WORLD NOT KNOWN ENOUGH

The example of the European Voluntary Service project involving persons with disabilities

Erasmus+

Key Action 1: Learning Mobility of Individuals

Short Term European Voluntary Service

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union
WORLD NOT KNOWN ENOUGH

14-28.06.2017 Gdańsk, Poland

coordinating organisation:
Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability - PSONI Gdańsk

partner organisations:
SISTEM VE JENERASYON DERNEGI Turkey, Jaunuoliu dienos centras Lithuania,
ASSOCIATION DES COMPAGNONS BATISSEURS Belgium,
Asociación Multideportiva Euexia Spain, cooperativa sociale Kara Bobowski Italy,
PANELLINIOS SYLLOGOS PROSARMOSMENON DRASTIRIOTITON ALMA Greece

participants:
14 young volunteers
6 accompanying persons

The manual prepared by Małgorzata Kochanowska, a project coordinator from PSONI Gdańsk

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PSONI (Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability) is a national, non-profit, parental organization, established in 1963, aimed on equalization of chances for persons with intellectual disabilities, creating opportunities leading them toward active participation in social life and supporting their families. It has branches in most cities in Poland. The branch in Gdańsk, established in 1992, works for and represents a group of more than 3000 individuals with developmental disability since birth (children, teenagers and adults) and their families. In leveling many years of neglect and promoting an idea of full participation in the society for this group of people, it promotes basic human rights as comprised in The UN Convention of Rights of People with Disability. It acts as well as a professional social services agency as a mutual support parental organization, by running many institutions:

- The Early Intervention Centre
- The Non-public Development Support Centre
- The Rehabilitation, Education and Care Centre
- The Non-public Vocational School
- The Occupational Therapy Workshops
- The Daytime Activity Centre
- The Sheltered Housing Facilities “Our Home”
- The Supported Employment Agency
- The Art gallery „Świętojańska”
- The Vita Activa Orchestra and additional projects.

The project „World not known enough” short term European Voluntary Service (EVS) is a result of our international experience and growing interest in volunteering among persons with disabilities. We host EVS volunteers since 2006 and we send Polish volunteers abroad since 2012. Our target group are persons with disabilities so involving them in international projects is our main goal. They are volunteers in local activities and they are very interested in participating in such projects at the international level. In 2013 three of our beneficiaries (two of them with special needs) took part in EVS in Turkey, implemented by System&Generation Association. After this experience we decide to implement our own hosting EVS project to widen our network, get a new experience and promote Erasmus+ projects for persons with special needs.

The project was strictly connected with the festival “Świat Mało Znany” ("World not known enough") organised by PSONI Gdańsk. The main aim of the EVS project was to support its organisation and to allow the volunteers to learn about event management, leading workshops, supporting people with intellectual/sensory/physical disabilities. During the festival the volunteers helped in logistics, they assisted in leading artistic workshops and they directly supported disabled participants of the festival. Moreover, they presented their organisations and their countries during a special meeting open for public. All the activities was held in mixed groups: workers of PSONI Gdańsk, local volunteers, EVS volunteers and participants with disabilities.

Another objective of this project was to show that people with disabilities can be volunteers and that they can successfully cooperate with non-disabled artists, work in the open environment. Thanks to this project they could show their potential, they got the chance to have a real impact on this festival and we believe that in the future they will be more active in the society, by using their new competences. During the project they acquired skills useful in adult life, which may increase their employment capability.

We hope that thanks to this project the voluntary work of people with disabilities will be more popular and that the number of organisations willing to organise Erasmus+ projects inclusive for people with disabilities will increase.
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1. Overview of participants

We expected 16 volunteers in the project, two from each participating country. Due to the resignation of partners from Sweden and Montenegro (who couldn’t find suitable candidates or accompanying persons), the group consisted of 14 volunteers:
- 2 volunteers from Belgium
- 2 volunteers from Italy
- 2 volunteers from Spain
- 2 volunteers from Lithuania
- 3 volunteers from Greece
- 3 volunteers from Turkey
and 6 accompanying persons: 1 from Italy, Spain, Lithuania and Turkey, 2 from Greece.

