

The Spirit of EVS

Communication and learning within the European Voluntary Service



Have you faced any of these challenges within the last years?

- A difficult communication and flow of information between the many different actors involved in EVS (such as: HOs, SOs, COs, mentors, volunteers, NAs, accreditors, trainers) or
- Little awareness of the different needs, roles and responsibilities within EVS
- Little shared understanding of the concept of EVS as a learning programme

So come with us, and let's tackle them together. We particularly want to focus on these three areas:

Information: Too often there is a lack of information or not fully functioning flow of information between the different actors (e.g. HO <-> mentors, HO <-> SO, HO <-> Volunteers, NA <-> volunteers, etc....) and we want to make sure that during the course all the actors get the information they need (such as rights and responsibilities, EVS concept and what they mean in practice etc.)

Communication: To have all the information one needs is often not enough to have an enriching EVS experience for all the actors involved. The quality of the relationships between the actors is crucial and communication an important element. We want to strengthen participants' communication skills by offering concrete tools and methods to help them be able to communicate well and efficiently, covering the aspects described above.

Spirit of EVS: When talking to organisations and volunteers we often hear: "EVS is more than a programme" and we want to emphasise this aspect. It is about gaining and growing from a shared experience that is beneficial for all actors (HOs, SOs, COs, mentors, volunteers, NAs, accreditors, trainers) and recognise the learning journey that it involves.

Aims

- Provide information and knowledge on the concept of EVS including rights and responsibilities, learning in EVS, intercultural learning, involvement of the local community.
- Create understanding for the different needs and realities of all the actors involved in EVS.
- Support the communication and problem solving between the different actors through methods such as NVC (Non-violent communication), the Way of Council and Mediation.
- Raise awareness and deepen the understanding of the spirit of EVS (EVS as a learning programme for all the actors involved)
- Support the transfer of what is learned within the course to the reality of participants back home

Approach and methods

In order to really understand EVS as a whole we want to have all the different actors (at least the following: HOs, SOs, COs, mentors, volunteers, NAs, accreditors, trainers) and their perspectives present. This means we want to work together with the Sending National Agencies to select different roles for the available places, if possible.

What is important here, however, is deepening the understanding of the spirit of EVS and what this means for all the actors involved. Only then can EVS become an experience that involves learning and benefit for everyone.

The international perspective is especially useful as EVS is working very differently in each country and to know more about this can help to rethink one's own country way of doing things. Again, having all the actors present when looking into this will be highly beneficial as it will help us make sure no perspective is left out.

The methodology will be based on non-formal education, taking the different needs and learning preferences of participants into account. In order to work effectively together, we want to start the process of the course already beforehand with an online platform.

Communication will be an important part of the course and will be supported by methods of non-violent communication, the Way of Council and mediation. We will also look at the Hero's Journey as a framework for the EVS programme and at different models of Knowledge Management as ways to ensure the continuity for the different actors involved.

Working language: English

Participants: 22 participants (from Programme countries)

Profile of participants

- Represent at least one actor within EVS system, i.e.: HOs, SOs, COs, mentors, volunteers, NAs, accreditors, trainers (several actors from one country are welcome)
- Are willing to learn, experiment and change their practice
- Are able to communicate well in English

Dates: 17. – 23. September 2015 (including arrival and departure days)

Venue: A beautiful Hostel in Laugarvatn, Iceland (100km from Reykjavik in the Southwest of Iceland)

Where to apply: <http://trainings.salto-youth.net/4963>

Deadline to apply: 12. June 2015

Selection results: 29. June 2015

Costs: This project is financed by the Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme. Please contact your NA to learn more about the financial details, and how to arrange the booking of your travel tickets and the reimbursement of your travel expenses.

Team:

Anna Wohlessen, member of Austrian trainers pool

A facilitator and learning process designer, working with EVS since 2004, having had many different roles such as: volunteer, Mentor, HO and Trainer. Besides collaborating with international youth organisations she is co-creating conferences and events in Austria with a strong focus on participatory culture and learning from each other. She is excited about the systemic perspective of this course.

Lenka Uhrova (www.rokstolar.com), trainer of Icelandic trainers pool

Mum and a freelance facilitator devoted and passionate about community development, change and learning and learning and change:) Connection to EVS: 1-year volunteer project in Iceland 2005-2006, trainer of EVS volunteers for Czech and Icelandic National Agencies, had a flatmate once who was an EVS and I ended up being 'informal mentor', creation of 2 int. trainings as my practice projects: Tools for EVS (for all EVS actors) and Mentors' universe (for mentors)

Yvan Rytz, freelance trainer from Switzerland

He is a founding member of Learning Partnership for Creative Sustainability, a network of European trainers in the field of non-formal, outdoors and experiential education active in the field of Youth-in-Action. He is a Way of Council trainer for the European Council Network and has been co-creating trainings around the topic of "coming-of-age".

