



# EVS TRAININGS

## IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CAUCASUS

SALTO-YOUTH  
EASTERN EUROPE AND CAUCASUS  
RESOURCE CENTRE



Erasmus+



# EVS TRAININGS

IN EASTERN EUROPE  
AND CAUCASUS

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# Introduction

Dear EVS trainers,  
Erasmus+ National Agencies officers,  
EVS coordinators,  
and anybody else interested in the content of this booklet.

Thank you for your interest in how we run the EVS training cycle in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, how we organise the wider training support system for EVS in the region and how the SALTO EECA EVS trainers pool works. The SALTO EECA Resource Centre has been supporting the volunteering activities within European youth programmes (previously known as European Voluntary Service – EVS) since its very beginnings in 2004. Over the last years we have created a comprehensive and quality system to support EVS development. **This book briefly describes elements of training support that have evolved throughout the previous years, as well as giving details and examples of our practices from particular EVS trainings.**

We hope that this booklet will help to illustrate the kind of training support we offer to EVS organisations, coordinators, mentors and volunteers in Eastern Partnership Countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) and Russia. Additionally, we would like to share information about the EVS trainers pool that is used to implement support activities.

SALTO Eastern Europe and the Caucasus together with members of the EVS trainers pool would welcome any feedback that you would like to share with us. Just e-mail us at [eeeca@salto-youth.net](mailto:eeeca@salto-youth.net). We also invite any interested National Agency officers and EVS trainers to visit our activities in the region. We are always open to suggestions for future cooperation.

Enjoy reading!

Your SALTO EECA team  
together with members of the EVS trainers pool.  
March 2018



# History

## of EVS trainings in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

Between 2006-2010 SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre together with local EVS trainers organised **over 70 EVS trainings** in the region. These helped to increase the quality of many EVS projects before the European Commission decided to harmonise the training cycle in the region.

From the very beginning SALTO EECA has considered increasing quality of one of the most important pillars of the European youth programmes – volunteering activities of young people (previously known as EVS). The first years of SALTO EECA produced several contact making seminars and training courses which focused on EVS projects management and development. For example:

- "EVS4U" training course in 2004;
- three contact-making seminars "Yth2" in 2005 and 2006;
- "EastWestEVS" training course with contact-making elements in 2006, 2009, 2010;
- a "Train to EVS" training course with study visit elements in 2006.





## History of EVS trainings in the EECA region

These events were crucial in establishing partnerships between organisations, future EVS projects' partners and in fostering an understanding of the European Voluntary Service. Training courses allowed participants to gain knowledge of the most essential elements of EVS, like the volunteer self-development and learning process, support for the hosting organisations, impact on the local communities both in the hosting country and back home and the need for constant training.

**In August 2006 SALTO EECA organised its first Training for EVS Trainers from Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.** At a time of change in programmes ("Youth" transformed into "Youth in Action") the Resource Centre wanted to launch a new experimental strategy for EVS training support. The first seminar for trainers took place in Poland and attracted a dozen youth workers from the EECA interested in EVS trainings. The aim of this meeting was to raise the quality of EVS trainings and create the organisational setting for future common activities. Over the next months some of the participants became involved in EVS support and organised the first joint EVS trainings in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, especially in Ukraine and Georgia. Before the training cycle was harmonised in 2011, local EVS trainers together with SALTO EECA delivered over 70 such trainings. This experimental phase helped us to more fully understand the reality of many EVS hosting projects and confirmed the positive part SALTO EECA could play in the EVS Training cycle in the region.

In September 2007 the SALTO EECA Resource Centre decided to organise a group of trainers from Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, already experienced in EVS, to support the EVS training cycle at a deeper level in order to make a stronger impact. **Almost twenty trainers met in Simeiz, Ukraine for a quality high level training for EVS trainers.** This training was a cornerstone for future quality in EVS training cycle.

At the end of 2009, thanks to support from Polish, French and German National Agencies, SALTO EECA organised a meeting of those experienced in EVS from Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. The meeting allowed over 20 trainers and EVS coordinators to discuss the most burning issues of EVS in the EECA as well as to have an input into the upcoming harmonisation process of EVS training and accreditation.



## History of EVS trainings in the EECA region

During the preparation for harmonisation of the EVS training cycle, many EECA EVS trainers from the region took part in practical job-shadowing during on-arrival trainings and mid-term meetings in a wide variety of countries, like Norway, UK, the Netherlands, Greece, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania, etc. Such preparation allowed best European practice to be incorporated into the EECA EVS training cycle that since 2011 has been organised centrally by SALTO EECA. In addition the process enabled EVS trainers from the region to become involved in the creation of the training system and thus empowered those involved with a strong feeling of ownership.

