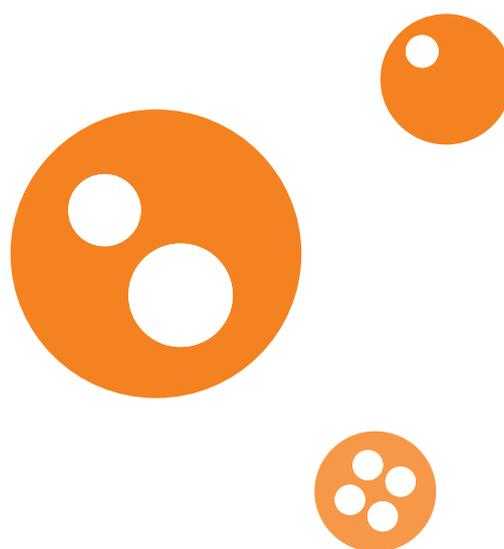


Renata Mieńkowska-Norkiene
**IMPACT OF THE EUROPEAN
VOLUNTARY SERVICE ON LOCAL
COMMUNITIES IN THE EASTERN
EUROPE AND CAUCASUS REGION
– Research Report**



Abstract

This study examines the impact of European Voluntary Service (EVS) on four groups of its stakeholders, namely on: volunteers, on hosting organizations, on EVS direct beneficiaries, finally on hosting organizations' local communities.

The impact is related to human, economic, social, cultural and some other fields of volunteers' activities.

The research findings are based on previous research design. The research embraces: quantitative research based on CAWI (*Computer Assisted Web Interview*) questionnaire, qualitative research embracing Skype IDI (*Individual In-Depth Interviews*) with the EVS volunteers and hosting organizations representatives, finally on theoretical analysis of the most important documents related to the European Voluntary Service within the Youth in Action Programme and additional information and database provided by SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre (SALTO EECA).

The research embraces long-term international EVS projects implemented by the organizations from the Programme Countries the Program (i.e., 27 EU and 4 EFTA member states, 2 EU pre-accession countries – Turkey and Croatia) and from Neighbouring Partner Countries from Eastern Europe and Caucasus (i.e., Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine) in cooperation with the countries of the Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region in 2007 - 2011. The projects involve long-term voluntary service of 6 to 12 months hosted by organizations in both regions – in Eastern Europe and Caucasus and in the Programme Countries.

Keywords

EVS, impact of the voluntary service, hosting organizations, beneficiaries, local communities, volunteers, skills, cultural dimension, professional development, personal development

Background

It was Robert Putnam who said that "*Social connectedness matters to our lives in the most profound way*".¹ In the chapter *Health and Happiness* from his book *Bowling Alone*, Putnam reports that recent public research shows social connection impacts all areas of human health, this includes psychological and physical aspects of human health. Putnam says "...beyond a doubt that social connectedness is one of the most powerful determinates of our well being." In particular it is face to face connections which have been shown to have greater impacts than non-face to face relationships. Such connections are definitely a basis of a local community which may be defined as a group of interacting people living in a common location. The word "community" is often used to refer to a group that is organized around common values and is attributed with social cohesion within a shared geographical location, generally in social units larger than a household. The word "community" is derived from the Old French *communité* which is derived from the Latin *communitas* (*cum*, "with/together" + *munus*, "gift"), a broad term for fellowship or organized society.

A sense of community refers to people's perception of interconnection and interdependence, shared responsibility, and common goals. Understanding a community entails having knowledge of community needs and resources, having respect for community members, and involving key community members in programs and common actions or activities.

The aim of this evaluation research report is two-fold – summary of received data should give an overview of the impact of the European *Youth in Action Programme (YiA)– Action 2: European Voluntary Service (EVS)* on the local communities in the hosting countries of the EVS volunteers, and – secondly – should explain the influence of participation in EVS project on the volunteers themselves.

As assumed by the European Commission, the European Voluntary Service (EVS) should "*provide young Europeans with the unique chance to express their personal commitment through unpaid and full-time voluntary activities in a foreign country within or outside the EU. In this way, it seeks to develop solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance among young people, thus contributing to reinforcing social cohesion in the European Union and to promoting young people's active citizenship.*"² The European

1 Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000, p. 326

2 Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action->

Voluntary Service enables young people to carry out voluntary service for up to 12 months in a country other than their country of residence. It fosters solidarity among young people and is a true 'learning service'. Beyond benefiting local communities, volunteers learn new skills and languages, and discover other cultures.

In theory, volunteering is one of the most effective instruments for young people's non-formal education – through EVS they may acquire new knowledge, skills and competencies. At the same time, being exposed to intercultural challenges and new personal experience, they expand their horizons, learn more about themselves and grow and get more mature as human beings. But what about practice? The main focus in this research report will be, therefore, on whether the participation in the EVS projects gives the volunteers a *chance to make a real difference to the world – and to their own lives*.

Living in a satisfying relation and understanding with the local community requires more time to discover and interact with the community. According to the "EVS guide for volunteers"³ the ex-EVS volunteers state that it takes 5 to 6 months to discover how a certain community is working and provides to get opportunity to understand intercultural learning in a true sense. Hence, the research assumption was that the research should embrace terminated long-term EVS projects of 6 to 12 months length which were hosted by organizations from the Programme Countries as well as by organizations from the Programme Countries in cooperation with the countries of the Eastern Europe and Caucasus.⁴ Cooperation within the Youth in Action Programme with the Neighbouring Partner Countries from Eastern Europe and Caucasus Region is supported by the SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre (SALTO EECA).

It is worth mentioning that the European Voluntary Service is one of these few rare opportunities that allow for "two-way East-West" projects in the non-formal education programmes within a variety of thematic fields ranging from such themes as environmental issues, art and culture, inter-religious dialogue, social integration, as well as post-conflict rehabilitation or youth sports, to mention just a

few areas that the EVS project may be focused on.

As already mentioned before, EVS projects may be implemented in cooperation with the Neighbouring Partner Countries from Eastern Europe and Caucasus Region: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine. As stated in the quantity statistical *Report on Cooperation of Programme Countries with Eastern Europe and Caucasus Region within the Youth in Action Programme between 2007-2010*⁵ compiled by the SALTO EECA, between 2007-2010 – at the macro-level – Programme Countries sent in total 1057 volunteers within 717 projects to the EECA Region, while 1024 volunteers within 562 projects were sent from the EECA Region to Programme Countries. The below presented research was, on the other hand, designed to mirror the impact of the EVS projects at the micro-level, and embraced the four groups of stakeholders: volunteers themselves, hosting organizations, EVS direct beneficiaries and the local communities of hosting organizations.

Research problem

As already mentioned, the research problem was two-fold: (1) to establish whether implementation of the EVS project makes a real difference in the functioning of local community in the volunteer's hosting country and (2) to determine whether participation in the EVS project makes a real and measurable difference to the volunteers' lives. Therefore, apart from the volunteers themselves, their institutional and social environment was examined. A link to CAWI (*Computer Assisted Web Interview*) questionnaire was sent over to 700 EVS ex-volunteers and to around 550 hosting organizations and qualitative research embraced Skype IDI (*Individual In-Depth Interviews*) with 8 representatives of hosting institutions (each employee represented different institution) and 8 volunteers (each conducted service in a different organization).

Questions asked in both CAWI questionnaire and Skype IDI interviews tackled the following scope of implemented EVS projects:

- a) character of the volunteer's service
 - what was the scope of the volunteer's service?
 - to what extent different social groups were included into the volunteer's service? (To what extent was this a result of volunteer's social commitment, to what extent was this the initiative

programme/european-voluntary-service_en.htm

3 See: www.evsguide.eu

4 As defined by the Youth in Action Programme regulations **Programme Countries** are defined as: EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey, Switzerland and Croatia, whereas the **EU Neighbouring Partner Countries** are: Eastern Europe and Caucasus countries, the Mediterranean region, South-East Europe. See: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/overview_en.htm

5 See: <http://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-2475/REPORT%20on%20YIA%20development%20in%20EECA%202007-2010.pdf>

- of the hosting organization and to what extent did it result from the assumptions and thematic range of the EVS project?)
- b) type and character of the cooperation between the EVS volunteer and the hosting organization
 - c) recognition and visibility of the volunteer's presence and the EVS as part of the YiA Programme – establishing the impact range of the EVS volunteer and the implemented EVS project
 - determining with the EVS volunteer was in contact – who knew about his actions and about the EVS project that was implemented
 - determining what picture of the volunteer and the EVS project was created
 - determining whether there is still a liaison of the local community with the volunteer after the EVS project is terminated
 - determining if – due to the implementation of the EVS project – the EVS and the idea of voluntarism have become popular and known to the local community (eg. did the local community members engage themselves in the EVS project?)
 - d) social activity of the local community members
 - determining the type and quality of the functioning (management) aspects of the volunteer's hosting institution – did the presence and the service conducted by the volunteer affected the way the institution functions? Did the hosting institutions make any improvements or adopted new solutions, did they widen their scope of activity (eg. improved their cooperation with the local government, inhabitants or other institutions in their region) or maybe the volunteer's service was continued after his/her departure?
 - examining the participation of local community members in the EVS projects – was any of the local community members involved in the EVS? Were there other volunteers invited to come to the hosting institution to implement other EVS projects?
 - determining whether the volunteer's presence had the influence on relations between the local community members (eg. on social perception of wards of social aid agencies, on the neighbourhood cooperation etc.)
 - determining whether the local social activities were initiated by the members of the local community
 - e) "multilingualism", "multicultural character" of the local community members – did participation in the EVS project add to the improvement of contact with the other culture, other language (eg. local community members took foreign language courses or became interested in other countries and cultures?); did the pres-

ence of EVS volunteer have the influence on the development/improvement of language skills of his most immediate environment?

Detailed research findings from both CAWI questionnaire and Skype IDI interviews are presented further in this report and were divided into 4 sections: (I) Impact of the EVS on the volunteers, (II) Impact of the EVS on hosting organizations, (III) Impact of the EVS on hosting organizations' beneficiaries, (IV) Impact of the EVS on hosting organizations' local communities.

Part I: Quantitative research report

This report contains findings of a research conducted from June 2011 to September 2011 among EVS ex-volunteers (VOL; in the report called “volunteers”) and EVS volunteers hosting organizations’ employees (HO; in the report called hosting organizations’ employees or representatives).

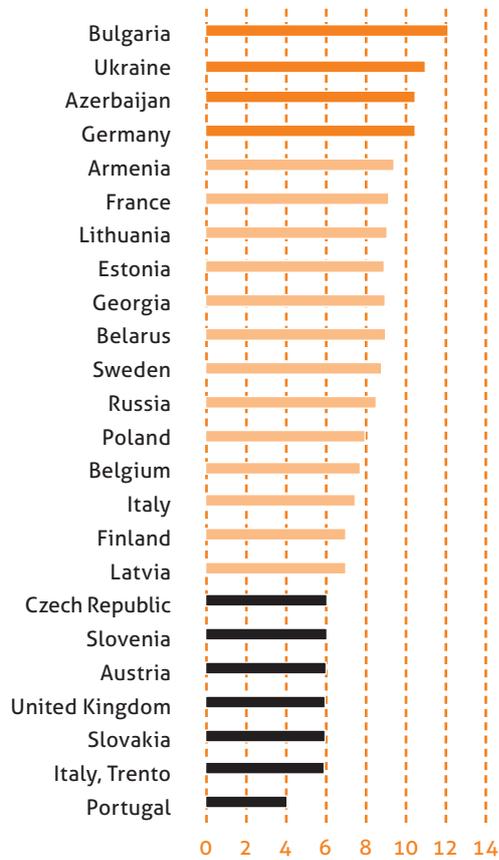
The main methodological strengths of the research are: a big percentage of responses to the questionnaire (10% among the volunteers and 11,2% among the hosting organizations). This percentage is really big in the light of the Internet-based research standards, therefore the research findings can be considered reliable and useful for recommendations to European and national policy- and lawmakers.

An important value of the research is the fact that its quantitative part was designed with the use of best practices in impact assessment (including questions in which also negative choice is allowed etc.).

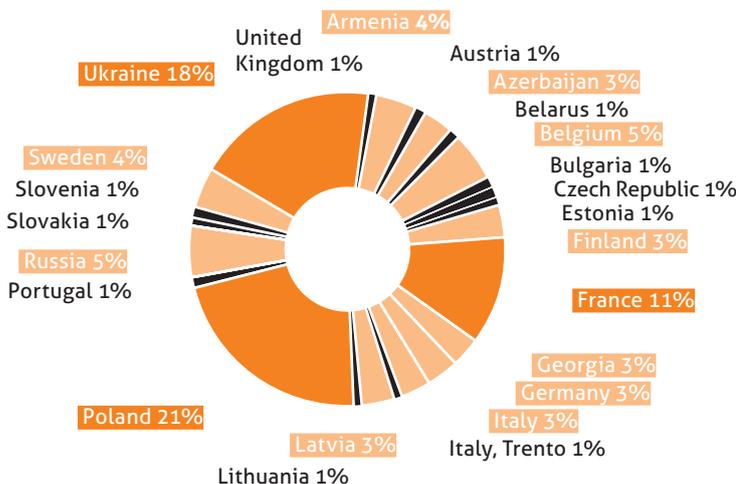
The qualitative research was conducted among eight representatives of hosting institutions (each employee from a different institution) and eight volunteers (each volunteer having conducted his/her service in a different organization).

Some dimensions of the research results can be seen on charts below.

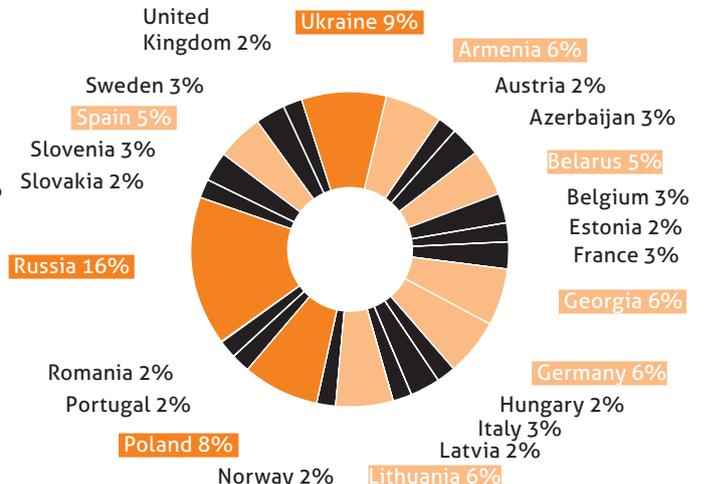
Average of EVS length (in months)



Countries origin of volunteers



Countries of hosting organizations

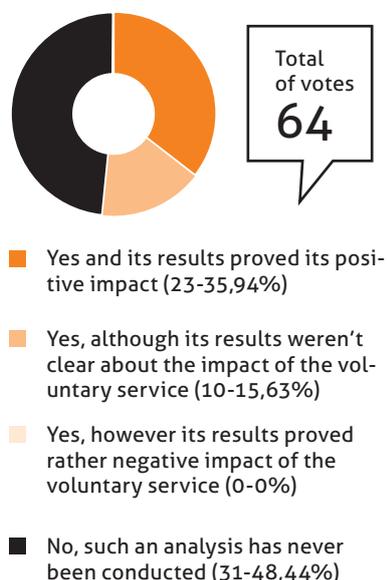


THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

A majority of hosting organization representatives asked to provide information on any research which their organizations conducted in the field of the impact of EVS volunteers on organizations themselves, their beneficiaries and local communities replied that they conducted such research (51,57%) and its result proved either a positive impact (about 81% of them) or a lack of clearness in results of such a research (about 11%). No one claimed the results of research proved any negative impact of the EVS. More than 48% of all respondents claimed they didn't conduct any research in this field (see the chart below). In this regard we may suppose that

at least some of the respondents from hosting organizations took into consideration not only their own personal experiences with EVS volunteers while answering the questionnaire but also referred to results of the research conducted by hosting organizations. This, to a certain extent, strengthens reliability of these research findings.

