

# The challenge of a new adventure: EVS accreditation in South Mediterranean countries

The accreditation of EVS in the South Mediterranean countries is a logical continuation of the processes started in South East Europe and Eastern Europe and Caucasus and was promoted by the other two regional SALTOs. The accreditation process in the South Mediterranean countries aims to guarantee the quality of EVS project and promote the quality in youth work as a whole. The situation of youth work and the understanding of volunteering are quite different in the South Mediterranean countries. In the last years, the SALTO Euromed RC started some research in order to consolidate knowledge about the situation. The main outcomes of this path can be found on the Salto-Youth EuroMed website: <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/EMlibrary/>.

EVS is about moving individuals but it is a collective project in which there are different actors involved, as partners and institutions (Sending and Receiving NGOs, National Agencies and SALTOs RCs). It is a structural action based more and more on the long term approach and stability of NGOs. It has a big impact in the quality of the Programme and contributes to the improvement of NGOs work in the field.

## Was the EuroMed region the last to set up the EVS accreditation?

First of all we have to remember and carefully consider the geopolitical background: Soon after the inception of EVS in 2000, there was an event in 2001 that dramatically upset and influenced a number of things that happened thereafter, namely September 11.

In the aftermath there was the second Gulf War, several terrorist attacks from both sides of «our sea», the “years of lead” in Algeria and the Arab revolutions and most recently the conflict in Syria and recent terrorist attacks of symbolic targets.

Since 2000 and the creation of the SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres by the DG EAC-Youth Unit, it has always been a very sensitive and challenging environment for SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed & Good Practices to work: many events happened, clearly highlighting the increasingly relevant role played by Youth in the Euro Mediterranean framework.

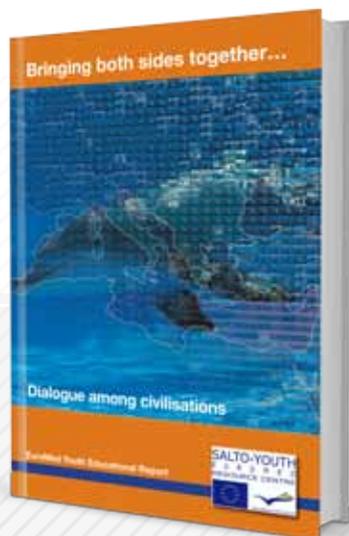
In the beginning, there was no question of accreditation for neighboring regions: this was only for the «Program» countries. When the idea began to mature, the EuroMed Youth program, which was co-managed with DG DEVCO, it was decided to develop in a decentralized and autonomous manner. Then, at the end of 2004

there was what was called the «suspension» which lasted until 2006. DG EAC was unclear about how to handle accreditation for NGOs from the southern shore of the Mediterranean, with or without DEVCO, and decided to put it in place in the other two regions (SEE and EECA) first.

In 2010 the idea came back but then came the year of the so called «Arab revolutions» (2011). And finally, in July 2013 Salto EuroMed asked the Commission to a meeting on this subject. It turned out that the time was right and that the two parties had arrived at the same time at the same conclusion: the accreditation had to be put in place!

### **EVS in EuroMed as cultural challenge: Dialogue among Civilisations!**

The accreditation as such has also the objective to increase the numbers of projects realised in cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea and support the quality of them.



Salto-Youth EuroMed started to work on this topic many years ago in 2004 with the development of a training format about EVS in South Mediterranean countries called: Dialogue among Civilisations”: [www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/emeducpub/reportscollection/reportdialogue/](http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/emeducpub/reportscollection/reportdialogue/)

In fact the background idea was to highlight and establish the link between Civilisations and Education and to determine whether it was a driver or an obstacle to the qualitative development of the Mediterranean European Voluntary Service.

The trainings were based on idea of providing opportunities to know Euro Mediterranean civilisations and their reciprocal influences, and reflect on the influence of Civilisation on

Education and on the latter on the different pedagogical attitudes on both sides of the Mediterranean.

During the four training course it became clear that to acquire the skills required to take on the role of a tutor or mentor within the framework of the EuroMed Youth programme, it was necessary to have the whole picture of the complexity in which the EVS is developing.

The challenge is to train NGOs, mentors and those responsible for projects to be able to deal with the continuing complexity that they will face within the political changes and instability.

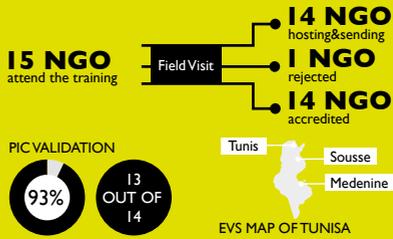
In this sense, EVS is an opportunity for many NGOs to create new competencies in mutual understanding and also to give the chance to some youth to see over the borders of their local community.

### **How will ensure all this?**

As decided in the kick off meeting with the European Commission representatives in charge of EVS, at the beginning of 2014, a specific training course for future mentors and those responsible for projects is part of the EVS accreditation process in the south Mediterranean countries. Each NGO which would like to become accredited for sending or hosting volunteers should send 2 participants to the trainings organised at national level. This requirement is to ensure quality. The training is the entry level to inform and enable one mentor per

From Tunisia 14 accreditation requests were received and 15 NGOs took part in the Training course for mentors and those responsible for Projects in EVS, organised in cooperation with the Tunisian EMYU from 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2014. 13 NGOs got favourable feedback from the accreditors who did the field visits.

