

SALTO-YOUTH
TRAINING AND COOPERATION
RESOURCE CENTRE



Erasmus+



SOHO

International Training Course

General Report

for the SOHO courses implemented during the period of

2015 - 2016

SOHO Cyprus 23 – 27 February 2016
SOHO Iceland 4 – 8 April 2016
SOHO UK 17 – 21 May 2016
SOHO Italy 18 – 22 October 2016
SOHO Portugal 3 – 7 November 2016

by the SOHO trainers team:

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Participating countries	Final number of participants
Austria	3
Belgium - FL	1
Belgium-FR	1
Bulgaria	6
Cyprus	7
Croatia	2
Czech Republic	2
Estonia	4
Finland	7
France	4
Germany	6
Greece	3
Hungary	2
Iceland	6
Ireland	4
Italy	3
Latvia	4
Lithuania	6
Malta	3
Netherlands	4
Poland	4
Portugal	4
Romania	7
Slovakia	4
Slovenia	1
Spain	5
Switzerland	1
Turkey	10
United Kingdom	3
South East Europe	6
Eastern Europe & Caucasus	10
Total Number	133

Total number of received questionnaires	132
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2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES: ARE THEY MET?

YES	124	NO	6
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The main aim of the SOHO training courses is to contribute to **quality development** of EVS projects through development of **competencies** of key actors (e.g. mentors, supervisors, coordinators) involved in the support system around an EVS volunteer and engaged in building long-lasting EVS partnerships. This means working on capacities of Sending, Receiving and Coordinating organisations to develop and implement high-quality EVS projects in all phases of the project lifecycle.

In terms of content and related objectives, the SOHO programme targets several critical quality aspects in EVS projects, such as: selection and recruitment of volunteers, preparation for sending, preparation for hosting, facilitating volunteers' learning in EVS while ensuring the service aspect, maintaining EVS partnership, building up good support system within the receiving project, as well as recognition of learning outcomes and follow-up support to the volunteers.

In addition to that, the SOHO courses create space for EVS support persons to reflect on their practice and their own EVS values and principles, as well as for sharing of experiences with other colleagues.

As indicated in the above table 94% of SOHO participants have confirmed that these aims and objectives were met in the five SOHO courses delivered in this period.

For large majority of participants, the SOHO course was an opportunity to get more information, to understand how the programme works in practice and collect valuable good practices to apply back home. Particular emphasis was given to some specific challenges in EVS, like how to ensure adequate preparation of volunteers by sending organisations, how to build and maintain good partnership, how to support volunteer's integration into local community and how to ensure proper follow-up support upon volunteer's return to home country. In addition to its regular goals, the courses have also created a space for contact making and partnership building for future EVS projects.

Participants' quotes:

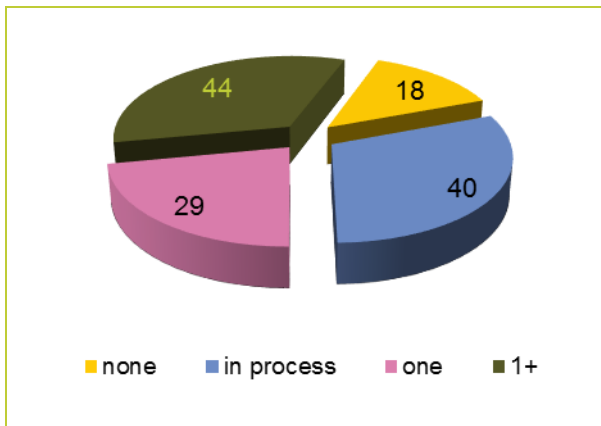
"Amazing way to learn. I will remember it the best way of my life. Amazing, Inspiring, Holistic."

"I think I have learned a lot and above all, I feel more self-confident about my skills to be a good mentor for EVS."

