



Erasmus+ Programme  
EVS INFO KIT  
January 2014

Dear volunteer!

Congratulations for having been selected for participation in the European Voluntary Service (EVS). The next weeks and months might be a life-changing experience for you.

Through your participation in EVS you will get the chance to live in another country, get to know a new culture and a new language. You will meet new friends – within and beyond your Receiving Organisation. You will provide a service to the benefit of your Receiving Organisation and the local community at the same time as you will develop your own personal, social and professional skills.

This Info-Kit will help you prepare for the EVS experience. It gives you important information about what you can expect from your Sending and Receiving Organisation and what they can expect from you. It is meant to complement and support the activities organised by your Sending Organisation to prepare you for EVS. With this regard, it is recommended that you go through and discuss the Info-Kit with the EVS coordinator of the Sending Organisation.

The Info-Kit is composed of the following:

1. "What to expect from EVS": a document providing clear information to volunteers and organisations about what can be expected in general terms before, during and after the European Voluntary Service period;
2. Youthpass in EVS: information about the scope of Youthpass and how to obtain a Youthpass Certificate can be found on the Youthpass website. It is important that both Sending, Receiving and Coordinating Organisations, and the volunteer, are familiar with the information here: <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/for/evs/subpage/>;
3. "EVS insurance plan: guidelines for volunteers": offering detailed information about the insurance scheme provided to all EVS volunteers during their stay abroad in different languages: [http://global.msh-intl.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=93&lang=en](http://global.msh-intl.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=93&lang=en)

4. The EVS Charter: highlighting the roles of EVS Sending, Receiving and Coordinating Organisations as well as the main principles and quality standards of EVS.

It is also important to know about the Erasmus+ Programme Guide (available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf)), which presents the formal definitions and criteria of European Voluntary Service, including the funding rules.

The Info-Kit is among several supporting documents which complements the information in the Programme Guide and provides inputs for improving the quality and successful implementation of an EVS project.

## **Erasmus+**

As you might know, EVS is part of the Erasmus+ Programme – the EU Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport. The programme aims to enhance the skills and competences of young people as well as their active citizenship.

Erasmus+ promotes mobility within and beyond the EU borders. The youth activities under Erasmus+ are based on non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourage the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social or cultural background.

Most volunteers participate in a project granted by National Agencies established in each of the 33 Programme Countries. Depending on the country of residence of the volunteer or on the country where the EVS takes place, the project can also be granted by the Executive Agency located in Brussels.

The National and Executive Agencies are promoting the programme, supporting applicants, managing applications and following-up the projects. In case a serious situation arises, you or the organisations involved may contact the granting agency or the agency of the host country.

There are also eight SALTO Resource Centres, supporting National Agencies and organisations in working with a neighbouring region or a particular thematic. More information about the role of the different programme structures can be found in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

## **EVS**

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) provides young people aged 17-30 with an opportunity to express personal commitment through full-time voluntary activities in a foreign country within or beyond the borders of the European Union.

The European Union offers such an opportunity to young people because volunteering is valued as a non-formal learning experience enhancing volunteers' professional skills and competences, thus contributing to their employability. At the same time, it increases their sense of solidarity,

develops their social skills and promotes active participation in society. It is a win-win situation, where both the volunteer and the community benefit.

The Commission has held a long commitment to supporting volunteering opportunities for young people and mobility across borders. Starting in 1996, the European Voluntary Service has thus far allowed around 70 000 young people to go abroad and gain a life changing experience as a volunteer. During the course of the Erasmus+ programme, many more will get the same opportunity.

We hope that you will take the best from this experience and we wish you the best of luck!

The European Commission



## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM EVS

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

This document is intended for volunteers and organisations involved in EVS. It gives clear information to volunteers and organisations about what can be expected in general terms before, during and after the service period. The document also supports the efforts of organisations, agencies and the European Commission in the area of risk prevention for EVS volunteers.

Each volunteer carries with her/him ideas, expectations, needs and habits that deserve to find a respectful and trustful hosting environment, receptive of individual specificities. At the same time, Sending, Receiving and Coordinating Organisations often devote a great deal of time, energy and resources to set up an EVS project; they can therefore expect that the volunteer shows a similar level of respect for and trust in their commitment to develop activities in their local community.

