

Pre-departure preparation in EVS

“i-Prepare” project - research report



With the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

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ANNEX

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

1. Context

We have realised this research activity in the framework of the Erasmus+ KA2 project „i-Prepare” (2017-2-HU01-KA205-036198). The “i-Prepare” project aims to develop an on-line tool to help the pre-departure preparation of volunteers participating in long term voluntary service abroad (focusing especially on EVS/E+/ESC volunteering). The research has been needed to support the development of the “i-Prepare” tool.

The research period was November 2017 - January 2018. This period coincides with the end of the EVS program and the start of “E+ volunteering” (+ plans of ESC), characterised by a great amount of uncertainty as to the future of the EU volunteering scheme, which has made our work somewhat difficult. Some organisations, especially sending organisations who heard rumours of the weakening position of sending organisations in ESC, were reluctant to answer because they felt that an on-line tool would take away their job; others felt it unnecessary to think about what was done in the EVS program, as it was finishing anyway. We believe that the experience gained through EVS can be and must be transferred to the new programmes.

The research team was: Gabriella Nagy and Tamás Mahner from Egyesek Youth Association, Budapest, Hungary; Emiliano Bon and Anna Di Muro from Xena Centro scambi e dinamiche interculturali, Padova, Italy and Helena Koskova and Jan Latal from Cia Cekija, Prague, Czechia. The present report has been written by Gabriella Nagy.

2. Aims and objectives of the research

In coherence with our project aims and activities, we have set the following aims and objectives for our research:

Aim of the research

By the end of the research phase we should

- be able to finalise the list of modules constituting the tool, and identify the subtopics within each module;
- and be in a position to make a sound decision about the format of the tool.

Objectives of the research

- to get information about the topics EVS pre-departure preparation should include, based on the needs of EVS volunteers, EVS organisations and on Program regulations and recommendations (O1);
- to produce a comprehensive list of already existing documents, on- and off-line materials and tools regulating and supporting EVS pre-departure preparation (O2);
- to get inspiration from best practices of EVS preparation and of e-learning (O3);
- to learn about effective ways of e-learning and to come up with a range of possible formats among which to choose (O4);
- to understand the preferences of the possible users as to the form and functions of the on-line tool (O5).
- to follow the development of the new volunteering schemes (E+ volunteering / ESC) and prepare the tool in a way that it is adaptable for the new programmes (O6).

3. Research activities, methodology

We have identified and carried out the following activities to reach our objectives:

- 3.1 reviewing official program documents and recommendations concerning EVS preparation activities (O1, 2, 6)

We researched the official programme documents downloadable at <http://ec.europa.eu> and at the sites of the Hungarian, Czech and Italian N.A-s, we reviewed the RAY research reports and the SALTO pages, looking for information on the pre-departure preparation of volunteers; we also had interviews with our N.A-s (Hungarian, Czech, Italian N.A-s).

-3.2 researching already existing on-line tools that can be used for EVS pre-departure preparation (O2, 3, 4)

We researched the Internet for any on-line tool available for the pre-departure preparation of volunteers, including tools developed explicitly for EVS and other on-line tools that can create an inspirational basis for the „i-Prepare” project. On a local level we had interviews with EVS organisations about best practices of preparation, what is more, our on-line survey (3.3) included questions about innovative methods and best practices of preparation just as well as about any on-line tool organisations already use.

- 3.3 surveying EVS organisations and ex- /present EVS volunteers (O1, 3, 4).

The survey was done on-line, with the help of Survey Monkey questionnaires sent to organisations working with EVS, and to former and present EVS volunteers reached through the partnership network of „i-Prepare” project partners (Egyesek, Xena, Cia Cekija), e.g. Alliance and CCIVS member organisations.

We asked organisations and volunteers about their experiences of EVS pre-departure preparation and about their needs. There were different questionnaires for the different target groups. Answering was voluntary and anonymous, however, in the end those wishing to get updates about the project could leave us their contact details, losing their anonymity this way. In the questionnaire there were no obligatory questions, so respondents could skip any question and still be able to submit their questionnaire. There were both open-ended and closed questions, however, also in the case of these latter ones we always included an open ended „other” box for comments.

The questionnaires were partly based on our needs analysis carried out at the beginning of 2017 before the KA2 project application, when we surveyed 32 EVS hosting organisations about their experiences as to how much the volunteers they had hosted were prepared and which were the most problematic areas neglected by preparation.

4. Results

4.1 Reviewing official program documents and recommendations concerning EVS preparation activities (O1, 2)

We have found the following information on pre-departure preparation in the official program documents:

i) Erasmus+ 2018 Guide

-General objective (pp 30)

What is a mobility project

"A mobility project will consist in the following phases:

*-preparation (including practical arrangements, selections of the participants , set up agreements with partner and participants , linguistic/ **intercultural**/ task related preparation of the participants before departure) "*

-Mobility of youth (pp 76)

What is the role of the organizations participating in this project:

"- sending organization : In charge of sending young people abroad (this include: organizing practical arrangements; preparing participants before departure; providing support to participants during all the project)

-Pre-departure training (pp 284)

*The quality of the preparation of the participants is a key element to implement a successful project. In this regard, a pre-departure training is to be provided to the volunteers. Pre-departure training is the responsibility of the participating organisations (usually the sending organisation or the coordinating organisation) and gives volunteers an opportunity **to talk about their expectations, develop their motivation and learning objectives, and obtain information on their host country and on the Erasmus+ Programme.** In addition, a one-day pre-departure training aimed at establishing contacts with the outgoing volunteers may be organised by the National Agencies.*

ii) EVS training evaluation cycle Guidelines and minimum quality standard

"3. ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT TO BE PROVIDED

In addition to the EVS Training and Evaluation Cycle, volunteers receive continuous counselling and guidance before, during and after the service period, while training for project managers, mentors and trainers adds up to a complex set of measures, accompanying volunteers and participating organisations throughout the European Voluntary Service experience.

The Sending, Receiving and Coordinating Organisations are responsible for preparing the volunteers prior to departure and for providing language training and personal and task related support during the service period. In addition to the pre-departure preparation by the Sending Organisation, certain National Agencies may, in justified cases, offer a one-day information session to volunteers prior to their departure. (...)

3.1. Pre-departure preparation (provided by the Sending Organisation)

Objectives of the training

In order for the project to be successful and the EVS experiences to be positive and enriching for the volunteer, it is crucial that the Sending Organisation adequately prepares the volunteer prior to departure.

*This preparation should take place at least one month before departure and should be tailored to the individual needs of the volunteer and the specificities of the project, the service and the host country. Pre-departure preparation provides the volunteers with **information about EVS, the project life cycle and the different parties involved**. It allows volunteers to discuss **their expectations, their motivation and also any concerns they may have about their future project** with their Sending Organisation.*

*It is essential to provide information on **'What to expect from EVS' (part of the Info-Kit)** — as well as on **the basics of conflict prevention and crisis management**. During their service period, volunteers will be living in a different country, interacting with people from a different culture and often in a foreign language. At times this will be difficult, and volunteers are likely to face various difficult situations during the service period.*

*It is therefore essential to lay the grounds for guiding volunteers through **the intercultural learning process** and to tell them about the **support available during their service period**. Pre-departure preparation includes providing volunteers with **practical and technical information on matters such as insurance, visa, pocket money and working hours, etc.***

*Prior to departure, each volunteer receives an Info-Kit. The pre-departure preparation is an opportunity for the Sending Organisation to go through and discuss the different parts of the **Info-Kit** with the volunteer. The Coordinating Organisation is responsible for ensuring that the Info-Kit is given to all volunteers involved in its project.*

Expected achievements of the preparation

The pre-departure preparation will vary according to training practices, organisational possibilities and volunteer needs. Nevertheless, pre-departure preparation should ensure that, by the time they leave, all volunteers:

know about concept of the European Voluntary Service and its place within the Erasmus+ Programme;

are familiar with the partners in the EVS framework and their role, i.e. the Sending, Receiving and Coordinating Organisation, the mentor and, where applicable, the National/Executive Agency, SALTO and the European Commission;

are familiar with the document "What to expect from EVS";

have shared their motivations, expectations and fears, and have reflected on their goals, including goals for learning;

have received appropriate practical and technical information on visas, residence permits, their legal status as a volunteer, their insurance, pocket money and the EVS Agreement;

understand the meaning of intercultural learning and are aware of the ongoing intercultural learning process;

have received guidance or at least hints on crisis management;

understand the importance and usefulness of getting a Youthpass.”

Apart from this concrete information, we have found some relevance/inspiration also in the following documents:

ESC concept note

https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/downloads/4-20-3885/esc-swd-2017-168_en.pdf

EVS charter 2017

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/library//evs-charter_en.pdf

EVS info kit

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/applicants/evs-info-kit_en

Inclusion and diversity strategy

http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/inclusion-diversity-strategy_en.pdf

RAYEVS20

<http://www.researchyouth.eu/factsheet-20-years-evs>

Mentoring and Pre-Departure Training in European Voluntary Service (EVS) - Ideas, tools and suggestions for practice, Written by Laura Pierfelici

http://www.agenziagiovani.it/images/Mentoring_and_Pre-Departure_Training_in_European_Voluntary_Service_EVS_Guide.pdf

Report on pre-departure and on-arrival training in Italy in 2010-2011 (in Italian)

https://issuu.com/agenzianazionaleperigiovani/docs/rapporto_2010_2011_def

Methodology of-pre-departure preparation (material of the CZ NA for trainers, in Czech)

<http://www.naerasmusplus.cz/file/1943/Metodika%20pro%20p%C5%99edodjezdov%C3%A9%20pro%C5%A1kolen%C3%AD%20dobrovoln%C3%ADka%20EDS.pdf>

Conceptual background paper- Quality in learning mobility [http://pjp-](http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/9484127/Background+Paper+on+Quality+in+Learning+Mobility.pdf/9613a580-5db0-43a0-acda-a8cf091a7afc)

[eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/9484127/Background+Paper+on+Quality+in+Learning+Mobility.pdf/9613a580-5db0-43a0-acda-a8cf091a7afc](http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/9484127/Background+Paper+on+Quality+in+Learning+Mobility.pdf/9613a580-5db0-43a0-acda-a8cf091a7afc)

A QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING MOBILITY IN THE YOUTH FIELD (Youth partnership between council of Europe and European Commission) <http://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/charter-learning-mobility>

4.2 researching already existing on-line tools that can be used for EVS pre-departure preparation (O2, 3, 4)

4.2.1 Similar initiatives

We have found no ready on-line tool directly developed for EVS (E+/ESC) preparation.

This finding has been reinforced by our survey (see 4.3): to the question „Do you use any already existing on-line tool for the preparation of volunteers?“ out of the 52 answers there was only 1 „yes“, saying „Yes, Comp-pass; it is an e-portfolio created through a KA2 project but not open to public yet. It helps the volunteers self-evaluate their competences according to concrete examples“.

However, we have found other initiatives/on-line tools under construction, too, that are more similar to our project:

On-line course for EVS mentors and coordinators - <https://www.salto-youth.net/evscourse>

Relevance for the i-Prepare project: we have similar modules, especially their „learning in EVS“, „intercultural learning in EVS“, „communication, conflict management and risk prevention“. How we can avoid duplications: we should concentrate directly on volunteers, not on SO-s (their materials are for youth workers).

Actually their team is developing a platform for e-learning courses in Erasmus + Youth, where we can join, see: <http://www.fb.com/HOPplatform>

"E-Learning for EVS plus" - Capacity building in the field of youth. <http://e-evs.eu/>

At the moment we do not have detailed information on this project, we are contacting the organisers to avoid duplications and overlaps and for possible collaboration.

ESC General On-line Training

In the concept note setting the basis for ESC we can find that there will be a general on-line training for ESC participants:

"General Online training: open-access training provided prior to departure via the European Solidarity Corps' portal. This is a general online induction with various modules, such as: the mission of the European Solidarity Corps, ethics and integrity of the European Solidarity Corps, including child safeguarding and child protection, roles and responsibilities of participants and placement providers, European values and democracy, inter-cultural awareness, and health and safety, etc." link, page 4.

On the 18th October we had a meeting with Jadranka Vukovic Johnsson, Violeta Birzniece and Mathieu Orphanides (European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Unit B3 – Youth, Volunteer Solidarity and Traineeship Office) in Brussels. Our aim to meet them was to get further information about the General On-line Training and to map possibilities of collaboration. We have been informed that plans are not ready yet and that there will be a call for tenders for the development of the General on-line Training. We would certainly like to connect to the ESC General On-line Training in some way, so that our work is not in vain.

Note that the ESC portal has already a section offering on-line tools for learning for participants.