? Has your organization ever conducted any research or analysis directly or indirectly related to the impact of voluntary service on your organization, its beneficiaries and local community (**please, select just 1 answer**)?



Before analysis of the respondent answers, it is worth mentioning that most of the questionnaires were filled in by volunteers from Poland (21%), Ukraine (18%) and France (11%). Other countries were represented by not more than 5% of the overall number of volunteers.

There are three main goals of the analysis of the research findings:

1. to both present and compare opinions of volunteers and hosting organizations representatives about EVS and its meaning for its stakeholders
2. to present some aspects of the research findings in geographical and age-related dimensions
3. to point out areas in which the EVS impact on its stakeholders was the most meaningful
4. to point out and shortly analyze certain aspects of the EVS impact on four main groups of the EVS stakeholders
5. to underline the most problematic and controversial aspects of the EVS impact on various groups of its stakeholders

PART I: IMPACT OF THE EVS ON VOLUNTEERS

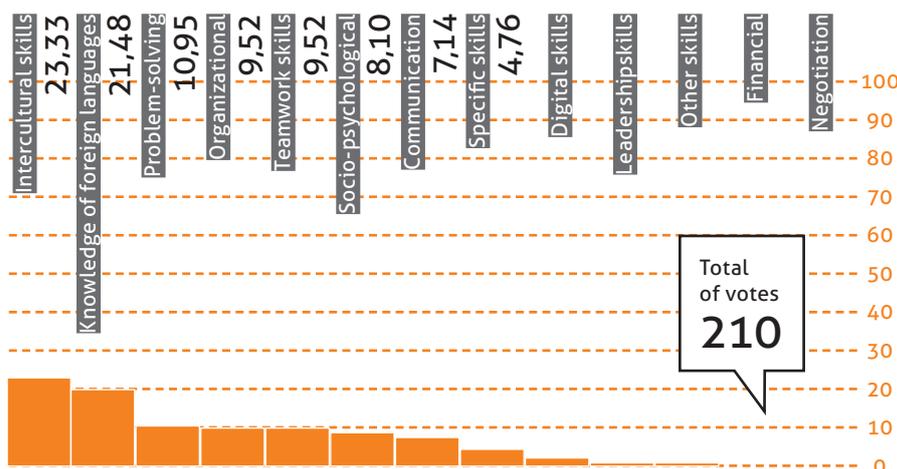
The first group of findings refers to EVS impact on volunteers – their professional and private lives.

While asked about the skills improved the most during their service, most of the volunteers pointed out intercultural skills (23,33%) and knowledge of foreign languages (20,48%).

Worth mentioning is the fact that the least chosen answers were: "negotiation skills" (0,48%), "financial management skills" (1%), "leadership skills" (1%) and "digital skills" (2%).

Exact numbers on chosen answers can be found in the chart below:

? Please, select the skills you improved a lot during your voluntary service (**please, select up to 3 answers**)

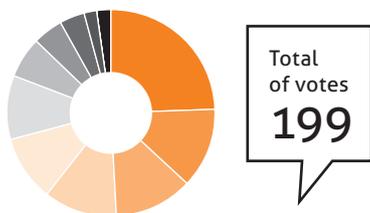


Ex-EVS volunteers were also asked about which areas of their every-day life have been most positively influenced by their voluntary service and the biggest number of respondents picked up "cultural life" as mostly influenced area (24,62%). About two times fewer votes received equally replies: "educational area" (12,56 %) and "Free time activities" (12,06%) and "General well-being" (11,56%). The EVS seemed to have least influence on volunteers' health.

The results above clearly point out that the EVS is mainly a cultural experience for requested volunteers, during which they learn and broaden their scope of activities usually associated by them as "free time activities".

The chart showing distribution of ex-volunteers votes – below.

? Which areas of your every-day life have been most positively influenced by your voluntary service (please, select up to 3 answers)?



- Cultural life (49-24,62%)
- Educational area (26-12,56%)
- Free time activities (24-12,06%)
- General well-being (23-11,56%)
- Professional area (20-10,05%)
- Political and social activities (20-10,05%)
- Hobby (13-6,53%)
- Love life (9-4,52%)
- Spiritual and/or religious life (8-4,02%)
- Health (4-2,01%)
- Relations with family members

What is interesting, when we cross-tabulate answers to the first and to the second of above mentioned questions, we receive a result pointing out that those who most often chose "cultural life" as the area impacted the most also picked up "inter-cultural skills" as improved the most, however, paradoxically, also those whose professional life was influenced by the EVS the most chose "inter-cultural skills" as those improved the most.

This seems to make improving intercultural skills important not only in people's cultural life but also professional life and those are strongly improved during EVS. Surprising is little influence of specific skills, related to the EVS on professional life of ex-volunteers and their meaningful influence on their hobby.

According to the European Commission's description of the European Voluntary Service, it "provides young Europeans with the unique chance to express their personal commitment through unpaid and full-time voluntary activities in a foreign country within or outside the EU. In this way, it seeks to develop solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance among young people, thus contributing to reinforcing social cohesion in the European Union and to promoting young people's active citizenship".⁶

The above presented findings, regarding volunteers' personal development, confirm that the EVS purposes are being achieved and volunteers develop their skills necessary to be more open, more tolerant and socially active.

Interesting results brings comparison of the above answers of volunteers with opinions of the host-

6 See: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/european-voluntary-service_en.htm, accessed 15th of October 2011.

ing organizations' employees on what skills of the volunteers were developed during their EVS and which areas of their lives were influenced. The answers pointed by the hosting organizations' employees were almost the same as those of the volunteers. Some minor differences were related to problem solving skills which volunteers pointed out as more important than teamwork skills.

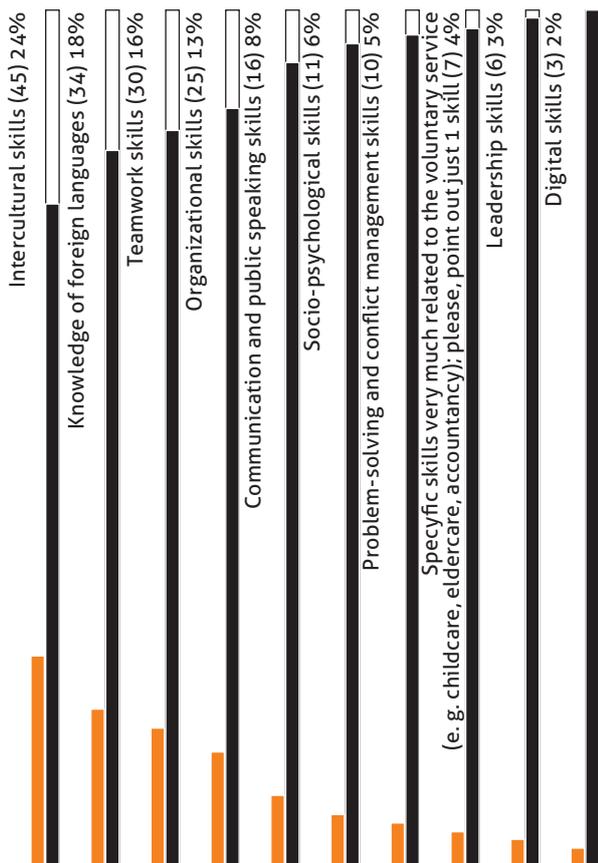
More than 80% of them declared that they self esteem and self confidence raised (at least a bit), however, slightly surprising is the fact that almost 7% claimed that their self esteem and self confidence decreased to a certain extend.

The chart below presents volunteers' answers to the question analyzed above.

General remark regarding perception of volunteers' benefits of the EVS is that it's similar by both volunteers and hosting organizations.

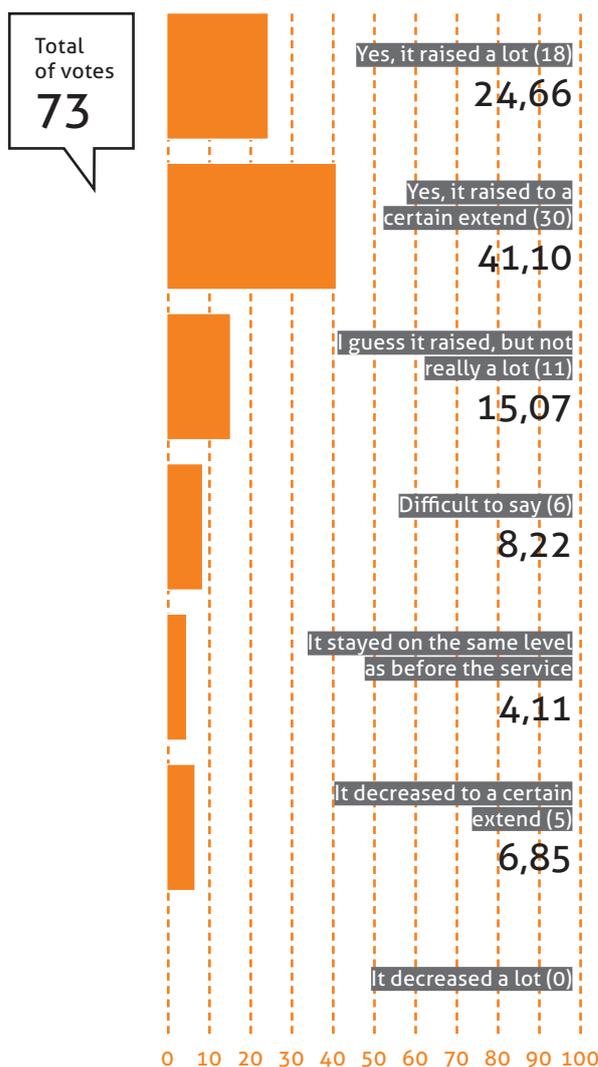
The exact data can be seen on the chart below:

Please, select the skills you think the volunteers of your organization significantly improved during their service (please, select up to 3 answers).



The EVS volunteers also significantly raised their self esteem and self confidence during their service.

Did the level of your self esteem and self confidence raise due to your voluntary service (please, select just 1 answer)?



Interesting result of comparison of volunteers' and organizations employees' opinion in the above described matter is almost two times bigger percentage of hosting organizations' representatives who believe that volunteers' self-esteem and self-confidence raised a lot. Almost the same percentage of both groups of respondents (around 42%) answered that these two features raised to a certain extend. This most probably means that

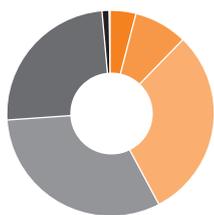
hosting organizations' representatives overestimate influence of the EVS on volunteers' self-confidence and self-esteem.

However, the results of research in the above mentioned field show a very positive aspect of the EVS influence, namely

very few representatives of both groups of respondents pointed out answers containing information about no change or a negative change in the level of self-confidence and self-esteem of volunteers.

What might be surprising, despite the fact that volunteers significantly improved some skills during their EVS, a majority of them claimed that the EVS didn't help them find a job (57,54%) although 31,51% of them found it useful in other ways. Exact results are presented on the chart below:

? How did the voluntary service influence your chances to get a job (**please, select just 1 answer**)?



Total of votes
73

- Actually it is fully thanks to the voluntary service that I got a job (3-4,11%)
- The service helped me a lot in getting a job (6-8,22%)
- The service was quite helpful in getting a job (22-30,14%)
- The service was useful but not really helpful in getting a job (23-31,51%)
- The service was neither helpful nor redundant in finding a job (18-24,66%)
- The service was redundant regarding my efforts to find a job (0-0%)
- The service actually disturbed me to find my dream job (1-1,17%)

All representatives of hosting organizations claimed the EVS to have positively influenced volunteers on the labour market, which is twice as many replies as it was in the case of volunteers.

It clearly points out that hosting organizations representatives overestimate meaning of the EVS as a job experience on the labour market.

Not less surprising seems to be another result of the research – a fact that financial situation of 86,3% of the respondents either didn't change or even worsened after leaving their hosting organization. On the one hand, it probably means that the EVS volunteers were sufficiently financed during their service (this was also confirmed by answers to the question about their financial support during the service – only slightly more than 15% of all respondents were rather dissatisfied or dissatisfied with it). On the other hand, this may also mean that after the end of the EVS they didn't find as well-paid or better-paid jobs.

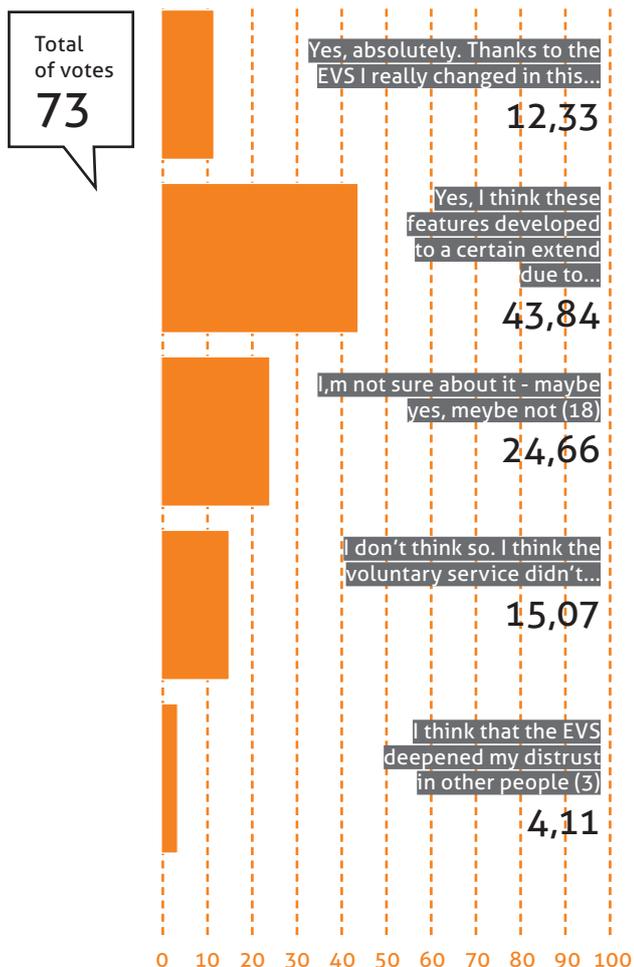
Results of a qualitative research confirm the latter presumption.

As regards volunteers' social contacts and networks of friends and colleagues, they managed to build them in a meaningful number.

More than 90% of the respondents built up a network of at least a few people met during their EVS and all of the volunteers having participated in the research still stay in touch with at least a few of them. However, a bit surprising is the fact that almost 20% of all respondents don't think that the EVS raised their trust in other people and motivation to share with them problems, challenges and joys. Only 12,33% of the respondents really opened towards other people. Almost 44% of the rest noticed such a change only to a certain extent.

The exact numbers can be seen on the chart below:

? Do you think that your sense of trust in other people and motivation to share with them your problems, challenges and joys rose due to the voluntary service (**please, select just 1 answer**)?



Representatives of hosting organizations were more convinced that there was a big influence of the EVS on volunteers' sense of trust in other people and motivation to share with them their problems, challenges and joys.

More than 20,5 percentage points differ the overall percentage of volunteers claiming positive influence of the EVS in above mentioned fields and the percentage of representatives of hosting organizations claiming so (bigger percentage refers to the latter).

