

SALTO-YOUTH
TRAINING AND COOPERATION
RESOURCE CENTRE



Erasmus+



SOHO

International Training Course

General Report

for the SOHO courses implemented during the period of

2014 - 2015

SOHO Croatia	12 - 16 November 2014
SOHO Netherlands	28 January – 1 February 2015
SOHO Turkey	8 - 12 March 2015
SOHO Romania	22 – 27 September 2015
SOHO Germany	14 – 18 October 2015

by the SOHO trainers team:

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Participating countries	Final number of participants
Austria	1
Belgium - FL	2
Belgium-FR	2
Belgium-DE	2
Bulgaria	3
Croatia	7
Czech Republic	4
Estonia	6
Finland	6
France	6
Germany	4
Greece	3
Hungary	4
Iceland	1
Ireland	1
Italy	3
Latvia	4
Lithuania	4
Malta	1
Netherlands	5
Poland	7
Portugal	1
Romania	6
Slovenia	2
Spain	6
Turkey	13
United Kingdom	4
South East Europe	6
Eastern Europe & Caucasus	10
Euromed	2
Total Number	132

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

YES	129	NO	3
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The main aim of the SOHO training courses is 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, namely: 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 *97.73% SOHO participants have confirmed that these aims and objectives were met* in the 5 SOHO courses delivered in this period.

More than 91% of participants have been very appreciative in their evaluation of the learning environment created during the course (see below 6.2), where their learning needs have been taken into account (see below 5.3) that allowed active participation in this intensive three-day learning experience (see 5.2). The participants in these courses particularly appreciated the practical orientation of the SOHO contents, which did not remain on the level of insights and reflection, but was allowing for building up of skills in terms "how to do it with our own volunteers in reality". 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:

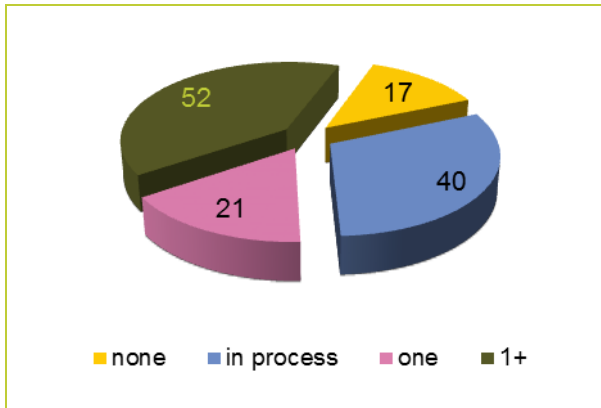
"The learning process during this TC was really good. Good balance between self-experiences, reflections in small groups, sharing experiences and tools, reflection in plenary group."

"The training course was very practical. I got lots of new idea and found new partners for the future projects."

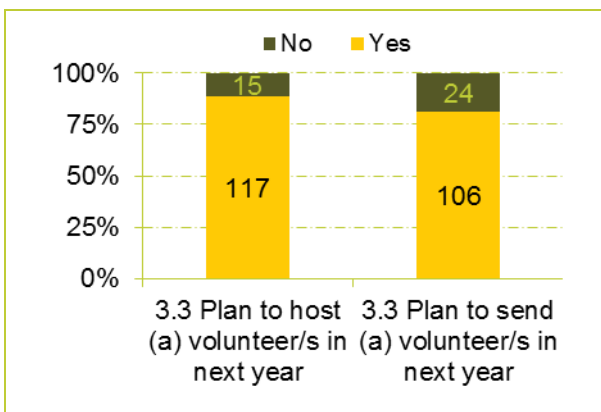
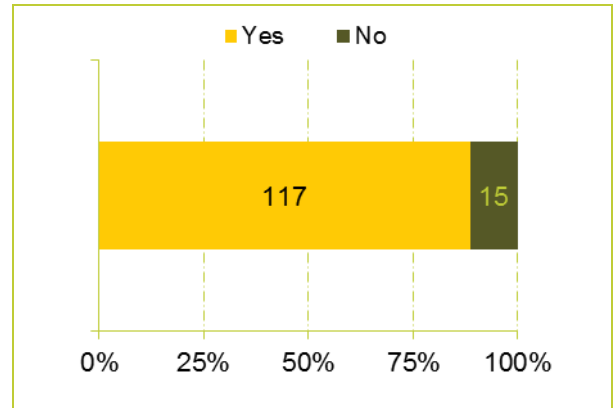
The same appreciation of the results and learning processes have been given by the representatives of the 5 hosting National Agencies, as well by the trainers involved, expressing their *particular satisfaction with the expressed participants' readiness to transfer their learning to their organisations*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