4.2.2 Inspiring materials on-line

We have found the following inspiring on-line materials:

Link	What is it?	Short description of the tool
http://www.ive-experienced.eu/	Lunaria follow up app.	Interactive way to process learning outcomes of short-term voluntary service. It is a follow-up app.
improve.inexsda.cz	Improve - INEX-SDA App to collect volunteer experiences and learning outcomes.	It is like a learning diary with self-evaluation of the gained competencies. It is also able to help volunteers to set learning goals and offer possibilities as to how the learning goals could be reached.
www.evsgalaxy.net	Guidebook for EVS coordinators	The brochure collects various topics related to the EVS agenda, which are important in different stages of EVS project (in preparation, realisation and evaluation of EVS project); it is not interactive.
actionbound.de	ActionBound - "Treasure hunt" creator and mobile app.	It is good for interactive city quests and other types of educational exploration. The content is done by the users. An example for volunteering: https://en.actionbound.com/bound/2017volunteeringhunt
https://www.coursera.org/learn/intercultural-communication	Coursera on-line learning about intercultural communication and conflict management	This is a 4 week long course about one module we want to create. Users have to pay for it.

goo.gl/pkNMSY	App4learning – mobile application	App for learning outcomes directly connected to YouthPass
StreetWize	Mobile application for competence progress report for children	This app allows youth workers to follow the development of the kids. There are many options and features. It is like a progress journal but on mobile.
http://cccc.eu/momap/welcome-to-the-mobility-map-online-survey/	MoMap Online competence test for intercultural competences	MOMAP Survey is to assess competences that help to carry out a successful mobility experience.

Since the evaluators of our KA2 project application had noted that there were already a lot of on-line materials available for EVS preparation, we have asked the Hungarian NA about them. We have been given the following list:

- SALTO <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3232/Preparing%20the%20volunteer%20for%20the%20EVS%20project%20abroad.pdf>
- https://www.younginitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/VTET_ToolKit_Final.pdf
- <https://www.goabroad.com/articles/volunteer-abroad/how-to-prepare-to-volunteer-abroad>
- <http://www.ifrevolunteers.org/how-to-prepare-to-volunteer-abroad/>
- <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/web/youth-partnership/t-kit-5-international-voluntary-service>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2014/mar/26/international-aid-how-to-prepare-volunteers>
- <https://www.udemy.com/best-practices-for-volunteering-overseas/?siteID=SAyYsTvLiGQ-saMtDAEdtxmmI2P57cGJ5A&LSNPUBID=SAyYsTvLiGQ>
- <https://movingworlds.org/international-volunteering-resources>

Note, however, that none of this list given to us are interactive on-line tools for volunteers going on long-term voluntary service.

4.2.3 Other

We participated in the Digital Youth Work Conference in Vienna, Austria between the 27th and 30th November 2017 (<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/european-training-calendar/training/conference-digital-youth-work.6839/>). The conference was useful mainly to

disseminate our project activities; what is more, we got to know some inspiring tools (they are included in the above list).

We had asked about 40 EVS organisations on a local level about their pre-departure preparation practices. Though we have identified no revolutionary new approaches, we have collected some off-line methods considered best practice by the organisations:

Post-it present yourself	volunteers take four post-its of different colors. They have to write on them: a drawing of themselves or something that represents them / their destination / why did they choose EVS/ their expectations
Letter to "future me"	Ask the volunteers to write a letter to themselves then send it or give it back to them when the EVS project finishes. Another option is to send the letters to the volunteers at the hosting organization around the middle of the project.
Collage expectations	Collage of images which represents how they think their time abroad will be like: expectations, doubts. Sharing and discussion
Individual open-dialogue	informative-individual meeting in which details about healthcare, contract, rules, trip etc, are provided to the volunteer
meetings in group	informative group meetings in which activities about interculturality are proposed to reflect and discuss
experience sharing	invite ex-EVS volunteers to share their experiences about the project they were involved in, and to respond any questions future-volunteers may have
fears/expectations	activity in which volunteers are invited to write their expectations and fears about the project on a hot air balloon drawing, then they share it with the other participants and the facilitator. Another option is using the 'sea-metaphor', and asking volunteers to write expectations on a fish drawing and fears on a jellyfish drawing.
W-curve	about cultural shock: the letter W is used to explain the different steps of cultural adaptation (honeymoon period, culture shock, adjustment, acceptance, etc.)
Life wheel	volunteers are asked to self-evaluate their competences
SVEopoli	board game in which volunteers go through a "simulation" of daily life as an EVS volunteer. They pick cards which depict situations that could happen in real life and gain competences by playing and discussing in group to solve potential problems
Volunteer's body	each volunteer receives a drawing of a human body and chooses what he/she brings to his/her EVS project represented by the different body members. After this, each volunteer shares with the group.
Case studies	"AND NOW? WHAT DO WE DO...?" Exercise to imagine different scenarios of situations that can happen in an EVS project, and each volunteer shares what she/he would do in those situations. Another option for larger groups is to give a different case to each smaller sub-group and ask them to act out the situation and the possible solutions they found, then discuss in plenum.

Iceberg	Use an image of an Iceberg to promote the reflection and discussion about the cultural shock that can happen in an EVS project. https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/32/bc/4f/32bc4fb319311b5a3c014f24f0702800.jpg
Questions to promote debates	Use of questions to promote the debate and reflection, such as "what does EVS mean?" / "why does the EU invest money on EVS?" / "why do volunteers go to EVS?"
Brainstorming	Brainstorming on culture and interculturality to compare and discuss these topics in group
Derdians	non-formal game that simulates the first meeting between two cultures, in order to enhance reflection on intercultural communication
The Hero's Journey	http://www.evsgalaxy.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/EVS_Galaxy-The_Heros_Journey_Koskova.pdf
Smooth leaving	Brainstorming about areas of life (school, family, friends, work, hobbies,...) and reflecting on what has to be done so that I can leave well. Plan of managing this, eventually plan how to keep in contact during EVS.
Learning	Task: learn something in 15 minutes. Debriefing on learning styles and motivation. Input on self-directed learning.
Solo time in nature	Solo time in nature with fatal question with - or without - and sharing

Similarly to the above, the question in our survey „Do you have any innovative approach or effective method that you use and you consider as good practice concerning EVS preparation (e.g. activity, questionnaire, digital tool, etc.)? If yes, please describe.” didn’t result many very innovative ideas (see answers in detail in 4.3).

We have got one very inspiring answer where we will contact the answering organisation for further details:

„We have an e-learning concerning volunteering in our organization and how we understand it and we thoroughly discuss motivation for volunteering and debate on self-motivation and pro-activity of each volunteer, we focus on long term planning and trying to discuss each of the project cycle phase in detail, so that we can prepare to some extent to what is going to happen in volunteers’ life abroad.”

Finally, on a local level we also had conversations with 28 volunteers about the OLS language platform, to see their likes and dislikes about on-line learning tools.

The volunteers’ opinion:

- OLS is not catchy, not very user friendly. It is complicated - cfr. Duolingu.

- OLS gives volunteers „too much freedom” in some way, volunteers can be lost, it is difficult to use it alone (e.g. “you have finished B2 and the system doesn’t suggest you where to continue, you can continue also with A1”).

- volunteers feel that OLS is a “worst substitution” of a real language course.

4. 3 Survey results

4.3.1 Introduction

Questionnaire for EVS organisations

52 EVS organisations answered the questionnaire, most of them (39) were organisations which were both sending and receiving EVS volunteers, (12) were only sending organisations. Only one organisation which was only hosting but not sending volunteers answered. The geographical reach of the survey was really wide: from Spain 6 organisations, from Croatia 5, from Germany 3, from France 3, from the UK 3, from Czechia 3, from Italy 2, from Hungary 2, from Slovakia 2, from Bulgaria 2, from Slovenia 3, from Turkey 2, from Portugal 2, from Macedonia 2, from Russia 2 organisations answered, plus 1-1 organisation from the following countries: Estonia, Romania, Austria, Jordan, the Netherlands, Kenya, Latvia, Belarus. One respondent’s country was not identified. The participation of non-EU/partner countries is significant.

Questionnaire for present and former EVS volunteers

155 volunteers answered our questionnaire. They indicated the following countries of origin: Italy (39), Hungary (22), Russia (15), Czechia (8), Germany (8), Macedonia (7), Slovakia (7), France (7), Spain (5), the Netherlands (4), Bulgaria (4), Austria (3), Turkey (3), Greece (2), Latvia (2), Estonia (2), Romania(2), UK (2), Armenia, Finland, Ukraine, Slovenia, Mexico, Georgia, Belgium, Kosovo, Donetsk People’s Republic, Portugal, Norway, Poland and Serbia (1-1 volunteer). The great number of Italian, Hungarian and Czech volunteers can be explained by the fact that the research team is from these 3 countries, so reaching volunteers coming home from EVS on a local level was convenient for us; the high number of volunteers from Russia is surprising, probably thanks to a very active Russian partner organisation.

Order of presenting the results

When presenting the results of the survey I will apply the following principles:

First I will present answers to the core question “What topics should the preparation tool treat?”, which was asked, though in somewhat different form, to all target groups. I have highlighted this question and treated it separately from the rest of the questionnaires not only because of its importance, but because I believe that, in this case, comparing answers of the different target groups enables us to have more insights than just proceeding linearly.

A linear listing of the results of the questionnaire for sending organizations, the questionnaire for hosting organizations and the questionnaire for volunteers will follow, respectively. In most cases answers given to open ended questions are presented as word by word quotations ordered in

thematic groups. However, I haven't quoted "empty" answers, such as "no", "nothing", 'I don't know', "..." – hence the discrepancy between the total number of answers and the sum of all answers listed in the thematic groups (+ it is so also because some respondents gave more than one answers). In two cases (org. questionnaire 4 and Q14), where respondents typically gave compound answers, I haven't included all answers quoted word by word, but a summary of key words with the relative number of appearances– for those interested, the full list of answers can be found in Annex.

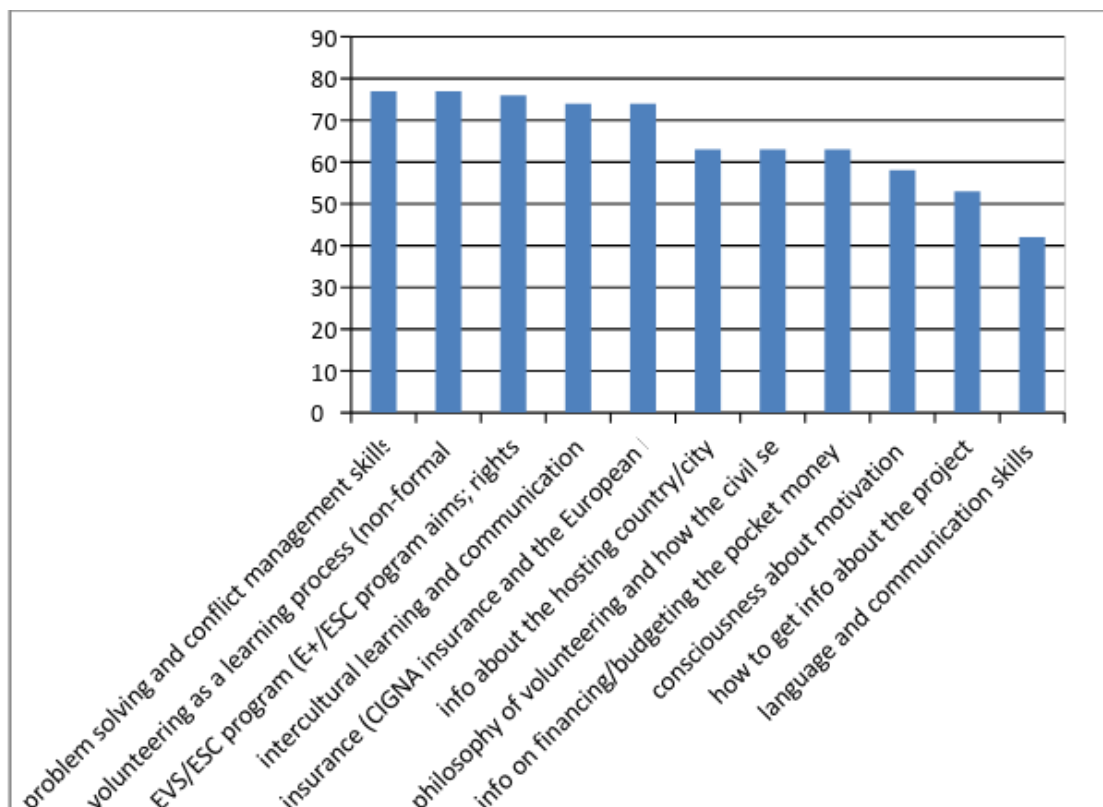
4.3.2 TOPICS OF THE PREPARATION TOOL

What topics should an on-line preparation tool treat?

(question for SO-s)

TOPIC	%
problem solving and conflict management skills	77
volunteering as a learning process (non-formal learning, Youthpass and the key competences)	77
EVS/ESC program (E+/ESC program aims; rights and responsibilities of the volunteers)	76
intercultural learning and communication	74
insurance (CIGNA insurance and the European Health Insurance Card)	74
info about the hosting country/city	63
philosophy of volunteering and how the civil sector/NGOs work	63
info on financing/budgeting the pocket money	63
consciousness about motivation	58
how to get info about the project	53
language and communication skills	42

(Answered: 43 organisations, skipped: 8; 5 comments under „Other”: *Roles of different partners; Relationships; Not needed; Maybe all; All other aspects are better performed in person I think*).

