



**100  
ADVICES  
FOR FUTURE  
VOLUNTEERS**



# INTRODUCTION



Dear volunteers,

We are giving in your hands a publication prepared by the EVS volunteers who have participated in the inter-continental projects in Asia, South America and Africa. We have asked them to share their experiences and provide us with the advices that according to them are valid for any volunteer who would like to make the EVS project in the other continent. We have clustered all the advices received, selected the most repetitive and relevant, and finally divided them into the categories - before the project, practicalities, during the project - life, work, and learning, dealing with the cultural adaptation, how to be, and the best of the best - meaning top 10 advices.

We hope that this publication will help you to get ready for your project, and serve as an important tool to help you to adapt and enjoy the project as much as possible. From our experience, working with over 100 volunteers that did the activity in the different continent, we can say that the projects are not always easy, the cultural differences might be very overwhelming, and places where you are going to stay challenging, but with the right attitude and motivation, the EVS in the other continent will be an unforgettable experience that might change your life.

In the end I would like to thank all the volunteers and partners, who have contributed to the publication, and to REVE association (Red Española de EX Voluntarios Europeos) who allowed us to make this publication, based on their idea.

Forget your fears, believe in yourself and enjoy this publication!

*Cazalla Intercultural Team*



# TOP 10 ADVICES



1. Enjoy every moment: don't forget that you are living an unforgettable experience, in an incomparable place that, even if it will become usual after few months, it's not.
2. Keep complaining is not good for health! Smile and act to make a difference.
3. Be happy, don't let that any obstacle make you forget what you are living. In the end, enjoying the experience it is only up to you.
4. You may have problems...but everything can be solved!
5. Leave all your prejudices at home, interact with as many people as possible, travel during your free time, and don't be afraid to try new things!
6. If you give it a chance... EVS will be one of the best moments in your life. Don't be afraid. Don't listen to pessimists. EVS is much more than just going to work, it's about understanding the world and it's inhabitants.
7. Enjoy every minute. There will be stressful times, boring times, challenging times, and fun times. Enjoy it all. It's all part of learning experience. Be happy!
8. Be yourself. Whatever happens, whomever you are with, always be yourself. It is the only way to know who will truly accept you and the most effective way to assess yourself if you need more improvement.
9. Develop! Don't avoid going outside your "comfort zone". The most important things that you will learn during your service will come from times when you started to do something that was new to you and different in many ways from your previous experience. Thanks to that you will become a different person and you will discover many new things about yourself!
10. Grow from every fight you will have, every relationship that you will experience, every ups and downs that will happen. Be better than yesterday!



# BEFORE THE PROJECT



11. Find a project that can excite you every day!
12. Don't think twice. Apply, get chosen and go!
13. Become a volunteer just if you want to help and learn.
14. You must be fully aware of where you are going and for how long. Prepare yourself before and avoid going to the first place, if you don't think you are ready at the beginning.
15. Be aware that a new extraordinary stage in life is about to start. Prepare a clear plan, but be ready to adapt it to the reality that before can be just a subjective projection.
16. Get informed about specifics of your hosting country, place and organization.
17. Read a lot about the country you are going to (culture, history, foods, dos and don'ts).
18. Try to talk to people who were previously in the same country. Ask them what you should bring that you cannot find in the country (hygiene products, utensils, foods medication, etc.).
19. Contact the other volunteers and ask to share their experience.
20. Contact with organization from the hosting country.
21. Bring your sense of humor!
22. Be prepared for not being prepared for many crazy situations.
23. Open your mind and heart to the world.



# PRACTICALITIES



24. Take a digital copy of all your documents.
25. If you have some problems, please say it out, don't keep them in silent, otherwise nobody knows what you are thinking.
26. Don't forget about your sending and coordinating organizations - share what is good and what is bad.
27. Have a bit of money for urgent cases.
28. Take a little, bring a lot.
29. Buy a telephone card from the residence place.
30. Learn what are the things that you need to take with you (like medicine, or formal cloth).
31. Don't speak about politics in front of people that you don't know, in countries it is a very sensitive topic.