3. TARGET GROUP

3.1 Experience in European Voluntary Service



3.2 Participants work directly with EVS volunteers

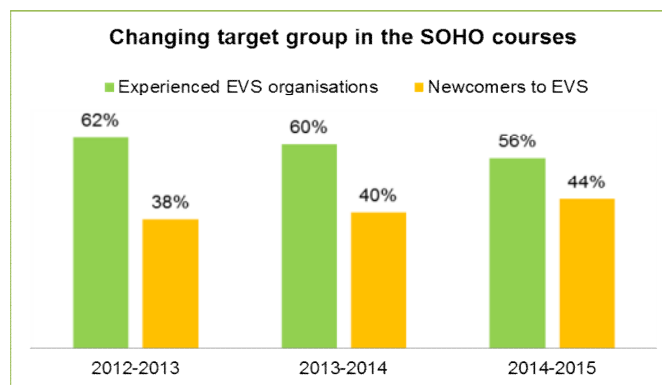


General conclusions about participants selection and preparation

In all the five courses, from the “projected” approx. 40 participants/group, the actual group size was between 25-29 participants per course. The training groups in all 5 courses have expressed a great deal of diversity in terms participants’ organisational backgrounds, countries involved, as well as types of EVS projects that they have been accredited for. As the graphs 3.3 - 3.4 show there was a balance between interest for hosting and sending within the training courses that has created an added value in terms of potential for establishing new EVS project partnerships during the SOHOs. Interestingly in all training courses there were between 7-13 former ex-EVS volunteers, that has always made an important ‘reality check’ and has proven to be a great source of learning for the group.

In terms of previous EVS experiences (as shown in the graph 3.1.) there were 56% of participants with the actual previous experience (i.e. realized one or more EVS projects before the course) and 44% of ‘newcomers’ to EVS (i.e. organisations who has just received their accreditation or are just in process of preparing their first EVS application). This situation is not new in SOHO courses reality and usually creates an additional *challenge in managing different expectations of these two target groups*. As the reporting trainers from the 5 courses state, all the trainer teams have managed to adjust the methodology and the contents of their course in a way that allows more peer learning and exchange amongst the participants, as well as trying to attend the learning needs of both groups in realistically speaking quite a short training course (that is one of the main reasons that the course is often perceived as ‘very intensive’).

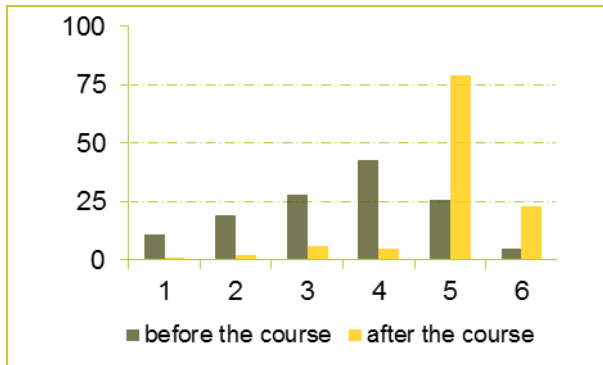
At the same time a comparison with previous cycles shows that there is an interesting pattern in SOHO selection of participants – *there is a clear trend in having less of 'experienced participants' and having more of 'newcomers to EVS'*. Perhaps one of the reasons is that there are less national level introductory training courses for EVS, so the entry point is placed at international level. Anyhow, this situation has been very much reflected in a stronger presence of expectations of the 'newcomers' towards receiving basic information about the programme, learning more about the application procedure and project management skills (that SOHO training course can only partially address). Perhaps these changing needs have to be addressed in a more systematic way in terms of developing several training programmes: introductory EVS course for the newly accredited organisations looking for partners, as well other more advanced EVS training offers targeting the more experienced organisations in need to share their experiences and deepen their reflection about the quality of their EVS practice.