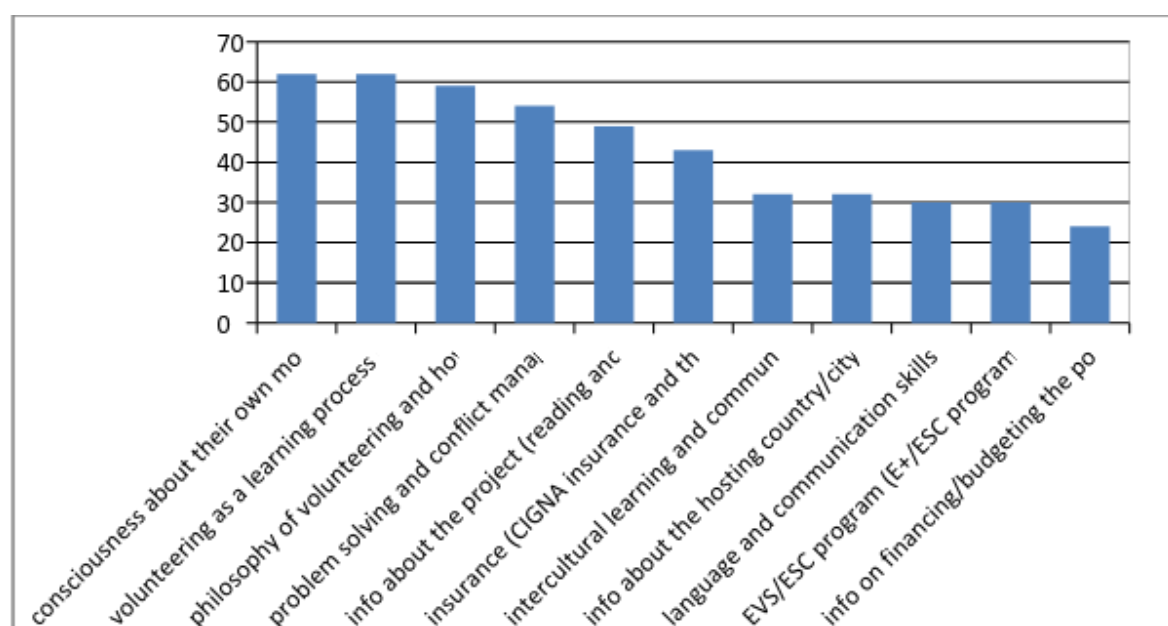


Tick any topics that - according to your experience – volunteers are usually not very well prepared of:

(question for HO-s)

TOPIC	%
consciousness about their own motivation	62
volunteering as a learning process (non-formal learning, Youthpass and the key competences)	62
philosophy of volunteering and how the civil sector/NGOs work, adequate service for the hosting organisation, working for local communities	59
problem solving and conflict management skills	54
info about the project (reading and understanding activity agreement, info about the HO, etc.)	49
insurance (CIGNA insurance and the European Health Insurance Card)	43
intercultural learning and communication	32
info about the hosting country/city	32
language and communication skills	30
EVS/ESC program (E+/ESC program aims; rights and responsibilities of the volunteers)	30
info on financing/budgeting the pocket money	24

(Answered: 37 organisations, skipped: 3; 2 comments under „Other”: *I need to put an emphasis on motivation. people use EVS as a means of holiday and happens that they lie about motivation just to travel; Sometimes all*).



The topic of „language and communication skills” scored low both in the question made to sending organisations about what to include in on-line preparation (42%, lowest score for this question) and in the question made to hosting organisations about what volunteers are usually not well prepared of (30%). In fact language knowledge is not a requirement for participating in EVS, and for language preparation there is already a specific tool, the OLS which volunteers can use.¹

There are some interesting correspondences between the question made to sending organisations „what an on-line preparation tool should include” and that made to hosting organisations „what volunteers are usually not well prepared of”. What scored relatively low in the question „what an on-line preparation tool should include” („consciousness about motivation” 58%, ranking 9 out of 11, „proceeding info about the project” 47%, ranking 10 out of 11) scored relatively high in „what the volunteers are usually not prepared of” (62% and 49% respectively, ranking 1 and 4 out of 11), which may indicate that less attention is paid to these issues during preparation. On the other hand, what scored low in „what the volunteers are usually not prepared of” („info about E+ program, rights and responsibilities” 30%, „intercultural learning” 32%) scored high in „what an on-line preparation tool should include” (76% and 74% respectively), which may show that these aspects are considered core part of the preparation and are usually treated effectively by sending organisations.²

¹ We suspect that with a clearer wording focusing only on „language”, we would have got even lower values.

² This idea is confirmed by the answers to Q4 for sending organisations, where „E+/EVS program” + „Rights and responsibilities” (17+19) and „Intercultural learning” (27) are the most often mentioned elements of preparation by SO-s.

Answers to the question „what an on-line preparation tool should include” made to sending organisations show that apart from the topic of „language and communication” all other topics are considered important to include, that is, more than 50% of the group of respondents indicated them as necessary and useful. (The irrelevance of the topic of „language and communication” is discussed above.)

It is an interesting question how much the results would be different if we asked “what preparation should include?”, not focusing the on-line nature of our tool. As it comes out in one comment under “other” (*“All other aspects are better performed in person I think”*) and in answers given to the question “Do you think an on-line pre-departure preparation tool would be a useful help to your work?” (see 4.3.2, org. questionnaire Q8) there can be topics which sending organizations feel important, but not suitable for on-line treatment, preferring face to face work.

The answers to the question „what the volunteers are usually not well prepared of” are more spread, with 4 topics scoring 50% or more: i) „volunteering as a learning process (non-formal learning, Youthpass and the key competences)”, ii) „consciousness about their own motivation” (both with 62%), iii) „philosophy of volunteering and how the civil sector/NGOs work, adequate service for the hosting organisation, working for local communities” (59%), and iv) „problem solving and conflict management skills” (with 54%). These are typically complex issues requiring the development of soft skills and not just information easy to pass. More time is needed to treat them and it seems that the limited time sending organisations can dedicate to preparation is not enough to go deep in these topics.

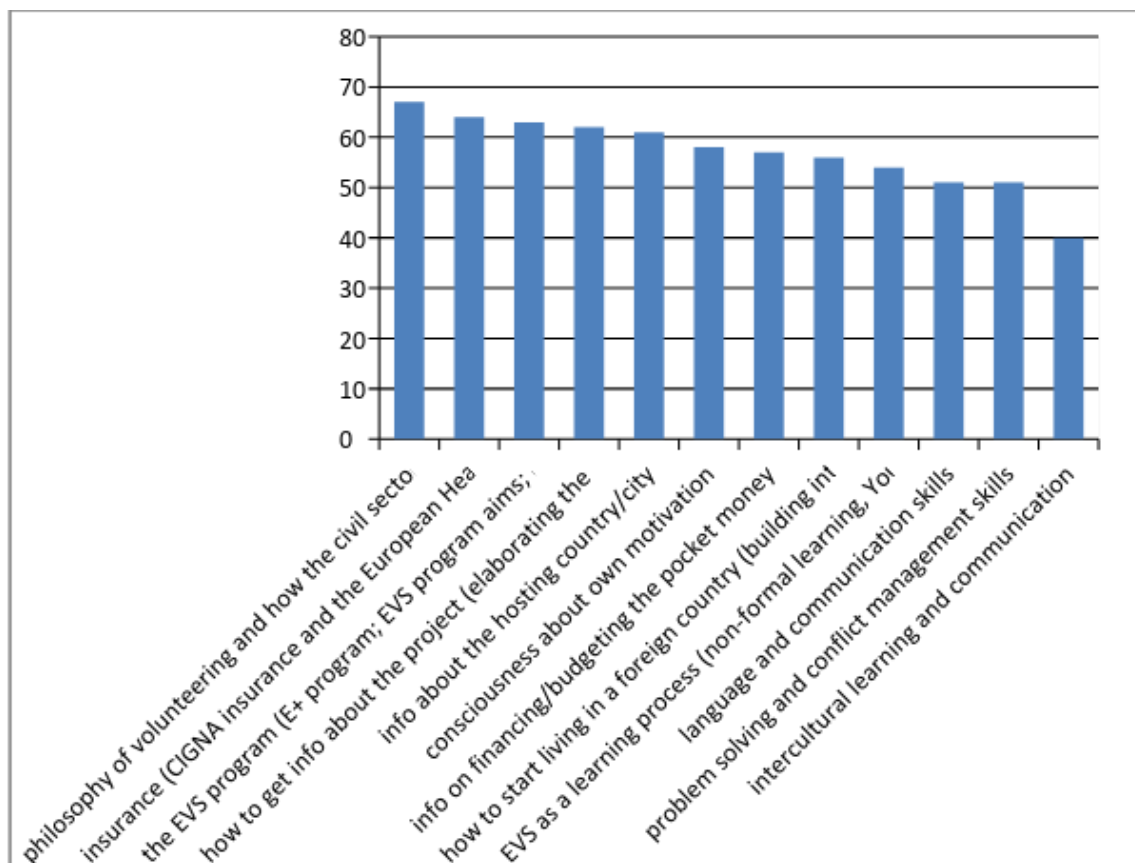
It is interesting though that dealing with interculturality is a similar soft skill based competence, but data still show that volunteers are usually well prepared of it: this may indicate that a lot of attention has been devoted to and a lot of methodologies have been developed to target this issue, while there are not so many handy tools to help preparation as to the other topics above (however, it may also have different implications, e.g. many volunteers have previous experience abroad so face less difficulties in dealing with interculturality, etc.).

If we compare these results with a similar question made to volunteers, we see the following:

Here below there are some possible topics the preparation platform could treat. Tick those that would be interesting to you and that you would click and open? (if you were before EVS)

TOPIC	%
philosophy of volunteering and how the civil sector/NGOs work, adequate service for the hosting organisation, working for local communities	67
insurance (CIGNA insurance and the European Health Insurance Card)	64
the EVS program (E+ program; EVS program aims; rights and responsibilities of the EVS volunteers)	63
how to get info about the project (elaborating the activity agreement, what questions to ask from the hosting organisation, etc.)	62
info about the hosting country/city	61
consciousness about own motivation	58
info on financing/budgeting the pocket money	57
how to start living in a foreign country (building interactions, creating social life, general guidelines where to start)	56
EVS as a learning process (non-formal learning, Youthpass and the key competences)	54
language and communication skills	51
problem solving and conflict management skills	51
intercultural learning and communication	40

(Answered: 84 volunteers, skipped: 71; 9 comments under „Other”: *I don't support online platform - will not choose any.; all of them are very useful and needed; I ticked language and communication skills because it would be nice to learn how to approach different kinds of people in different situations; Info and/or experiences on what you may and may not expect from your hosting organisation and EVS experience in general.; How to have realistic expectations, make the best out of a not so eastbound situation; Leisure time possibilities, EVS trainings, mentorship (who is doing it, why, what you can ask for, etc); What to bring. Useful tips from previous volunteers.; 1. Adult responsibilities, e.g. time management, money management, food preparation, travel arrangements, and other such practicalities. | 2. Inquiries about the project specifics (what will one be doing? Find out more about possibilities in advance in order to make the best of the project). This might be also connected to the next part. | 3. Chat system with former (and also current?) volunteers.; Maybe also about how do not loose time. I was staying in group of volunteers, but when you are single volunteer it can be difficult for some people to go out or have a good time. so i suggest to have a tip (motivation) how to use your free time with pleasure. also working time-because sometimes host.org. have nothing to do or nothing interesting to do.).*



More than 50% of volunteers considered important to include all topics, but interculturality, which reached only 40%. It is interesting to see this resistance towards the topic of „intercultural learning and communication“. Based on the comments of volunteers under the question „Which was the least useful part of your preparation?“ (vol. questionnaire Q4, see 4.3.5), we may suspect that there are two reasons for it:

- volunteers cannot connect what is done under „intercultural education“ to their real life experience, they receive theoretical input and/or do abstract exercises of which they cannot see the everyday usefulness („Too general, too much about discovering another country...“, „Talking about the culture shock wasn't that necessary since we're all experiencing it in very very different ways... Somebody going to Spain will experience very different things than somebody going to Hungary.“);
- there are a number of quite experienced volunteers who have already travelled a lot before EVS („I had several experiences abroad before leaving for the EVS project so I didn't had the need of a meeting to handle my feelings and expectations.“, „Culture shock model. I've lived abroad for many years, and I knew about this already.“).

It is even more revealing to read volunteers' answers to the question „According to you, what other [i.e. apart from the list above, including also „intercultural learning and communication“] topics should a preparation platform include?“ (vol. questionnaire Q8, see 4.3.5):

- *Cultural aspects concern the host country,*
- *Basics facts about the country,*
- *Living with culturally different people,*

- *Cultural customs and rules in the new country, practical advice (about weather, things we shouldn't talk about etc.),*
- *How big is the community I would belong to and how is it to live in shared living environment.,*
- *Something more about the culture of the country you will live in,*
- *Information about the country that will host you, what is in the neighbourhood, how the locals spend their time, etc,*
- *History of the country.,*
- *How to adapt in a different culture,*
- *Homesickness - who to talk to if it gets bad, ensure them that homesickness is completely normal, some tips on how to get your mind off of it etc.,*
- *Not really sure HOW it can be organised, but something that will show volunteer where he/she will go. Some volunteers I know didn't really had clear picture about living in another culture , or living in very small town, etc.,*
- *Language barrier and how to live on your own in a different country,*
- *Information about the country, habits (tradition) and culture,*
- *Interculturality and to be ready to discover other ways of life and working,*
- *More cultural informations about the place you are going to, the people, food... etc.*

This shows that i) the concept of „intercultural learning and communication” is not so clear for volunteers and ii) instead of (besides of?) developing intercultural awareness and becoming open to the surprises and challenges inherent in discovering new cultures, they would like to have country specific information, ready-made descriptions about habits and customs, do-s and don't-s, etc. about the given country/community they are going to, which is not exactly the approach we intend to follow under „intercultural education”.³

³ Note that if we go back to the questionnaires for organisations, we see that „info about the hosting country” scored high (63%) among the answers to the question „what to include in an on-line preparation tool”, and scored low (32%) in „what volunteers are not prepared of”, and also in Q4 to SO-s “What are the main topics preparation involves?” it scored high, so probably it is part of the normal preparation process – the discussion here is more about its relation to the concept of „intercultural learning”.