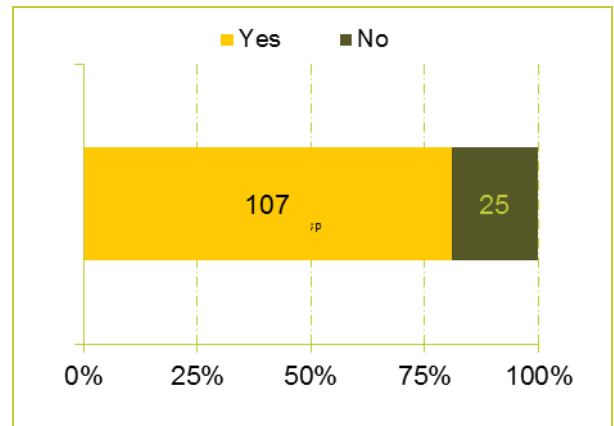
The same appreciation of the results and learning processes have been given by the representatives of the 5 hosting National Agencies, as well by the trainers involved, showing their *particular satisfaction with the expressed participants "readiness to transfer their learning to their organisations"* (see below 6.5).

3. TARGET GROUP

3.1 Experience in European Voluntary Service

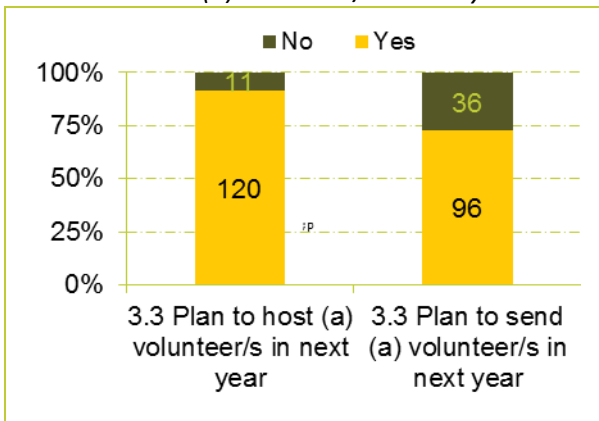


3.2 Participants work directly with EVS volunteers



3.3 Plan to host (a) volunteer/s in next year

3.3 Plan to send (a) volunteer/s in next year



General conclusions about participants selection and preparation

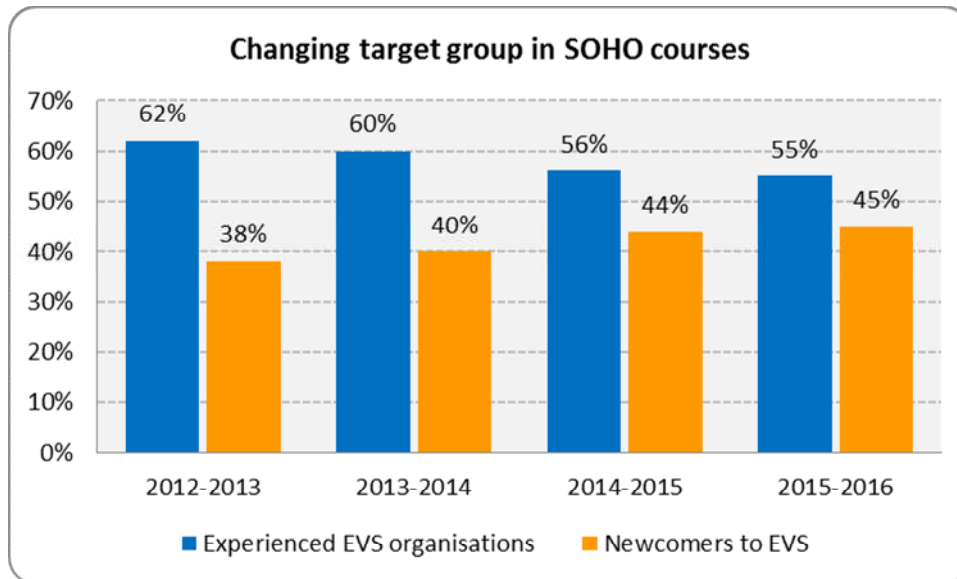
In SOHO CY the group's composition was very diverse, from none experience to many EVS projects implemented. In SOHO-UK majority of all participants were not experienced or had little experience in EVS. This was felt during the programme - trainers often returned to basic EVS information. This is also represented in participants' open comments during course evaluation - they mentioned that differences were felt, experienced participants felt they shared a lot, but did not get that much in return.