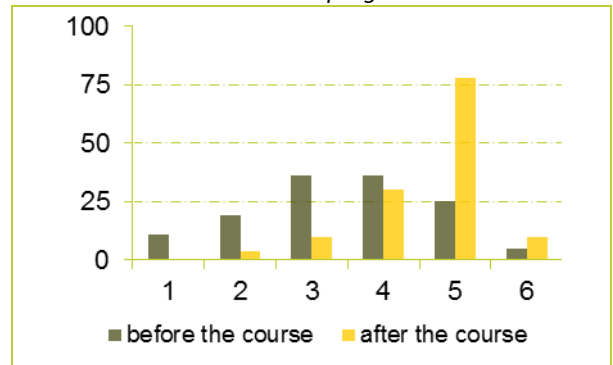
With regards to quality of the preparation of the given courses, in all 5 training courses participants have been sufficiently prepared and the relevant information about the course has been sent on time. The communication between the National Agency representatives and the SOHO trainers was 'smooth' and 'efficient' allowing that all necessary preparatory activities were done in best possible manner. In most of the cases the selected training venues have supported the quality of the learning process and allowed the full focus on the course (and in some cases providing additional outdoor learning possibilities). However, it still remains important to underline the importance of the good training venue for the successful implementation of an intensive training course; training venues with daylight and enough space for the group size enable the maintaining the group energy and foster participation in the learning process.

4. GROUP LEARNING PROCESSES AND RESULTS

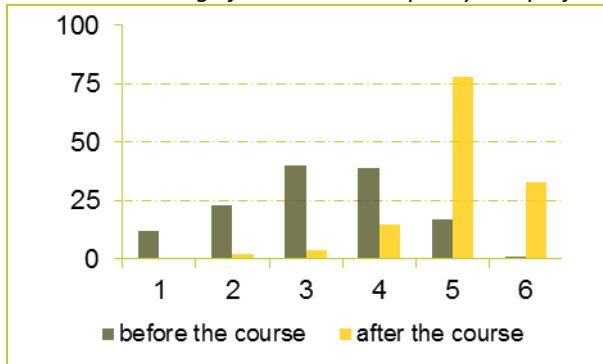
4.1 Knowledge of EVS within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action



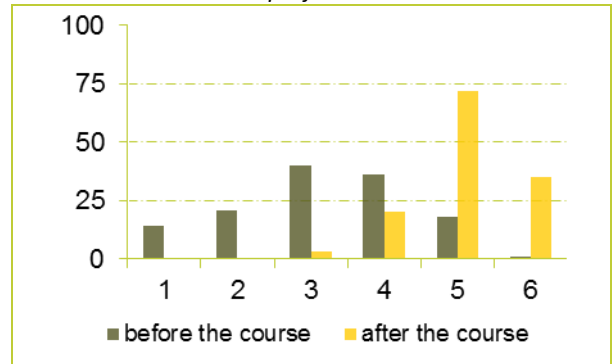
4.2 Understanding of the framework of Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme



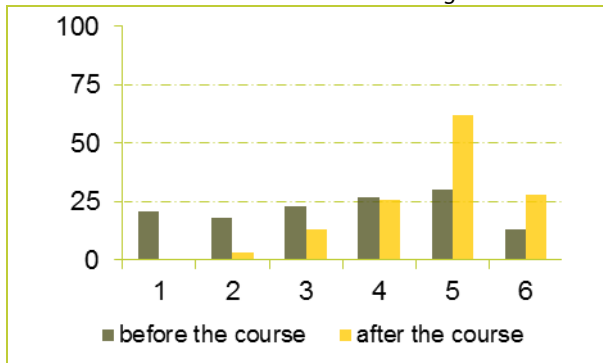
4.3 Understanding of what makes a quality EVS project



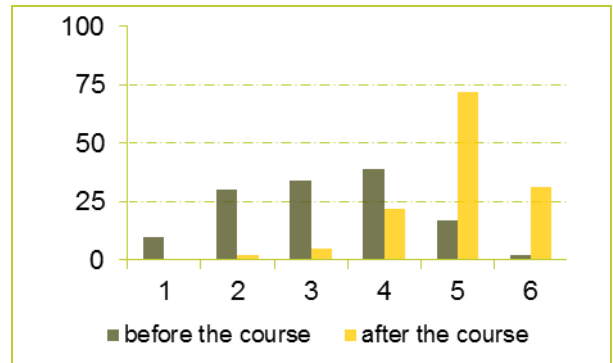
4.4 Understanding of the learning dimension in EVS projects