There were 11 volunteers with fewer opportunities in the group:
- 3 persons with Down Syndrome
- 1 person with other intellectual disability
- 2 persons with a development disability
- 3 persons with an autism
- 1 person with a sensory disability (blind)
- 1 early school leaver.

The accompanying persons were: 4 professionals and 2 sisters of volunteers with disabilities.

The participants in numbers:
-gender: 11 boys and 9 girls;
-age: 3 persons were 17-19 years old, 11 persons were 20-24 years old, 5 persons were 26-29 years old, 1 person was 31 years old (it was an accompanying person).
2. Participating organisations

We knew the partner organisations from previous projects dedicated to inclusion of people with disabilities in Erasmus+ projects: "Hand in Hands for Disabled in Production" held in Ankara, Turkey in January 2015 (that is how we know the organisations from Turkey and Montenegro), "Breaking Barriers Training Course" held in Dublin, Ireland in November 2016 (the organisation from Belgium). We cooperate with other partners in a frame of other EVS projects (the organisation from Spain) and in Caravan2000 - European Movement for Diversity and Understanding (the organisations from Greece, Italy, Lithuania and Sweden). We already hosted participants from the organisation from Greece and Sweden at the previous edition of the festival.

All of those organisations work with people with disabilities on a daily basis, so they easily found suitable candidates, prepared them and supported. They were in constant contact with us and their participants during the project and after.

The volunteers came from very diverse countries with a different approach to inclusion of people with disabilities, so they could share their experience and learn from each other. We believe that this project strengthened our networks and it will allow to create more inclusive projects in a frame of Erasmus+ programme.
3. Programme

14.06. Wednesday

- Arrival of participants
- Orientation in the Association PSONI
- Lunch in PSONI
- Orientation walk in the district with a long term volunteer
- Welcome dinner in a restaurant

Some volunteers arrived in the morning, some of them during the day or late evening, but all of them were very tired, so this day was calm and activities were optional. We showed them our Association and our long term volunteers showed them the district, all the necessary facilities and the sea.

15.06. Thursday

- Getting to know each other through ice-breakers

We used games that were easy to explain and allowed participants to learn and remember their names, nationalities and basic information about their interests. Later the participants proposed their games.

- Organisational session (EVS rules, documents, receiving pocket money and food allowance)

This was a time to review the information about this project and about EVS in general.

- Polish language lesson led by a volunteer with Asperger syndrome supported by his sister

The 20-years old boy with physical disability and Asperger Syndrome was our beneficiary two years ago but after that he refused to take part in the next edition of the project, saying that he prefers to help
others now and he asked if he could be a volunteer in PSONI. He is interested in learning languages and he knows English, Italian and French. He was very happy to meet foreign volunteers. With his sister, who is an English teacher, they prepared the great interactive exercises of basic Polish language. The volunteers were very motivated to learn, they got to know useful expressions and learnt how to introduce themselves.

- Lunch in PSONI
- Free time
- Common cooking in PSONI
- Integration party in PSONI: dinner, board games, music and dance
16.06. Friday

- Polish language and culture workshops led by Polish volunteers

This time the volunteers learnt Polish words useful in a daily life and got to know what to do in their free time during the project. They had a chance to ask about Polish customs and compare them with their own ones. The Polish volunteers prepared a quiz about countries of coming participants and it was a lot of fun.

- Sightseeing and a city game in The Old Town of Gdańsk; promoting the festival

The group met at the tourist information with the volunteer from PSONI who prepared an outdoor game: participants divided into 3 groups had to fulfill five tasks which required interaction with locals, learning about Polish culture and history and discovering the Old Town.
- Lunch in a restaurant

- Evaluation of daily activities; presenting the results of the city game in PSONI

- Group work: making posters for the countries’ presentation in PSONI
17.06. Saturday

- Free day (trip to the beach, taking part in a Holi color festival, concerts in The Forest Theatre)
18.06. Sunday

- Free day (picnic, travel to Sopot, sightseeing and visiting the pier)
All activities during the weekend were optional, but we offered the guidance of our local volunteers and interesting events. The participants became a well integrated group. They organised themselves to make a picnic in the park.