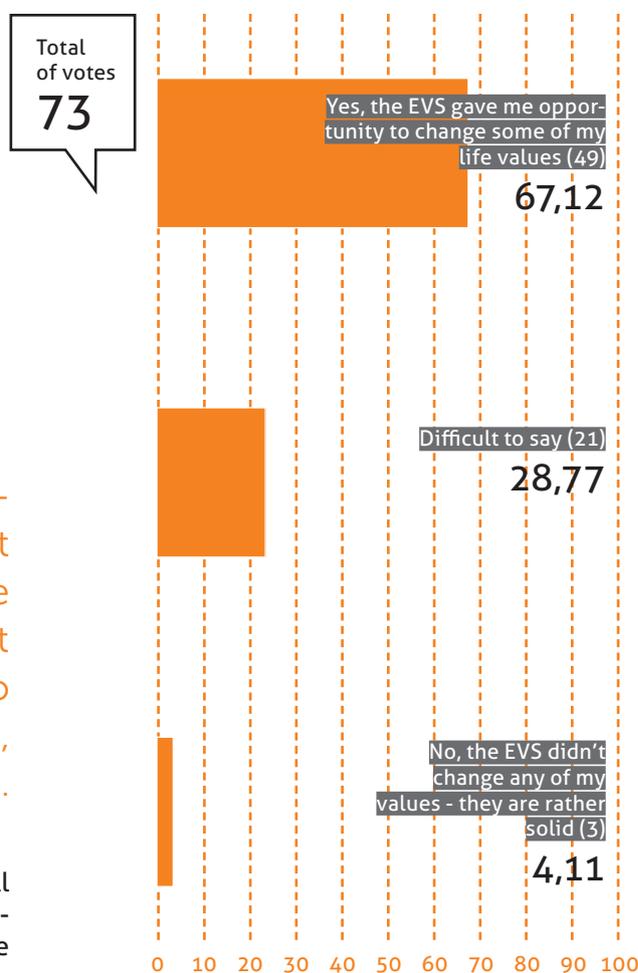
Interesting impact of the EVS is the one it has on volunteers' values. More than 67% of the volunteers claimed that the EVS changed their

life values. Worth mentioning is that only about 4% of the ex-volunteers were sure about their values not having changed during their EVS

– all the others (28,77%) were simply not convinced if they could claim so.

The results of this part of the research can be seen on the chart below:

? Did any of your life values change due to your voluntary service (please, select just 1 answer)?

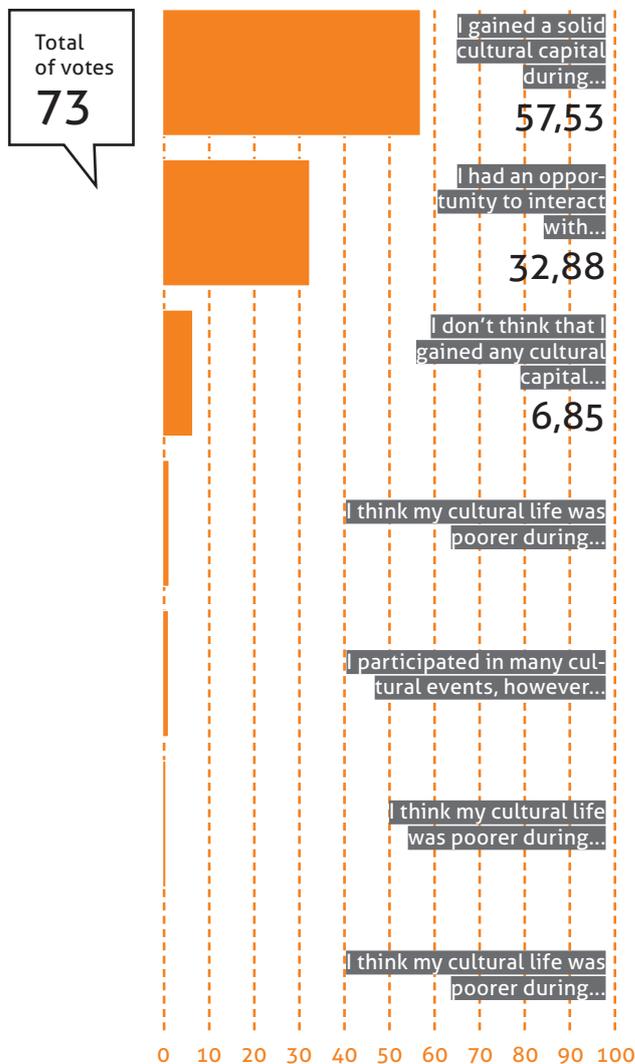


Regarding cultural aspects of the EVS service, a majority of all volunteers (almost 58%) both participated in cultural events (only 21% of all respondents didn't participate in any cultural event) as well as interacted with people from different cultures.

Cultural life during EVS was described as poorer than usually only by one respondent and it was due to a lack of opportunities to make his or her cultural life more intense.

Cultural dimension of the EVS impact on volunteers can be seen on the chart below:

? How would you describe the cultural dimension of your EVS (please, select just 1 answer)?



PART II: IMPACT OF THE EVS ON HOSTING ORGANIZATIONS

55% of all respondents described a character of their service as rather informal or informal (out of whom 17,5% claimed they felt as family members). An interesting aspect of volunteers' perception of the service is that 44% of them considered it similar to a regular job and perceive their tasks similar to those of other employees, however, exactly as many volunteers (44%) found their service different or very different from responsibilities of other hosting organizations' employees.

When we cross tabulate these two aspects, it provides us with the following results: 1/ a half of all volunteers having replied that they had worked more than regular employees considered character of their cooperation with other employees neither formal nor informal while the other half stayed in relations which were formal with elements of informality or informal with elements of formality, 2/ a vast majority of volunteers whose relations with other employees was rather informal or informal worked during their service as any other employee, 3/ it seems that the less formal the relations with other hosting organizations' employees, the less the EVS remained regular job. No one said that their service was strictly formal and hardly 10% considered it very informal – like in a big family.

This means that generally, the EVS leaves the volunteers (in their opinion) a lot of space for flexibility and does not require following strict formal rules.

When we compare above results with what representatives of hosting organizations noticed, we receive an interesting result, namely, representatives of hosting organizations found the EVS more informal than the volunteers

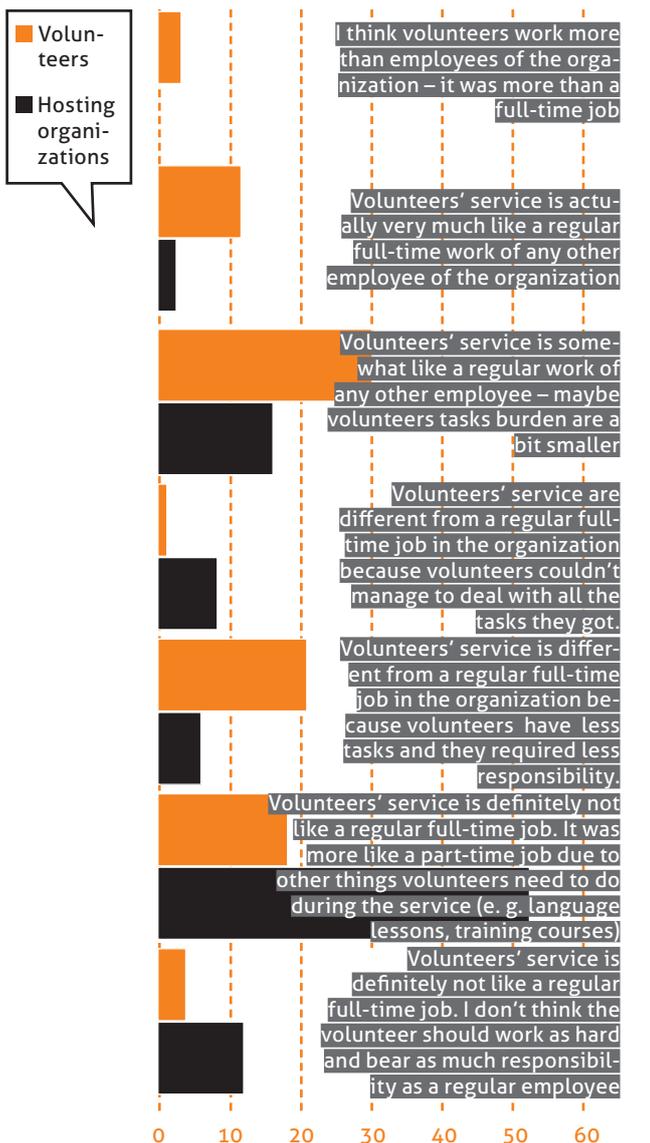
(almost 60% of them claimed it was rather informal while slightly more than 45% of the volunteers chose this variant). Even more striking is the fact that more than 51% of respondents from hosting organizations claimed that the EVS was "definitely not like a regular full-time job" and "more like a part-time job due

to other things the volunteers need to do during the service” while only 17,81% of volunteers claimed so. The latter in a twice bigger percentage (30,14%) than in the case of hosting organization representatives (15,63%) claimed their work was “somewhat like a regular work of any other employee”.

This clearly shows that volunteers draw too far going conclusions regarding similarity of their work to regular jobs of hosting organizations’ employees.

A chart comparing those two points of view can be seen below:

? How would you describe volunteers’ service in hosting organizations in comparison to their employees (select just 1 answer)?



Some comments of the volunteers regarding character of their service (enabled by place to fill in answer h) Other) underlined specificity of the EVS. The most significant of them were:

“My service was less than full-time job and more than part-time job, tasks were not many, some of them I was not willing to do, so I chose what I wanted to do”, “My service was definitely not like a regular full-time job. I don’t think the volunteer should work as hard and have as much responsibility as a regular employee. Also I needed to do some staff to do (e.g. language lessons, training courses etc.)”, “My service was not like a regular full-time job because I was not as respected as when I was working as an employee/volunteer in my home country” (this was a comment of a volunteer from France serving in Moldova), “My service was definitely not like a regular full-time job. I needed to do other things during the service. Except of work in hosting organization and language lessons, I had an opportunity to work a lot on my own projects”, “My service was more like full time job, but my tasks was different from regular ones. I was developing new ideas and my personal projects. I guess I fulfilled the aim of the project, my EVS was more like addition for hosting organization”, there was even one answer: “my host has no employees”.

Surprising in this regard is, however, the fact that results of qualitative research actually confirm the point of view of the volunteers.

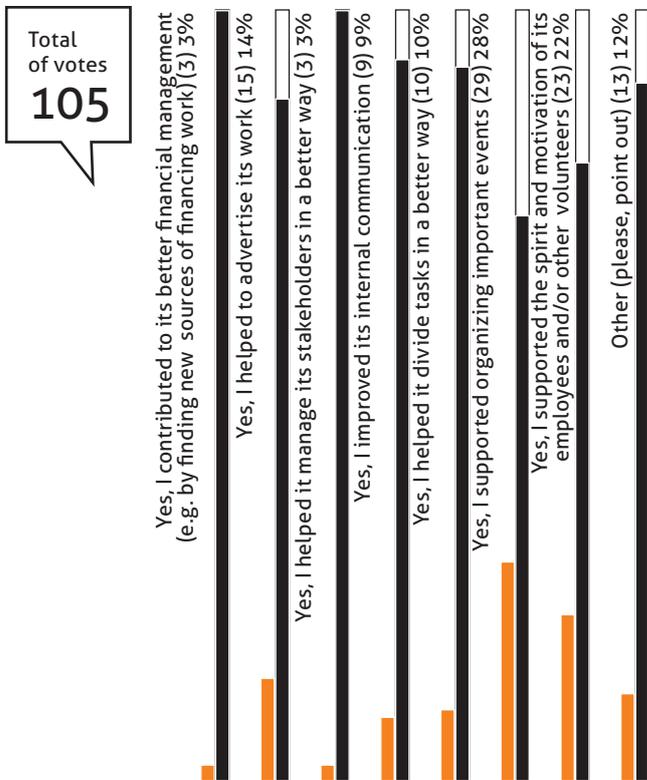
According to all interviewed employees of hosting organizations, a majority of volunteers really made efforts to fulfill their tasks as any other employees. Other way of perceiving EVS seemed to be exceptional.

As regards support that hosting organizations received from their volunteers apart from regular activities, it seemed to be mostly organizing events (almost 30% of responses of representatives from hosting organizations), advertising work of the organization (22,22%), support of the spirit and motivation of organizations’ employees and/or other volunteers (19,66%). A similar percentage of volunteers pointed out all three above mentioned activities. What is, however, interesting, more than 12% of volunteers mentioned their own activities. e. g.: “I hope that I helped them understand how important is to be honest”, “no, I don’t think I contributed to its efficient work”, “my host organiza-

tion was really bad structured; I tried to work there but it was impossible to work with them”, “I supported its international communication”, “No, first of all, I was not interested in what they were doing, it seems boring for me, anyway in some small organizational stuff I also helped”.

The exact percentage of answers can be seen in the chart below:

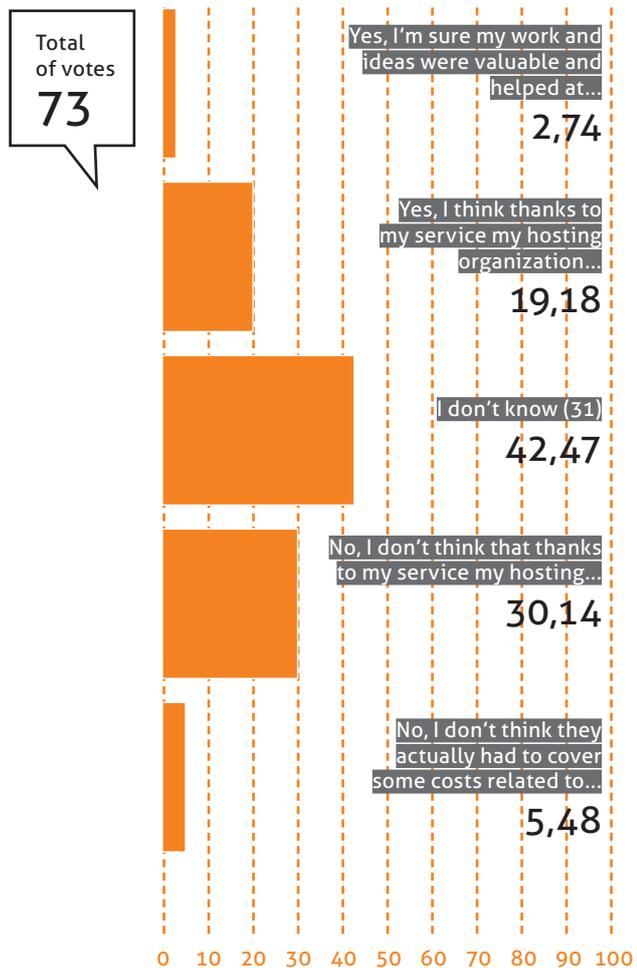
? Do you think that, apart from your main tasks within the EVS project in your hosting organization, you contributed to its efficient work also in other ways **(select up to 2 answers)?**



Regarding influence that EVS has on financial situation of hosting organizations, it seems that many volunteers don't realize how meaningful such an influence could be