[www.salto-youth.net/EVStcsPrevious](http://www.salto-youth.net/EVStcsPrevious)





# The EVS training cycle in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus **today**

The training cycle in volunteering activities within European programmes for young people (previously known as EVS) is very important for the well-being of volunteers abroad as well as in helping ensure the overall success of a project. Within the Programme Countries, the National Agencies are in charge of the EVS training cycle. In the Neighbouring Partner Countries, respective regional SALTO Resource Centres are responsible for this support measure for EVS volunteers. Consequently it is **SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus who coordinate the EVS training cycle in Eastern Partnership countries and Russia**. This helps ensure minimum standards in EVS training set by the European Commission.

The EVS training cycle in the region is organised around 3 sub-regions due to large geographical distances, number of volunteers and specificity of the countries. The trainings in Georgia are for all volunteers working in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. In Ukraine for those doing EVS in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine and in Russia for volunteers in this country. Between 2011 and 2014, when a large number number of volunteers were hosted in the region, SALTO EECA organised 5 on-arrival trainings and 5 mid-term meetings in each of the sub-regions. Since 2014 the number has decreased to 4 activities of each kind in each of the sub-regions due to fewer EVS volunteers.





## The EVS training cycle in the EECA region today

Each on-arrival and mid-term is run by two trainers from the EVS trainers pool. Normally the on-arrivals start Saturday lunch time and finish on Wednesday evening (4,5 working day), while the mid-terms begin just after, from Thursday lunch till Sunday lunch time (3 working days). See the concept: [www.salto-youth.net/download/2704](http://www.salto-youth.net/download/2704).

The volunteers must be registered by the receiving organisations themselves, and SALTO EECA puts lots of emphasis on the need to respect this obligation. The organisations and the volunteers can plan EVS trainings well in advance using our annual calendar: [www.salto-youth.net/EVScalendar](http://www.salto-youth.net/EVScalendar).

If less than 6 volunteers register for particular event, SALTO EECA cancels the training/meeting and invites volunteers for another activity. In cases where there are between 6 and 10 volunteers, SALTO EECA might decide to shorten the activity to 2 working days in case of mid-term and 2,5 working days for on-arrival. If there are more than 25 volunteers, SALTO EECA organises additional activity. Sometimes additional training might be adapted to meet special needs of a group, for example taking place in Armenia or Moldova.

**Additionally, in order to strengthen the learning as well as the project's impact, once a year SALTO EECA organises three to four EVS events throughout the region.** Again the region needs to be divided. In case of EVS events for ex-volunteers from Belarus and Russia, the meetings are rotated between these countries. The same applies for Ukraine and Moldova, where each year the event is hosted either in one or the other country. In the Caucasus the events used to be organised separately in Armenia for ex-volunteers from this country and in Georgia for youngsters from this country and Azerbaijan. Due to organisational obstacles, from 2016 the system was unified and events are now rotated between Armenia and Georgia.

Each EVS event is built around a 2 days programme (usually from lunch 1st day to lunch 3rd day) and facilitated by a team of EVS trainer, an EVS accreditor and SALTO EECA officer. The evaluation and reflection of ex-volunteers about their EVS experiences usually takes up to 60% of working time, while 40% of sessions are left for promotional activities that are organised with involvement of local EVS organisation(s).



## The EVS training cycle in the EECA region today

Naturally, the EVS training cycle can not be the only system of support for EVS, as it concentrates mostly on EVS volunteers. Therefore **since 2012 SALTO EECA has organised in each of the countries in the region an annual EVS coordinators meeting**. Representatives of accredited organisations and those interested in EVS gather to exchange practices and learn about EVS from each other. The meetings are either 2 or 3 days depending on the needs of EVS community in each country and vary from training with concrete learning objectives to open exchange of participants experiences. The big advantage is that the meetings can be run in local languages.

Already for some years, SALTO EECA reserves 3-4 places at each of SOHO trainings, sending 10-15 EVS coordinators each year from the region to these important international events. SALTO EECA is also involved in other international EVS oriented activities allowing EVS coordinators to access a broad variety of opportunities in a range of languages.