4.3.3 SENDING ORG. QUESTIONNAIRE - RESULTS

Q3⁴

How do you normally prepare the EVS volunteers you send abroad?

- Answered: 49
(Note that respondents could indicate more than one answer.)

conversation on Skype/phone and/or e-mails	35	71%
offering possibility to meet foreign EVS volunteers and/or ex volunteers who have come home from EVS	29	59%
at least one face to face meeting, where we discuss the most important things to know about EVS	19	39%
offering possibility to experience volunteering on a local level	17	35%
at least one face to face meeting, where we discuss the most important things to know about EVS and use also interactive methods	15	30%
a group meeting with other future volunteers	13	26%
at least one entire day long pre-departure preparation training together with other future volunteers, organised by you as a sending organisation	12	24%
at least one entire day long pre-departure preparation training together with other future volunteers, organised by the National Agency or some other organisation	8	16%
help with language preparation	8	16%
a complex preparation programme with a sequence of more meetings	4	8%

Other (please specify):

if possible, invite the volunteer to participate to other institutional meetings; the assembly, the national seminar training for camp leaders and others

Also we offer our blogger "Aprendiendo a aprender en el programa SVE" where they can find more information.

Sending/proposing info and links related to the hosting organisation, community, country, general info about EVS and learning.

we also emphasize the intercultural learning aspect, introducing the intercultural adaptation theory and discussing previous experiences, talking about fears and expectations and also about the further communication channels and tasks between us and the volunteer. Our aims is double: to inform and prepare the volunteer for the evs experience and adapting to a different culture, and to create a personal contact that can be a base for the communication in distance.

Face to face if the volunteer is coming from our region

depends if the volunteer can participate in the week end of preparation or not..

⁴ Q1 and Q2 were statistic questions about the country and type of organisation (SO, HO, both) – results are summarised in 4.3.1.

we only send our volunteers that we know very well

Involving them as active members of the organization, in order to have the feeling of 'belonging'

It depends the place where the EVS is living

Q4

What are the main topics the preparation involves?

- Answered: 44

Summary:

E+/EVS program (17)

rights and responsibilities (19)

infokit (3)

Activity Agreement (9)

financial rules, pocket money (8)

the hosting project: practical arrangements, tasks (20)

practicalities (what to pack, travel tips, visa, administrative issues...) (17)

insurance (17)

crisis management, risk prevention (7)

problem solving and conflict management(15)

communication (5)

fears and expectations (18)

motivation (4)

own contribution, what is volunteering (9)

non-formal learning (8)

competences and Youthpass (12)

intercultural learning (27)

language barrier (6)

building trust, emotional support (7)

what is mentoring (2)

ex-volunteers' experience (6)

networking (1)

team work, group dynamics (2)

questions (2)

what to do before/during/after EVS (1)

building on previous experiences of volunteers (1)

country specific info (1)

time management (1)

Q5

Do you have any innovative approach or effective method that you use and you consider as good practice concerning EVS preparation (e.g. activity, questionnaire, digital tool, etc.)? If yes, please describe.

- Answered: 36

Group meeting with non-formal methods (7)

We have several interactive methods for some of the topics mentioned above which encourage the volunteer to look inward, and understand/see themselves better

Group work - Energizers - Power Point - Lunch together - Breaks - so the EVS volunteers have possibility to talk and exchange - Evening Program - Different kind of games

non formal education tool like exercises, role play, interactive methods,

week end of preparation : two days training based on non formal methods

We are planning to update our training for EVS volunteers in January, at the moment it's a good training, based on the needs of the volunteers and local cultural peculiarities, but we use pretty standard exercises.

I guess it is pretty wide known but the rollercoaster of intercultural adaptation, discussing the different adaptation stages and the physical symptoms connected can be revealing for the volunteer on the spot thinking about previous experiences and also afterwards, during the evs period.

Groups meetings are the best way

Letter to themselves (3)

At the end of our meeting, we ask them to write a letter to themselves, and give it to us...

We ask all volunteers to write a letter to themselves before they start their activity. They can choose to take the letter with them so they can open it when they are for example sad or we give the letter to them when they come back.

In the end of the training we ask the volunteers to write the letter to themselves into the future. They put the letter to the envelope, the letters are kept in our office and after they return from the project, I send it to them. Not innovative, but usually volunteers don't expect that and like such form of the training conclusion

Contact with other/ex. volunteers (6)

The future EVSer will have a meeting with an EVSer in his/her own country relating to other volunteers

It's not innovative but we try to connect face to face with ex-volunteers to meet and share experiences

let the new volunteers meet with different kind of current and old volunteers to help with their experiences and to make the things more clear

We don't believe it is something innovative. Maybe the most important is that our previous EVS volunteers (sent) and our current EVS volunteers (host) are completely involved.

Putting in contact with ex EVS volunteers so they can hear about their experience.

Info pack (2)

We have a brief infopack in a presentation way, and our blog, in spanish and in english, also a blog with the experience of our EVS here in Granada and our EVS around the world to motivate them.

infopack, where is described whole EVS, how is it going, how we'll communicate, what to do before going abroad

Specific tools (4)

yes, we use this competences assessment

and digital tool for competences

we have an e-learning concerning volunteering in our organization and how we understand it and we thoroughly discuss motivation for volunteering and debate on self-motivation and pro-activity of each of the volunteer, we focus on long term planning and trying to discuss each of the project cycle phase in detail, so that we can prepare to some extent to what is going to happen in volunteers life abroad

We have a special questionnaire as for sending as well as for hosting EVS volunteers, which helps volunteers to realize their goals of volunteering as well for sending and hosting organization to keep the volunteers data and expectations

Other (4)

Volunteer candidates are asked to volunteer for a few days at our office. motivation of the volunteer and meticulousness about the business are measured. In this way he realizes that he is facing a serious job before volunteering. his attitudes and behaviors and responsibilities.

I ask for volunteers to prepare special innovative motivation letter (I focus a lot on motivation). One volunteer prepared comic strip about his life.

Skype with one of the responsible person in the hosting organization

A good cup of coffee and a lot of honest approach

Q6

What are the main difficulties you meet regarding EVS pre-departure preparation activities?

- Answered: 40

Difficulties of organising face to face meetings/training (logistics: distance, time, money) (27)

the fact that is not always possible to meet volunteers face to face

find a suitable date for everyone, so usually we end up by having individual meetings

we have only one training, so date and location is often the greatest difficulty
Normally match the perfect day for everyone involved is a bit difficult, but we can handle it
To gather a group of volunteers in the same day!
To gather all the future volunteers at one time for the training
Having all the volunteers together for the activities Doing a preparation for one volunteer means we cannot use some of the methods (activities usually need several people) and they also miss out on the added benefit of sharing other volunteers' experiences

Lack of personal meetings due to the big country's territory

Distance if volunteers lives far away.

sometimes happen really quickly and far away than where we are, so we have to do it through skype, and it is not so personal.

Sometimes it is hard to find possibilities to meet the volunteers in person. For example if they do another activity abroad (for example Au Pair) and want to do their EVS right after that activity. Or if they have to work a lot and live on the countryside where it is hard to come to the city.

Sometimes we are not able to have face to face meetings because the volunteer lives in different city and when the time is short is not available to come for a meeting.

future volunteer is from the other part of Czech Republic and sometimes we can't meet personally, only on skype

Acced to the volunteer who are living very far away, it is never the same things just by skype, mails and phone !

Well, it happens (more often) in the last two years, that none of our active volunteers is available, and we usually send a volunteer (or inactive member) of our partner organizations from other cities. Usually we are pressured by the time, their availability and actual motivation.

time management, sometimes volunteer doesn't have enough time for coming to the office
lack of time - usually future volunteers are so busy (cause they are working, studying and trying to manage all the things before their departure), so it's hard to meet them face to face more than once.

lack of time from both sides

time

Lack of time and no fund to cover this time

meeting the volunteers and financing the activities

Ideally I would like to run a weekend preparation training course with all the EVS volunteers, but the distance and lack of funding to cover the expenses makes it impossible for this to happen.

Lack of time and Money to run a comprehensive training.

I think it is a pity that we only have budget for one day (budget from the SO and not from the NA, because the NA does not give funding for this). I would prefer a longer pre-departure, to have the real group-feeling. Sometimes volunteers can not attend the training, sometimes because they live far away, sometimes because they have other plans - they receive always a pre-departure via Skype or Phone, but it is not the same as face to face.

that we don't get enough money for these activities

Too much information for one session.

No funds.

Difficulties with working with the hosting partner (4)

The main problem is that we don't know the hosting organizations well, nor the location of their departure, therefore we cannot prepare the volunteers 100%.

sometimes the lack of information from the hosting organisation

communication with partners and making agreements that all partners follow and respect

Not knowing the context and quality of work where we are sending an EVS, if the organisation is our new partner.

Difficulties with working with the volunteers (10)

Little knowledge about EVS among young people in general.

Also the fear and back agenda volunteers have

inadequate knowledge about what evs is and what volunteers do

fear of volunteering abroad because of lack of experience abroad. Something may happen or

fear of disappearance Considerations that the pocket allowance for EVS may be insufficient

some of the volunteers keep being afraid of travelling and deal with new people and new language especially if their English language not very good

The language barrier the volunteers face, it's hard to prepare them for this.

The main difficulties are to define goals for EVS year and find motivation for volunteers (it is also depend on every volunteer individually).

different levels among the same group of volunteers

Not attentive listening therefore - same questions after.

dealing with expectations

Special needs (1)

We send ST EVS and our young people need a lengthy and detailed pre departure process.

We find managing everyone's expectations to be difficult.

Q7

In which way would you like to develop your EVS preparation activities (if any)?What kind of support/resources would you need for this development?

- Answered: 36

What would be needed?

On-line preparation (5)

Having preparation tools for volunteers who can't make it to the training would be great.

Easy friendly online system

Internet or phone application designed for preparation of volunteers

Actually at the moment I'm thinking about developing online course for my volunteers with different topics covered, they would have to do it in 1 or 2 weeks and have small tests in the end to check their knowledge. I know the platform I will use (Udemy).
e-preparation could be interesting for this kind of long distance preparation

Communication platform (3)

It would be good to have a platform for communication between the hosting organization and volunteers present there with the volunteers arriving.

some platform to make evs volunteers meet and share stories, concerns and suggestions

Different experiences from other active and experienced organizations would be a great help, especially those involving more specific profiles of young people, often with mixed fewer opportunities.

Tools (11)

I have a lot of ideas but usually there is not enough time to put those things into action. I would really appreciate to receive a tool where I can prepare the volunteers regarding their future learning experience. How can they prepare themselves for active learning?

Step by step tool

A kind of interactive presentation of the most important elements of EVS. A commitment document for the volunteer. Currently, there are too many young people deciding to do the EVS as a paid option to go abroad, but when there comes any other better option they decide to abort the program.

Maybe a kit with all details that are meant to be mention

a checklist would be really welcome

some innovative tools for facilitation and for the explanation of the toolkit that sometimes becomes boring for vols

More tools and maybe an Info-kit with the most frequent questions already answered

finding new tools

involving more interactive tools maybe (eg. to plan deeper the experience)

have a wider variety of activities

universal preparation plan

Funds (6)

more money for these activities and more appreciation from all parties, especially the National Agency

Fund to cover volunteers expenses to attend training, for example accommodation, food, transport.

have financial support in advance for preparation and dissemination

More research on the activities on our part and additional financial resources to do the preparation

Erasmus+ should finance advance planning visits for all volunteers, not only for youth with fewer opportunities -

I would like to have a bigger Seminar Room, maybe a co-trainer, visit from NA, funding from NA, making it longer (not only one day).

Centralised training (5)

it would be better if there will be training for volunteers who are leaving for the EVS project done by NA or trainers

pre-departure training made by other subjects not our organization, maybe some special trainer

We prefer the NA to run this regularly.

Maybe the support of the NA or support from other SO so once in a while we can organize together one-day preparation training for all the volunteers we are sending in the next period. This way they will not feel alone, having the support of the another volunteers who will also go somewhere abroad to volunteer.

NA for now

Other (4)

More active ex-EVS or experience volunteers and staff members.

Meetings for groups. We have the resources.

We need a mentor support. we are having a lot of trouble at the source.

I would like to have not only one meeting face to face, but to organize all day for one volunteer.

Q8

Do you think an on-line pre-departure preparation tool would be a useful help to your work?

- Answered: 42

Yes	40
No	2

Other:

if properly explained to volunteers how to use it ;)

but not sufficient as the only preparation!

I already do online pre-departure training

Following some guidelines or principles would enable providing equally qualitative support for all departing volunteers.

Maybe...I don't know now...I'm little bit sceptic about this because I think the best way how to prepare volunteer is the face-to-face meeting

Yes, it would be great to get some help/inputs online.