In SOHO IS the selected 30 participants (out of 300!) were more compact as a group: "we had a very good composed group, with the majority of participants with good experience on EVS".

In SOHO IT the learning from each other had been identified by the participants in their evaluation as one of the very strong points of the course and a great source for learning. The big cultural diversity supported by four participants from partner countries had a very good impact on the group dynamics and the integration within the group.

In SOHO PT participants had a mixture of experience and diversity that turned to be relevant resources for learning.

Nevertheless, also in the SOHO cycle 2015 – 2016 the trend of selecting more EVS newcomers has been confirmed, as the graph here below shows.

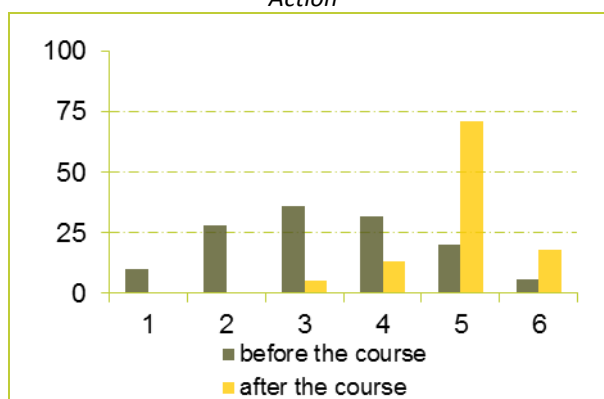


This new trend has an impact on the methodology of the courses that shall be adapted to the different expectations of these two target groups. This difference is usually well managed in the SOHO programme, but it raises its challenges as well.

In addition to that, the groups of participants are often diverse in terms of backgrounds, age and roles in EVS. The particular richness for the learning process is always the fact of having ex-EVS volunteers in the group. This brings a benefit in terms of “volunteer’s perspective” in the key reflections during the course. In addition, the number of participants from co-ordinating organisations has increased and is seen as useful as one of them stated: *“For me as co-ordinating organisation it really brought clear picture of the responsibilities of all actors in the EVS process.”*

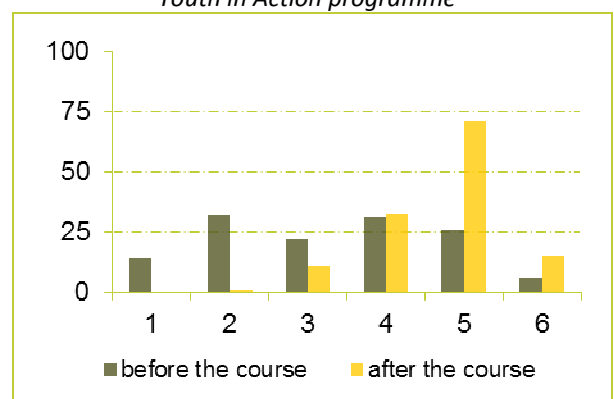
4. GROUP LEARNING PROCESSES AND RESULTS

4.1 Knowledge of EVS within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action

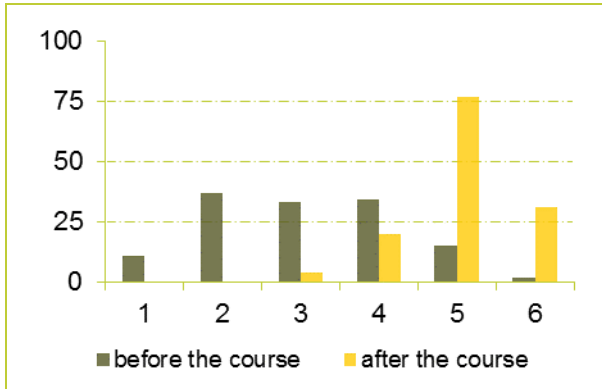


4.3 Understanding of what makes a quality EVS project

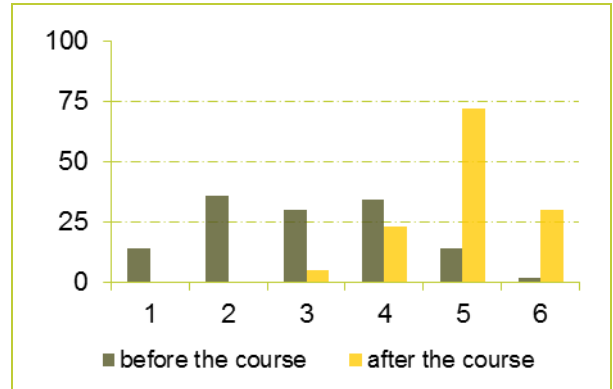
4.2 Understanding of the framework of Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme