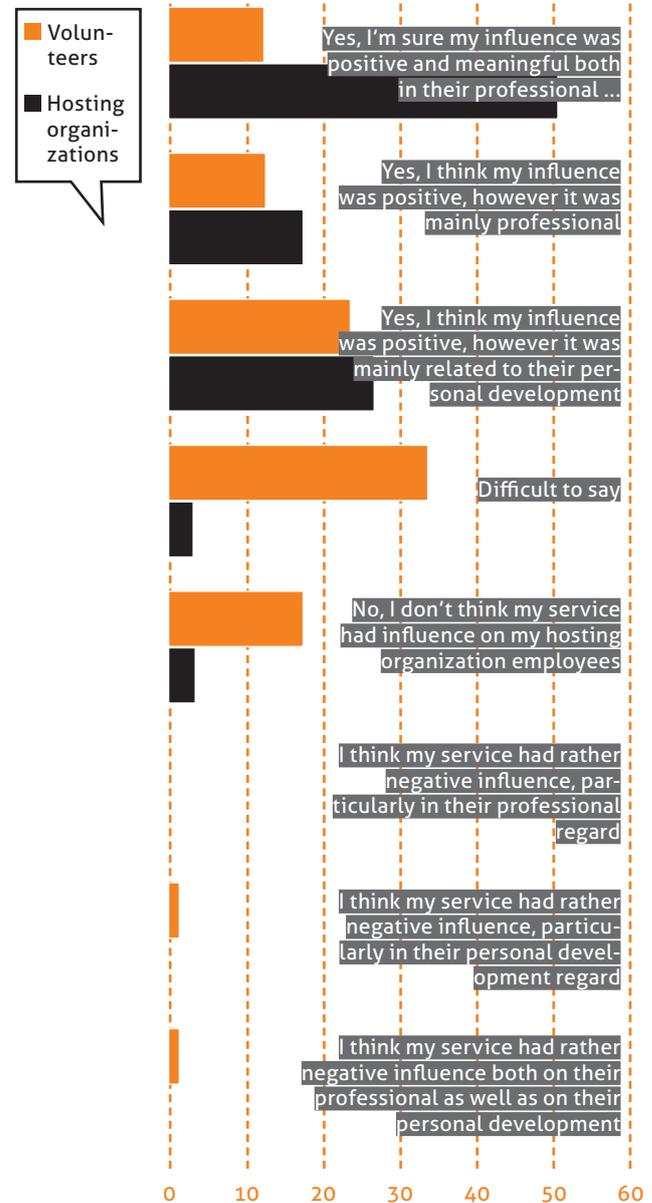
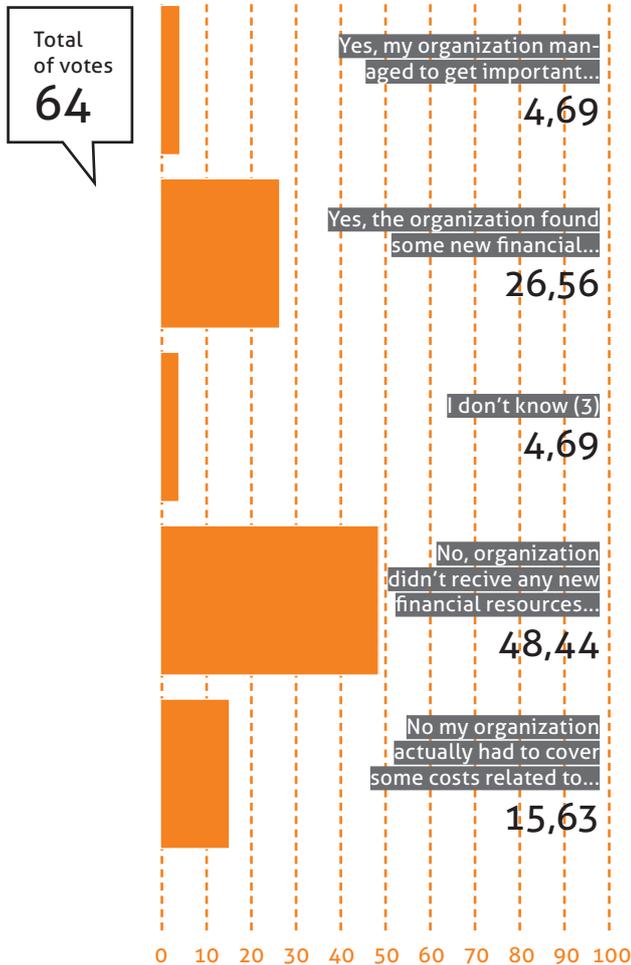
(almost 43% of them don't know if their hosting organizations were able to gain some extra financial resources thanks to their voluntary service and about 50% of them chose answers which underlined their uncertainty regarding the question like: "I think..." instead of "I'm sure..."). Despite this fact, about 35,5% of them replied that they thought their hosting organizations didn't gain any extra financial resources due to their EVS or even had to had to cover some costs related to supporting volunteers and about 23%

? Do you think that your hosting organization was able to gain some extra financial resources thanks to your voluntary service **(select just 1 answer)?**



? Was your organization able to gain some extra financial resources thanks to the volunteers and their service (please, select just 1 answer)?

Do you think that the voluntary service had influence on hosting organizations' regular employees (select just 1 answer)?



The research findings seem to confirm the fact that the EVS volunteers underestimate their impact on various groups of their service stakeholders, while their hosting organizations perceive their impact as bigger and more meaningful.

This tendency is visible in percentage of positive responses to the question about influence of volunteers on hosting organization's regular employees. A chart below clearly shows differences in perceiving this matter by volunteers and hosting institutions' representatives.

The above presented chart gives an evidence of one of the most surprising differences between the way hosting organizations representatives' and volunteers perception of the same matter. The most shocking discrepancy appears in percentages of the most positive answer to the research question. Only slightly more than 12% of all volunteers replied that their EVS influence on regular hosting organizations' employees was positive and meaningful both in their professional (efficiency of their work, their workload etc.) as well as their personal development (relations to other people, openness etc.) regard, while 50% of representatives of hosting organizations claimed so.

This finding suggests that the EVS volunteers do not seem to be aware of their impact both professional and personal on hosting organizations and their employees. Since only 3% of hosting organizations' representatives find it difficult to judge this influence and almost 33% of volunteers are not able to evaluate it, it seems that volunteers are not convinced about this aspect of their impact.

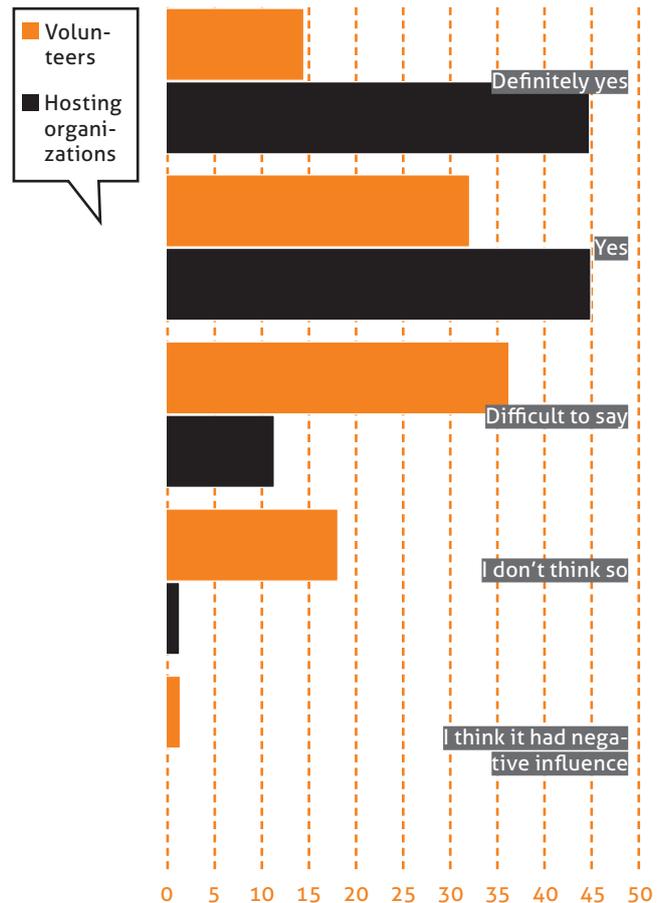
Important research finding is the percentage of tasks and activities continued by hosting organizations after volunteers who started them left (20% of all respondents from hosting organizations claimed that volunteers seemed to have put a lot of efforts into them and they went really well) as well as percentage of hosting organizations encouraged to invite more volunteers in the future thanks to their hitherto experience with EVS volunteers (61% of hosting organizations' employees answered they would definitely invite more volunteers due to a great performance of EVS volunteers).

The last important aspect of volunteers' impact on their hosting organizations – cultural diversity - again confirms the phenomenon pointed out in this report: insufficient awareness among the volunteers of their impact on hosting organizations.

The chart below points out both discrepancies in percentages of volunteers and respondents from hosting organizations claiming that volunteers definitely actively promoted cultural diversity supporting aspects in hosting organizations' activities as well as level of difficulty of volunteers in evaluating their own impact on awareness of cultural diversity in their hosting organizations.

?

Do you think that your organization's activities became more reflective of cultural diversity thanks to your volunteers and their services (**please, select just 1 answer**)?



PART III: IMPACT OF THE EVS ON HOSTING ORGANIZATIONS' BENEFICIARIES

On the basis of the analysis of research findings in the field of the EVS impact on volunteers and hosting organizations it becomes clear that this impact is big and meaningful. In the light of research results it also becomes clear that the hosting organizations' beneficiaries profit a lot from the EVS since it raises their level of self-confidence, "opens" them and makes them more tolerant, finally provides them with services they would otherwise have to buy or resign from

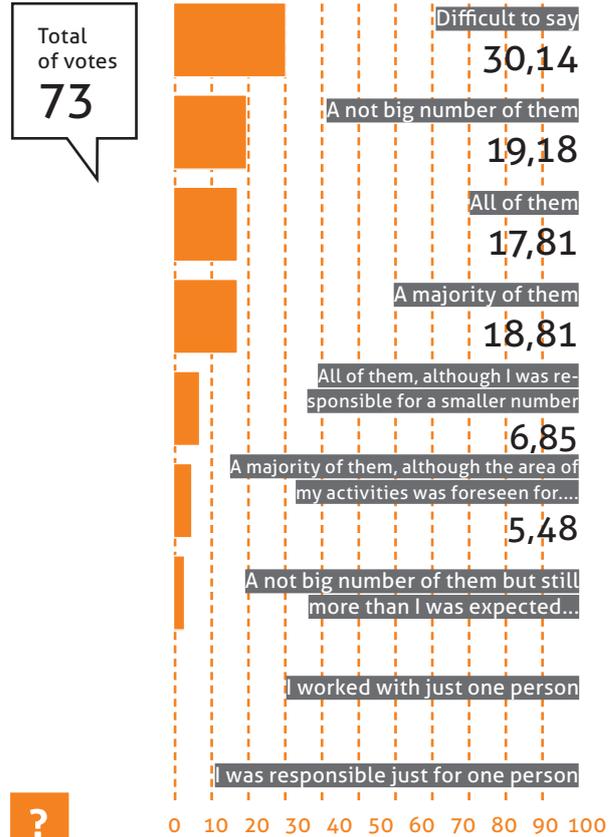
The first important research finding are the fields in which EVS volunteers influence the beneficiaries the most. It seems that the three main ones according to the volunteers are: educational area (24,47%), free time activities (21,28%) and (almost equally) general well-being and professional area (around 12% each). For hosting organizations these areas are: cultural life (27,32%), educational area (25,14%) and free time activities (21,31%). General well-being in hosting organizations' representatives opinion was on the fifth place among the most important areas of volunteers support towards hosting organizations' beneficiaries. Since there was also a separate category: "other" in the questionnaire, a few volunteers and hosting organizations' employees chose the opportunity to define the "other". Volunteers pointed out in this category such areas as: communication field, ecological awareness, intercultural area and sustainable development, finally one volunteer wrote: "I didn't work with any beneficiaries (cause I did only a handyman job) except one day when I helped to lead a small competition; but it's hard to judge cause it's too small experience". Regarding comments of hosting institutions' representatives, they embraced two areas, namely: international mobility and intercultural learning.

When we consider the scope of the EVS in the context of the number of hosting organization beneficiaries who volunteers dealt with, it seems to be perceived differently by hosting organization and the EVS volunteers. The latter are not really aware of such a scope since more than 30% of them answered that it was difficult for them to say how big part of all beneficiaries of their organization was directly or indirectly supported by their work within the EVS. More than 19% of the volunteers pointed out a not big number of them, about 18% claimed they dealt with all of them and the same number – with a majority of them – actually more than foreseen. The exact percentage numbers can be seen on the chart below.

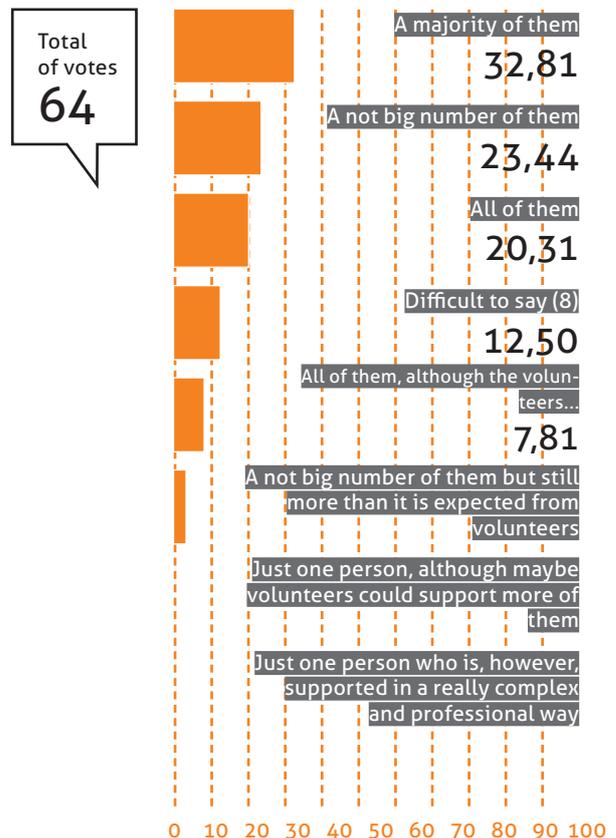


How big part of all beneficiaries of your hosting organization was directly or indirectly supported by your work within the EVS (**select just 1 answer**)?

Almost 33% of representatives of hosting organizations claimed that volunteers had impact on a majority of beneficiaries – actually more than foreseen for volunteers, more than 23% of them claimed that the volunteers dealt with not a big number of beneficiaries foreseen for them and about 20% replied that volunteers dealt with all of them, despite the fact that they were responsible for a smaller number of them. The exact percentages can be seen on the chart below.



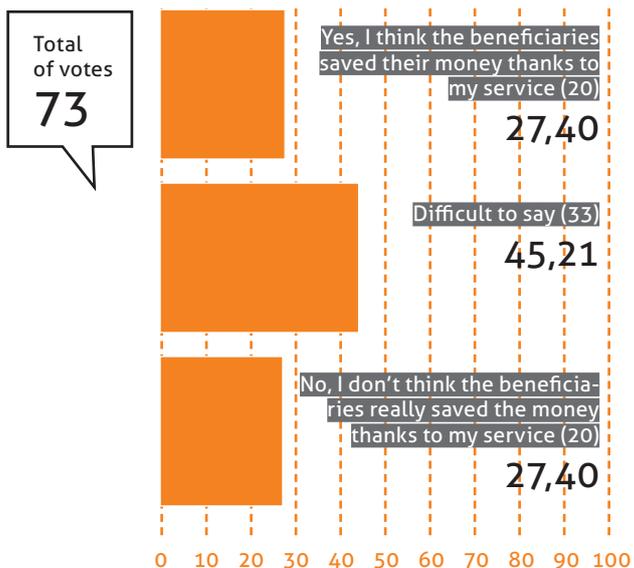
How big part of all beneficiaries of your organization is directly or indirectly supported by the EVS volunteers (**select just 1 answer**)?