The main objective of this text is therefore to clarify the role each project partner (including volunteers) should take in jointly creating a 'good' environment for an EVS project.

'What to expect from EVS' provides guidelines on particular aspects of EVS project implementation. These guidelines take into account the great variety of project partners, project formats and fields of service, and they need to be adapted to the very specific environment of each project. The guidelines complement the information given in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide<sup>1</sup> and they form part of the Info-Kit to be given to all volunteers before they leave.

It is strongly recommended that potential volunteers read this document before agreeing to take part in an EVS project.

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<sup>1</sup> In case of inconsistency between the two documents, the information given in the Programme Guide will prevail.

## **2. WHAT TO EXPECT FROM EVS**

### **2.1. Information and communication**

The volunteer has to be informed about the Erasmus+ Programme — its philosophy, aims, priorities and procedures — and how EVS projects are carried out.

Prior to her/his departure, the volunteer must receive clear information about the EVS project, in particular about the tasks to be performed, accommodation, training and support. If the host placement is located in a live-in community, the volunteer must be informed about the rules and conditions that apply in such a community and which relate to her/him.

Prior to her/his departure, the volunteer is responsible for informing the organisations about any circumstances that may influence her/his capability to carry out certain tasks and about any individual special needs. If necessary, she/he should provide accurate information about health-related issues.

The volunteer must inform the Coordinating, Sending and Receiving Organisation about the exact dates of her/his departure and arrival. This information should be provided well in advance before the start of the service.

### **2.2. Financial and administrative rules**

The volunteer is to sign a volunteering agreement with the Sending and Receiving organisation. More information about the content of this agreement can be found in the Programme Guide.

The volunteer must also read, agree on and sign the EVS Agreement together with the Coordinating, Sending and Receiving Organisations. In addition, the volunteer must read the grant application approved by the National/Executive Agency for her/his project. Each partner (including the volunteer) is responsible for respecting the project details as set out in the volunteering agreement and the EVS Agreement.

Participation in EVS is free of charge for the volunteer. Except for a possible contribution to travel costs and expenses the volunteer encounters not directly linked to the project, the volunteer must not be charged, either fully or partially, directly or indirectly, for taking part in an EVS project. This implies that the volunteer is entitled to one return travel ticket between the sending country and the host country, and to insurance, food (meals or food money should be provided also on free days and during holiday periods) and local transport.

During the entire volunteering period, including while on vacation, the volunteer is also entitled to a monthly or weekly allowance (pocket money). The amounts are as stated in the Programme Guide. The pocket money must not be aimed at covering costs related to the implementation of the project (for example local transport or food).

The volunteer has to be covered, throughout the voluntary service period, by the obligatory EVS group insurance plan set up by the European Commission. The volunteer must read carefully the insurance-related information found online (the link to which can be found in the welcome letter).

The volunteer can request and must receive help from the organisations in obtaining a visa, if so required by the legislation of the host country. If asked to do so in due time, the National/Executive Agency or SALTO can also issue letters supporting the volunteer's visa application.

The volunteer is entitled to receive a Youthpass certificate, attesting her/his participation in EVS and the experience and skills she/he has acquired during the period of service (more info at [www.youthpass.eu](http://www.youthpass.eu)).

Upon her/his return, the volunteer must complete a final report.

### **2.3. Positive attitudes in EVS**

The volunteer should take an active role in setting up her/his EVS project together with the organisations, and this should be encouraged by the Sending, Receiving and Coordinating Organisation.

The volunteer must respect the rules and the organisational structure of the Receiving Organisation. The volunteer must also abide by the laws in force in the host country. The volunteer must keep the Receiving Organisation informed about her/his whereabouts during the period of service.

While abroad, the volunteer should give the Sending Organisation regular feedback on her/his experience and must evaluate the overall project with the Sending Organisation upon her/his return.

### **2.4. Practical arrangements**

The Receiving Organisation must take care of the practical arrangements in order to support and guide the volunteer from the moment of his/her arrival in the host country. The volunteer is entitled to free board and lodging. Her/his accommodation must remain available for her/him throughout the entire service period, including holidays. The Receiving/Coordinating Organisation must ensure that the volunteer can live in safe and clean accommodation and can eat sufficient and healthy food.

The volunteer must take good care of the accommodation that has been provided for her/him.