All the activities organised in Eastern Partnership countries and Russia are facilitated by the SALTO EECA EVS pool of ca. 15 trainers:

**[www.salto-youth.net/EECA\\_EVS\\_Trainers](http://www.salto-youth.net/EECA_EVS_Trainers)**

The EVS training cycle is always supported by a local person to take care of logistics and the practical arrangements of the training. Sometimes representatives of SALTO EECA are also present.







# On-arrival trainings in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

Just like EVS on-arrival trainings elsewhere, in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus the main objective is to introduce volunteers to the hosting country and prepare them for their EVS experience – both service as well as learning process. Life in one of the Eastern Partnership country or Russia can often be culturally very different from the volunteers' home reality. Therefore SALTO EECA EVS trainers pay special attention to helping volunteers understand and adapt to local culture as well as learn how to deal with cultural and personal challenges. Trainings also help participants get to know other volunteers in the same region, network with each other and provide space to set learning goals and develop ideas for personal initiatives within their EVS project.

During the on-arrival trainings the trainers will take into account the fact that the geopolitical and cultural identity of each country and region are a bit different and also the fact that background and needs of volunteers might vary. Nevertheless, the general parts that are usually included in the programme are similar.



## On-arrival trainings in the EECA region

### Getting to know each other and sharing information and experiences of EVS projects

To create closer ties and ties between participants, EVS trainers lately use different outdoor and rope exercises. To get to know more about EVS projects different poster methods are quite popular (pizza, poncho, etc.).

### Clarifying idea behind EVS (philosophy) and how it functions (rules and roles)

As volunteers are expected to know the EVS Info-Kit before coming to training (with information on “what to expect from EVS”, insurance and Youthpass), the on-arrival trainings do not focus much on clarifying basic information about EVS, but rather concentrate on providing a space for volunteers “to see the bigger picture” – understand the meaning behind European volunteering activities and how volunteers are an important part of it. Sometimes “moving debate” method with controversial statements that help to clarify EVS specificities is very helpful.

Also, knowing that volunteers often have selective memory when it comes to the rights and responsibilities part of EVS, they can clarify who is responsible for what (partners in EVS) and have space to ask questions.

### Intercultural learning

Most volunteers hosted in the EECA region do not know much about it before arrival. Thus intercultural learning requires a lot of attention in on-arrival trainings in the region. Knowing history and understanding different dimensions of local culture helps volunteers to better understand different patterns of local people's behaviours and thus adjust their own models of reaction.

Apart from experiencing ICL exercises (like Albatross, Baranga, Abigail story, etc.) and explaining basic theories on it, volunteers have space to discover cultural peculiarities of the hosting country/sub-region and exchange ideas on how to deal with intercultural challenges.



Especially in the Caucasus experience has shown, that volunteers expect quite straight-forward examples of potential cultural differences. These examples are grouped around 6 Cultural Dimensions of Geert Hofstede (power-distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, indulgence).

### Effective communication, dealing with conflicts and coping with challenges in EVS projects

As the way of communication and dealing with conflicts is also strongly affected by cultural differences (in many cases it is not common to talk openly and directly about things), volunteers can also discuss extensively how to communicate effectively with receiving organization in a respectful manner and how to manage conflicts. During the trainings volunteers can understand that challenges are part of EVS and are unavoidable. EVS trainers encourage volunteers to be aware and sensitive about it and how to take it as a learning opportunity.

### Understanding learning and setting personal learning goals for EVS

Most EVS volunteers are not familiar with non-formal learning approach and in many cases have also not yet thought about the learning dimension of their EVS project. Therefore during on-arrival trainings volunteers have a chance to become more aware about the value of the Youthpass process – setting the learning goals, constructing a learning plan and recognizing learning outcomes. There is no need to analyse details of the framework of 8 key competences, but volunteers can get the general idea and understand sense of spending time during EVS on reflection about learning, personal and professional development.

In the Eastern European countries of the region trainers for instance combine reflection on learning with a hike in the mountains (having check-points with questions to reflect upon). This works very well and allows volunteers to look at their projects and EVS experience from a more meta-level.

## On-arrival trainings in the EECA region

### Exchanging ideas on activities within the projects, working on own initiatives and networking

Many hosting organizations expect volunteers to come up with their own ideas and to propose activities for the local community (especially for young people), but volunteers mostly do not have experience with organising and animating such events. At on-arrival trainings volunteers are encouraged to exchange ideas about different personal initiatives and how they can be implemented (especially when the resources are often limited). EVS trainers also share their experience and provide space for volunteers to practically plan such activities – often in cooperation with other volunteers.