Regarding possible financial profits of hosting organizations' beneficiaries based on the fact that they might have saved the money they would otherwise have to spend on similar but paid services, it seems that this kind of impact of the EVS is rather unclear and both volunteers and hosting organizations' employees found it difficult to be judged (more than 45% of volunteers and about 40% of hosting organizations representatives found it difficult to say if there was such an impact). About 30% of hosting organization representatives and about 27% of volunteers claimed there was no meaningful impact on saving the money thanks to the EVS by its beneficiaries.

The chart below shows the percentage of volunteers' answers to the question about beneficiaries possibility to save any money due to the EVS (very similar to the hosting organization's answers).

? Do you think that your work helped beneficiaries of your service save the money they would otherwise have to spend on similar but paid services?

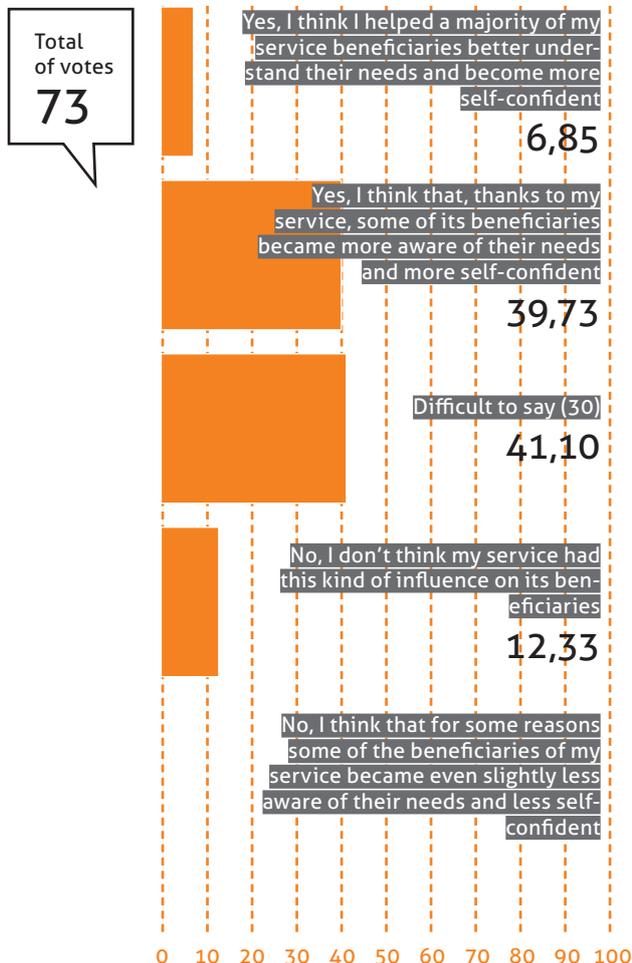


The awareness of influence of EVS volunteers on beneficiaries' self-confidence and their needs is rather problematic among the volunteers.

More than 41% of all respondents didn't know whether their activities raised self-confidence and awareness of needs of their activities' beneficiaries. More than 46% of volunteers think that they positively influenced beneficiaries in this regard, however, there were more than 12% of respondents who didn't see this kind of influence at all. No one claimed to have had a negative impact in beneficiaries in this field.

Exact numbers are shown on the chart below.

Do you think that, thanks to your voluntary service, its beneficiaries became more aware of their needs and more self-confident (please, select just 1 answer)?



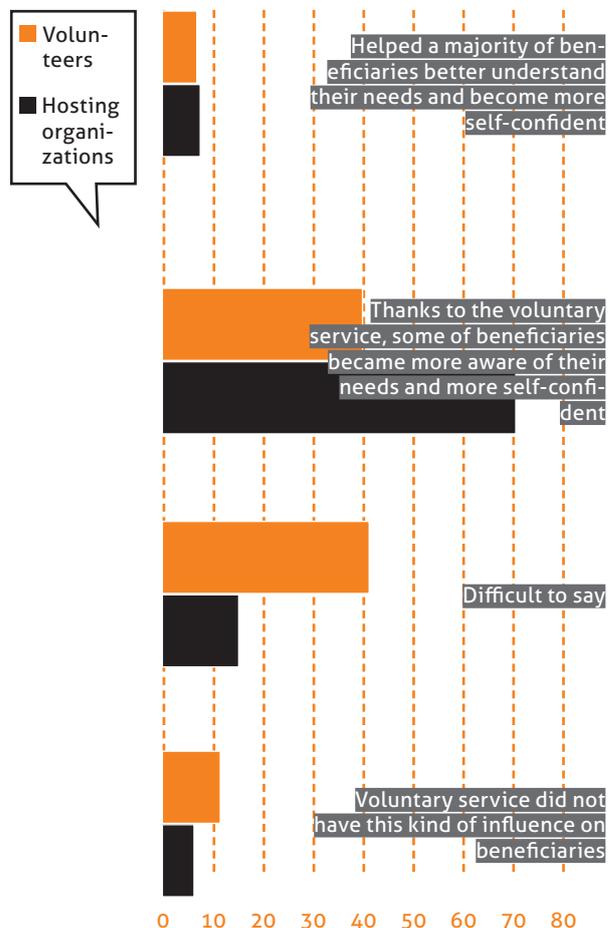
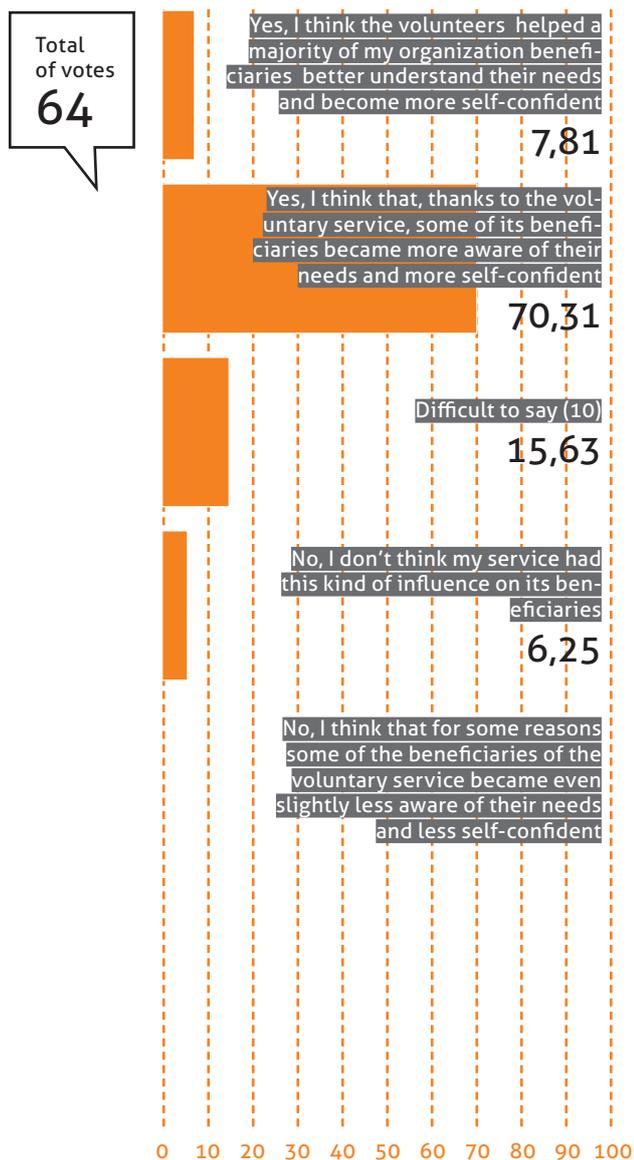
It seems that the awareness of the hosting organizations' employees of influence of volunteers on beneficiaries' self-confidence is bigger than of the volunteers themselves.

Only 15,63% of them weren't sure whether there was such an impact (in comparison to more than 40% of the volunteers it is not many). Furthermore, more than 78% of the hosting organizations representatives claimed positive influence of volunteers on beneficiaries in this regard (in comparison to almost 47% claimed by volunteers). This shows volunteers modesty in evaluating real meaning of their impact on direct beneficiaries of their activities.

The chart picturing hosting organizations employees' opinion on volunteers' impact on beneficiaries self-confidence and awareness of their needs can be found below.

Results of comparison of volunteers' and representatives' of hosting institutions answers

? Do you think that, thanks to your organization's volunteers' service, its beneficiaries became more aware of their needs and more self-confident (please, select just 1 answer)?



When asked about the level of satisfaction of hosting organization's beneficiaries with the service of the EVS volunteers on the scale from -2 to +2, representatives of hosting organizations set the overall level of this satisfaction on 1,41 (between satisfied and very satisfied), while volunteers claimed that beneficiaries were satisfied (on the level 1,03).

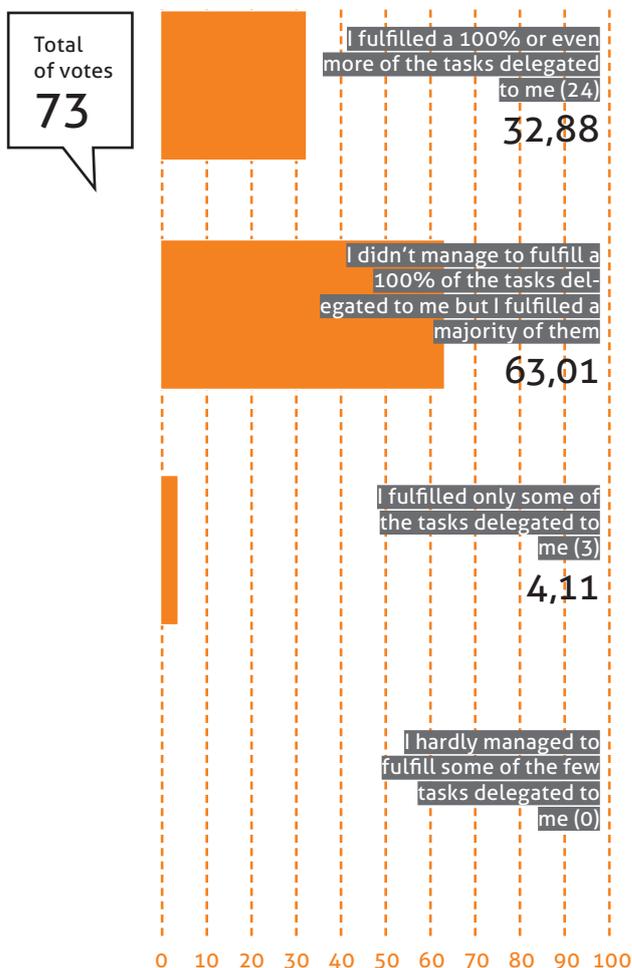
Pretty similar results (very positive) were achieved on the basis of replies to questions about influence of hosting organization's volunteers on the level of openness and tolerance of the EVS beneficiaries. Representatives of hosting organizations evaluated this impact as big (4,06 on the scale from 1 to 5) and the volunteers answered that it was on the level 3,93 (also close to "big").

This clearly points out that both volunteers and hosting organizations consider volunteers' service to

influence the level of openness and tolerance of the EVS beneficiaries really meaningful.

Almost 96% of the volunteers asked to describe to what extent they fulfilled the tasks delegated to them by their hosting organization and directed towards beneficiaries claimed they fulfilled all of them, even more than all of them or a majority of them. Only 4,11% claimed to have fulfilled some of them and no one chose the answer: "I hardly managed to fulfil some of the few tasks delegated to me". Exact numbers of replies can be seen on the chart below. Slightly smaller percentage (91%) pictured hosting organizations' positive opinion about volunteers performance in fulfilling tasks delegated to them.

? To what extent did you manage to fulfil the tasks delegated to you by your hosting organization and directed towards beneficiaries of your services (not related to organizational or administrative work) (please, select just 1 answer)?

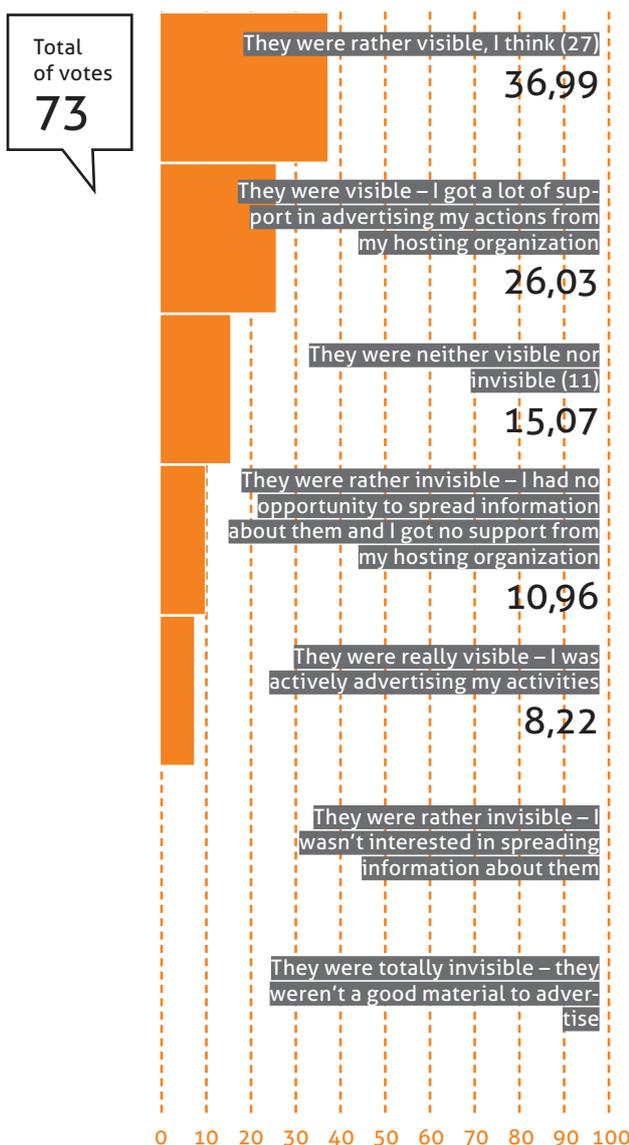


PART IV: IMPACT OF THE EVS ON HO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

One of the most important aspects of the research is the volunteers' impact on their hosting organizations' local communities. This impact can be seen in various areas: from general information about the EVS and volunteers to specific support the volunteers provide to the local communities.

The chart below shows the volunteers' perception of their visibility in hosting organizations' local communities. As it can be seen, "rather visible" and "visible" are the most commonly chosen answers (63,02%).

? How visible were, in your opinion, your activities in the local community (please, select just 1 answer)?



One of the aspects of the impact of EVS on local communities is presenting and popularizing the idea of volunteering among members of local communities.

Both the respondents-volunteers and representatives of hosting institutions participating in the research similarly evaluated volunteers' impact on spreading and/or strengthening the idea of volunteering in hosting organizations' local communities as really meaningfully positive.

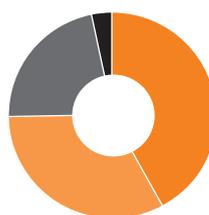
Almost 67,15% of volunteers and 75% of employees of hosting institutions fully agreed that thanks to the EVS volunteers' activities, the idea of volunteering became better known in their local communities. What differed in responses of volunteers and of employees of hosting organizations was the fact that bigger percentage of the latter described the level of popularizing volunteering as definitely meaningful while volunteers were more modest about their influence – they most often picked up the answer with expression "quite many people found out about the idea of volunteering and EVS". Furthermore, just 2 representatives of hosting organizations chose the answer: "No, unfortunately, I don't think that the volunteering and the EVS became any better known thanks to our volunteers" while there were even 7 volunteers who claimed so.