The volunteer is entitled to two consecutive free days per week (unless arranged differently in mutual agreement between the volunteer and the organisation and explicitly stated in the volunteering agreement) and two days of holiday per month.

Vacation periods and weekly rest days have to be agreed between the Receiving Organisation and the volunteer.

## **2.5. Support, training and meetings**

Prior to departure, the volunteer must receive the EVS Info-Kit and be adequately prepared by the Sending/Coordinating Organisation for the stay abroad, according to her/his needs and in line with the EVS Training and Evaluation Cycle guidelines and minimum quality standards.

Upon arrival in the host country volunteers in projects with a duration of more than two months have the right and obligation to take part in an on-arrival training session. Volunteers whose period of service lasts six months or more also have the right and obligation to take part in a mid-term evaluation session.

The volunteer should receive appropriate task-related support and guidance to enable her/him to carry out the agreed tasks.

If online language courses are provided as part of the project support from the Commission, the Coordinating organisation must ensure a proper follow-up and support to the volunteer in starting the course as early as possible and completing it. The same applies when funding is provided for language learning. A number of volunteers will take language tests before and after mobility. The final language test should be taken just before the completion of the Youthpass, at the end of mobility. The Receiving organisation has to oversee that the final test is taken by those volunteers who are given access to the testing scheme.

In addition, the Receiving/Coordinating Organisation supports other language training, free of charge for the volunteer. The training can be formal or informal and the format, duration and frequency will depend on the needs of the volunteer, her/his project tasks and the resources available to the organisation.

For personal support, the volunteer has a mentor with whom she/he will have regular meetings throughout the service period. The mentor must be appointed by the Receiving Organisation, and must not be the volunteer's supervisor or be otherwise directly involved in the volunteer's daily activities.

The mentor should help the volunteer to get integrated within the organisation, the project and the local community. The mentor should help the volunteer with administrative issues, if necessary.

The volunteer must accept the role of the mentor as the person responsible for her/his well-being and must attend the regular meetings organised by the mentor.

At the end of the project, the volunteer should receive help from the Sending Organisation in evaluating the participation in EVS so as to gain the maximum benefit from her/his experience. If asked for, the volunteer should also get help in re-adjusting to life in her/his home country and for guidance in personal projects.

After completing her/his period of service, the volunteer should take part in the Annual EVS Event organised by the National Agency.

The volunteer can also contact the relevant National Agencies or the Executive Agency<sup>2</sup> asking for any kind of advice and support (on accreditation, insurance, visa support, crisis management, etc.).

## **2.6. Volunteer's tasks**

The volunteering conditions must respect the volunteer's personal health, safety and dignity, and be in line with the national laws of the host country.

EVS must be full-time service for the volunteer. Her/his project activities (including language and other training activities relating to the project) should take up at least 30 and not more than 38 hours per week.

The volunteer must not carry out routine tasks that would normally be carried out by paid employees. The volunteer must not carry out high-responsibility tasks alone or unsupervised.

The volunteer must not be solely responsible for the individual care of vulnerable persons (babies or children; ill, elderly or disabled people, etc.) on a day-to-day basis.

The volunteer must not teach or provide teaching assistance as part of formal education.

The volunteer should be encouraged to use her/his own ideas, creativity and experience to develop his/her own projects or activities relating to the work of the Receiving Organisation.

Any changes in the project and in the volunteer's tasks, areas of responsibility, support and training must remain in line with the general set-up of the agreed and approved project and must be agreed between the volunteer and the Receiving Organisation.

## **2.7. Risk and conflict management**

The volunteer must not act in any way that could put others or her/himself at risk of being injured. If a conflict situation arises, the volunteer may ask her/his mentor to facilitate communication between the volunteer and the local environment or Receiving Organisation.

The mentor should be able to provide an independent and objective evaluation of the situation. If conflict arises between the volunteer and the mentor, the volunteer can ask to get another person appointed as her/his mentor.

In the event of a conflict situation, the volunteer should be supported and must cooperate actively with the Coordinating, Sending and Receiving Organisations to avoid communication problems.

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<sup>2</sup> For contact details to National Agencies and the Executive Agency please consult [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/national-agencies\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/national-agencies_en.htm)



If a serious incident occurs, the volunteer can expect the mentor to establish and maintain appropriate contact with the Sending Organisation, her/his next of kin (if required or requested) and the insurance company, if necessary.