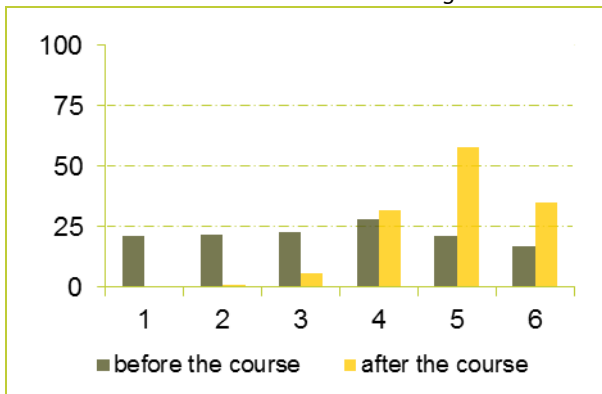
4.4 Understanding of the learning dimension in EVS projects



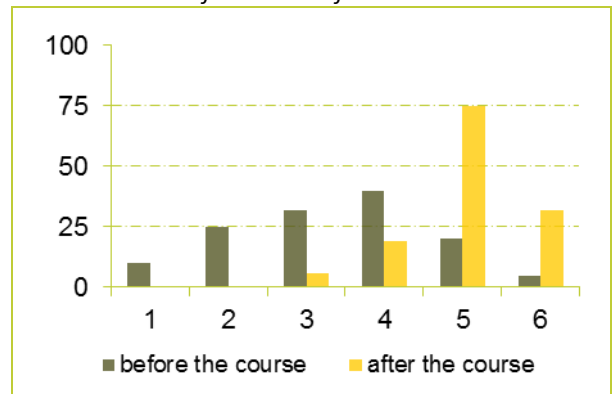
4.5 Familiarity with the Youthpass tool and process in the Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme



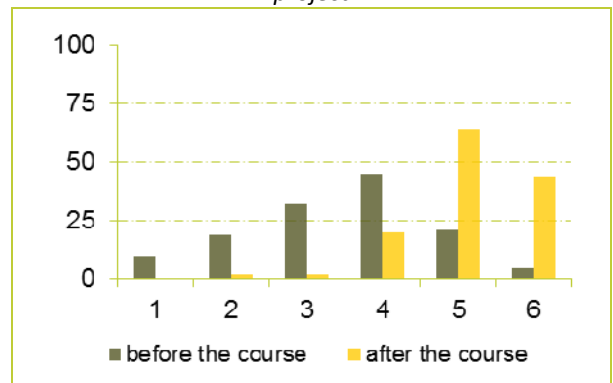
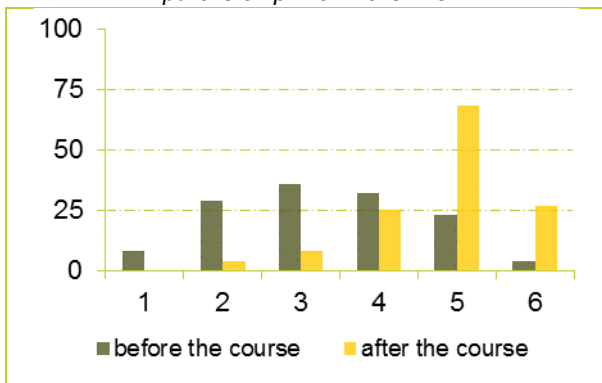
4.6 Awareness of competencies needed to be a successful mentor of EVS volunteer



4.7 Ability to co-operate and work in an international partnership within the EVS



4.8 Confidence to act as support person within an EVS project



General conclusions about participants learning process and results

In terms of knowledge and understanding, the five SOHO courses have provided a good learning opportunity to understand what makes a good quality EVS project, and also to understand and value the learning dimension in EVS. The course in Island certainly contributed to an increased confidence to act as a support people in EVS, it was a shared feeling that the course contributed to an enhanced clarity of the roles in EVS and related responsibilities.