Some kind of online database would be helpful, where all the info about an EVS is accessible, maybe an interactive map with their photo, beginning and end date and automatic alarms to contact them regularly (on a certain period of time).

In case it supplements the training. Especially if there's a some kind of interactive online (or even offline) game or something about the practicalities of the EVS programme (roles in EVS, etc)

Q9

What topics should an on-line preparation tool treat?

see 4.3.2

Q10

Imagine an on-line pre-departure preparation tool, which is composed of the above modules (the ones you indicated in the previous question), each module containing several different e-learning activities. How do you imagine you could integrate such an on-line tool in your preparation activities?

- Answered: 41

I would give the link to the volunteer and encourage him/her to work with it alone; afterwards I would discuss with him/her the learnings	20	49%
I would ask the volunteer to use the tool and to share the files resulting from the on-line activities with us; afterwards I would use these files to discover what are the points we should focus on during face to face preparation	19	46%
I would use some parts of the tool to treat some topics, but for other topics I believe only in the efficiency of face to face work	15	37%
I would personally accompany the volunteer working with the on-line tool, following the process and helping him/her to overcome difficulties/making up for lacking digital competences	13	32%
I would use the on-line tool only as background resource and inspiration	11	27%
I would create an individualized on-line preparation programme for each volunteer, selecting the most relevant topics and activities from the on-line tool; afterwards I would discuss the learnings with the volunteer	7	17%
I would give the link to the volunteer and encourage him/her to work with it alone	2	5%

Other (please specify):

i would choose the method regarding individual

Easy system please

Q11

Do you use any already existing on-line tool for the preparation of volunteers? If yes, please describe. If possible, share with us the tool, too (link).

- Answered: 34

yes, Comp-pass; it is a e-portfolio created through a KA2 project but not open to public yet. it helps the volunteers self-evaluate their competences according to concrete examples

All the other answers were „no”.

Q12

Any other idea for the on-line preparation tool or any good advice for the team developing it.

- Answered: 23

we developped an online test to measure intercultural skills in the 4C project – momap – mapping intercultural mobility (ccc.eu)

To explain things also for a person who speaks basic English

Prepare also a list of „Do not forget”

To make it very easy and also interactive for the volunteer (maybe include a game or challenge, short videos..).

Visa and residence permit issues for volunteers needing a visa & permit.

4.3.4. HOSTING ORG. QUESTIONNAIRE - RESULTS

Q14⁵

How would you define a „well- prepared” EVS volunteer? What should be the ideal outcome of EVS pre-departure preparation activities?

Answered: 35

SUMMARY

According to the answers a well prepared volunteer...

- knows about EVS , rights and responsibilities, insurance, role of different partners
- is committed by signing document; was co-creating activity agreement, understands and agrees with it
- can identify with the philosophy of EVS, knows that it is about working and learning, is motivated to volunteer, taking volunteering as a service
- knows what he/she wants from EVS, has clear aims
- has realistic expectations, and a clear picture of the project:
 - i) is aware of the conditions (shared bedrooms, accommodation, city life, etc.) and accepts the rules (e.g. about smoking and drinking alcohol in the place of the activities).
 - ii) has information about the hosting organization and its field of work / should have a clear idea about his/her role and tasks
 - iii) has information about the hosting country/city/community
- is aware of that there will be challenges.
- is proactive/doesn't expect to get everything ready from HO
- ready to live in an intercultural context
- is flexible, being open to changes that could happen in the project and to accept that there might be some differences between what he/she expected and the reality of the project
- is open to bring him/herself in and open for learning
- knows the basics of conflict management
- knows what is necessary in case of crises (communication)
- has a good sending organisation

⁵ Q13 was about the contact details of organisations (optional).

Q15

Tick any topics that - according to your experience – volunteers are usually not very well prepared of:

see 4.3.2

Q16

How could you as a hosting organisation use/benefit from an on-line EVS preparation tool?

Answered: 32

To make up for/integrate preparation by the SO (14)

In case the sending organization couldn't give them the pre departure training, we can offer this tool and then speak about it.

as coordinating and hosting org. i would use it to supervise sending coordinator

It would be great because this way it would not matter that much if the volunteer does not have a good sending organisation.

It would make our work easier, as for now, some volunteers do not receive any pre-departure preparation, except the information we send to them.

I would be able to send it to volunteers who are coming to my projects and make sure therefore that they're prepared.

Send the link to the volunteer in case their SO doesn't have such tool or doesn't bother preparing the volunteer at all.

I would know, that volunteer at least heard basic things and he is aware of all EVS dimensions

To get prepared volunteer

We can direct Vols to the tool

Maybe the volunteer will be better prepared.

We could work together with sending organisation and maybe prepare volunteers better.

The volunteer will come more prepared as a result of standardised preparation tool.

we'll get a very well prepared volunteer, informed volunteer

Helps as additional tool

To get to know the volunteers/to base further preparation on the results (10)

I think we could be more aware of the possible problems of the volunteers that want to come and so to learn how to face the situations. As we work with short term and youngsters with fewer opportunities all of them have a difficult background.

We would have a better overview of what the volunteer has already heard and what kind of topics should be tackled upon his arrival.

maybe getting to know the volunteer better, making them try a bit harder before they arrive so they know where they are coming

Maybe if we will see the results we will have better idea about the volunteer and his/her motivation, fears and expectations.

It will be easier to follow up the volunteer with the difficulties find during the preparation
Useful to communicate with the volunteers

Knowing what the volunteer has passed through, potentially the outcomes of the preparation
Maybe could also use preparation material as an input to map the learning outcomes.

Also it would be great if we (as hosting organisation) could use at least few parts of results of
our future volunteer, to build up work when he arrive.

ask the volunteers to review it and then discuss

Inspiration (2)

We could learn about how to react when the problem comes by other experiences. - We might get
some information about how to encourage him when becomes discouraged, not only to phone the
sending organization, which sometimes does not know the real problem.

will help in making a lot of things more clear / will give us hit to talk on new topics and items

To stress on some important point to take into account as motivation, learning objectives...

Other (4)

with country or project specific tools, more info and exercises can be included for the
incoming volunteer so they are better prepared for us

Online tools are vital to motivate volunteerism. Your volunteer may be able to specialize in the
field of volunteer work by developing online programs on the field.

After the arrival having a 1 week exclusive preparation of EVSers

It would be very useful, because it would be universal tool to be used by all the organizations;
it would help to keep all the information in one place.

Q17

**The tool may have a feature which makes it possible for the
volunteer to share the results of his/her on-line activities also with
the hosting organization. What information would you be interested
to get from the volunteer before his/her arrival?**

Answered: 37

info about his/her fears and expectations	32	86%
info about his/her motivation and interests	32	86%
his/her questions about our project	32	86%
info about his/her competencies	23	62%
a "user's guide to me" section compiled by the volunteer about himself/herself	20	54%
only a short summary of what he/she did on-line	10	27%

Other (please specify):

Any special needs or wishes concerning mental and physical health, behaviour, habits,
addictions etc.

former intercultural and voluntary experiences

info about learning goals and competences he/she wishes to work on during activity

It would be helpful to get all this information but I think it is much better to talk about them in person (for example via Skype) than through an anonymous online tool.

4.3.5 VOLUNTEERS' QUESTIONNAIRE - RESULTS

Q2 ⁶

What kind of preparation did you get before your EVS (from your sending organisation, from your hosting organisation, from other sources)?

- Answered: 85
- Skipped: 70

no preparation (11)

Sending organisation did not invite me for seminar before my departure. - I had no preparation meeting before I left. – None - I think nothing, but I was living already for 4 years abroad - I didn't get any preparation. – None – None - My SO just got the accreditation, not long ago before I left (I was the first volunteer they've send somewhere) so, I was in a process of learning a lot with them. Prior to that I knew a lot of things about EVS and the program (I did a short-term evs project 5 years ago).- I have not had any kind of preparation because my hosting organisation needed a volunteer in a short time - None, I got it all while on spot - I didn't have a preparation, I just read the contract

Skype with SO (13)

I took part in Skype meetings - I have informed on skype. - We had a long skype meeting where we talked about everything that may concern my EVS. So basically thanks to all of this I didn't need any help from any other sources - I did a formation with the Italian association through skype, because I am not been able to bring on the place for working problems. During this formation I spoke of the project sve, of thing I would have had need during my experience, of the expectations and motives respect this experience. - I participated in several skype talks about my expectations about the Sve's project and experience. - Skype training from my sending organization - Online meeting with sending organisation - Skype interview with sending with sending organisation - Online preparation from sending organisation about program, its rules, my rights, logistic details, visa, insurance. - pre-departure online conversation with coordinator from send.org - Online prep meeting with sending organisation on culture shock, what to expect from evs, documents I should take

⁶ Q1 was about the country of origin of volunteers – results are summarised in 4.3.1.

with myself, etc. - Skype conversation - Introduction for the project, a short online preparation, EVS tool kit and practical infos

meeting with SO (24)

meeting with a coordinator from my sending organization - More detailed information on the function and rules of EVS I received from my sending organization. - meeting with sending organisation- I had one meeting with my sending organisation - My sending organisation explained me everything about the insurance, the youthpass, the infokit in general - I have got full information about the project, the meeting place and time from the sending organization. - A personal meeting with my sending coordinator; - On meeting in INEX Slovakia, explanation what to pack, what is insurance about and so on... - I had pre departure meeting with latvian sending organisation. - I had pre-departure session with sending organization - - Personal meeting together with the other volunteers who were my fellows later. We were talking about the details (insurance, travel, costs) - By sending organisation I was prepared. I got explanation and other details about the contract - meeting with sending organisation –I had personal meeting with leader of my sending organisation. It was predeparture meeting about practical thing about travel to Macedonia, we bought fly ticket, talked about what I expected, some practical tips - With my sending organization I met with my mentor before I moved to Slovenia and she explained me everything

I got a short briefing from my sending organisation before my EVS. - A two-hours preparation - A one hour talk about my doubts and expectation and the riding of the AA - Formal preparatory meeting with the SO - 2h general presentation about EVS (SO) and 1h individual talk (SO) - Sending organization just some basic information about EVS, the rules, the insurance... - Just short personal interview with sending organization - 3h meeting about the EVS and my project - my sending organization made a meeting for 30minutes. it was about all process like pocket money, online course, context of on-arrival training, documents for visa.

training by SO (9)

weekend long training before departure - one training from my sending organisation, - I went to Trento for one day with other three volunteers. I did more activity for know better my project. - Departure training from the SO - My sending organization had a four day pre-arrival training prepared for us in which we talked about all the logistics, health insurance and we also had some preparation regarding how to deal with a culture shock or feelings of loneliness, etc. - I had a pre departure training organized by my sending organization. - Pre-departure training from the sending o. – pre-departure training from my sending organisation, 1 Day big meeting with a lot of volunteers who will be send by the sending organisation - - sending organisation: Seminar

more meetings/continuous contact with SO (8)

From my S.O. I received a lot of help from a girl working there-few meeting with my sending organisation, tips from my coordinator - Preparation meetings with the Sending organization, Info Kit, discussions, - I was and I am still in touch with my sending organisation -... I was all the time in contact with sending organisation - I was in touch with a member of the sending organisation who answered all my questions regarding the paperwork. - -. - The sending organisation (Egyesek) invited me to two or three rounds of preparations where they explained a lot to me. - Preparation was done by my sending organization mainly through meetings - - I've had a meeting before departure in which my sending organization explained everything that I should know about the evs projects and how they work, playing games based on the evs things (monopoly with experience of the previous volunteers, drawing and writing our fair and expectations and discussing about them) with others volunteers. I've also participated in one meeting before that with my sending organization about the world of the evs in general.

centralised training (5)

pre-departure training, - Pre-departure training - pre-departure training organised by the National Agency of my home country - participated in a preparation training organized by the NA

contact with other/ex volunteers (11)

I exchanged a couple of e-mails with a girl who volunteered at the same hosting organisation as I was going to. - meetings with ex-EVS volunteers and current EVS volunteers - I watched the video about the activities of the organization. I also contacted the Russian participant of the project, to ask my questions. - description of the project, my rights and responsibilities, info about project, prices, life in Germany and accommodation from ex-volunteers of the project - meeting with other volunteer - Reading blogs from other volunteers - read several blogs about evs - Advices from friend who was currently on EVS - few email exchange with former evs volunteer from my host organization. - I contacted my friends who already did EVS. Also I got in touch with the other Hungarian who was still at the organization before my arrival. - I found most of the infos I needed on the internet (on blogs written by ex-volunteers).

written materials (7)

I got some pdf files through e-mail about general rules, insurance etc. - I also got some online brochures from my sending as well as hosting organisation. - detailed infopack from the receiving organization - I got some info packs from both organisations - document sharing - my sending organization send me lot of document, and help me with CIGNA - Before the departure also my hosting organization send all the documents that I should have read before the departure

interview/contact with HO (13)

Skype call with people from my hosting organization - When I asked my hosting organization, I learned more about the place of stay. - i got all the necessary information regarding money, accommodation and the project itself from my HO, otherwise i was going in blind, because i decided to go last minute - spoke with them about what I would have done during EVS. They cleaned up any confusion. - I was constantly in touch with my hosting organisation by email for every single and stupid doubt I had (they even replied on weekends) - info about the project and the activities in it from the HO - With the hosting organisation I have made an interview in which they explained me of thing I would be me due to occupy and relative information about the lodging etc., with them I remained always in contact up to my arrival - I had skype interview with hosting organisation - I had a skype call with the hosting organisation, to learn about the project, the environment, the challenges, etc. - Before leaving I spoke a lot with my hosting organization - 10 minutes skype call with host organization - General informations about the hosting organization, the place and the city where you will live. Difference between mentor, tutor and coordinator and to who to ask for help in case of problems. - Interview with hosting organisation

answer not specified (preparation by whom/how) (10)

From my sending organisation - Preparation in order to assest your expectations and manage your fears - Work on myself, my expectations and my view on the country - preparation Training, Support - From my sending organisation, from my contact person - Information and organisation of the project - Information about what to expect, my tasks, responsibilities. - presentation of the project and EVS programme - from sending organisation - from sending organization.