19.06. Monday

- Visit in The Occupational Therapy Workshops of PSONI

The volunteers had a chance to meet Polish workers and participants with whom later they worked during the festival; they get the idea of the workshops. The staff members discussed realities in NGOs in Poland and other countries.

- Organisational session: the festival, roles of volunteers
- Learning goals – workshop
During a brainstorm the volunteers came up with ideas of possible contribution during a festival. They discussed their previous experience in this field and wrote on post-its: 1) what I already know, what I can do, what I can share with others during this festival; 2) what I want to learn during this project. Each volunteer explained what he/she had written and stuck post-its to the wall.

- Lunch in PSONI

- Multicultural party: preparation and implementation of countries’ presentations for a local community (with a support of local volunteers)

The event was prepared totally by the volunteers. We used their ideas so they could learn how to organize a cultural event from the beginning till the end. Each country was presented with a short slideshow, interactive games, traditional food tasting and dancing to the hits from that country. The dancing part was the favorite one! Around 100 guests came to this event, mostly persons with disabilities with friends or families, but also young people interested in Erasmus+ projects.

-Dinner in PSONI
20.06. Tuesday

- Organisational meeting with workshops’ leaders, dividing tasks

- Beginning of the Festival: volunteers’ support in organisation of workshops

The volunteers were divided into different art workshops: music, theatre, dance, murals, photography. Everyday, they assisted the workshops’ leaders, supported other participants with disabilities and helped in organization (lunch breaks, technical equipment etc). Some issues appeared during the workshops, so evaluation sessions that were conducted every morning allowed the volunteers to report it and thanks to it we could improve our work.

- Lunch in PSONI

- Festival: volunteers’ support in organisation of theater shows in European Solidarity Center

The theater evening with performances of many Polish inclusive groups took place in the auditorium. The volunteers helped in greeting and informing guests and in organizing stands for a NGO fair. They enjoyed watching theater shows.

- Pizza

21.06. Wednesday

- Evaluation session

Every morning we met with all the volunteers and the accompanying persons and discussed previous activities. Everyone was encouraged to speak.

- Festival: volunteers’ support in organisation of workshops
- Lunch in PSONI
- Festival: volunteers’ support in organisation of the opening of an art exhibition in Galeria Świętojańska
- Dinner in a restaurant

22.06. Thursday

- Evaluation session

- Festival: volunteers’ support in organisation of workshops

- Free evening (barbecue)

The important thing was that all participants had a possibility to spend their free time together. They lived in three hostels located close to each other and close to the Association. They organized common meetings in the garden almost every day.
23.06. Friday

- Evaluation session

- Festival: volunteers’ support in organisation of workshops

- Lunch in PSONI

- Festival: volunteers’ performance and support in organisation of concerts in Klub Żak

The concert had two stages: the first performance was the result of festival workshops with Krzysztof Arszyn Topolski. The volunteers who had taken part in music workshops performed on stage and supported other disabled musicians. After that other inclusive music bands: A może... and Remont Pomp with Orkiestra Klezmerska Teatru Sejneńskiego performed. The concert finished very late, some volunteers were very tired and even though we had planned to stay in the club and dance, we came back to hostels immediately after the concert. Later we decided that maybe it is better to start events earlier, but on the other hand, if we want to reach a wide audience and make persons with disabilities feel really included, we need to adapt to realities.
24.06. Saturday

- Pizza

- Free morning (Visit at the ZOO)

- Festival: volunteers’ support in organisation of the concert in European Solidarity Center

This was a classical music concert. The volunteers helped in informing and greeting guests and in logistics. They enjoyed the concert, for some of them it was the best part of the festival.

25.06. Sunday
- Festival: volunteers’ support in organisation of the parade in The Old Town in Gdańsk

The volunteers’ tasks: logistics, music support in the rhythm group, animating participants and audience, performing (theatre and music group).