In addition, they brought an awareness that Youthpass is not only a tool, but also a process built in the activity. In terms of awareness raising the courses highlighted the competencies needed for a successful mentor in EVS.

Taking into account the large number of new comers in EVS in SOHO-CY and in SOHO-IT, the courses had also a great impact on ability to work in an international partnership.

In SOHO PT participants stated that the curse helped to understand the importance of quality in EVS, and that the whole picture of EVS quality components became clearer.

We could say that the training programme allowed space for development of variety of competences for support persons in EVS, as some of the participants commented in their evaluation:

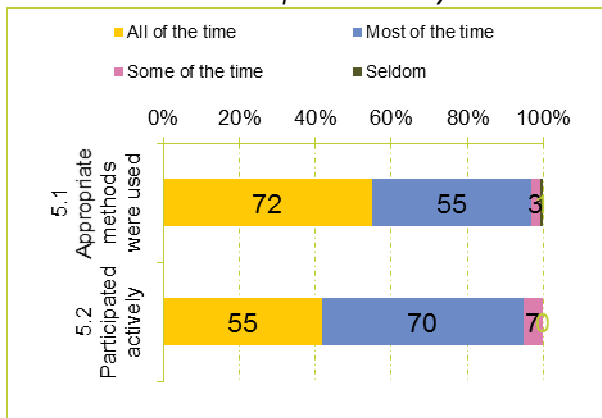
Participants' quotes:

"I have progressed with the understanding of many aspects of EVS: its educational aspect and to give importance to it, more confidence to contact international partners and work in international environment and to work and communicate in English in my first training course"

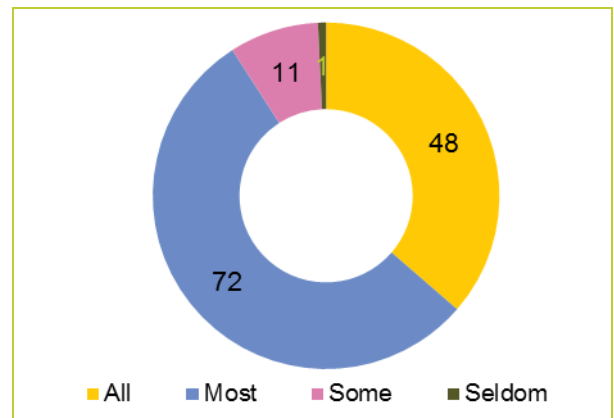
"The progress I recognize doesn't have to do with knowledge or skills but mostly with sensitizing my perception in specific fields of EVS project; understanding deeper some of the necessities and prerequisites for the planning and the implementation of a quality EVS project."