Q3

What was the most useful part of the preparation you got?

- Answered: 84
- Skipped: 71

Information on the EVS program, rights and responsibilities (8)

The part where I got general information regard the EVS project

Getting knowledge about the rights i have.

To know the EVS rules

All the information related to EVS especially the responsibilities of the 3 parts.

Talking about the legal framework of the evs

My rights and responsibilities as a volunteer

Details about EVS, such as rights as volunteers, pocket money, told that I'm able to say no to tasks I don't feel comfortable doing.

all the notions about my rights and my responsibilities

Documents, written materials (5)

I got some kind of brochure where I found most of the important info what to expect, what to take with me and so on.

I got only little preparation - the pdf documents, so I gained info from them. I was happy I got at least something

The info pack was very clear.

reading the AA

the info pack

Contact with hosting organisation/info on hosting project (9)

Skype interview with hosting organisation

Skype interview so I could see the spaces where I was working

HO information, experience and preparedness to help out

if my hosting organisation didn't tell me about how to survive in my hosting country of course I would not feel that good now.

Contact with the hosting organisation

my coordinating organization sent some mails before i arrived. they sent activity agreement and informed me about visa. it was very useful.

hosting call

During the whole A.P.V. the organization of the given information was the most useful, since it was clear.

interview with hosting organisation

Practicalities (5)

For me was buying fly ticket, because it was my first time travel by airplane

Things concerning the practical aspects of my - and EVS in general - project

the technical stuff, i don't remember more...

Sanita from RED (sending organization) made sure we have everything we need for travel and that we know what will happen in Holloko.

It was very helpful that we got explained ALL the logistics before by the hosting organization in my mother tongue, because this is usually the most complicated part of the EVS regarding explanation.

Insurance (5)

for me the most useful information was about health insurance, as it wasn't clear from the materials I got. So the info of what to do before departure, what is covered by the insurance and what to do after, was the most important for me.

About the insurance. The rest I knew.

Insurance

Also explanation about insurance and how it works.

technical informations like insurance, how we can claim back money for medical cases

Contact with other volunteers (18)

talking to an ex-volunteer and my own research.

the personal meetings with the sending organization and the volunteers

Meeting another volunteers

ex-volunteers experiences, advices, infos

I found out from a friend that she knew someone who was a few years ago a participant in an EVS project in the same city I was going to and I met up with him and he had some good tips.

We met all of the Latvian that would come and it was good to know who are coming to EVS.

Talking to EVS volunteers.

Building relationships with the other volunteers and the people in the organization. Our group became good friends very quickly. It's nice to have someone you can spend time with and talk to who is in the same situation as you.

web site of my sending organisation, blogs of ex volunteers

Blogs from other volunteers with information about their experience

tips from ex-evs

reading a blogs about program and projects

activities to get to know other volunteers.

Experience from former volunteer in same organization.

I would say the real information and experience what you can receive directly from your friends or people who already experienced the whole EVS system.

To meet other volunteers who will do Erasmus + but to different countries

Actually probably talking with old volunteers, and people who already did long term evs.

Talking with the other participants; it helped to feel part of a group, ready for an adventure.

It created the appropriate mindset

Psychological support (11)

of course talking with my sending organisation in my native language helped me a lot with understanding how everything works and feeling less worried about it.

The hosting organisation and the sending organisation have helped me to clarify all of my perplexities, surely I would have preferred to personally do her but this has not been possible.

the fact that there was always someone available to help with information, logistical and financial support, etc.

And talking with Lenka was for me at generous like don't worry, will be good, and she create on me feeling that I was wondering for EVS and she stopped my worries. That was the most useful moment

The part in which the project has been explained and I have been reassured that I could contact the sending organization for any reason at any time

Feeling supported by the people in both the sending and coordinating organization.

The feeling that you can count on the coordinator.

the psychological support provided

The psychological help that my sending organization gave me during the pre-departure meeting

The thing most useful has been know better sending hosting

I has been very inspirational

Expectations (3)

being reminded that things are never as on paper and I have to be proactive during the project. Working on my expectations

What to expect when i am doing EVS

to know how to evaluate my EVS before it started

Problem solving and conflict management (6)

Discuss the possible unexpected events that may occur.

Conflict management

how to deal with problems

The information about to who to ask help

A sort of game, which simulated the experience of the EVS

Learning how to use my creativity with ordinary objects

Intercultural learning (4)

Intercultural Learning

Learning about how it might be difficult to adjust, cultural shock, adaptation curve,

Some cultural context

Different culture

Language (1)

Language course

Unspecified content (7)

the training

Skype call

From the sending organization, additional information in the email.

communication with my coordinator

the only meeting i had in Prague in the sending organisations office

Personal discussions

My first meeting with my coordinator

Q4

What was not useful?

- Answered: 79
- Skipped: 76

Expectations vs. reality (4)

What it was expected to do during evs - What we can expect :-) Because I think you can never be prepared. Written paper is one thing, reality the other one. - the meeting with my sending organisation and infos that I got from my hosting organisation (they lied about a lot of things) - - Maybe, the less useful was the information that sending organization provided me because it was too general and disconnected from the concrete reality of my particular evs.

Theories of interculturality (3)

Too general, too much about discovering another country... - Talking about the culture shock wasn't that necessary since we're all experiencing it in very very different ways. A little introduction is useful, but somebody going to Spain will experience very different things than somebody going to Hungary. - Culture shock model. I've lived abroad for many years, and I knew about this already

Info on the program, official documents (6)

The SO meeting: it was formal, fast and I did not understand anything from it. - erasmus plus guide - everything is useful, but I was too bored to read everything - There was a lot of booklets and informations that seemed to be there just for the sake of being, not really telling you anything useful. - Little information on the program. - Repeating the same info from different sources (read about program by myself, then from sending org, then from receiving org, then on on-arrival training)

Other (2)

Looking for information in other sources doesn't help that much in my opinion (also because not everything in the Internet is reliable). Also, being in touch in advance with another volunteer who is already in the same hosting organisation is helpful (I did it with my new roommate), but not so necessary.

I have met nice people on the pre-departure training, but maybe it would have been nice to have peer groups, or somehow stay in touch to support each other. I am sorry, I don't remember the rest.

All other answers stated that preparation was entirely useful or that respondents could not recall any more the parts which were less useful.

Q5

Was there anything you missed, but would have been useful to talk about during preparation?

- Answered: 83
- Skipped: 72

Hosting project details (15)

equipment in the house, what clothes I would need (I didn't bring an evening dress which would be quite useful for our very festive Christmas dinner)

a detailed description of the work that I was going to do as a volunteer. instructions on how to get there - I personally didn't have problems to find cheap plane and bus tickets but I know that some volunteers that I've met had troubles with it and bought overpriced tickets. I would have liked to know what was I supposed to do and maybe what did the previous volunteers do

Maybe talking more about my tasks in the project

Maybe more concrete and also accurate information about what supposed to happen.

logistical matters like transportation to the country, who is going to pick me up and when etc.

what to bring - not to bring :)

Since we were working with children and we had only 3 weeks I would have loved some preparation for the activities with kids.

nobody told me to take my laptop for working. (but I took it). Because if I didn't take it, it would be complicated for me to work. Also it would be better to know about living conditions in your flat (to take from home some basic things)

Details about work environment

Concrete reality of the place I was going, detailed information of daily routines.

Know better the tasks of the project before departure because first days were a bit confused.

how to get to the hosting organization

more informations about hosting organization

proper task division

Info on the hosting country (4)

More information about the place where I have been in Spain

More details about the country (e.g. currency);

No, in any case some information about the country that I am going understanding Czech culture before arriving

Intercultural learning (5)

Discussions on cultural conflicts, how to avoid them and how to work with different types of people.

How to adapt in new country, in new culture

Coming from a country where most bureaucracy works well (it is a lot, but it works well) it was very hard to come to a country where that isn't always the case. Maybe that could be counted as culture shock, but I'd say it's not what you imagine as culture shock. Another thing would be how to deal with racism, people being aggressive towards you for speaking English on the train, etc.

I think what is important to share with people who haven't had an experience abroad, is to prepare them that it might not be always marvellous, and it might not all be like they expect, and give them tools, how they can take the most out of it, even if it's something challenging. How they can be proactive in finding things or people or hobbies they like, how to be patient, how to deal with conflict or misunderstandings, give them tools, how they can find beauty in unexpected things.

In my case, I went for a whole year. Although now it is obvious, then I didn't really grasp the significance of such a long time period. It is a whole year of living, it includes ups and downs, amazing memories and hardships. Talking about this might be useful.

Meeting ex-volunteers (4)

I think it would be nice to prepare a presentation or a meeting with ex-volunteers to explain better what the EVS means (what to expect, what we have to do as a volunteer but also what we do not have to do as a volunteer and so on).

Maybe meeting other volunteers who would have shared their experience

I would have liked hear the testimonies from people that have already EVS.

I know it's almost impossible to do but would be very useful if an ex EVS volunteer could also attend the pre departure training. Especially who did EVS at the same organization or at least in the same country.

Rights of EVS volunteers (5)

Yes, I miss the whole pre-arrival meeting, so I could better know, what are my obligations and rights. We had complications with our hosting organisations and maybe we could solve them if we were better prepared, at least some F.A.Q. like: What to do if you find out you are accommodated in the place where you work? What to do if you didn't receive insurance confirmation (and after 11 months you find out you weren't insured at all)? What to do if you find out you have no real mentor (only name on official paper)? What to do if your hosting company doesn't know what to do with you, you mostly have nothing to do and you don't get why they are enrolled in EVS?

More about rights/duties of the volunteers, more about the opportunities offered by the receiving organization.

Yes, it would be great to know that in the case of the conflict is possible to ask for my own apartment. It would help me a lot.

i didn't know about food money in general. i was just informed about my situation. maybe it would be useful to know how it is in general, what is the standard for food money and also flight tickets.

Maybe the roles, who does what, standard routines of communication (every week, every 2 weeks)

Problem solving and crisis management (4)

I think it is useful to know whom to contact if there is anything wrong or like with what type of problem should I contact the sending organization, the mentor or the local coordinator.

What to expect, how to deal with certain obstacles, etc

how to deal with problems within the organization or within the country's system.

How to go to the hospital and dealing with insurance.

Sense of volunteering (3)

what is expected from me, what it means to be a volunteer (it is just rights, or just responsibilities)

What is volunteering. Values, engagement... why to do it... Our place in the hosting organisation, what we can give, and not only what we can get from EVS!!

Maybe more reminding to be proactive

Erasmus+ program (2)

Erasmus + in general

Maybe it would've been too much information to get at once in the beginning, but at some point, I would've liked to get more information about how Erasmus+ works in general.

Youthpass (4)

EVS pass. Nobody was really able to explain what it involves and it would be good to work on it during your EVS, not after. So some hints how to build your EVS CV before you go would be helpful

Youthpass

More information about learning process

learning plan maybe

Language (3)

Maybe after we know the country where we are going we can have some tool to help with the language

What standards to expect for the language course for example

how to make new friends if you don't speak the language? ;)

Other (2)

I think that allowance money management needs to be taught on some basic level.

I think that more specific questions should be asked about cohabitation and ecological knowledge about the environment. An educational preparation in this sense could be useful to avoid great misunderstandings during the experience.

Q6

If you were before EVS now, would you use an on-line EVS preparation platform as part of your preparation process?

- Answered: 84
- Skipped: 71

Yes	62	74%
No	22	26%

Other/comments:

Quick, useful

There can be things you think you understand, but they can mean something different. Besides, it's good to hear stories from previous volunteers

I don't know if I understand the question right, but probably yes

I have bad experience with EVS language online platform, so I prefer verbal communication.

To have it written so I can come back to the information any time during my EVS but as an addition, not replacing the personal contact
 I would do it but just at the beginning of the preparation, and also it depends on how is the platform.
 If, maybe...
 I personally wouldn't, but also i'm 30 years old, so may be for people who are 18 now, it is much more obvious.
 I would imagine it as a place for peer support. Forum to ask questions maybe
 Especially for small countries! It's hard to find non-tourist information about small countries in East Europe when you're not going to the capital.
 Out of curiosity
 Just for more information. I prefer face to face, it is more easy to answer questions
 Maybe, it depends if there will be as well a meeting. To meet personal other EVS volunteers is always better than Online platform
 I think it has to be mandatory
 I think that it could be useful for the people that live far from they're sending organization but I don't think that it could be a substitute for the proper meeting with your organisation and talking face to face, it could be an integration of that

Q7

Here below there are some possible topics the preparation platform could treat. Tick those that would be interesting to you and that you would click and open? (if you were before EVS)

See 4.3.2

Q8

According to you, what other topics should a preparation platform include? (Think especially about general things, which can be useful for any volunteer independently of their hosting projects and destinations.)