This shows that hosting organizations' employees noticed bigger positive impact of volunteers on popularizing volunteering and EVS than the volunteers themselves.

The exact answers of representatives of hosting organizations can be seen on the chart below.



Do you think that, thanks to the EVS volunteers' activities, the idea of volunteering became better known in your local community (please, select just 1 answer)?



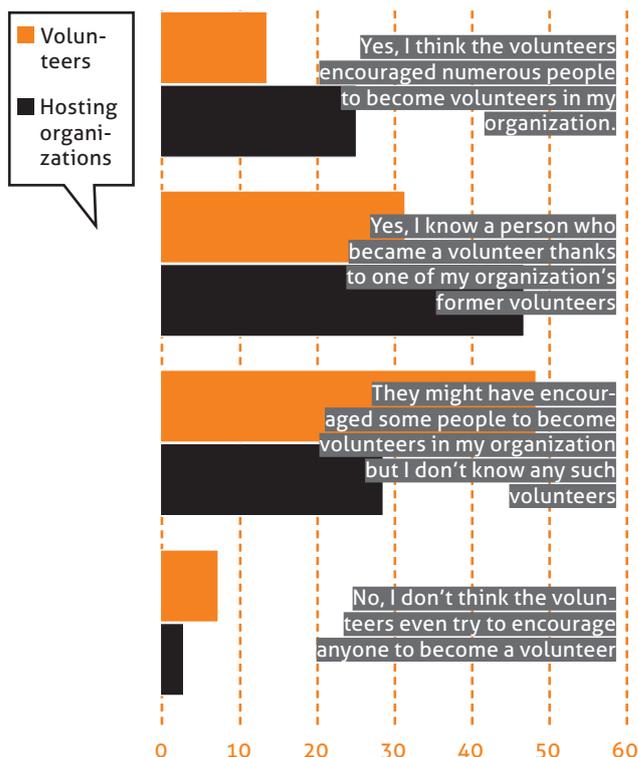
Total of votes
64

- Definitely yes, I think that many people found out about the idea of volunteering and EVS thanks to our volunteers and they got interested in it (27-42,19%)
- Yes, I think that quite many people found out about the idea of volunteering and EVS thanks to our volunteers' activities (21-32,81%)
- Yes, I think that a few people really found out about the idea of volunteering and EVS thanks to our volunteers (14-21,88%)
- No, I don't think that the volunteering and the EVS became any better known thanks to our volunteers (2-3,13%)
- Difficult to say (0-0%)

Another evidence of volunteers' modesty in judging their achievements in promoting volunteering and EVS are their answers to the question about encouraging their friends or other members of local communities to become volunteers. The chart below gives an evidence of underestimation of volunteers' achievements in this field by themselves.



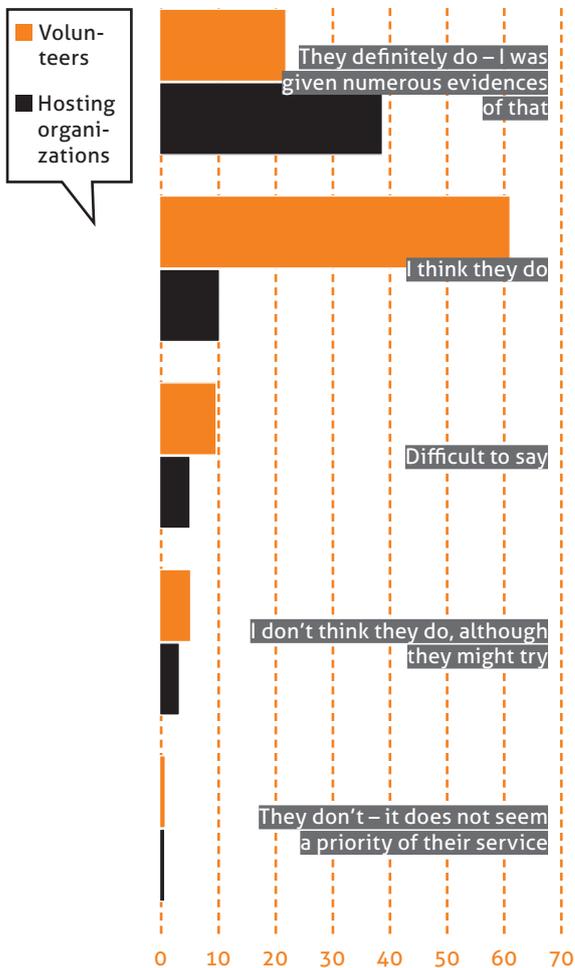
Did anyone of volunteers' friends or people they talked to about the EVS decide to become a volunteer in their hosting organizations (please, select just 1 answer)?



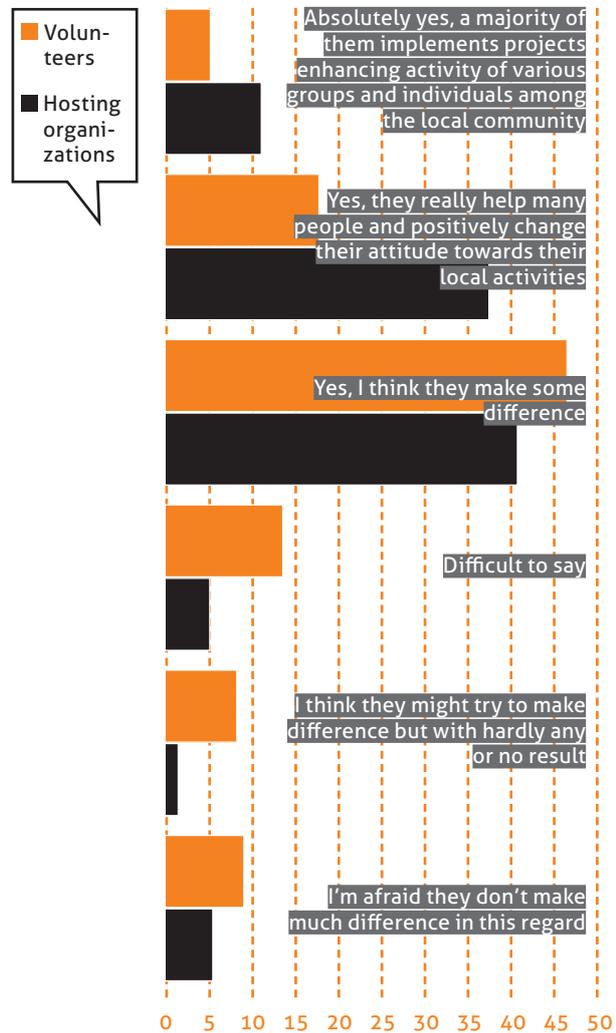
Regarding the chart above, it is worth mentioning that no one chose the answer: "I think the volunteers rather discourage people from becoming volunteers".

One of the last aspects investigated in the context of volunteers' impact on local communities was their influence on local communities' interest in multilingualism and multiculturalism. It appeared again that members of hosting organizations evaluated this impact as more positive than volunteers themselves. It can be seen in an overall percentage of positive answers to the question about this impact (90,62% of hosting organizations' employees pointed out this impact and 83,56% of the volunteers did so), however, it is also visible in a percentage of most positive answers. The chart below provides us with detailed information on this aspect of the research results.

? Do you think that your organization's volunteers enhance your local community's interest in multilingualism (or at least in learning some foreign language) and multiculturalism (or at least interest in one of the foreign cultures) (please, select just 1 answer)?



Do you think that volunteers' activities made difference in hosting organizations' local communities (please, select just 1 answer)?



It is worth underlining that none of the volunteers and no representative of hosting organizations picked up the answer: "I think they actually discourage people from active contributing to their local community's activities".

The two charts below connect the overall perception of the level of satisfaction of the beneficiaries with the EVS and of effectiveness of the EVS activities in hosting organizations' local communities with the national dimension of the volunteers. The first chart presents the answers provided by volunteers of the EU Member States' origin and the second chart presents the answers of volunteers from non-EU countries (Eastern Europe and Caucasus). The charts provide for some interesting discrepancies between the way volunteers from various countries perceive their impact on both beneficiaries and local communities. In some cases these discrepancies are large (see: Bulgaria, Latvia, Slovenia) and in some almost none (see: Italy, Russia). This gives an overview over nation-based dif-

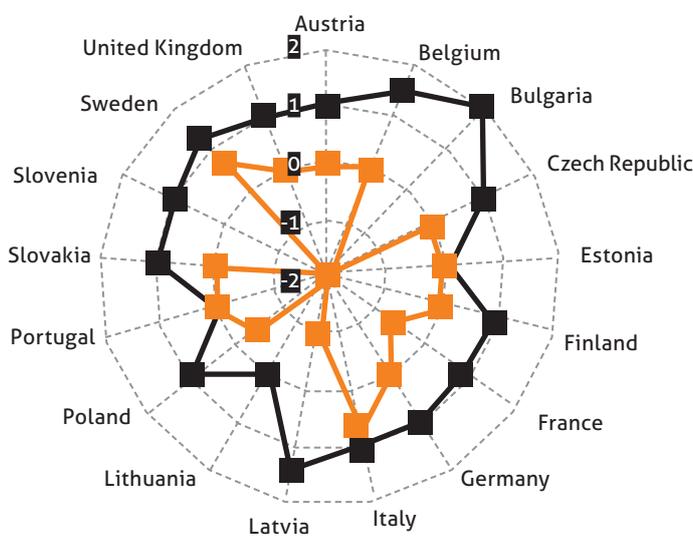
ferences in volunteers' perception the EVS impact on beneficiaries and local communities.

On the scale of 1-5 (-2 – very dissatisfied, 0 – neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, +2 – very satisfied), where would you place the level of satisfaction with your service of its beneficiaries (**please, select just 1 number**)?

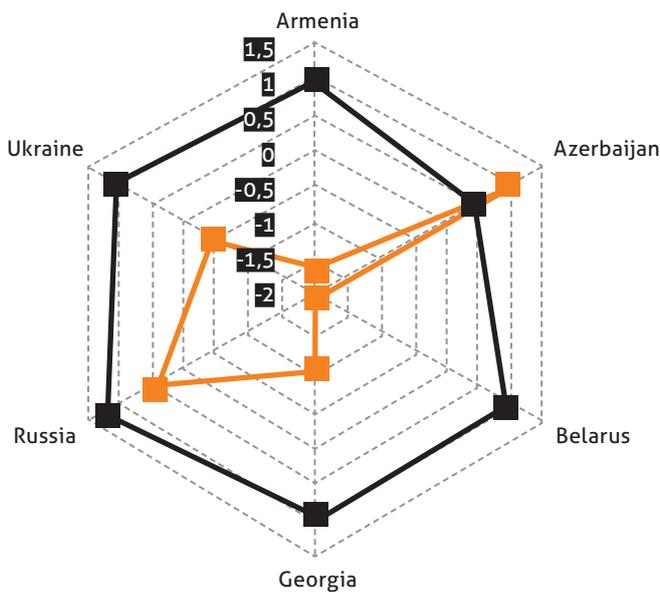
Do you think that your activities made difference in your hosting organization's local community (**please, select just 1 answer**)?

The last question which both groups of respondents: volunteers and hosting organizations were asked pointed out which of the four groups of EVS main stakeholders profit from it the most. The most often chosen answer was that it's volunteers who profit from the EVS the most (almost 59% of all volunteers and 50% of hosting organizations' representatives). The second most often chosen answer was: all of them equally (almost 30% of hosting organizations' representatives and almost 17% of volunteers). It was difficult to say to almost 11% of volunteers and only 3% of hosting organizations' employees.

What is surprising, hosting organizations' representatives almost equally evaluated benefits of the EVS for hosting organizations, beneficiaries and local communities (see: chart below) while influence on the latter group seemed to be underappreciated by volunteers (only 1 of them chose this answer). No one chose sending organizations as entities which benefited from the EVS the most.



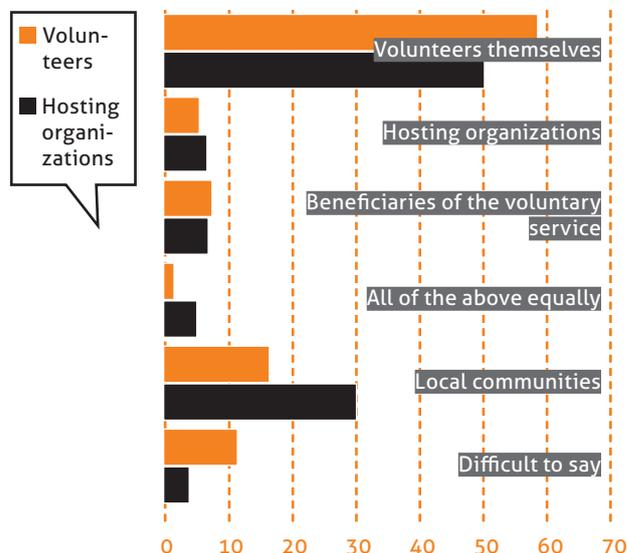
— Average of 27. Scale
— Average of 31. Scale



— Average of 27. Scale
— Average of 31. Scale

It is worth mentioning that each respondent was able to point out just one entity which, in his or her opinion profited from the EVS most, which "sharpened" the answers and didn't enable joining two or even three various variants.

Which of the following entities is, in your opinion, influenced by the voluntary service to the biggest extent (**please, select just 1 answer**)?



FINAL REMARKS REGARDING QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The quantitative research findings leave no space for the EVS critics. It seems to have a meaningful positive impact on all EVS stakeholder groups embraced by this research. However, there are some minor remarks pointing out interesting aspects of perceiving the EVS impact. First of all, the hosting organization employees seem to be more aware of the positive impact of the EVS on various groups of its stakeholders while volunteers are less aware of it. Secondly, the biggest impact the EVS has on volunteers themselves and their personal as well as professional development. Thirdly, the EVS is not really a full-time job but it brings similar results (just in different fields than the regular employment in hosting organizations), it is though more useful in volunteers personal and social than in professional development. Fourthly, the volunteers do not seem to get a clear and sufficient feedback on quality of their work in hosting organizations, therefore they have troubles with self-assessment in this regard.

Therefore the main recommendation to law- and policy makers regarding the EVS is that it should be strengthened as one of the most important means of spreading tolerance, awareness of cultural and social diversity, multilingualism.

EVS – YES!!!

Part II: Qualitative research report

Qualitative research was done on the basis of interviews with standardized list of questions, conducted between August and October 2011 among 8 volunteers and 8 representatives of hosting organizations chosen from all volunteers and hosting organizations' employees who filled in the questionnaire and agreed to have a skype interview at further stages of the research. There were two lists of questions – one for the volunteers and one for the hosting organizations (see: both lists of questions attached to this report).