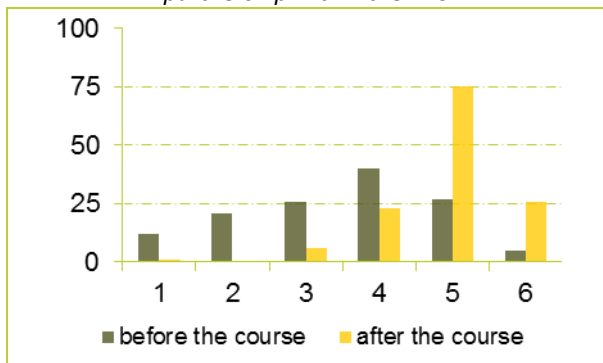
4.5 Familiarity with the Youthpass tool and process in the Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme



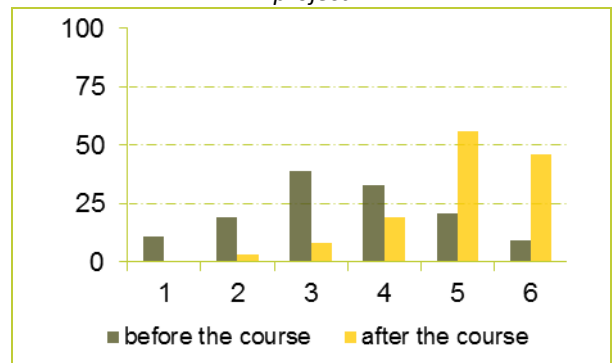
4.6 Awareness of competencies needed to be a successful mentor of EVS volunteer



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

As the learning impact graphs 4.1-4.8 indicate, the significant learning happened in all the areas tackled by the content of the SOHO training courses.

In terms of knowledge and understanding, the SOHO courses have provided great learning opportunities to gain more *knowledge about EVS, understand better overall Erasmus+ framework and understand Youthpass not only as a tool, but also a process built in the activity*. In terms of awareness raising the course *has increased participants' awareness of quality in EVS and its aspects, as well as created an enhanced awareness of competencies needed for a successful mentor in EVS*.

Taking into account the large number of 'newcomers' in EVS, the courses had a *significant impact on the ability to work in an international partnership and contributed to an increased confidence to act as a support persons in EVS*. It is a shared impression that the courses have contributed to an enhanced clarity about the roles in EVS and related responsibilities. In addition to that the courses have particularly emphasised the *learning aspect in EVS* and equipped the participants with a number of very useful and applicable tools for mentoring and learning support.

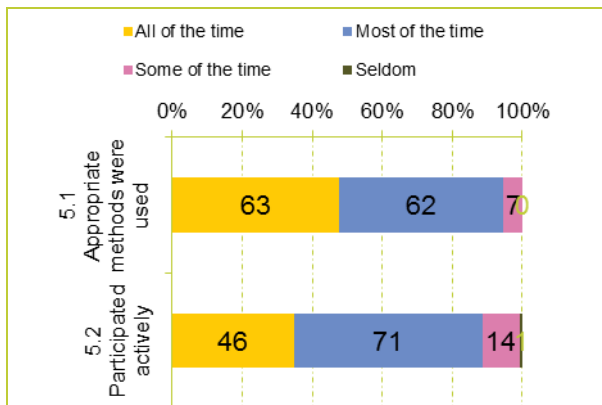
We could say that the training programme allowed space for development of variety of competences for support persons in EVS, as some of the participants commented in their evaluation:

Participants' quotes:

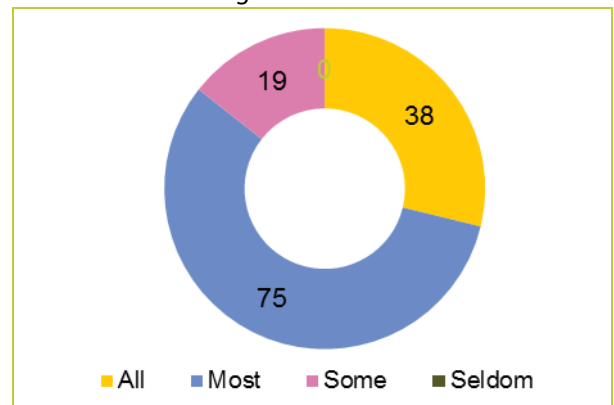
"I have progressed with the understanding of many aspects of EVS: its educational aspect and to give importance to it, more confidence to contact international partners and work in international environment and to work and communicate in English in my first training course"