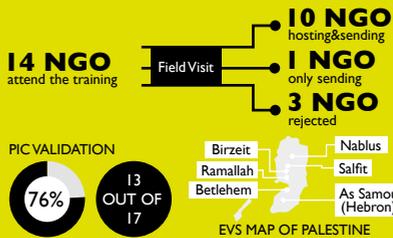
## TUNISIA



From Palestine 17 accreditation requests were received and 14 NGOs attended the training course for mentors and those responsible for EVS projects organised in cooperation with the Palestinian EMYU and the Italian National Agency of Erasmus+:Youth in Action from 18<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014. 10 NGOs were accredited for Hosting and Sending, 1 only for sending and 3 didn't get the accreditation.\*

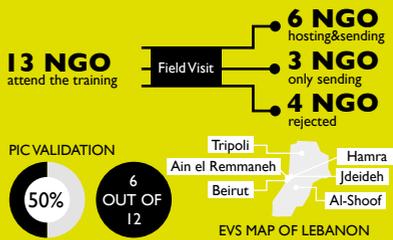
\* One organisation didn't managed to apply online (was not able to submit online the PDF) for this reasons we had 13 NGOs to the training course.

## PALESTINE



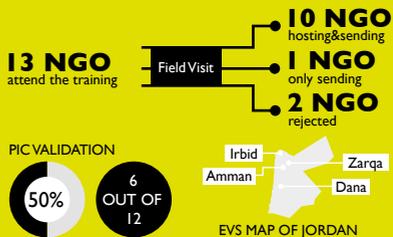
From Lebanon 12 accreditation requests were received on line<sup>1</sup> and 13 NGOs attended the training course for Mentors and those responsible for Projects in EVS organised in cooperation with GIZ and Civil Peace Service from 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> November 2014. 6 NGOs were accredited as Sending and Hosting, 3 only for sending and 4 were rejected for the moment.

## LEBANON



From Jordan 16 accreditation requests were received and 13 NGOs took part in the Training course for mentors and those responsible for EVS projects organised in cooperation with Jordanian EMYU from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> September 2014. 10 NGOs got accreditation for hosting and sending volunteers and 1 NGO only for sending volunteers.

## JORDAN



NGO with regard to her/his role and one person in the NGO to be responsible for the program. Their participation in the training courses is the first step towards accreditation and it avoids the situation where NGOs start the process without any basic information.

In 2014 training courses for mentors and responsible of the EVS projects were piloted in Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine: 55 NGOs and 110 participants in total.

The objectives of these training courses were:

- To develop a common understanding of the EVS process
- To discuss and agree about the roles and tasks of the mentors and volunteers
- To familiarize participants with the Youthpass
- To assess the competences of mentors
- To assess NGOs and plan their development
- To do a consistent risk assessment for mentors and volunteers
- To explore Intercultural Learning and its tools
- To promote the political recognition of EVS and non-formal education

The training courses helped mentors and those responsible for EVS projects to understand more about their roles in an EVS project, and to answer their questions and develop their abilities about creating and managing EVS projects and mentoring volunteers. The programme also helped the participants develop tools for engaging volunteers, local communities and organizations in an educational and learning experience. The training course tackled the following topics:

- EVS structure: the principle actors, the pedagogical approaches;
- Learning in the EVS process for the volunteer and the NGO
- Mentors and those responsible for EVS projects: task, roles, values, attitudes, and competencies
- The official documents referring to EVS
- Youthpass
- Risk prevention and communication

The trainings and accreditation process help to increase the importance and clarify the definition of volunteering in NGOs in the different national contexts and cultures. The training provides opportunity to connect NGOs at national level and to assess the meaning and value of volunteering.

On the 01.12.2014 Salto-Youth EuroMed received 74 accreditation requests from Tunisia, Algeria, Palestine, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan and Morocco.

## How is it sustainable?

This process is sustainable due the high level of cooperation and contribution from different actors involved in the EVS working group.

The **key-actor number 1** has been the **European Commission** and the key word was to describe their contribution is **“Institutionalisation”**. **The Commission brings** legitimacy to the whole process.

The founding Act was held in Brussels on July 12<sup>th</sup> 2013, followed by the official the “Kick off” meeting of the EVS South Mediterranean countries working group on January 29<sup>th</sup> 2014 in presence of both DGs: EAC and DEVCO.

Pascal Lejeune; then Head of DG EAC Youth Unit, opened it with these words: “The accreditation in EuroMed is the logical continuation of the processes started in South East Europe and Eastern Europe and Caucasus and promoted by the other two regional SALTOs. The fact that the accreditation will be done in the Meda countries will guarantee the quality of EVS projects and promote the quality in youth work as a whole”.

Without the **2nd key** partners it would have been impossible: **5 National Agencies** willing to support, and not only financially! On same level but with a different role the 2 others regional SALTO Resource Centres, sharing, informing and involving SALTO EuroMed in their experiences and ongoing work.

And last but not least the **EuroMed Youth Units** (linked to DG DEVCO), in charge of the implementation of the EuroMed Youth Program IV in the South Med countries: Their commitment has been commendable.

## **And for the future...**

The strategy for the future will provide more focus on the recognition of Non Formal Learning within the NGOs and in this way support the quality of Youth work in the different countries.

The role of volunteering is an important aspect of the strategy and of the training course and this will become more and more relevant in the future..

There are growing challenges in the political area and constraints on the NGOs trying to realise their projects. The geopolitical instability is playing a big role at the moment in the creation new partnerships among South Mediterranean countries and Program countries. Many NGOs in Europe have fears in starting cooperation with the southern shores of Mediterranean Sea. The challenge is to increase the possibility to cooperate and create shared experiences and good practices that can lead future projects.

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