- Answered: 66
- Skipped: 89

Info on the hosting country, intercultural learning (21)

I would like discovery the cultural, the story and the geography of the hosting destinations.
 Cultural aspects concern the host country
 basics facts about the country
 Living with culturally different people
 Cultural customs and rules in the new country

How big is the community I would belong to and how is it to live in shared living environment.

Something more about the culture of the country you will live in
information about the country that will host you

History of the country

Integration in local society.

How to adapt in a different culture

Homesickness - who to talk to if it gets bad, ensure them that homesickness is completely normal, some tips on how to get your mind off of it etc.

How to interact with local community

Adaptation

Not really sure HOW it can be organised, but something that will show volunteer where he/she will go. Some volunteers I know didn't really had clear picture about living in another culture or sharing apartment/room with neighbour, or living in very small town, etc.

Information about the country, habits (tradition) and culture

Interculturality and to be ready to discover other ways of life and working

More cultural informations about the place you are going to, the people, food... etc.

how things work in the country you are going to

practical advice (about weather, things we shouldn't talk about etc.)

language barrier and how to live on your own in a different country

Info on the hosting project/work (6)

Definitely informations about work and working place

Information about hosting organisation, about the situation in working place, about work
more informations regarding the hosting organization

Inquiries about the project specifics (what will one be doing? Find out more about possibilities in advance in order to make the best of the project).

Working conditions, at least detailed info about the place, maybe summary of future colleagues

Practical info - how much is the taxi from point A to B, what is in the neighbourhood, how the locals spend their time

Visa (3)

visa process. how to protect yourself from problems in obtaining a volunteer visa. what to do if you are denied a visa

also if you are not from EU how the things work with you preparing yourself for getting visa and papers when you arrive to the country

Same with visa issue. In Serbia, where was my EVS, we didn't have visa. Our hosting organization didn't even apply. However, friends working in different organization in the same country, they got visa...

After EVS (3)

how to "use" your EVS experience once it finishes

Life after EVS: how can this experience benefit the volunteer after the project

Tips for the time after the EVS, about the transition back to the "old" life conditions and environment

Meeting ex-volunteers (8)

Talking with former EVS volunteers.

Chat system with former (and also current?) volunteers.

A network is needed that unites all the volunteers and their projects
get in contact with others

In my opinion what would be interesting and useful would be collecting simple "reports" and
tips from other EVS volunteers from the same hosting country/city

Info about other participants or volunteers in the same country

maybe a list of contacts of volunteers who previously worked for the same organisation (so
that the future volunteer can ask them about their experience and for advice)

maybe meeting with a former volunteer who has already been in that place

Youthpass (3)

importance and meaning of Youthpass

youthpass

A guide with questions about competences that help you to write Youthpass

Sense of volunteering (7)

impact on local community sustainability of both activities (project) and your own lifestyle in
the hosting country.

To inform to people that EVS is something to really think about and to take the time to
choose the good NGO, it is only once a life that we can do it.

Maybe something related with having no fear to take part in projects and start projects
ourselves. Something correlated with proactivity

What do you give volunteering?

Where does the money come from? Why EU pays that money from taxpayers pocket to
support mobility and volunteering? Volunteer - slave or a master? Or anything else?

underlining that the expenses are covered by the service up to an allowed limit;

clarify the meaning of being a volunteer

Rights of EVS volunteers (3)

rights of the volunteer in a project

Everything about bureaucracy (papers etc.) should be clarified. And also everything that is
provided from the H.O. One more thing that I consider important is information about
different laws in the hosting country.

I would make a list of what is mandatory from hosting/sending organization to provide and
what not . For example language course is optional or not? if not, how many hours per week
hosting organization has to provide, etc

Training and development (4)

more about the on-arrival training, mentor-volunteer relationship

EVS trainings, mentorship (who is doing it, why, what you can ask for, etc)

getting a training during the evs about youth works

The language, how to get more than an online course, because in some countries it is much
more needed than in other

Living together (4)

Living with someone new - what to do when a conflict arise, who to talk to (is there anyone you can talk to who can be a neutral person in the conflict) etc

Make sure that the responsibility towards the house and the roommates is clear;

Try to achieve sufficient compatibility between people

Strategies to find a meeting point between the different habits avoiding excesses (as in consumption)

Psychological support (3)

Motivation, psychological help

how to deal with challenges

Expectation management, how to deal with the fact that reality is never as planned or on paper, where to go for support if things don't go right

Other (6)

Adult responsibilities, e.g. time management, money management, food preparation, travel arrangements, and other such practicalities.

some people it's also their first time moving out of their parents home

Skills about time management, that is essential.

sources of low cost travel tickets, how to plan a travel itinerary ...

leisure time possibilities,

what to do before departure

Q9

What do you prefer?

- Answered: 85
- Skipped: 70

simple one-off series of tasks, quizzes, questionnaires of your choice, without logging in and the ability to return and review your data	34	40%
signing in and working on tasks and quizzes within your account with more structure and evaluation options	48	56%

Other/comments:

none

No quizzes. It's volunteering, not TV show would you like to be a millionaire. Some scripts as for high school education. Simple but useful. No childish games and pictures. You are sending us abroad where we have to depend on our own, so the preparation process should bear this in mind. So that everybody gets, its not free holiday in foreign country, but a real life experience.

Why quizzing? I think it is everyone's responsibility to learn as much as possible do not quiz anyone on their required knowledge.

In addition to puzzles and tasks I believe there should be a knowledge base / wiki.

With signing in (so SO or RO could see that you did it), but not too long;) and not clear what's for "evaluation options". It's just learning platform for getting knowledge about program, structuring it, for preparing participants. It's not school task where you need to get an excellent mark;)

Q10

Would you be interested in completing on-line competence tests as part of your EVS preparation?

- Answered: 83
- Skipped: 72

Yes	66	79%
No	17	20%

Other/comments:

not at all

Of course maybe before beginning the preparation and then one in the middle of the preparation

Although I'm always in for some tests, I do not see the added value (yet)

Only if there is a mentor or peer to work with

But with a notification that the results should be taken only lightly.

yes, it can be interesting to understand yourself better

But I wouldn't take it too seriously

could be useful to have a starting point of learning process

If they do not require too much time

Q11

On which platform would you use the volunteer preparation tool?

- Answered: 84
- Skipped: 71

PC - desktop	65	77%
MAC - desktop	10	12%
Android smart phone	24	29%
Apple smart phone	11	13%

(Note that giving multiple answers was possible.)

Other/comments:

none

PC Desktop: Linux

and phones (i have a Microsoft, for ex). or to make good mobile version of website

Laptop or tablet

Ipad

Q12

Any other idea for the on-line EVS preparation platform or any good advice for the team developing it?

- Answered: 59
- Skipped: 96

Suggestions as to the form

include as many information as you can

More infos the volunteers get, more confidently they can start their project

Make it serious like its university on-line platform.

keep it short and simple :)

of course fun is welcome.

have an interactive course with quizzes

Gameification maybe, adding quests and levels

I would like to start with a simple quiz: as a "future volunteer" I would understand which aspects I have to deepen and what I really don't know at all; with the future volunteers' result, the team would know how to improve the project. Then I after the quiz (always as "future volunteer") I would like to use the platform and deepen the only topics that I really need. I would also like to take a quiz in the middle of my preparation just to understand if I am collecting info in the proper way.

Sending organisation gives enough instructions (documents) during pre-departure training, however it's better not to just read it and forget, but have an interactive course with quizzes

I think it has to be attractive and some parts have to be mandatory
not compulsory: I didn't do that and now I'm ok with it

Just make it well-structurized:) And that participants could go to any chapter of platform in any moment (and see them all from the beginning). I mean without quest with one-by-one topic

PLEASE make it easier to navigate and understand than the solidarity corps. Simple design, a good page for FAQs and page for help would be very useful.

Make it good looking and very user friendly, like this survey ;)

Project specificity?

Give, as far as possible, more information about the culture of the host country and respect the expected times or advise in advance of any delays.

list of useful sentence in your hosting country

To be more specific about the different countries as much as it can. Not everything is the same, and all countries/communities have something special about them that would very useful to know.

The most important is communication. Be available and inform about every possible aspect of evs stay in concrete place

Contact with other/former volunteers

It should be something interactive where each volunteer can bring his advices and experiences

I think a forum, open talk about possible problems and difficulties would be more useful than just information about rights, the project

Have a platform where future volunteers can ask questions from former volunteers.

maybe you can make some kind of evs network

Reinforce the contact between volunteers

possibility to comment and discuss with other users

if possible maybe contact with previous evs volunteers

A official forum (country) of volunteers and doubts

it would be great to get in contact with other EVS volunteers

I think a forum, open talk about possible problems and difficulties would be more useful than just information about rights, the project

I think that only after collecting all the info that I need I would like to hear about some other EVS volunteers' experience just to test my knowledge once again

personal video made by the ex-volunteers (even bad one)

I think it would be very nice (and useful too) if some kind of personal video made by the ex-volunteers would be part of the preparation platform so, the new volunteers can better imagine what the EVS experience exactly means and that is not only about working and learning somewhere but it is also about to meet new people, to start new friendships and so on

Other

You could use French as language as well

diary on-line before departure, during the project and an the end of the project

5. Summary – main implications for the i-Prepare project

Volunteers' attitude towards an on-line preparation tool

If we observe the results of the questionnaire for volunteers, we can note a quite a strong resistance towards the tool - nearly 1/3 of the volunteers stated that they wouldn't use an on-line tool for preparation. Comments modulate a little bit these negative voices: diffidence is based partly on previous bad experience with on-line tools (the OLS is mentioned as an example), partly on the fear that the tool would totally replace personal meetings (our intention is to develop a tool that would integrate but not substitute face to face preparation).

This means that we must „sell“ our tool to volunteers, that is, they will not be automatically curious about it or motivated to use it, but we should create such a catchy and attractive thing, and we should disseminate and advertise it in such an efficient way, that they open and try it notwithstanding their initial diffidence.

What would organisations use the tool for?

The answers suggest that most SO-s would use the i-Prepare tool as a kind of starting point for the preparation, making volunteers use it and then building further preparation activities/discussions on the outcomes.

Results also show that HO-s would mainly use the tool i) to make up for inadequate preparation by SO-s, ii) to get info on volunteers and to motivate communication with them (this implies the need for functions such as file sharing and chat/ mailing/ communication between volunteer and HO) and iii) as inspiration to treat topics which are difficult for them to handle otherwise.

Ideal outcome of the tool

According to our survey, the ideal outcome of the preparation process is:

A well prepared volunteer, who...

- knows about EVS(/E+/ESC), rights and responsibilities, insurance, role of different partners
- is committed by signing document; was co-creating activity agreement, understands and agrees with it
- can identify with the philosophy of EVS, knows that it is about working and learning, is motivated to volunteer, taking volunteering as a service
- knows what he/she wants from EVS, has clear aims
- has realistic expectations, and a clear picture of the project:
 - i) is aware of the conditions (shared bedrooms, accommodation, city life, etc.) and accepts the rules (e.g. about smoking and drinking alcohol in the place of the activities).
 - ii) has information about the hosting organization and its field of work / should have a clear idea about his/her role and tasks

iii) has information about the hosting country/city/community

- is aware of that there will be challenges.
- is proactive/doesn't expect to get everything ready from HO
- ready to live in an intercultural context
- is flexible, being open to changes that could happen in the project and to accept that there might be some differences between what he/she expected and the reality of the project
- is open to bring him/herself in and open for learning
- knows the basics of conflict management
- knows what is necessary in case of crises (communication)

(- has a good sending organisation).

Topics/contents the tool should treat

Based on the available official documents the preparation of volunteers should include:

"- the concept of the European Voluntary Service and its place within the Erasmus+ Programme;

- the partners in the EVS framework and their role, i.e. the Sending, Receiving and Coordinating Organisation, the mentor and, where applicable, the National/Executive Agency, SALTO and the European Commission;

- the document "What to expect from EVS";

- reflection on motivation, on fears and expectations, and on goals, including goals for learning;

- practical and technical information on visas, residence permits, legal status as a volunteer, insurance, pocket money and the EVS Agreement;

- intercultural learning

- guidance or at least hints on crisis management;

- the importance and usefulness of getting a Youthpass."

Our list of topics to include, confirmed by survey results is:

- the EVS program (E+ program; EVS program aims; roles; rights and responsibilities of the EVS volunteers)

- the philosophy of volunteering and how the civil sector/NGOs work

- consciousness about motivation; fears and expectations

- volunteering as a learning service (non-formal learning, Youthpass and the key competences)

- problem solving and conflict management skills

- intercultural learning and communication
- how to get info about the project (elaborating the activity agreement, what questions to ask of the hosting organisation, etc.)
- info about the hosting country/city
- insurance (CIGNA insurance and the European Health Insurance Card) and other practicalities
- info on financing/budgeting the pocket money

Survey results suggest that special importance should be given to the topics i) „volunteering as a learning process (non-formal learning, Youthpass and the key competences)”, ii) „consciousness about their own motivation”, iii) „philosophy of volunteering and how the civil sector/NGOs work, adequate service for the hosting organisation, working for local communities”, and iv) „problem solving and conflict management skills”, offering sending organizations ready means and methods to treat these issues and make volunteers reflect about them.