"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



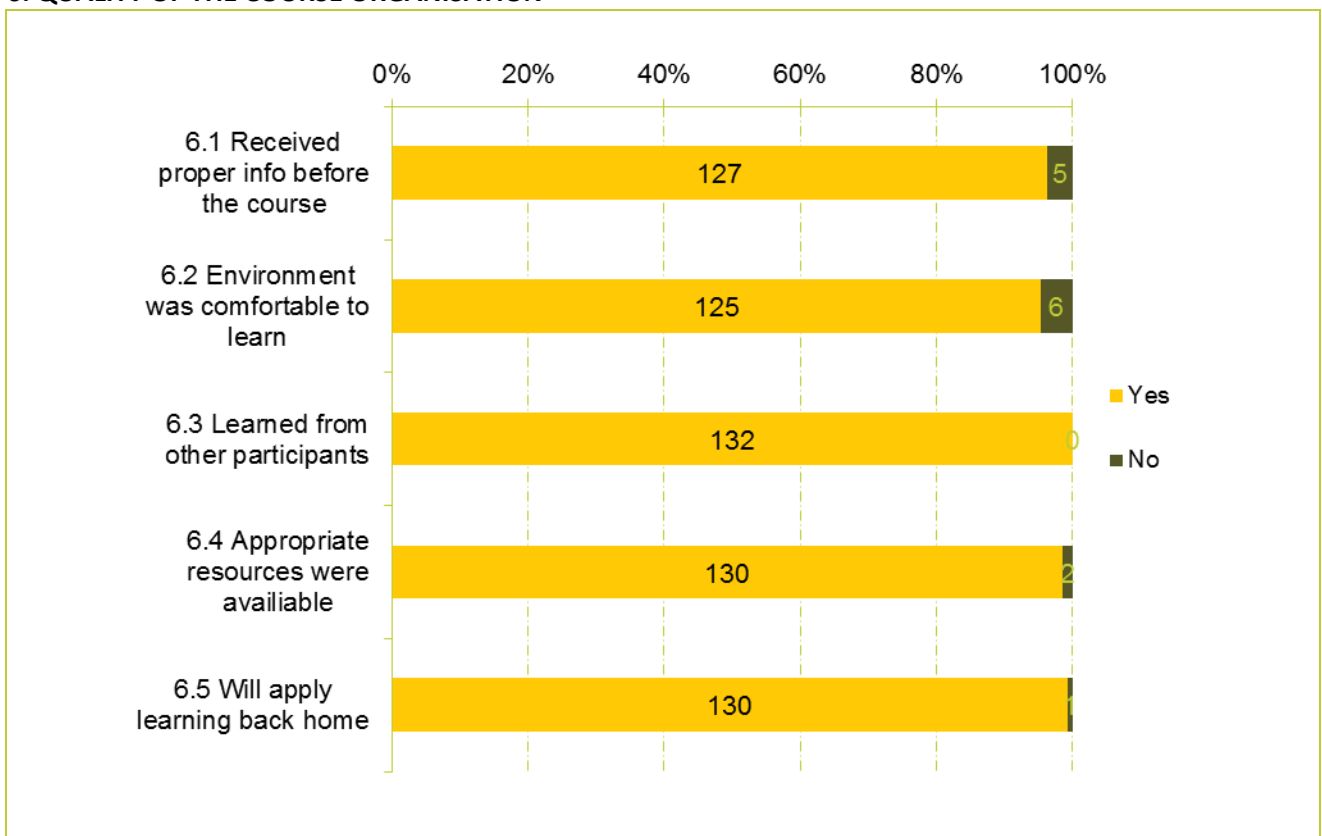
5.3 Learning needs were addressed



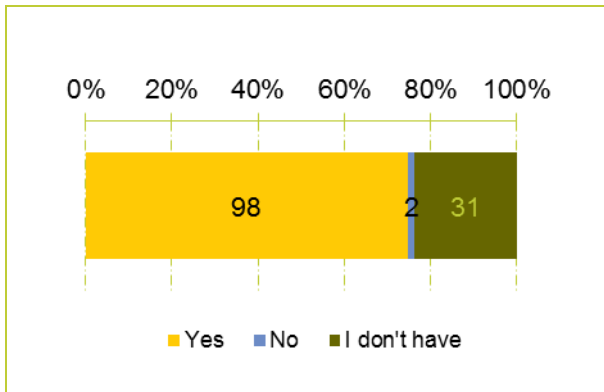
As shown in the graphs above, these five SOHO courses have managed to provide enough space for individual learning and participation, both for the ‘newcomers’ and the more experienced ones. 113 participants report that their learning needs have been addressed “all the time” or “most of the time” and 117 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 33 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:

"A harmonious combination of methods used: experiential exercises, inputs, discussions, work in small groups. Overall, it was very useful and timely. Big advantage for me was the practical orientation – it was always possible to figure out why this or another tool was used".