### Open space

Usually volunteers take an active part in adopting the programme to own ideas. Often they bring specific topics that they would be interested to discover in more detail (how to work with children, how to manage fund-raising activities, how to teach my language to locals, outdoor methods etc.). Therefore during on-arrivals volunteers also have chance to come together in smaller groups and discover those topics closer with help of facilitators.



# Mid-term

## meetings in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

The mid-term meetings aim to create space where volunteers can reflect about the experience they have gained so far during their Erasmus+ volunteering experience and place it within the learning frames. It means that a meeting should help a volunteer to summarize, share and draw learning conclusions from the EVS experience. It is also time for networking and planning further individual paths and steps.

Ideally the mid-term meeting should take place in the middle of EVS service but in reality it differs from case to case. The meetings are supported by 2 trainers whose tasks are mainly to facilitate activities for group sharing, individual and collective reflection. Additionally the trainers provide space for volunteers to assess and plan personal learning in a conscious way.



At the beginning of the mid-term meetings trainers identify the needs of participants and adjust the programme to suit the most relevant ones. Based on the interests expressed by participants openly or “flying in the air” the programme can sometimes include additional workshops on specific topics (for example: communication, time management, conflict resolution, project management, practical tools for working with children etc.). In the same time there are several aspects that are addressed on a regular base during each mid-term meeting.

### Getting to know each other, team building, sharing expectations, creating groups rules for the volunteers

This is a traditional part of any activity run in a non-formal education setting which aims to break the ice and create a positive and trustful learning environment. If the weather allows, this can be done outdoors through experiential learning activities like a rope course or treasure hunt. If the group needs certain common rules related to attitudes (like confidentiality) or norms (being in time, switching off the mobiles etc.) those can be agreed at the end of the team building. This is also a time for sharing the individual expectations so that trainers can adjust the programme to the needs of the participants.

### Individual reflection and group sharing about the EVS projects

During this part of the programme it is important to create a space where volunteers can reflect individually and share in a group their impressions, feelings and thoughts about their EVS projects. It starts usually with a short presentation of each project to create an overview of “who is in the room” (methods often used: “t-shirt” or “elevator speech”). Sometimes those sessions (usually two) become very emotional and become a way of letting off steam, especially when volunteers do not have enough support from their hosting organizations or local mentors. Trainers understand the importance of emotional relief and can suggest different tools to support this process such as story telling (also using Dixit cards, postcards or cubes), collage, drawing, making flags etc. It is important to plan the programme element logically going from individual reflection to group sharing so the second part of these sessions usually ends with some form of EVS projects' exhibition.

### Assessing an EVS project

Assessing the projects is a logical continuation of the previous overview. It allows volunteers to reflect on their EVS activities in a more rational way and evaluate them from different perspectives. In general the volunteers need to determine to what extent their project is in line with the values of EVS but before going “global” some practical issues are assessed. Usually trainers suggest different forms of grids, graphics, diagrams or tables (pizza or web activity, for example). Several aspects



can be evaluated visually and shared orally such as: relations with sending organization, mentor, hosting or coordinating organization, lodging, work, target group, personal involvement, social life, language issues etc. Participants may also indicate the quality level they expected before they came, the actual level, and the one they would like their EVS project to reach.

### Conflicts/Challenges/Issues

This session should help volunteers to find solutions for any difficult circumstances they might have faced before the mid-term meeting. The most burning topics identified by the volunteers can be related to lack of respect or resources, unpredicted reactions of hosting organisations to volunteers' ideas and problems, cultural challenges, difficulties in cooperation with stakeholders, target groups, staff and other volunteers of receiving organisation etc. Different activities can be used to explore the roots of open or hidden conflicts and identify ways to address them (for example, activities based on 6 Thinking Hats of Edward de Bono, collecting and responding to the "box of troubles", role games, forum theatre etc.). As a result of the session participants should get a clearer vision of what they can do to improve the situation.

### Intercultural learning

The intercultural learning session requires a different approach to that used in the on-arrival training. By the time of mid-term meeting volunteers have already gained some experience of interacting with the local culture, they may have encountered the initial cultural shock, so this programme element should help them to go deeper in intercultural issues, reflect about personal weaknesses and strengths in dealing with interculturality. For example, participants may be invited to reflect how they were influenced by living in the hosting country (completing unfinished sentences, creating an art object of personal values, reflecting on quotes of famous people etc.).

Bringing some related theories can be supported by the participants' experience. It is also worth exploring the reverse cultural shock volunteers may experience upon returning back to their home and discuss how it can be dealt with.