- Lunch in Polish families of persons with disabilities

The volunteers divided into country groups were taken to the houses of members of the Association (families with children with disabilities) for lunch. They could experience a Polish lifestyle, traditional food and hospitality. For all of them it was a magnificent time and they mentioned it as one of the best ideas of the project.
- Free evening

26.06. Monday

- Visit in The Occupational Therapy Workshops of PSONI:
  - Team work - painting a fence

The volunteers cooperated with Polish participants from workshops. Their common task was to paint a part of a fence. Most of them have done similar tasks before and they were happy to contribute with their experience. The work went very fast and in a good atmosphere.
- Recording interviews with participants

The volunteers were asked about their opinion on the project. All of them seemed to be very happy and some of them had some interesting insights about what could be done better. We recorded their opinions and talked about it later.

- Grill and picnic in a park with Polish participants of the Festival

-Sport activities: hand-bikes

The Occupational Therapy Workshops organized a picnic in a park to integrate the volunteers with participants of workshops. They invited a foundation „Aktywnie do przodu” with their handbikes.

- Organisational session: travel arrangements

- Free afternoon (sightseeing in Gdańsk)

-Dinner in a restaurant
27.06. Tuesday

- Evaluation session

At the beginning we asked volunteers to use their cameras and during this session we collected their photos and videos. Photos used in this manual were taken by the participants. Despite the language barrier, the volunteers became great friends and willingly posed together to „selfies”.

- Collecting visual materials

- Presentations of participating organisations
Everyone could give a speech about the organisation that she/he represents, using a projector and materials from the Internet. It was also an occasion to discuss differences between the approach to work with persons with disabilities in our countries and possible cooperation within Erasmus+ program.

-Lunch in PSONI

-Youthpass session

It was an artistic excercise that volunteers liked very much. We used the visual idea of a suitcase where we want to put our new experience and memories. The volunteers reflected on their learning achievements according to Youthpass Key Competences. We helped them by giving suggestions of possible learning outcomes.
- Dinner, birthday and farewell party in PSONI

This moment was a good example of the learning achievements. Comparing with the activities from the beginning of the project, this time the volunteers were much more independent in choosing and completing tasks. The party preparation was on their side: shopping and managing the budget, decoration, arranging tables, DJ and proposing activities.

28.06. Wednesday

- Planning the dissemination of results of the project

During an open discussion everyone said how can he/she contribute in the dissemination.

- Relaxation session in a dark room of The Educational Center of PSONI Gdańsk

Our dark room is designed for sight therapy and it uses light, music, projector, mirrors and special equipment. The goal of our session in this room was not only to take some rest after a hardworking week but also to reflect on the time spent in Gdańsk.

- Lunch in PSONI

- Free afternoon
- Dinner in a bar

- Departure of some participants

29.06. Thursday

- Sightseeing in Gdańsk (Baltic Sail, The Historical Museum of Gdańsk)

- Evaluation session

- Meeting with local volunteers

Our long term volunteers shared their experience with newcomers and discussed their voluntary service in PSONI. We will use their suggestions in future projects.
30.06. Friday

- Visit at The Occupational Therapy Workshops for the blind persons in Gdańsk

The idea of this visit came from the Turkish volunteers, who wanted to see the opportunities for the blind persons in Poland. We organized a visit in Occupational Therapy Workshops at Towarzystwo Pomocy Głuchoniewidomym. They showed us their workshops and they prepared a presentations of Polish songs and poems. Later our EVS volunteers sang in Turkish and the meeting ended up with common singing and playing a song of Tarkan. The warm greeting convinced us to visit this place more often with our long-term EVS volunteers.

- Lunch in a bar

- Sightseeing in Gdynia

- Dinner in a restaurant

- Departure of some participants
01.07. Saturday

- Preparing the video about the project (available at https://youtu.be/hoXf2yMUxUs)

- Departure of the last participant

*Photos by the participants, the coordinator and Krzysztof Mystkowski – a photography workshops’ leader*
4. Visibility

- The Festival was promoted in a local radio Radio Gdańsk, in a local newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza Trójmiasto, websites: [http://www.gdansk.pl/wydarzenia/Miedzynarodowe-Spotkania-z-Tworczym-Zyciem-Osob-z-Niepełnosprawności-Intelektualna-Swiat-Malo-Znany.w,21524](http://www.gdansk.pl/wydarzenia/Miedzynarodowe-Spotkania-z-Tworczym-Zyciem-Osob-z-Niepełnosprawności-Intelektualna-Swiat-Malo-Znany.w,21524), [http://kultura.trojmiasto.pl/Swiat-Malo-Znany-imp440512繁华.html](http://kultura.trojmiasto.pl/Swiat-Malo-Znany-imp440512繁华.html) Posters were in visible places in the city of Gdańsk. The participants of the Festival (including the volunteers) received special T-shirt with a poster and a website address of the Festival. The logo of Erasmus+ was on all Festival materials.