When creating the module on interculturality we must pay attention to not being too theoretical/abstract and link materials to everyday life and to possible experiences volunteers may have.

We intend to create a general tool without country specific parts, but the topic of “information about the hosting country” – which is considered a very important part of preparation by volunteers - can still be included in form of questions (what to ask/find out about your hosting country/reality).

Similarly, there is a great need on the side of the volunteers for concrete details about the hosting projects, which our tool, being a universal tool for all volunteers, can answer only partly. Obviously, we cannot give details on each and every hosting project, however, we can focus on making volunteers get and proceed information effectively (providing volunteers with questions to ask and motivating them to communicate with their hosting organisations and with ex/other volunteers to clarify their doubts).

According to the survey results, contact with other/ex volunteers is another recurring need of volunteers. To respond to it, we should create some interactive surface in our tool that makes it possible for volunteers to communicate with each other/with ex-volunteers; we can also include tips and advice from ex-volunteers as fix text/video message.

Competence tests can also be included, as most volunteers seem to be interested in it.

The form/technical details

As to the form, just as usual, there are opposing needs (as much information as possible vs. as simple as possible; serious like a university site vs. playful, with quizzes; obligatory parts vs. nothing is

obligatory) that we will have to balance. The most important recommendation is that we should create an easy to use, well-structured tool.

What do you prefer? (vol. questionnaire Q9)

simple one-off series of tasks, quizzes, questionnaires of your choice, without logging in and the ability to return and review your data 40.00%
34

signing in and working on tasks and quizzes within your account with more structure and evaluation options 56.47%
48

As there is a relatively small difference between the percentages reached by the two options, it is advisable to create a tool which is possible to use also without registration, but may require logging in for advanced features.

According to survey results, most volunteers (89%) indicated desktop computer as the main platform where they would use the tool. In any case, 42% of the respondents would still use the tool (also) on their smartphones, so we believe that responsiveness (mobile-compatibility) is important.

The supplementary nature of our tool

It is important to emphasize that - though we are aiming to create a rather comprehensive tool that can be used by volunteers autonomously, - for a thorough preparation the participation of the sending (and hosting) organisation will still be necessary.

Off-line preparation should focus especially on the following needs of volunteers which have appeared in the survey, but which cannot be answered by our tool:

- binding between the participating organisations and the volunteer, making volunteers feel secure, building trust and providing emotional support (eventually also creating a supporting group feeling between several volunteers)
 - discussing project specific details (info on the hosting country and the project activities), providing practical, task oriented preparation (e.g. teaching games or making volunteers visit a nursery if they are going to work with children, etc.)
 - support with using the tool: motivating volunteers to use it, discussion of learnings and clarification of any doubts resulting from on-line activities, providing additional information based on the volunteers' individual needs.
-

i) SO questionnaire Q4

What are the main topics the preparation involves?

Detailed answers:

EVS infokit, AA, insurance scheme, intercultural shock and resilience, fears expectations and contribution, youth pass. During meetings face to face (not always possible due to distance) we also use a methodology inspired to competences assessment

Expectations, Cultural differences, language and conflict resolution

rights and responsibilities of EVS organizations and volunteers, crisis management, insurance details, cultural shock and adapting to a new home, setting up standards of communication while on EVS, enhancing trust and relationship

What to expect from EVS, communication, financial rules, practical arrangements, their tasks, our support, risks and conflicts.

organisational matter as insurance, right, rules, structures and duties of the EVS – how the programme is working and who is responsible for what. time for reflection and find out more about their motivation thinking about difficult situations and how to solve problems (type of conflict training) intercultural training visit of an ex-EVS volunteer

Presentation of EVS program Expectations of the exchange year Experiences of a returnee in a different culture Role of the volunteer Expectations of different parties towards volunteering Volunteer's rights and duties Conflict management: Solving as a group two "typical" "problematic situations in the voluntary host placement (drama method) Health, safety, insurance cultural adaptation process the meaning of intercultural learning and are aware of the ongoing intercultural learning process on crisis management; Youthpass

Volunteering in general; lifestyle, according to the specific project; networking; concrete and ethic rules of EVS; communication; conflict management

Presentation of EVS programme What to do before, during and after the programme Youth pass, insurance, discounted card, language course What to pack, planning holidays Health & safety Adapting to the new environment Any questions they might have

What is EVS, who is who at programme, info about the training cycle, about the work, about some apps that they can use during their EVS, what they can wait from EVS, and some info about Cigna and Youthpass

Work related preparation, cultural diversity, mapping learning

erasmus+, EVS info kit, insurance, intercultural learning, conflict resolution

EVS in general, activity agreement, rights and duties, activities, responsible persons, support, culture shock

General about EVS, insurance, culture shock

evs guidelines (charter), key competences, expectations and fears, coping strategies, previous volunteering experiences if any, intercultural adaptation, task of the volunteer, practicalities (travel, insurance, etc.)

Erasmus+, specific EVS project, fears, expectations and contributions of volunteer, Activity Agreement, rights and responsibilities of the volunteer, HO, SO, CO, insurance, pocket money, mentor, food allowance, conflict resolution, ...

tolerance

Volunteerism EVS Expectations Concerns Intercultural learning Relationships Administrative issues

- explaining and checking understanding of all roles in evs project, rights and duties of every role - preparing activity agreement and checking understanding of all its parts, special focus on working tasks and learning goals - arranging logistic (insurance, communication, traveling, documentation ...)

general informations: rights and responsibilities, food, accommodation, pocket money, administration

What should we wait for AGH YouthPass certification EVS insurance plan Voluntary agreement

Living as an EVSers, reading and discussing the activity agreement

Practicalities about the evs project (accommodation, food, , what to expect, etc,...), Information about the country and organization, youthpass, volunteering rights and duties, etc...

- Expectations - Rights and responsibilities - Cultural Shock - Youthpass - Fears - Youthreporter.eu - Good tips - Intercultural learning - Conflict management

Rights and duties of the volunteer; Cigna insurance; Role of the involved NGOs; role of the mentor and the tutor; activities; tasks of the volunteer; pocket money, food allowance and lodging.

We go through the EVS infokit and we talk about EVS in general (rights, responsibilities), insurance, what to do in case of crisis, cultural shock. We also provide a packing list and tips from former EVS volunteers.

Budget and time management, risk management, volunteering (duties and responsibilities), cultural differences etc

All technical details connected to EVS, life and work, language support, motivation of volunteer

Hopes & fears, objectives, competences, missions, intercultural learning

About EVS, logistics (pocket money, insurance, language, working environment, Activity Agreement, about hosting organisation), expectations, motivation, non-formal education.

Concept of volunteering / The EVS program in general / Rights and responsibilities of different actors in EVS projects/ Intercultural learning and culture shock/ The hosting organization / Personal project planning / the kind of activities ... etc

1. Motivation and expectations of the volunteer 2. Partners involved (sending and hosting organisation + the volunteer) and their rights and responsibilities, 3. Conflict resolving, 4. A talk with a current EVS volunteer 5. Logistic arrangements, 6. Questions

- fears and expectation - conflicts mediation (with the org, with other volunteers) -cultural choc -interculturality - health, insurance and administrative stuff

housing, money, living and working conditions

Cultural differences, shared accommodation conditions, self-confidence, volunteering principles, team work, self-oriented learning, language, Youthpass

Preparation for living abroad with people from other countries. The cultural differences and the language barrier.

Theoretical aspects, actors of EVS projects, responsibilities and rights of all sides involved, insurance, visa, activity agreement, working hours, non-formal education process.

what is EVS, duties and rights; we're discovering country and culture together; we're discussing the problems that volunteer could have and solutions, expectations and fears

- Getting to know the sending organization if the volunteer has not been involved in any activity before - Going through the agreement and the programme - Sharing experiences of previous volunteers - Giving tips and tricks

Cultural differences, potential problems with the other EVS vols or with HO.

The training for the future EVS volunteers whose projects are already confirmed includes: expectations and fears about EVS project, info about Erasmus+, EVS, roles in EVS project, financial aspects, insurance, conflict management, cultural shock, useful tips, advice from ex EVS volunteers, Youthpass, any other practical info in case the HO wants me to address specific issues, concerning the project.

Administrative, follow-up, intercultural and practical issues

intercultural learning, conflict management, group dynamics, communication, rights and responsibilities, practical tips and presentations from former volunteers

what is EVS about, EVS chart, rules, cultural differences, support

Explanation of the experience from the most humanistic point of view.

ii) HO questionnaire Q14

How would you define a „well- prepared” EVS volunteer? What should be the ideal outcome of EVS pre-departure preparation activities?

Detailed answers:

- - The volunteer should come with a good attitude, and not so exigent because he/she is "the king". - He should be ready to face some new situations, related to things that he/she does not do usually, like preparing the menu, new type of food, working in teams, cleaning and respecting the place..which usually are advised in advance for most of them. - He/she should be more flexible in the program. Should not be a problem that the activities should change in some ways (ej: if the children do not like them). - They should accept the rules about smoking and drinking alcohol in the place of the activities. No exception to do it in the place. - Even if they do not like the activities too much, they should try to be involved and open to share her/his fears.
- They need to know not only their rights and responsibilities, they need to know that even if is not a job, they have a compromise with the project and they have to fulfill it.
- Knows EVS in general, his rights and obligations, role of different partners, knows what to do with Cigna insurance, has identified some personal ideas he is interested to work on and cultural things he is willing to try once in the foreign country, is motivated to learn and develop and to map and share his learning.
- When they know about the programme they are participating in. When they are aware of the challeges.
- A volunteer that knows what is volunteering, what is EVS, why they are doing it, knows how to act in a new place, knows hot to learn,
- has a clear vision about the evs principles and practicalities, is prepared to be creative and proactive - has clarified aims for the project and in the meantime poseses flexibility towards the upcoming tasks and conditions.

- Well-prepared EVS volunteer would know what EVS means. S/he would understand what are main goals of the EVS. S/he would have all necessary information about the insurance, rights and responsibilities and would what on what kind of project s/he is going.
- Vol aware of his morivation, who knows what he wants to learn
- motivated and enthusiastic, knowing about communication
- Realistic expectations a volunteer who is willing to adjust to a new environment flexibility a volunteer ready to embrace a new experience a volunteer with some knowledge of their host community
- volunteer was co-creating activity agreement, understands and agrees with it
- She/He should know the rights and responsibilities, the essence of the volunteering programme, being motivated
- He will accept that the hosting country is not the sending one, he will know some info about language, country and city he will be living. Be aware of the conditions (share bedrooms, accomodation, city life)
- Know abot volunteering, motivated about the project, knows the place where to go,...
- - knowledge about CIGNa and insurance - Youthpass - Cultural Shock
- A volunteer that knows what to expect from the project, knowing his/her rights and responsibilities.
- I am happy if a volunteers * knows about EVS in general (pocket money, insurance, holidays, etc.) * does not expect a 12 months long holiday * knows about cultural shock * knows about cultural differences * knows what is necessary in case of crises (communication) * has a good cooperation with the sending organisation * is open to bring him/herself in and open for learning
- Volunteer who is prepared for all possibilities, motivated volunteer with realistic expectations
- A well prepared EVS volunteer is volunteer that knows basic stuff about the program, check hosting organisation work and show mottivation to work and be EVS volunteer.
- being open to changes that could happen in the project and to accept that there might be some differences between what he expected and the reality of the project
- Understanding the context where the volunteers is coming to, understanding the work they can do for the organisation and learning opportunities the organisation can offer to a volunteer. Understanding the philosophy of EVS.

- The volunteers should know information about EVS program / Should know information about the hosting organization and its field of work / should have a clear idea about their role / information about the country I have a clear idea about their rights and responsibility
- A commitment document to be signed by the future volunteer.
- a good sending organisation
- A volunteer who is ready to face the cultural differences, working styles of the hosting organization, inspired to explore the needs of the local beneficiaries, motivated to talk about specific issues existing in the local community, knowing few words (including different alphabet) of the local language, the main historical and political terms ...
- When he knows the background of the project, when he learned about the place where he goes and about the organization. When he realizes his personal goals for the project.
- Volunteer knows his rights and responsibilities, activity agreement, knows about importance of training cycle, knows about non-formal education process and has clearly defined motivation and aims for the project.
- Motivated volunteer who knows what will be his duties and he already knows what would be his own initiatives. He knows what he wants to get from EVS. He understands that EVS is learning process, he understands that he comes to other country to give not just to get something. He understands that he has to be open and flexible for different kind of situations.
- When the volunteer has a real picture of the hosting organization and what are his/her tasks.
- Aware of cultural differences and respect them, ready to be a team worker, do not expect everything from the HO but search for solutions by him/herself
- For me a well-prepared volunteer is the volunteer who: 1. Understands the philosophy and value of the volunteering on the whole. 2. Speaks the same language with me, concerning the terminology (roles in EVS project, AA etc.). 3. Knows at least basics in conflict management I believe that all the rest depends on the person and can't be changed by the preparation :)
- Aware about his/her rights and responsibilities, ready to be volunteer and to be prepared to live in an intercultural context.
- volunteer knows about EVS (the rules, possibilities, insurance), is motivated, knows that it's not only enjoying the life in foreign country but also that it's about learning
- Flexibility