5. METHODS AND INDIVIDUAL LEARNING

5.1 Appropriate methods were used
5.2 Participated actively



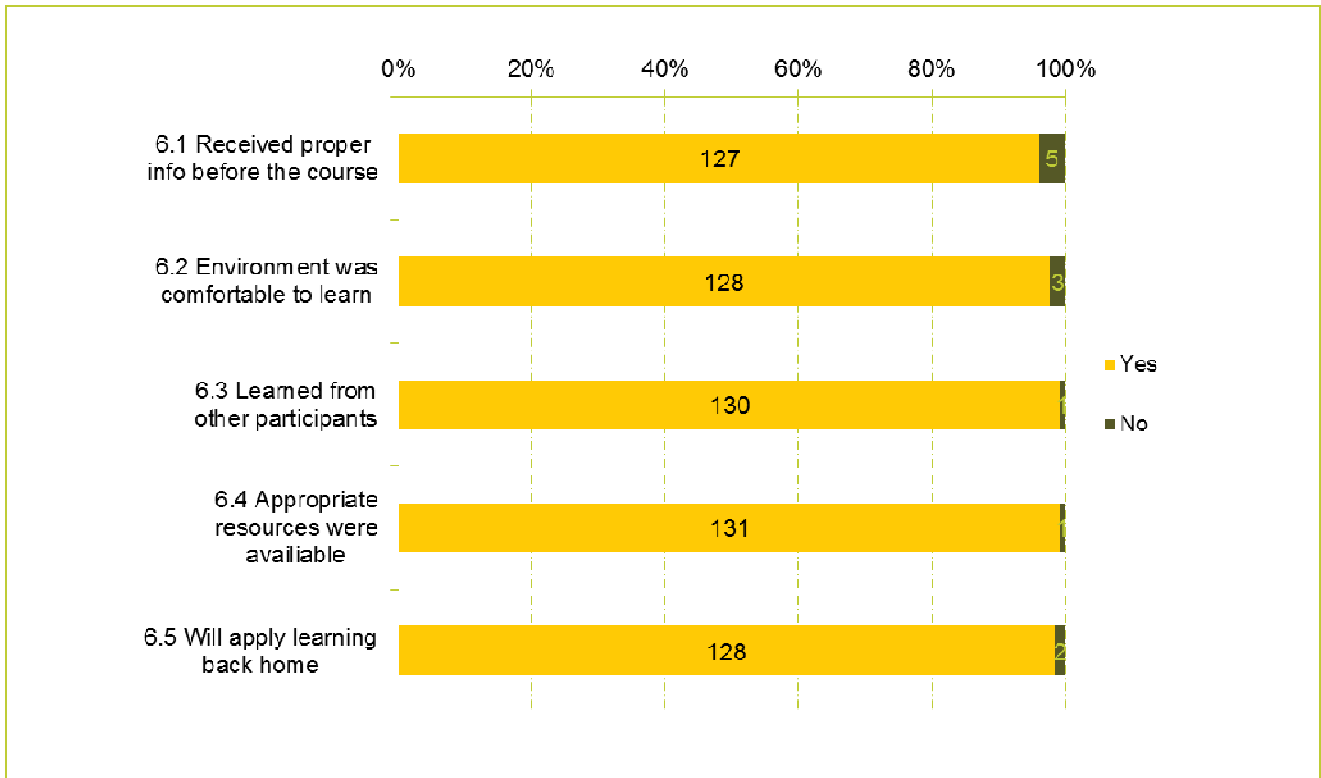
5.3 Learning needs were addressed



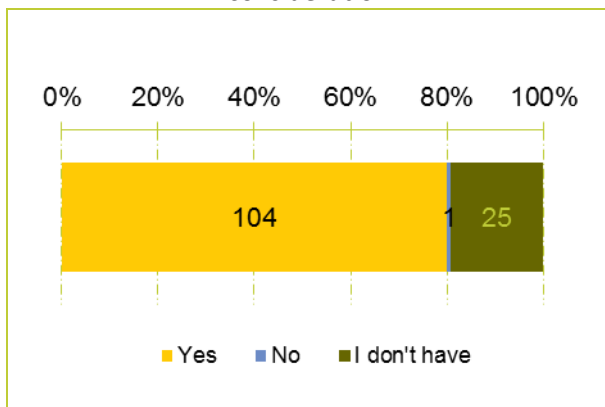
As shown in the graphs above, these five SOHO courses have managed to provide enough space for individual learning and participation, both for the 'newcomers' and the more experienced ones. 120 participants report that their learning needs have been addressed "all the time" or "most of the time" and 125 of them believe that they have participated actively during these intensive and demanding three-day learning experiences.

During all five courses the participants' previous experiences (see 6.6 below) have been taken into account and the expectations have been addressed to a very large degree. There were only 25 participants reporting that they "had no relevant practical experience so far", since they had just been accredited and in the process of developing their very first EVS projects.

6. QUALITY OF THE COURSE ORGANISATION



6.6 Previous experience in EVS was taken into consideration



7. METHODOLOGY

Participants' quotes:

"It opened something new for me. I take many non-formal methods, which are creative and interesting for learning back with me. Thank you for unusual and very useful methods."

The participants were appreciating the balance between different forms of learning during the course: experiential learning, learning through sharing in small groups, discussions in plenary, individual reflection.