- Many activities within the project took place in the open space, so the volunteers had interaction with a local community. Our group always took attention, so they had a chance to talk about the project with people in public transportation, in shops and in the street. We gave to the volunteers leaflets about the Festival, so they could spread the information even without talking in Polish.

- Video about the project on Youtube: [https://www.youtube.com/hoXF2yMUxUs](https://www.youtube.com/hoXF2yMUxUs)
The short movie was made by the Turkish volunteer Abdullah Sağır during the project and it was his own initiative. The video appeared on Facebook page of PSONI Gdańsk and in Facebook groups connected to the topic of Erasmus+ projects. Also the participants shared the movie among friends.

- Video about the Festival on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhl1BDpqcho&t=14s

The 15-minutes movie prepared by AgencjaVizualna includes short interviews with the organizers and the workshops’ leaders.

- Short promotional video about volunteering in Gdańsk, recorded during our voluntary service and at other events:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPAdhwNj8SU&t=264s

- Posts about the project on sending NGOs websites

- Articles about representants of the sending organization from Spain in local Spanish newspapers:

A press conference:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTxJZlM4CZY&feature=player_embedded

Thanks to the support of the local municipality and some enterprises the Spanish volunteers printed special T-shirts with a logo of the Festival. They brought them as gifts to participants in Poland.

- Article written by the Turkish volunteer Ece Kir posted on the website of her sending organization:
- Article in „Społeczeństwo dla wszystkich” magazine, published by Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability headquarter, written by the project coordinator.
5. Dissemination

The sending organizations or organizations where the volunteers are active members invited them to support local events as volunteers and to promote international mobility among friends. In PSONI Gdańsk Branch we organized a meeting for potential EVS volunteers, we collected forms of interested persons and now we will try to find receiving projects for them.

The results of the project were presented and discussed at the following meetings:

- a seminar OPEN ACCESS in Paris 23-27.09.2017
  This seminar, organized by French National Agency of Erasmus+, intends to help youth workers from NGO's working with young people with physical or mental disabilities:
  ● To discover opportunities provided by Erasmus + Youth programme
  ● To explore how Youth Exchange and European Voluntary Service projects could be an educational tool in inclusion youth work
  ● To provide opportunities to find partners for future projects;

- a contact making seminar: Short Term EVS: Step by step in Madrid 15-17.11.2017
  This seminar was organized by Europa Yoven Madrid for 14 organizations from 8 countries to foster their work with short term EVS projects.
  The organisations which work with persons with disabilities in Madrid will use the manual and the promotional video to promote the idea of international mobility among their beneficiaries.

  This manual will be published in SALTO Toolbox.
ERASMUS+ PROJECTS FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

manual

1. FIND GOOD PARTNERS

It is very important to cooperate with good, reliable organisations. The best way to get to know them is taking part in contact making seminars or training courses organized by Erasmus+ National Agencies. You can also use SALTO Partner Search website or Facebook groups. If you have a partner that you don’t know personally, check if they answer quickly and if they have capacity to find and prepare participants for your project.

We know the representatives of our partner organizations from previous projects, so we could easily contact in urgent situations and react quickly. It was our first Short Term EVS, but our partners organized projects like this before, so we used their experience. It is a good idea to send a draft of your application form to other partners before submitting and to take their remarks into account.

2. PLAN IT WELL

When you organize a project with persons with special needs, you may have more expenses than in other projects. Think about the accommodation adapted to all kind of disabilities, a sending cost for sending organisations for their preparation of volunteers, an organisational cost of accompanying persons and their gratification. We contacted our National Agency of Erasmus+ to consult if our Special needs cost is applicable and to what extent.