## Mid-term meetings in the EECA region

It is important to avoid cultural generalizations and show that each small town may have its own cultural specificities. That is why trainers organize some local visits or handicrafts workshops in a town where the activity takes place. They may also give some practical assignments to participants to discover local reality by themselves.

### Understanding learning and setting personal learning goals

Though the majority of volunteers will already be familiar with the non-formal education approach they may still have trouble to assess and plan own learning. The trainers start with emphasizing EVS as a good learning opportunity and suggest participants reflect about it through the “learners” glasses, for example, by drawing a “river of learning”.

After that, the concept of a competence is explored as well as the framework of 8 key competences as a supportive tool to assess and plan personal learning. It is important to give participants space to frame their learning achievements in a competence and to adjust to this approach. Some activities are suggested for this purpose, for example, watching cartoons or doing small assignments on each competence. After an explanation of the YouthPass including technical and practical arrangements, everybody can start working on personal YouthPass and get consultation from a trainer.

As a continuation, volunteers can be invited to think of 3-4 key competences or at least skills they would like to develop by the end of the EVS project and identify the time-line and the activities that will support their learning.

### Exchanging ideas on activities still to be done during the project, working on own initiatives and networking

Planning the rest of EVS project is an important element in every mid-term meeting. Volunteers are encouraged to think about what they can do in order to improve their remaining parts of the project. That personal task may be followed by group work with drawing mind maps, for example. It is also valid to help young people to find new dimensions during the EVS, for example introducing different on-line educational platforms, language learning opportunities, etc.

This topic during mid-term meetings is also related to the initiatives that volunteers may still implement. Brainstorming for their personal project ideas can be followed by describing in more detail the basic project structure: what are they planning to do, for whom, when, where, how and why. Additionally volunteers are asked to think of the resources they might need to carry out their own initiatives.

### Workshops upon request

Usually volunteers have enough space for their own learning needs and can suggest content for workshop sessions. It may be a mutual sharing space where volunteers are involved in running the activities, so they can teach each other. Sometimes trainers prepare ad-hoc specific workshops, where the experience of volunteers is always at the center. The topics may differ depending on the volunteers' interests.

### Life after EVS

Many volunteers feel stressed about their future after the EVS projects. Uncertainty makes them very vulnerable. At this part of the meeting the trainers suggest different methods to make further plans after the EVS more concrete. Visualisation exercises are very effective tools to support each participant in individual reflections while brainstorming will open a floor for different ideas. It can be strengthened by setting personal plans at least for the first months after returning home. Sharing personal plans is very effective way of inspiring participants. They may also advice each other or join their peers initiatives. Trainers also share information about possible educational or volunteer programmes, opportunities and resources that young people can apply to or use in their future.







Navigating



# Final annual events in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

Beginning in 2012, SALTO EECA with the support of local organizations in Eastern Partnership countries and Russia has organised annual EVS events for and with the former EVS volunteers who would have completed their service within months preceding the event.

The intention behind these events is twofold:

1. Allow the ex-volunteers to share and assess their past EVS experiences, assist in their reintegration process (in particular equipping them with skills to cope with reverse cultural shock), create an environment of mutual support and possible networking among the ex-EVS volunteers.



2. Promote the Erasmus+ Programme and in particular the European Voluntary Service among local communities through:

- giving a chance for potential volunteers and promoters to meet and talk to the former volunteers;
- elaborating on EVS and its impact while having a direct contact with local stakeholders, decision-makers and the media;
- showcasing successful projects;
- contributing to the recognition of the notion of volunteering locally and internationally.

The assessment component of the Erasmus+ volunteering activities mainly addresses the question of ambiguity connected with the “life after EVS”, which is not always properly dealt with by the existing support structures of the former volunteers – their sending and receiving organizations. The setting created for EVS events and the programme flow provide **space for participants to reflect on and share within a community of likeminded youth**, and sometimes is the only opportunity for them to talk openly about these intense experience, which they find difficult to explain even to their families and friends. Other important topics like Youthpass, may be addressed as well, depending on the needs of particular groups and participants.

Often EVS events result in future collaborative projects, common plans and most importantly an online and offline “safety net”, which most volunteers lack upon their return home. **Volunteers continue to share tips on reintegration, employment, further education and travelling** based on their own experiences both at the event and after it.