# DURING THE PROJECT



## YOUR WORK

32. Don't forget your initial motivation. In fact, time passes really fast. If you have some idea, just do it!
33. Initiatively propose your own ideas to do something, ask others for helps and start turning it into existence. Explain to your organization what you would like to do.
34. Learn what the organization expects from you.
35. Create new and interesting projects not only for Yourself but beneficial to the community too.
36. There is so much that needs to be done that the idea of limiting yourself to few tasks the organization has thought for you it seems like a waste. The more you want to do the better it is.
37. You just need to have a good sense of initiative and be organized.
38. If nobody tells you what to do, take your own initiatives
39. Frustration could be a common feeling one should learn to deal with when engaging in such development work.  
Persistence and strength might be useful.
40. Communicate! You have a problem - talk! With other volunteers, mentors, your coworkers, boss, project coordinator or coordinator from your sending organization! Maybe sometimes they will be not able to really help you but 1) they will become aware that there is a problem and 2) by talking with them you will be able to look at your problem from other point of view and maybe find a resolution to it. Also talking make you feel not alone what helps you to avoid you many motivation problems in your project.
41. Doing routine work leads to understanding the system and finding the problems that you didn't see before.
42. If you don't understand why you are doing specific activity - ASK!
43. Sometimes even your small effort can make a change.
44. Don't expect that everything will be smooth: not all projects are organized professionally, not all hosting organizations might fit your expectations, and definitely each organization has different management style that at first might be very challenging and not understandable.
45. Respect the communication rules with your sending organization, mentor/coordinator. In this way you can receive the real support when you will ask for it.



## YOUR LIFE

46. Visit and get to know the environment around you are the more you can.
47. In case of problems arise with your flat mates: Organize a meeting to talk and discuss solution. Take the meeting serious enough and be willing to adapt the rule if you agree it is good for yourself and others. Having unsolved problems with your flat mate could affect negatively to your own experience.
48. Live and do like local.
49. Build yourself a life outside of the project: meet people, visit places, join an activity. Although the project will not be like you expect will be worthwhile to continue there.
50. Do things you could not do if you were at home: forget about facebook and initiate activities you always wanted to try, remember you are a volunteer and you can take risks - you are there to learn!
51. Go out! Meet local people! Don't waste your time at home!
52. Be sensitive with other Volunteers.
53. Take the advantage of weekends by traveling.
54. Eat in the places where local people eat - it is good and cheaper.
55. Learn the language of the country in order to understand the cultural aspects better.



## YOUR LEARNING

56. Arrange yourself regular meeting with co-workers if necessary to reflect on your learning process. Keep track of every moment during your EVS project by writing blog, taking photographs, recording video, etc. in order to remember it in the end.
57. Find a clear time to reflect about your experiences.
58. Be patient: there will be delays, deficiencies; cultural shock that will reach an extent that you could barely stand. But be patient, and learn from it. If something is wrong is happening ask yourself: what can I learn from it?
59. Keep a log, it will help you to discharge all your feelings and, once that yo back, to remember every detail (names of persons, places, moments, stories), which, believe it or not, you will end up forgetting, and it will make you feel very sorry.
60. Language. Even if you don't understand the language of that country, it is not that bad. It is incredibly fun and rewarding to walk around and look, listen to the foreign language. To experience that one moment when a word that you see or hear, is understandable. It is priceless when you learn the language without books and teachers and school-like lessons.
61. Listen to what people are telling you. You can only hear their stories then and here and you can learn a lot from them!
62. Try to learn something every day, go to a new place, talk with some new person, learn new word in other language, try new food.
63. Don't be afraid and get out from your "comfort zone" - it is where the true learning happens.



## DEALING WITH CULTURAL SHOCK AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

64. Read about the stages of cultural adaptation and be prepared to go through all of them.
65. Be patient.
66. Be open to adapt and learn.
67. Be receptive.
68. Think more than usual before you act.
69. Observe, observe and observe! Please consider the culture of the host country and try to adapt to it (e.g. way of dressing, addressing people, or other things that they might do different from you). Stay polite!
70. Never forget where you are. You will be in a foreign country with different rules, customs and ideology. Try to accept, at least tolerate it and not force your own ways. Unless someone asks for it.
71. For the culture shock. Try to make it a game. The new reality can be very different even scary at times. Imagining that this is a new story a start of a new life can be helpful and fun.
72. Embrace and appreciate the differences.
73. Be ready for challenge and misunderstanding.
74. Do not compare the culture of the hosting country to the one from where you come from.
75. Adapt but do not forget who you really are.
76. Appreciate the beauty of every culture and respect diversity.
77. Understand that some shocks are inevitable: cultural, climate, security and others.
78. Accept! Sometimes things will be working in the way totally strange for you. Many times you will not be able to change them. Sometimes you need to accept them.
79. Enjoy! You will face many problems during your project. There will be many situations when you will be feeling really low. So find something that you will really enjoy doing or try to enjoy things that are totally new to you. It is not your goal to become all grumpy and depressed during your service. Try to find something that even in your dark times will still bring a smile on your face.
80. Cultural shock is normal reaction, first of all you will miss your home and comfort zone, but later you will adapt and will be amazed discovering something totally new every day and learning.
81. The best way to feel the culture, the way people live there is to talk to random people, appreciate who they are, without any judging, just listen to them and try to understand.
82. Time is running really fast so after cultural shock move on with new wishes and goals.
83. After a while less and less questions about differences will appear in your head as you slowly transforming from tourist to a resident.