You can use following categories:
- Special needs cost
- Exceptional cost: it includes visa and the cost connected to visa, but you can put here also: Reinforced mentorship since people with disabilities can ask for extra time of mentoring and Language support since there is no money for a language course, and because some of our volunteers with special needs can’t handle a typical language course. You can use this money also for a translation.

3. BE BRAVE TO ASK

Hosting international volunteers, especially persons with disabilities, should be a big deal for your organisation and a local community. Therefore, we suggest to ask local authorities for support. During our project we had a support from The Regional Voluntary Center of Gdańsk – they organised transport cards for our volunteers; and The City Hall of Gdańsk – they gave us promotional materials about Gdańsk and gifts for volunteers.

4. INVOLVE MORE PEOPLE

Most probably your colleagues, local volunteers and other people around will be interested in meeting young people from other countries. Try to ask scouts, nearby schools, students who learn languages of participating countries. Ask them to help you. They can spend free time with volunteers, show them around, help in emergency situations. For our volunteers meetings with locals were very important.

5. BE TOTALLY INCLUSIVE

The project is about inclusion, so let’s directly put it into practice! Invite local volunteers with disabilities to help you in the project. Maybe some tasks can be done in cooperation with a target group? Your beneficiaries can for example prepare a presentation of your country. Our Polish teacher has an Asperger
syndrome and moves on wheelchair. The city game was an idea of one boy with a great knowledge about the city and some psychological problems.

6. **LET THEM GET TO KNOW YOUR CULTURE**

Short term projects are short, but if you are creative, the volunteers will feel that they discover your culture:
- welcome them in a traditional style;
- during countries’ presentations arrange also a presentation of your country;
- eat local food;
- organise a dinner in families of your beneficiaries;
- talk with them about your history, culture etc in a free time, during trips; answer questions.

7. **BE FLEXIBLE & AWARE**

For many volunteers it may be the first time travelling without family. Think that maybe they never make their beds or prepare breakfast; they had to change their routines. Look carefully if some participants feel uncomfortable, sad or nervous. Maybe you have to adapt your plans to their needs. Appreciate the help of accompanying persons.

8. **GIVE MORE TIME**

Don’t try to do too many things during sessions, remember about a time for preparation (changing clothes, toilet etc) in the morning, in the evening and between activities. Don’t forget about free time! Also during learning sessions and other activities remember to give everyone space and time to speak up – be patient. Remember that accompanying persons always need time to translate everything and don’t forget to explain to participants with eyesight disorders everything that is visible.

9. **HOW TO WORK WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES? TIPS FOR STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS:**

- Don’t feel pity. Persons with disabilities are usually happy, if you are fun they will be even happier! The sense of humour helps in every situation :)
- Behave naturally, like with a person without disability similar age.
- Be patient. Give them time to do every task in their own tempo. Let them do things by themselves.
- Be aware that some of persons with disabilities might have a big need of relations. Don’t be ambiguous, wear modest clothes and don’t give any fake hope to them. Put the boundaries of your physical contact from the beginning and inform them if you feel uncomfortable in some situations.
- If the person doesn’t speak clearly, don’t pretend that you understand, but ask to repeat. If you still don’t understand, ask to show it in some other way or draw.

- **Intellectual disability**
  - Be very reliable, punctual, responsible.
  - Smile, have fun, don’t worry about appearances.
  - The information must be short and clear. You can ask them to repeat in order to check if they had understood. It is handy if the information is written and given on paper.
  - Usually people with autism don’t like changes. Try not to change your mind; keep with the schedule.
  - If they stuck with some words, try to change the topic.
- Physical disability

- If a person on wheelchair cannot move independently, be aware if he/she is sitting in the right position and can see other people (for example in front of a door).
- Don’t move a wheelchair without its owner’s permission.
- Talk to a person when you are in front of him/her, try to be on the same level (sit or crouch down).
- Ask if a person can stand for a moment (to move to toilet, climb stairs etc) and if not, ask how to help. Never lift a person if you don’t know how! Every person has different needs and you can easily hurt them or yourself.
- If you need to help in some hygienic issues, be gentle and use the sense of humour if it is needed.