The promotional component of EVS events varies from year to year, and from country to country. They are very much based on the needs and interests of the local community which SALTO EECA tries to understand and address together with the local EVS organizations. Sometimes other, bigger event that gathers youth and NGOs becomes partner of an EVS event. **This creates the synergy needed to more easily reach local young people and organisations**, by bringing international aspects to the activity.

Representatives of local authorities, NGOs and media are invited in order to increase the knowledge of the wider community regarding EVS and at

the same time use the chance to make Erasmus+ organisations' work, the work of SALTO EECA in the region and the programme itself more visible. **The ex-volunteers take an active role in organizing and carrying out the promotion component of the EVS events.** Their participation in this part of the activity makes the programme more reachable, attractive, convincing and reliable to the locals attending the events.

In 2014 an online campaign “How EVS changes lives” was initiated in parallel with the events, and while sharing tweet-photos with the **hashtags #EVS and #lifechangingmoments** the ex-volunteers from different countries of the region could connect to each other.

**[www.flickr.com/evsevents](http://www.flickr.com/evsevents)**

To sum up, the EVS events bring greater added value to the implementation of EVS in the region. Every year 3 to 4 EVS events allow about 100 ex-volunteers to meet and promote Erasmus+. This is practically about 30% of all volunteers sent from the region annually. There are still many ex-volunteers who can not make it to the events for different reasons (no information about the activity, staying abroad after EVS, no time due to family or job reasons, etc). The EVS events which are carried out in **various locations throughout countries of the Eastern Partnership and Russia** make a strong impact both at the individual level of ex-volunteers, at the level of local EVS organizations and at the level of the local communities at large.







Navigating



# EVS coordinators meetings in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

Meetings of EVS coordinators are a breakthrough for the quality assurance of the Erasmus+ volunteering in Eastern Partnership countries and Russia. At the very beginning of involvement in EVS, each organisation develops its own way of implementing EVS projects, learning from its own mistakes. Previously, hosting organizations in the region had to rely on their more experienced colleagues from Programme countries for successful project implementation and for the good of volunteers. Many organizations didn't know about other EVS projects in the same country and volunteers were often not aware about other volunteers, sometimes even in the same city! It goes without saying there were opportunities for learning and contact making provided internationally by SALTO EECA and committed NGOs, though they were



fragmented. With the introduction of an accreditation and centralized training cycle the situation changed markedly and new learning and training opportunities appeared for all actors involved into EVS. Annual coordinators meetings is one example.

Since 2012 the meetings of EVS coordinators have been organised in each country of the region, in order to allow participants to use their own language and focus on issues specific to their situation. The meetings are used to exchange experiences and learning in order to make EVS in the region better and produce a more meaningful impact on the local community and other partners involved. It is also a good space for more advanced organizations to share their experience with the newcomers, find solutions for common issues, plan common activities to promote EVS and advocate for decisions necessary to improve the stay and work of foreigners in a hosting country. **The objectives are as follow:**

- to integrate the EVS community in each country;
- to share experiences and good practices in sending and hosting volunteers;
- to discuss obstacles and plan common steps to overcome them.

The first meetings had a strong learning component and trainers from SALTO EECA EVS trainers pool focused on improving the general knowledge of organizations about Youth in Action programme in general and EVS in particular. The standard agenda of a meeting would consist of a day with different inputs and presentations about the regulations and criteria of the European Voluntary Service and details of non-formal education. A second day would be more training oriented, with the focus on EVS realities, finding common solutions and developing shared quality standards.

The most common expectations of EVS coordinators were accreditation procedures, specificities of the Programme, rights and responsibilities in EVS, visibility and promotion of EVS in local community, motivation of EVS volunteers and how to match motivations with expectations of hosting organizations, selection process of volunteers, how to manage finances of an EVS project and how to develop YouthPass with volunteers.

As EVS developed further in the region and organisations became more experienced, the expectations and consequently programmes of the meetings have changed. Now in many cases coordinators form the agenda of the meetings themselves and contribute much more of the content by sharing experiences and initiating discussions on issues important for successful implementation of EVS projects. Consequently, the role of a trainer has shifted to facilitating the meeting. Nowadays, in most countries the meetings start on 1st day at lunch and finish on the 3rd day at lunch time. In countries where the requirements may be more specific, we offer 2 intensive training days.

EVS accreditors are usually involved in the meetings, either as experts or co-facilitators, bringing a valuable point of view on the EVS qualities. Sometimes, local youth policy makers, representatives of ministries responsible for youth or city councils are invited to present country youth policy development and find common points with organisations implementing EVS. This is especially valuable in the countries, with bureaucratic obstacles in implementing EVS projects. **A representative of SALTO EECA is always present at least for part of a meeting**, so participants can directly address different issues. The meetings are also open to the representatives of non-accredited organisations if they are interested and have the capacity to become an EVS organisation.