This appreciation is evident in the graph 5.1 above, where 127 participants stated that the methods used during these courses were fitting the needs of the group and supporting their learning.

In this period, the standard SOHO programme has been further adapted, in order to satisfy the needs of the target groups, as stated in the paragraph above, and the Erasmus+ - Youth in Action requirements.

The major adaptations focussed on the process of selecting volunteers, to understand roles and responsibilities of each EVS stakeholder, and the value and impact of the Youthpass.

8. TEAM WORK

Participants' quotes:

"Very clear, so close to the group, they took into account all our opinions and questions"

"Perfectly prepared - I have learnt a lot from you"

"You really made me remember why we are doing this, how life changing experiences EVS can be!"

The works of the trainers' teams have been very much appreciated by participants in all five training courses. The comments given underlined a good balance of facilitating styles, solid knowledge and experience in EVS, as well sensitivity for the group needs and ability to adjust the programme accordingly.

The cooperation with the representatives of the hosting NAs has been very smooth and productive. In three out of five training courses, the NA officers had an active role in assisting the trainers to deliver certain parts of the programme.

In general, the communication with the host NA was good, clear and effective, and contributed to the successful implementation of the courses.

9. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

In terms of the future developments of the SOHO training programme, the pool of trainers should consider following issue:

- Keep on adjusting the methodology and methods to satisfy the diversity of expectations, due to the changing target group, also in terms of providing basic information on EVS. At the same time, keep the focus of the training on the topic of quality development and improvement of competencies of key support persons in EVS.
- Keep the general information about the Erasmus+ programme to the necessary minimum and with the clear focus on EVS within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action, also through the support of videos. Links to these videos shall be included in the Infopack for participants.
- Strengthen the practical support to mentors in terms of offering a variety of tools and building skills for facilitation of volunteers learning
- Rethink the approach of introducing the Youthpass, since there is no need any more for a basic introduction. Trainers should facilitate the reflection on the practical value of Youthpass certificates, and on how mentors could support volunteers in their self-assessment process.

Another suggestion is to include in the programme more detailed information on the European Youth Portal, in order to promote its new functions.

ANNEX:
SOHO Cyprus

Participating countries	Final number of participants
Cyprus	4
Belgium-FR	1
Belgium -FL	1
Bulgaria	2
Finland	2
France	3
Germany	2
Hungary	2
Malta	2
Netherlands	1
Poland	1
Romania	3
SALTO SEE	
Montenegro	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1
SALTO EECA	
Ukraine	1
Moldova	1
Russia	1
Total number	29

SOHO Iceland

Participating countries	Final number of participants
Austria	2
Bulgaria	2
Czech Republic	2
Finland	3
Iceland	4
Ireland	3
Italy	1
Latvia	2
Lithuania	2
Netherlands	1
Portugal	1
Slovak Republic	2
Turkey	4
SALTO EECA	
Georgia	1
Total number	30

SOHO UK

Participating countries	Final number of participants
United Kingdom	2
Bulgaria	2
Croatia	1
Cyprus	2
Estonia	2
France	1
Germany	1
Lithuania	2
Poland	1
Romania	3



SOHO
International Training Course

Spain	3
Turkey	3
SALTO EECA:	
Georgia	1
Russia	1
Total number	25

SOHO Italy

Participating countries	Final number of participants
Italy	2
Cyprus	1
Estonia	2
Germany	1
Greece	1
Iceland	2
Ireland	1
Netherlands	2
Romania	1
Slovakia	2
Spain	2
Turkey	1
United Kingdom	1
SALTO SEE	
Montenegro	1
Bosnia Herzegovina	1
SALTO EECA	
Georgia	1
Azerbaijan	1
Total number	23

SOHO Portugal

Participating countries	Final number of participants
Portugal	3
Austria	1
Croatia	1
Finland	2
Germany	2
Greece	2
Latvia	2
Lithuania	2
Malta	1
Poland	2
Slovenia	1
Switzerland	1
Turkey	2
SALTO-SEE	2
Albania	1
Montenegro	1
SALTO EECA	2
Ukraine	1
Belarus	1
Total number	26