� Italy		Diana Lozko Aluksnes Bernu un jauniesu centrs (Kids and youth center in Aluksne) Latvia
	Dilruba K�bra Kırım Çanakkale Koza Gençlik Derneđi Turkey		Dora Tasnadi Harmonium Egyesulet Hungary
	Elvira Dudkova Livonsaaren yhteis�kyl� Finland		�va Kir�ly Fenntarthat� Orm�ns�g Nonprofit Kft. Hungary

	Lilla Kalla ÖDE-Önkéntes Diakóniai Év Programiroda Hungary		Magdalena Szewczuk ANAWOJ Poland
	Marta Reis Geoclube- associação Juvenil Portugal		Mehmet Ekinci Young Accumulation Association Turkey
	Riina Pulli Lahti Youth Services Finland		Roberta Lanzalaco Associazione Culturale Strauss Italy
	Sanja Tabori NGO Argonauta Croatia		Sara Lulić Hrabri telefon Croatia
	Sarah Erdmann IB Berlin-Brandenburg gGmbH Betrieb Brandenburg Nordost Germany		Serena Piro Legambiente Toscana Italy

 A portrait of a woman with dark hair, wearing a floral patterned top, looking directly at the camera.	<p>Silja Huttunen Jyväskylän kaupungin nuorisopalvelut Finland</p>		
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Author

Laura Pierfelici



I am NGO coordinator, a freelance trainer and a researcher in the youth field.

As rapporteur, I wrote articles and e-books for NGO and public bodies like Italian National Agency and Youth Information Center of Pesaro Municipality.

At academic level I am running a research for the University of Florence, Department of Education Science, about the role of Informal Education in the development of soft skills and in particular the impact of EVS as educational setting.

Additionally, since 2014 I collaborate on a regular basis with a local newspaper as responsible of the youth field section.

As trainer, I design, run and evaluate international seminars and training courses address to youth workers.

Main topic of my projects are recognition of competences in non formal and informal context, project management and inclusion of youngster with fewer opportunities.

As NGO coordinator, my tasks are both operational (supervision of educational projects) both political (networking with other stakeholders like schools, institutions and private bodies at local level).

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