Both volunteers and hosting organizations' employees replied to the questions via skype – average interview time was: in case of volunteers – 20 minutes and in case of hosting organizations' representatives – 31 minutes. The number of questions was similar, namely volunteers were supposed to answer 15 questions and representatives of hosting organizations – 14 questions plus two additional short questions about the number of EVS projects and the number of volunteers. The qualitative research was conducted to collect and elaborate private opinions of chosen volunteers and hosting organizations' employees on impact of the EVS on four groups of its stakeholders: 1. volunteers ("How did the voluntary service influence volunteers' personal life and professional development?", "Did the EVS had impact on volunteers' family and/or friends?", "What was the nature and scope of the volunteers' service?"), 2. hosting organizations ("What were volunteers' relations with their supervisors and colleagues in hosting organizations?", "How did the EVS influence volunteers' hosting organizations?"), 3. beneficiaries ("How did volunteers influence lives of direct beneficiaries of their voluntary service?") and 4. local communities ("How would you describe the scope and the nature of your impact on your hosting organization's local community? What social groups did your activities influence?"). Furthermore, the qualitative research was designed to collect and analyze private attitudes of the volunteers and their hosting organizations' representatives towards EVS, its strengths and weaknesses, finally motivating factors for the volunteers and for hosting organizations regarding EVS ("Did volunteers feel appreciated during their voluntary service? How did they feel this appreciation (or a lack of it)?", "Who/what motivated volunteers the most during their service?", "Could the voluntary service in your hosting organization be described as active and successful (or at least

fruitful)? Why?”, “What were the most satisfying moments of the voluntary service?”, “What were the least satisfying moments during the voluntary service?”, “Who, in your opinion, benefitted from the EVS the most? Why?”, “How would you sum up the EVS in your hosting organization with one sentence?”, “Do you think that there was a balance between volunteers’ personal learning and service for the hosting organization? Please, comment.”).

There were 2 volunteers having conducted their service in hosting organizations whose employees participated in a qualitative research (a Latvian volunteer having served in a Georgian hosting organization and a Finnish volunteer having conducted her EVS in a Ukrainian organization). Other interviewed volunteers came from: Poland (served in a Ukrainian hosting organization), Russian (served in an Austrian hosting organization), Ukraine (served in UK), Slovakia (conducted EVS in Russia), Georgia (served in a Polish hosting organization), Czech Republic (served in Russia). Other hosting organizations having participated in the research are located in: Portugal, Poland, Armenia, Russia, Spain, Germany.

A majority of hosting organizations participating in the research host from 10 to 25 volunteers and a few EVS projects, which means their experience is meaningful for evaluating the genuine impact of the EVS on its stakeholders.

After the interviews were recorded and transcribed, the collected data was sorted into a range of categories embracing both areas of impact of the EVS on various groups of stakeholders and personal opinions of ho employees and volunteers on the EVS.

The first category was impact of the EVS on volunteers.

A majority of interviewed volunteers claimed there was an impact of the EVS on their lives both personal and professional.

There were two opinions that the EVS was rather boring – one of them was quite clear about the EVS being overestimated as means of influencing volunteers lives (“It was a nice experience, but I wouldn't really say it was very valuable for my life. Maybe it was valuable a little, but not as much as I had expected (...) EVS had definitely no impact on my family and friends.”). The critical opinion’s author was a volunteer from EU Member State who conducted his EVS in Russia. Six other opinions of the interviewed volunteers contained such expressions as: “I definitely learned the language (Russian) and office work. This helped me in my job back in my home country (...) I met and still stay in touch with really many people (...) I met my boyfriend during

my EVS.” (EU Member State volunteer), “I learned language and acquired communication skills (...) I came back with many new contacts and a new boyfriend” (volunteer from a Partner Country), “I have met so many motivated individuals who are out to change the world and I am proud to be a part of their movement (...) It had positive impact on my friends and family. Some of my friends decided to do EVS and they of course benefitted from this.” (volunteer from a Partner Country), “I definitely became more self-confident. When I survived of some difficult situations during my EVS I was sure I can survive anywhere. I also feel I became more <<international>> and able to understand different cultures...” (EU Member State volunteer), “EVS gave me a chance to look more inside of me. I understood much better that I am the value and the leader of my own life. I definitely became more independent, more self secure and more brave. The same in my professional life. I returned back to my work when coming back to home country and I have become freer, more active, I come more often with my initiatives to my bosses. Even if the ideas are declined I am aware of not being silent, I want to share what I have learned. I was happy to have a chef during my EVS that always supported our ideas and always encouraged us to do and to realize all we have planned. So right now I am in a phase of quitting my job because I feel a need of more challenges. I would never do it without my EVS.” (volunteer from the EU Member State). One of the volunteers from Czech Republic stayed in the country of her hosting organization because she got a job in this organization. Her personal life was influenced by the EVS for she learned independence and got acquainted with many people.

One of the most personal confessions about impact of the EVS on volunteers was the one of a Georgian volunteer who said during the interview: “Doing service provided the meaning in my life. It allowed me to take a step away from my issues, problems and business and focus on helping others through their struggles. It provides me with perspective, understanding and most importantly: love. I’ve become a more accepting, caring and easy-going person through service.” The same volunteer when asked about beneficiaries of her service also referred to her own experience: “I have learned more from the EVS than I could possibly put down in words; but basically I have learned what it means to be a living, breathing, caring human being. Being involved in this program pushed my boundaries beyond myself. I had to figure out how to lead and then do it. Every service project opened my eyes to the biases I have, to the injustices in the world, and most importantly, to the ways we can change it.” One of the volunteers from the EU Member States with details described changes in her life which were related to the EVS, from necessity to pack her staff in a 20 kilo bag to inevitable pursuit for independence while being

on her own and taking sole responsibility for her life.

As it can be seen above, a majority of interviewed volunteers perceive their EVS as a part of their lives which positively and meaningfully influenced their personal and professional life. No volunteer has, however, claimed to have wasted their time while conducting their EVS.

Regarding representatives of hosting organizations, they, what could be expected, underlined a bit different areas of the EVS influence on volunteers' lives. They pointed out volunteers' better ability to learn, their better social skills (*"Volunteers were integrated in educational and social projects, they had to coexist and cooperate with the others"*), said an employee of one of the hosting organizations from the EU Member States), they also underlined volunteers' better experience in facing new challenges (*"The EVS means doing something different in new conditions."*-claimed an interviewed representative of hosting organization from Ukraine), significant experience in working for an NGO in international surroundings and general positive impact on volunteers personal life (one of the representatives of hosting organization in Russia shortly summed up: *"participation in projects positively influences private life of volunteers and their professional development"*).

Additionally to the information above it is worth mentioning that all volunteers agreed upon the fact that it's them who profited from the EVS the most. Even the interviewed volunteer who didn't see much influence of the EVS on his life while asked about who benefitted from the EVS the most admitted: *"Maybe me in a way. I did realize a few things about myself, other people, life in general, but I wouldn't really say it did give me that much benefit in terms of future employment."* Some volunteers also pointed out young beneficiaries of their activities as those who benefitted from their service.

A bit surprising is the fact that representatives of hosting organizations interviewed within the research weren't so convinced that it's volunteers who benefit the most from the EVS. Out of 8 interviewed hosting organizations' employees 3 replied that both volunteers and hosting organizations benefit equally, other 3 claimed that all or almost all parties profit equally and opinions of two of them was that it was mainly beneficiaries. A representative of a Russian hosting organization claimed: *"From the EVS benefitted farmers and needy families [main beneficiaries of the organization – R. M.-N.]. Due to the short operating time, volunteers didn't have time to be tired, and if the volunteer was tired, children started to complain and behave whimsically. In Russia it is necessary to work, and volunteers often aren't ready to such work but*

they do work." Hosting organizations' employees also underlined benefits that young people in local communities had because of the EVS, namely: more openness, better understanding of the others, more interesting projects with a bit of international dimension.

The second category is the EVS impact on hosting organizations.

In most of the cases volunteers underlined (what some opinions of the hosting organizations' employees' confirmed) that the scope of influence of a volunteer on his (or her) hosting organization depends a lot on volunteer himself (or herself). One of the interviewed volunteers (from a non-EU country having served in an EU Member State) became an employee of her hosting organization after finishing her service, which means her impact was definitely meaningful and she admits it. Other volunteer from the EU Member State having conducted her EVS in Ukraine claimed that volunteers didn't get too responsible tasks and she didn't fight for much more responsibility though she broadened scope of her activities a bit. One of the Russian volunteers, as a first non-EU volunteer in her hosting organization understood her role not only as fulfilling regular tasks but also as "opening" her organization towards non-EU volunteers and Russians as such.

Some of the interviewed volunteers pointed out concrete contributions to their hosting organizations' development. One of the volunteers from Ukraine working for a British NGO claimed: *"I implemented new activities and did important job with fundraising. Due to my donation requests my hosting organization got 500, new furniture and other Christmas presents for service users."* Other volunteer (from an EU country having conducted the EVS in a non-EU state) claimed: *"I see the time of my EVS as a very productive time of my host organization. The team that we were on that moment was a very productive and with a high self initiative."* There were also expressions pointing out simple but meaningful influence on hosting organizations, namely: *"Some workers had a lot of stuff to do, so I think they were just happy that I helped them to look after clients"* or *"My host organization enjoyed working and cooperating with me."*

Just one person was skeptical about his influence on hosting organization. While asked about it, the volunteer replied: *"I had very little influence. I would say none, but I guess that would not be true. Except for interaction with a few employees (meaning having a conversation here and there) - not much."*

As regards the way hosting organizations' representatives perceive volunteers' impact on their

hosting organizations, it seems that they underline a bit different aspects of such an influence than volunteers. They seem to less concentrate on “quick and measurable” impact and point such influence as: pointing out new perspectives for developing projects, opening new horizons of acting for local communities, new energy in the organization. An employee of a hosting organization from the EU Member State claimed: *“The EVS was a very important support for our activities and for developing more activities or put more attention to details. I think that the most important was that the volunteers gave us a different point of view to some things and this is important to grow.”* A representative of a non-EU hosting organization answered to the question about this influence: *„We invited volunteers for concrete projects where we already participate. Therefore volunteers taught us how to correctly plan work in our country. It was very important that they also learned our language!”*

Regarding the scope and character of relations of volunteers with their colleagues, supervisors and other volunteers, they were described by a majority of both volunteers and hosting organizations’ representatives as rather informal, two volunteers called these relations “a friendship”.

Some volunteers still stay in touch with their hosting organizations. *“I still have contact with my host organization. I have friendly and professional relation with them. It's my pleasure to cooperate with my HO.”* – claimed one of the non-EU volunteers having worked in one of the EU countries. Other volunteer said: *“I had very good relations with my supervisor, manager and colleagues. With some of them I still continue friendship. I learned a lot from them, but also taught them sometimes.”*

The third category is the EVS impact on hosting organizations’ support beneficiaries.

In six out of sixteen interviews with both volunteers and representatives of hosting organizations beneficiaries were pointed out as a group genuinely supported by the EVS though to a certain extent and this support was of different kind in each case.

Some of the volunteers just described their activities towards beneficiaries, like: *“My role was support young people in they everyday life: doctor’s appointment, college enrollment, money management, shopping, cooking, cleaning and etc. During my shifts I had to provide different kind of activity with young people to maintain they leisure time as cooking activity, DVD night, house meeting, outdoors games, searching interesting social and cultural program.”* (non-EU volunteer) or *“I helped about 270*

people understand what intercultural values are and how to make them a part of their lives (...) I provided them with new info, I help them open.” (non-EU volunteer). The volunteer who didn’t see that much benefit from the EVS for himself did admit he influenced his activities beneficiaries. He said: *“I did interact with kids, meaning I did distract them, made their life maybe a bit happier while playing games, talking to them, etc. It was mostly by distraction, simple games, etc.”*

Three volunteers (all from the EU Member States) answered the question about their support towards beneficiaries through their personal experience. One of them said: *“Every service project opened my eyes to the biases I have, to the injustices in the world, and most importantly, to the ways we can change it.”* The other mentioned her deep personal experience: *“Before my EVS I didn't know almost anything about disabled people, but after my EVS I realized that they are all special and they have different personalities like every people. I also understood that even if they are "different" they are still normal people who enjoy doing similar stuff like we all. I was also looking the live of the mothers of those children. To be honest, I was first feeling pity for them, but when I saw how positive they are and how they can survive of almost everything, I understood that if I just think negative, things are negative. It is simple but something very important for me to understand during that point of life.”* The third volunteer pointed out the influence she made on “locals” only after she understood the essence of the “difference” she might make. She said during the interview: *“I never thought I would write this but if before the term “European values” was something very abstract for me than living in Caucasus I realized that I am European and there really are some values we are based on. So I was telling a lot about them to all the youngsters around (...) Actually I am still not sure that they understood but what I know is that they look differently on Europe now for sure.”*

There were also some stories about the way volunteers influenced direct beneficiaries of their activities. One volunteer from the EU country told her story from Caucasus: *“I am still in touch with a small girl from a refugee village near Abhazia’s border. For her I was the first blond person to be met... and a friendly one. We were providing English language lessons in that village. And that girl was totally impressed that we both can communicate in English. And I told her to continue to learn, to develop, to learn good at school because she will have great opportunities in her life. And I know she does it. And for example the cleaning action we did on the beach...we had many people there but the most important thing is that there were like maximum 5 girls, the rest were young man cleaning the area. As the local volunteer told us it is something unbelievable that Georgian*

youngsters do that. We just persuaded them that cleaning is fun. And after this I guess they won't put garbage on the ground anymore and will also ask their friends not to do so. Actually here I could tell so many more stories..."

Regarding volunteers' perception of their influence on beneficiaries of their activities, one quite striking conclusion can be drawn from the interviews, namely, volunteers from the EU Member States seem to perceive their support to the beneficiaries as enriching themselves while volunteers from the non-EU states described more scope and technical aspects of their support towards the beneficiaries. This may be a difference in perception of the purpose of the EVS. Volunteers from non-EU countries want it more to be an experience to help the others. The EU volunteers also strongly pursue for their personal development and make it a part of their "EVS project".

Regarding the hosting organizations' representatives perception of the EVS volunteers influence on their beneficiaries, they positively evaluated volunteers' impact – mostly on beneficiaries' self-confidence, openness, breaking stereotypes. Of course the influence depends on the group of beneficiaries. If they are handicapped children or youth, volunteers support them by their presence by their care and positive attitude. If they are the youth, volunteers spread their experience and values so that they can be acquired by the youth. Even those of volunteers who spent most of their time in the office were praised for great job influencing many people (organization of events etc.). One Russian hosting organization employee while asked about the way volunteers influenced beneficiaries answered: *"Positively! In our business new people and new dialogue it already 50 percent of success."*

An optimistic result of the research is that the two representatives of hosting organizations and volunteers having conducted their EVS in them have similar impressions regarding the EVS impact on their activities' beneficiaries. The volunteers underlined their support in "opening" the beneficiaries in raising their communication skills and intercultural orientation. Exactly this kind of impact and even some more aspects of it were pointed out by representatives of hosting organizations. They underlined also such aspects of the influence as: raised motivation to change their situation among beneficiaries, more orientation towards business and strengthening professional and personal relationships.

The fourth category is the EVS impact on local communities.

The question about impact of the EVS on local communities seemed to be the most difficult one. It may be due to the fact that this kind of impact is the least touchable and not obvious at once. Since the interviews required immediate response, particularly volunteers got a bit confused and gave answers that can hardly be described as precise.

Some of the volunteers were dealing with their hosting organizations' beneficiaries so much that they couldn't properly judge their impact on local communities. Then they replied through their influence on the beneficiaries. One volunteer from a non-EU state said: "I dealt with the most vulnerable and disadvantage homeless young people. It was difficult, but very challenging. Very often I felt that that entire job I did was useless, because young people had very little motivation to do something. But thanks for the staff they always support me in my intention." Other volunteers avoided replies by saying that there must have been some impact, however, it is difficult to describe. The others simply pointed out the groups they influenced, however, without describing their actual impact on them. Among the supported groups in local communities a vast majority was a group of young people. There were also pointed out: students, older people, refugees, local inhabitants who participated in local events. All of the above mentioned opinions contained an aspect of volunteers bringing colorfulness and a bit of fresh air to local communities.