The participants appreciated the diversity of the methodology and the participative approach to learning. The overall SOHO methodology is very much based on experiential learning, providing an adequate balance of theory and practice and allowing enough opportunities of peer learning. It seems it is still a winning combination that brings results. In addition to that the course stimulates development of 'reflective practice' and enhances awareness of 'learning processes' both during the SOHO training course and within the EVS context. Therefore, it is no surprise that 125 participants stated that the methods used during these courses were fitting the needs of the group and supporting their learning (see graph 5.1. above)

In this period, some further adaptations have been made in the 'standard SOHO programme' to allow better addressing the diversity of expectations (resulting from the variety of previous experiences, as addressed above), sharpening the focus on the topic of inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and enhancing the capacities of EVS mentors to facilitate the volunteer's learning. These fine-tunings are no just keeping the information given in the courses up-to-date, but also maintaining the high level of quality of the programme through continuous innovation.

8. TEAM WORK

Participants' quotes:

"The delivery of SOHO training was exceptional; both trainers were always prepared and delivered each section of the programme with clarity, ensuring every participant has understood their learning. Brilliant team work and great sense of humour!"

"Very professional job; excellent; supportive, considerate, super prepared"

The works of the trainers' teams have been very much appreciated by participants in all five training courses. The feedback comments underlined a good balance of facilitating styles, through 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 all of the courses, the NA representatives have offered the individual consultation time for the participants needing more 'administrative information' about the application procedures and project management challenges.

9. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

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

- Adjust the methodology and methods to accommodate the diversity of expectations due to the changing target group in the forthcoming courses. 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.
- Consider stronger support to Sending organisations, since due to changes in the EVS training cycle, their role has increased in terms of volunteer's preparation, as well as follow up activities upon the volunteer's return
- 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
- 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 as a tool and the process, since there is no need any more for a basic introduction, but rather for reflection on how to support volunteers in their self-assessment and what is the practical value of Youthpass certificates
- In the long run, initiate the reflection the network of National Agencies in rethinking the current offer of international EVS trainings to address better different training needs (e.g. Newcomers to EVS, Experienced EVS organisations, EVS mentors, etc.)

ANNEX:
SOHO Croatia

Participating countries	Final number of participants
Belgium-FR	2
Croatia	3
Estonia	2
France	3
Latvia	2
Lithuania	1
Malta	1
Netherlands	2
Poland	2
Romania	2
Slovenia	1
Spain	2
Turkey	2
United Kingdom	1
EECA	1
Georgia	1
Total number	27

SOHO Netherlands

Participating countries	Final number of participants
Netherlands	3
Bulgaria	2
Croatia	1
Czech Republic	2
Finland	4
France	1
Greece	2
Hungary	2
Italy	2
Lithuania	2
Romania	2
Turkey	2
Albania	1
Total number	26

SOHO Romania

Participating countries	Final number of participants
Romania	2
Czech Republic	2
Estonia	2
Finland	2
France	2
Ireland	1
Lithuania	2
Poland	2
Spain	2
Turkey	2
SALTO SEE	1
SALTO EECA	3
SALTO Euromed	2
Total number	25

SOHO Turkey

Participating countries	Final number of participants
Austria	1
Belgium-FL	2
Estonia	2
France	4
Germany	1
Iceland	1
Latvia	2
Poland	3
Spain	2
Turkey	3
United Kingdom	3
SALTO EECA	
Moldova	1
Ukraine	2
SALTO SEE	
Albania	1
Serbia	1
Total number	29

SOHO Germany

Participating countries	Final number of participants
Germany	3
Belgium-DE	2
Bulgaria	1
Croatia	3
Cyprus	1
Greece	1
Hungary	2
Italy	1
Portugal	1
Slovenia	1
Turkey	4
SALTO SEE	2
SALTO EECA	3
Total number	25