To sum up, the meetings bring great added value to the implementation of EVS in the region. **Every year the 7 meetings gather around 180 EVS coordinators, representing about 80% of all accredited organisations.** Naturally, many EVS coordinators join the meetings regularly each year, creating a trustful community of peer support. Some other organisations prefer to send new persons each time, to make sure there is plenty of their staff aware of EVS. Such a high attendance practically also means that the SALTO EECA team has a chance to meet and work together with most of EVS coordinators in the region. This gives benefits for both sides far beyond the EVS itself.

See the actual calendar of the meetings as well as previous editions:

**[www.salto-youth.net/EVScordinators](http://www.salto-youth.net/EVScordinators)**





TRAVEL  
COSTS

Organisational  
Support  
440€ / month  
440€ x 10 months  
4400€

Programme countries  
28 EU members  
3 EFTA members  
FYROM, Turkey

EVS  
17-30yo

ERASMUS





# Trainings for **EVS** **mentors** in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

In order to develop the competences of all actors involved in Erasmus+ volunteering projects, SALTO EECA introduced specialized training courses for mentors in 2012. The courses have a dual aim. The first is to underline the importance of a mentor's role within EVS. The trainings raise awareness and understanding that a mentor is more than a “formal friend”, who needs to fix emerging problems and show volunteers around during the first weeks of the service. The second is to develop competences of mentors in order to support the learning process of volunteers. Bearing this in mind the programme of courses has been developed in a way that allows mentors to step into the shoes of volunteers and feel the necessity and importance of support in the learning process as well as to equip them with the basic tools that can help to make learning an interesting and exciting adventure. The approach of facilitative learning is used for these courses.



## Trainings for EVS mentors in the EECA region

The methodology of the courses was inspired by the values and principles of non-formal learning and self-directed learning. It is based on the learning theories of the humanistic school of education, particularly the work of David Kolb, Carl Rogers, Richard Boyatzis and Albert Bandura. The trainings agenda was largely based on participants' needs, identified through self-assessment during the preparation stage and by setting learning objectives by each participant during the course. The programme consists of three main stages:

1. The first part of training focuses on **"Me as a learner"** and provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on how a person learns, what helps and prevents him/her learning. Part of the programme emphasises the specifics of the learning process during EVS experience.
2. The next part is **"Me as a facilitator/supporter of learning"** and equips participants with a variety of tools for assisting learning of others with a special focus on supporting the individual learning process within EVS, including learning in different cultural contexts.
3. The final part focuses on **practising design of learning process** for/with EVS volunteers applying tools acquired during the course.

Approximately 100 mentors from 7 countries in the region have been trained during 3 training courses. These trainings were possible thanks to contributions from French and Polish National Agencies of Youth in Action / Erasmus+ programme. It is planned to empower the process with e-learning possibilities, so that parts of the residential trainings are adapted and available online.



# Managing **EVS** **trainers pool** in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

Someone might think that it is enough to bring (preferably good) trainers together, in order to create a trainers pool. In Eastern Europe and the Caucasus we are very far from such thinking. SALTO EECA has supported EVS in the region from the very beginning. From the first trainings and seminars targeting EVS organisations and coordinators in 2004, the Resource Centre was able to identify a number of people who in the end created the pool. Many of the current EVS trainers have grown together with SALTO EECA in improving the quality of support for the EVS community. Some have developed their trainer's paths individually, but thanks to cooperation with SALTO EECA, they had the chance to get part of their practical experience at European level.



## Managing the EVS trainers pool in the EECA region

Between 2006-2010, SALTO EECA together with different trainers organised over 70 EVS trainings in the region. This was before the harmonisation required by the European Commission. Although there were some logistical struggles, the trainers were already beginning to gain a lot of very **valuable experiences from these EVS trainings, even before the EVS trainers pool was created.** Working together was, and still is a key element to building quality within the pool. An additional aspect in creating the pool was **15 job-shadowings at Programme Countries EVS trainings**, so the trainers could not only learn about others experiences in running trainings, but also about the structure and management of other pools. This allowed the trainers to have a strong say, when it came to creating an EVS trainers pool in the region.