# HOW TO BE DURING THE PROJECT



84. Don't be afraid...everything's gonna be SUPER!
85. Don't be shy...and the world will be yours.
86. Be open minded.
87. Be flexible.
88. Be passionate about what you are doing.
89. Be Creative all the time.
90. Be a wanderer.
91. Be friendly, be sociable, be a part of the local community!
92. Be ready to face challenges - have patience, be honest, be flexible!
93. Be yourself! Do not act as a different person. Do not try to fit to hard in to local society on the beginning. Be honest about what kind of person you are and where are your limits. People will accept you whoever you are.
94. Don't be ashamed.
95. Don't worry much about the things.
96. Don't expect anything, face the things as they come.
97. Clean your mind of prejudices, barriers, fears.
98. Have your mind full of ideas.
99. Have a will to change surrounding environment for better.
100. Be kind, patient and grateful for the most amazing experience in your life!

✦ **EXTRA:**  
**Don't worry thinking it's going to be a long long time away from home...**  
**The year will pass by so quickly that you will not even realize it 'till the end!**



# HOW OTHER VOLUNTEERS MOTIVATE YOU TO DO EVS:



- ◆ Every day when you open your eyes and go out of your room it will be a new adventure, even if it's a huge cultural shock.
- ◆ It's an ideal moment to do something which worth doing.
- ◆ It is a great opportunity to recognize ones professional capacities and discover what are you able to do.
- ◆ You will face unique situations of impossibilities of living in other environments.
- ◆ You will learn practical things for your life.
- ◆ You will meet a lot of different people but what the most important is that you learn much better about yourself.
- ◆ This is an experience which helps you open a new worldview.
- ◆ It changes your life.
- ◆ You understand things that in other context you would not be able to learn.
- ◆ You will have a family in every part of the world.
- ◆ If you are not an independent person you will be.
- ◆ You will overcome all your problems.
- ◆ Doesn't matter what you do now or what experience you had before - volunteering is the way to find something totally new.
- ◆ Anyone that comes here with an open heart and desire to help is going to go back with an invaluable luggage of memories, I promise!



## Credits

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### Cazalla Intercultural

Cazalla Intercultural is Spanish NGO with the mission to promote active citizenship, social inclusion, youth mobility, voluntary service, sustainable development, stand up for human rights, integration, non-discrimination and against gender-based violence, through non-formal education, youth information and international cooperation.

More information: [www.cazalla-intercultural.org](http://www.cazalla-intercultural.org)

### BeVolunteer

BeVounteer is a platform that works as a resource tool for all the people who would like to do EVS projects with the inter-continental dimension. It is as well an informal network of the partners from all around the world who are involved in the voluntary exchange.

More information: [www.bevolunteer.net](http://www.bevolunteer.net)

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## About the project:

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The title of our EVS project "the other way!" reflects the idea that there is always some other way. We wanted to empower unemployed youth to look for the alternatives, motivate them to keep investing in themselves, support their creativity and the spirit of initiative, and we wanted them to do it in the responsible way, being Global Citizens.

Project aimed at offering the unemployed youth EVS possibility to take them out of the constant circle of unemployment (no job-no perspective for job-deteriorating economic situation-lack of motivation to do extra trainings-lack of motivation to look for a job-no job).

### OBJECTIVES:

- a) To empower unemployed youth to further develop their competencies (especially L2L), sense of initiative, and improve their position on the labor market
- b) To take young people out of the unemployment circle by restoring their motivation, encouraging active citizenship and offering possibilities to participate
- c) To foster the exchange of experiences and contribute to the local development in the hosting countries in the spirit of global understanding
- d) To empower volunteers to act as multipliers in home communities, and be active citizens
- e) To contribute to the development of the quality in EVS exchange with other partner countries (to create publication with advices for volunteers)

The project was composed of the 30 EVS mobility from Spain, Poland, Lithuania and Italy, to the Philippines, Indonesia, China and Nicaragua. All the details of the projects implementation are published on [bevolunteer.net](http://bevolunteer.net). We keep updating the webpage constantly in order to provide examples of the successful stories of unemployed youth. We believe that those successful stories are the best way to promote European Mobility Projects among youth with fewer opportunities.