Just one volunteer replied that there was no influence of his work on local communities.

The impact on local communities was described by the hosting organizations' employees as: "supportive", "breaking stereotypes", "promoting voluntary service and EVS", "pointing out similarities among people from different countries". The EVS was promoted in local communities through various events, information in the media and through direct activities of the volunteers. A hosting institution employee from the EU Member State said: *"....it was interesting that EVS has been breaking well-established attitudes in our city and especially in relation to cultures, so that the citizens have learned to understand other cultures through their contributions and participation in the activities of the city."*

There was one interesting – a bit striking – expression of a Russian representative of a hosting organization on this matter. He pointed out a negative side of influence of volunteers on local communities. He said: *"There is a big problem with the international volunteers - they set many silly questions and talk politics much! It's not good. Questions about elections of president of Russia and others"*

of this kind have, in my opinion, no value to local communities. Just cause confusion." This, however, shows volunteers' interest not only in their direct surroundings during their EVS but also their pursuit for finding out more about the reality they spent their EVS in.

The fifth category is the EVS meaning for strengthening human relations and supportive attitude towards other people among various EVS beneficiaries.

The fifth category of research answers analysis is based on those parts of interview with volunteers and representatives of hosting organizations which deal with personal impressions of what were the motivating factors during the EVS what it meant to feel satisfaction with the EVS, finally what it meant to be a part of the EVS "adventure" for both volunteers and their colleagues or supervisors from hosting organizations. In this part of analysis of research results there will be many personal expressions and individual subjective opinions. They do matter for the overall evaluation of the EVS impact since they are the decisive factor for multiplication of the EVS direct results. On the attitudes and personal impressions both volunteers and representatives of hosting organizations build their will to develop good conditions for the EVS to get strengthened and supported.

The EU Member States volunteers having served in EECA Partner Countries expressed in almost all cases their positive impression and sense of being appreciated and motivated during their EVS. Some of their expressions were totally enthusiastic. An example can be an opinion: *"I felt totally appreciated during my EVS. Really I cannot describe what a fantastic person was our chef. He totally trusted us. I am talking in plural when saying this because of other two volunteers who would confirm that (...) I felt appreciated and supported. I also knew that what I did made an impact. Yes, the positive outcomes of our projects plus the kindness and will of people we met to help us in any situation very often gave power when there was a small lack of it."* The above mentioned volunteer would claim there were plenty of satisfying moments during her EVS (*"Without lying – every day was satisfying and of course a glass of cold beer after every end of the next successful project"*).

The above mentioned volunteers described their service with one sentence the following way: *"Good is the basics, than comes better and for the best there is a new synonym - my EVS."*, *"Definitely not always easy, but definitely worth of it!"*, *"It was just perfect"*.

The only exception in this regard seem to be impressions of a volunteer who as the only one didn't appreciate his EVS much. He claimed: *"I wasn't appreciated in my work. I rather felt that even though I liked the work, I still found the work rather made up. I felt that we are not of any benefit to anyone (or of very little benefit)." This volunteer has also said: "I did benefit from my EVS a bit when I would realize my weaknesses and strengths but that was rather thanks to interaction with other volunteers (not the work). I think it was a nice way to spend extra time not doing that much after university, but I was quite disappointed by the whole EVS experience."* The volunteer pointed out positive impact of other volunteers on his EVS. He would sum up his EVS with one sentence as: *"mostly not doing much, being bored and disillusioned with voluntary work, not something I would consider as very valuable - but still nice."*

The volunteers from non-EU states felt slightly less appreciated and motivated. One of them claimed: *"I always felt appreciated from the colleagues, because they could feel my support. But I almost didn't feel appreciation from our service users, because of lack of motivation. Anyway I tried to do my best even if nobody appreciate that."* The same volunteer, however, underlines also very positive aspects of the EVS motivation and success: *"My voluntary service was no doubt active and successful. I used every single minutes to make this time fruitful not only at my project, but at my spare time as well. I improved my English, met many international friends, and learned local culture and traditions."* Interesting was the least satisfying moment of the EVS pointed out by this volunteer, namely: *"That I couldn't enroll as other EVS volunteers at the college, because I'm not the member of EU."* The expression contained a lot of hope that the volunteer's home country would become the EU member one day. Other volunteer pointed out among the most motivating factors other volunteers and beneficiaries. She claimed: *"During my EVS some of EVS volunteers motivated me so much. I understand how important is to be involved actively and social life. Also the focus group with whom I was working gave me a power to be strong."* The only thing she didn't like were language courses. Other volunteers from Partner Countries were motivated by their colleagues and other volunteers. Some of them experienced tough moments while interacting with their colleagues or locals".

When asked, the non-EU volunteers summed up their EVS with one sentence as: *"New experience, new country, new people, new life and new challenges (...) even though some of my duties weren't satisfying at all I tried to learn as much as I could."*, *"Unforgettable experience of my life."*, *"It was one great unforgettable experience"*.

Representatives of hosting organizations under-

lined dependency of the EVS success on volunteers, their attitudes and personalities. One of the stories told by an employee of hosting organizations perfectly confirms that. The story was about one volunteer. "There was a girl from Netherlands who was very shy and non active. She had difficulties to participate in anything - a complicated case. But when she finished her service and I made the final evaluation, she told me (and I will never forget it): <<Look I know that my service here not was very productive and I never integrated very well... I can say that I hardly did anything. But you don't know one important thing. For me it was the best experience in my life since I never left my home before. My mother always took care for everything to me and here I learned a lot of important things for my life like autonomy, working with others, cooking, cleaning...>> This was a surprise for me. Next year the same volunteer told us that she wanted to come to our Association as a volunteer to participate in summer activities and she was fantastic. So, I think that all the volunteers need some time for integration and everyone is different..."

The hosting organizations' employees claimed that a vast majority of volunteers was motivated and full of ideas. One of the EU hosting organizations representatives underlined volunteers' usefulness as motivating factors in the organization's work: *"The most important thing is that volunteers are in contact with young people, and their experiences are very important for motivation to the others."*

Among hosting organization employees there were hardly any real complaints towards volunteers and even if, they were usually related to their misbehaving (aggressive or without taking into consideration other people's needs). These were, however, related to the small minority of volunteers. One representative of a hosting organization from Russia complained about the money volunteers get. He said: *"EVS are allocated with few money resources for the volunteers and it strongly constrains volunteers!"* The same person pointed out an important, in his opinion, aspects of conducting EVS in Russia that might cause problems for volunteers. He claimed: *"In Russia it is necessary to work and volunteers often aren't ready to such work."* He was, however, satisfied and optimistic about volunteers and their work if they, as he said, *"feel Russia instead of trying to understand it"*.

Most of the hosting organizations representatives confirmed the balance between volunteers' personal learning and their service for hosting organizations. There were even more statements on their side about this balance than on the volunteer's side who claimed that they were benefitting from the EVS more.

Final conclusions

General remark on the basis of all interviews taken for the research is that, despite the fact that in a vast majority of cases the EVS positively influences volunteers, hosting organizations, beneficiaries of their activities and local communities, it's the volunteers who benefit from the EVS the most. This capital gained by them doesn't disappear though. They use it to make change in their lives and in their surroundings after the EVS.

Other important conclusions can be formulated in the form of a SWOT analysis. It is not a typical tool for presenting impact of social phenomena or processes – rather a potential or a strategy, however, it seems to be suitable for mirroring some aspects of EVS as activity of certain importance for its various stakeholders. The SWOT analysis is performed from the point of view of both hosting organizations and volunteers.

SWOT – impact of the EVS

On the basis of a quantitative and qualitative re-
search

		STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Impact on volunteers	VOLUNTEERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables volunteers recognizing their professional path • Meaningfully strengthens cultural dimension of volunteers' life activities and enables gaining solid cultural capital • Raises volunteers' self-confidence and self-esteem • Opens volunteers to new cultures and lifestyles • Encourages many people to become volunteers (multiplication effect) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables acquiring work experience mainly in cultural field – other fields seem to be less meaningful • Volunteers are not always treated as team members and are not given sufficiently responsible tasks • It's not financially profitable for volunteers; sometimes it even requires spending their own money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives volunteers unique opportunity to learn what is not taught within the formal education system • Enables practicing "soft" skills indispensable in working for NGOs and in public sector • Positive EVS experience encourages other young people to participate in the EVS • Volunteers open towards new values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers may treat the EVS too much as "vacation" or a "transition period" to await hesitations regarding their professional plans • Strengthened self-confidence and self-esteem of volunteers may be just a short-term result • Positive influence on finding a job may be overestimated and may leave a sense of disappointment by those volunteers who considered it their main reason to participate in the EVS
	HOSTING ORGANIZATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens volunteers' chances on labour market • Significantly increases volunteers' self-confidence and self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes seems to be a sort of "vacation" instead of being rich work experience • Not all volunteers realize what their actual EVS tasks are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports interest of young people in helping socially excluded groups and individuals • Raises level of understanding NGOs work among young people, enables them getting involved in social activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of the EVS on volunteers' trust in other people and openness may be overestimated

Impact on hosting organizations

VOLUNTEERS

STRENGTHS

- Supports positive image of hosting organizations
- Bringing “fresh” ideas to regular activities of hosting organizations

WEAKNESSES

- Discrepancy of volunteers’ expectations towards their EVS tasks and possibilities on hosting organizations’ side
- Problems with proper communicating hosting organizations’ expectations towards volunteers
- A lack of awareness of volunteers regarding real value of their work

OPPORTUNITIES THREATS

- Putting additional aspects of serving beneficiaries on the agenda (thanks to volunteers)
- Using volunteers’ know-how in everyday activities of hosting organizations and increasing number of beneficiaries of hosting organizations activities
- More volunteers will support hosting organizations in their tasks

- Overestimating the EVS as regular work bringing similar experience as regular work
- Doubts regarding actual role of volunteers in hosting organizations

HOSTING ORGANIZATIONS

- Strengthens multicultural dimension of hosting organizations’ activities
- Strengthening informal aspect of dividing tasks and cooperating with employees and volunteers
- Enables implementation of projects which wouldn’t be implemented otherwise
- Positive influence of volunteers on hosting organizations’ employees

- A lack of a constant approach of hosting organizations towards volunteers due to variety of volunteers’ personalities, attitudes and motivation to fulfil their tasks
- Conflicts arising from cultural differences and different expectations towards the service

- Strengthens openness of hosting organizations towards new experiences and new activities
- Supports development of skills and competences among hosting organizations’ employees
- Raises efficiency of hosting organizations’ activities

- Informal relations in organizations strengthened by volunteers may lower efficiency of their functioning
- Not fulfilled expectations of hosting organizations’ employees regarding volunteers’ scope of tasks

		STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Impact on beneficiaries	VOLUNTEERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers provide them with services they would otherwise have to pay for or resign from • Volunteers raise their confidence and level of “openness” for different cultures, opinions, attitudes; they are taught tolerance by volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is related mostly to educational and cultural aspects (rarely this support is related to basic problems of beneficiaries) • Not always volunteers work directly with beneficiaries, which does not give them direct opportunity to understand beneficiaries’ needs • Volunteers are not always aware of their actual support to beneficiaries of their hosting organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens good opinion about volunteers among beneficiaries • Promotes meaning of human relationships and contacts, positive attitudes towards other people, cultural differences • Fights exclusion of those who wouldn’t receive support without participation of volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers may not realize and/or understand what kind of support beneficiaries really need • Volunteers may not be interested in direct support to beneficiaries – rather to implementing projects supporting them
	HOSTING ORGANIZATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers support hosting organizations employees in providing some aspects of support towards beneficiaries (mostly of educational nature, cultural and related to free-time activities) • Volunteers teach beneficiaries tolerance, patience, openness • Volunteers make activities of hosting organizations towards beneficiaries “warmer” and closer to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some volunteers are not extravert enough or simply not predisposed to work directly with beneficiaries and properly support them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosting organizations may be considered more “open” and acting “closer” to their beneficiaries thanks to direct contact of volunteers with beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers may not understand their impact on beneficiaries due to lack of professional preparation to work for hosting organizations • Volunteers’ support to beneficiaries may not be sufficiently professional and in extreme cases may even cause problems

Impact on local communities

VOLUNTEERS

STRENGTHS

- Draws attention of members of local communities to the idea of voluntarism
- Points out existing of certain social problems
- Strengthens good opinion about volunteers (sometimes also about people from abroad generally) in local community

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of understanding necessity to spread information about the EVS or lack of knowledge how to do it and motivation to do it

OPPORTUNITIES THREATS

- Gives hope to strengthening voluntary activities among members of the community
- Encourages people to undertake actions of solving social problems

- Volunteers may not sufficiently appreciate their own impact and insufficiently address their activities towards members of local communities
- Lack of language skills or knowledge about local communities and their customs may result in misunderstandings and may cause problems

HOSTING ORGANIZATIONS

- The idea of volunteering becomes well-known and positively perceived
- Volunteers meaningfully promote ideas of multilingualism and multiculturalism
- Volunteers give great example of how to help other people despite their origin, language problems etc.

- Lack of particular interests of volunteers in spreading information about their activities in local communities (this process seems to be rather accidental, resulting from volunteers' regular activities in hosting organizations)

- Volunteers embody idea of helping others and their activities encourage local communities to organize activities supporting social ideas

- Lacks in volunteers' knowledge and understanding local customs, political situation and lives of inhabitants may lead to strengthening prejudices and misunderstandings

Attachment: lists of standardized open questions for both volunteers and representatives of hosting organizations.

VOLUNTEERS

1. How did the voluntary service influence your personal life and your professional development?
2. Do you think that your voluntary service had impact on your family and/or friends?
3. What was the nature and scope of your voluntary service?
4. How did you influence lives of direct beneficiaries of your voluntary service?
5. What were your relations with your supervisors and colleagues in your hosting organizations?
6. How did your voluntary service influence your hosting organization?
7. How would you describe the scope and the nature of your impact on your hosting organization's local community? What social groups did your activities influence?
8. Did you feel appreciated during your voluntary service? How did you feel this appreciation (or a lack of it)?
9. Who/what motivated you the most during your service?
10. Would you describe your voluntary service as active and successful (or at least fruitful)? Why?
11. What were the most satisfying moments of your voluntary service?
12. What were your least satisfying moments during your voluntary service?
13. Who, in your opinion, benefitted from your service the most? Why?
14. How would you sum up your service with one sentence?
15. Do you think that there was a balance between your personal learning and service for your hosting organization? Please, comment.

HOSTING ORGANIZATIONS

How many EVS projects did you coordinate within your organization?

How many EVS volunteers did you host?

1. How did the voluntary service, in your opinion, influence volunteers' personal life and professional development?
2. What was the nature and scope of volunteers' service in your organization? Was it satisfactory, in your opinion?
3. What were yours and your colleagues' relations with your organization volunteers? (other volunteers – local, international)
4. How did volunteers and their service influence your organization's functioning?
5. How did the volunteers influence lives of direct beneficiaries of your organization?
6. How would you describe the scope and the nature of volunteers' impact on your organization's local community?
7. How did you motivate the volunteers to fulfill their tasks?
8. Would you describe the voluntary service in your organization as successful (or at least fruitful)? Why?
9. What were the biggest achievements of volunteers during their service in your organization?
10. What were the least satisfying moments during the volunteers' service in your organization?
11. How did the volunteers influence life of your organization's local community?
12. Who, in your opinion, benefitted from the voluntary service the most? Why?
13. How would you sum up voluntary service in your organization with one sentence?
14. Do you think that there was a balance between volunteers' personal learning and their service for your organization? Please, comment.