In 2011, when the European Commission finally decided to harmonise the process of EVS trainings in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, SALTO EECA has officially recruited 12 trainers from Eastern Partnership countries and Russia only. There was no doubt, that there were already enough quality trainers in the region able to run EVS training cycle. The first meeting of the pool in Suzdal, Russia took place in June 2011, just before the first on-arrivals and mid-terms. Since then the pool has met every year (Torun-Poland 2012, Pultusk-Poland 2013, Gyumri-Armenia 2014, Zarechany-Belarus 2015, Krakow-Poland 2016, Mestia-Georgia 2017, Kyiv-Ukraine 2018). **Annual meetings** allow the pool, including the SALTO EECA team, to work on quality of on-arrival and mid-term sessions. Using experience gained and translating it into more clear learning objectives and more accurate methods of work. The meetings are also a platform for clarifying internal issues related to the management of the pool. Since the very beginning the pool has had a **code of conduct** that trainers adheres to.

The **register of trainers' responsibilities** is written down on paper and clarified each year, so everyone is well aware. The meetings are great opportunity to include new trainers, as the pool is always open to new members and each year it changes slightly. Nowadays it consists of 15 trainers, with 8 colleagues active since the very beginning.

The meetings are also a chance to develop practical competences in the training field. Each year the trainers identify the topic for **quality workshops** and together with SALTO EECA invite experts in the field.



So far we have mastered:

- change management (with Michael Kimmig),
- youthpass process and learning support (with Juan Ratto-Nielsen),
- drama (with Diego Marin Romera),
- inclusion and work with challenging participants (with Leo Kaserer),
- first aid (with the Armenian Red Cross),
- outdoor and low-ropes methods (with Donatas Petkauskas),
- learning badges (with Laimonas Ragauskas),
- graphic facilitation (with Deniss Jershov).

Working with these European trainers has also allowed to see the pool in a mirror and gain valuable perspective to the work, that sometimes is less visible inside.

**Transparent and equal division of work** is another key aspect of the pool management. It was agreed that SALTO EECA will divide the work based on the availability declared by trainers. The work schedule is agreed at the end of a year for next 12 months and published on-line, allowing EVS organisations to plan their calendars ([www.salto-youth.net/EVScalendar](http://www.salto-youth.net/EVScalendar)). The principle is that all the trainers should get the same amount of work. In the years before 2014 it was quite easy, as there were many EVS volunteers in the region and therefore also lots of work.

Since Erasmus+ was launched there have been significantly fewer training opportunities, but each trainer should get minimum 3-4 activities to facilitate during a year. After the work division is set, it is up to trainers themselves to find substitution among the colleagues from the pool in case of any need for changes. Naturally in the end the work assignment differs among trainers, as some colleagues are more available, some less. Some will never need substitutions, and some others need it more often. Those trainers who are more freelancing would easily take any unexpected trainings (for instance if the group for on-arrival is too big, SALTO EECA splits into 2 separate activities), etc.

EVS trainers from Eastern Partnership countries and Russia have **the opportunity to organise spontaneous sub-regional meetings** throughout the year to discuss current issues, exchange practices and discover new methods. Such meetings are agreed and covered by SALTO EECA, but the overall cost is really low, while the benefits in terms of ownership of the

## Managing EVS trainers pool in the EECA region

process as well as quality of cooperation is remarkable. More and more the trainers take the management issues into their hands. Recently an on-line evaluation form was developed, so that the collection of feedback and reporting its outcomes become much easier and automatic.

Preparing publication about the EVS trainings in the region, where most of content was written by the trainers themselves is another example of progressing self-management. Of course there is always a role for SALTO EECA to coordinate certain aspects of cooperation, but it is also great help for the Resource Centre if the pool takes different responsibilities.

Members of the pool can count on support for **specialised trainings and seminars for advanced European trainers**. Recently SALTO EECA has supported representatives of the pool to join the Bridges for Trainers seminar, COMETS where experienced trainers could develop competences related to Competence Model for Trainers, Trainers Skill Workshops with another focus on trainers' competences development, etc. New colleagues who joined the pool can take part in Training for Trainers coordinated by SALTO Training and Cooperation, so they could practice the process of preparing and running international activity at a European level.



Finally, for us a successful pool is a team of trainers where members find it beneficial to cooperate, learn from each other and often spend time together. Creating **an open atmosphere** is the responsibility of everyone, so also SALTO EECA takes care to ensure, that all meetings and communication are made in an open and transparent way, where trust is one of key factors. **Continuity of staff responsible for management** of the pool within SALTO EECA is most probably also playing an important role in quality management.

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