In the event of a serious incident or conflict situation that cannot be resolved in other ways, the volunteer can leave the project. This, however, should always be the last resort and should be agreed with the National/Executive Agency.



## **EVS CHARTER**

The EVS charter describes the role of EVS organisations acting as sending, receiving or coordinating organisation and defines the main principles of EVS and the minimum quality standards that must be respected within an EVS Activity. Here is a suggestion on how the roles and tasks of organisations involved in EVS could be shared (in some cases these roles must be compulsorily performed by a given organisation).

### **COORDINATING ORGANISATION:**

- submits the application and bears the financial and administrative responsibility for the entire project towards the National Agency or the Executive Agency;
- coordinates the project in cooperation with all sending and receiving organisations;
- distributes the EVS grant between all sending and receiving organisations;
- ensures that the volunteer(s) receive(s) the EVS Info Kit and attend(s) the full EVS Training and Evaluation Cycle;
- provides support to the volunteer(s) it places in the receiving organisation(s);
- carries out all or some of the administrative tasks of the sending or receiving organisation(s) involved in the project;
- ensures, with the sending and receiving organisations, that each volunteer is in possession of the European Health Insurance Card (if applicable) and is covered by the obligatory EVS Insurance plan foreseen in the Erasmus+ Programme;
- arranges, with the sending and receiving organisations, a visa for the volunteer(s) who needs it. The National/Executive Agencies can issue visa support letters, if needed;
- provides support for the learning/Youthpass process. Completes, with the sending and receiving organisations and the volunteer, and issues, a Youthpass Certificate for those volunteers who want to receive it at the end of their EVS.

## **SENDING ORGANISATION:**

### Preparation

- helps the volunteer(s) to find and contact a receiving organisation;
- provides adequate preparation for the volunteer(s) before departure, according to the individual needs and learning opportunities of the volunteer(s) and in line with the Volunteer Training Guidelines and Minimum Quality Standards of the European Commission;
- ensures, in cooperation with the receiving organisation, that the volunteer receives support in carrying out language preparation (if applicable, support to carry out the online language course and assessments provided by the Commission);
- ensures the participation of the volunteer(s) in the pre-departure session, if organised by the National Agency or SALTO.

### Contact during the voluntary activity

- keeps in contact with the volunteer(s) and with the receiving organisation(s) during the project.

### Upon volunteer's return

- provides support to volunteer(s) to help reintegrate them into their home community;
- gives volunteers the opportunity to exchange and share experiences and learning outcomes;
- encourages the involvement of the volunteer(s) in dissemination and exploitation of results and learning outcomes;
- provides guidance regarding further education, training or employment opportunities;
- ensures the participation of the volunteers in the annual EVS event organised by the National Agency in their country.

## **RECEIVING ORGANISATION:**

### Mentor

- identifies a mentor who is responsible for providing to the volunteer(s):
  - personal support,
  - support to carry out the online language course and assessments provided by the Commission (if applicable)
  - support to carry out a self-reflection on the learning outcomes of the EVS activity (through the use of Youthpass).

### Task-related support

- offers supervision and guidance to the volunteer(s) through experienced staff.

## Personal support

- provides personal support and support during the learning/Youthpass process to volunteer(s);
- gives the volunteer(s) the opportunity to integrate into the local community, to meet other young people, to socialise, to participate in leisure activities, etc.;
- encourages contact with other EVS volunteers whenever possible.

## EVS training and evaluation cycle and language support

- ensures the participation of the volunteer(s) in the on-arrival training and mid-term evaluation organised by the NA or SALTO;
- arranges language learning opportunities and support to volunteers undertaking language courses.

## Principles of EVS

- ensuring universal accessibility to EVS: receiving organisations cannot specify that volunteer(s) should be of a specific ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, political opinion, etc.; neither can they require qualifications or a certain educational level in order to select the volunteer(s);
- offering to the volunteer(s) the opportunity to carry out a well-defined set of tasks, allowing some of the volunteer's ideas, creativity and experience to be integrated;
- identifying clear learning opportunities for the volunteer(s).

## Accommodation and food

- providing suitable accommodation and meals (or a food allowance, covering also the holiday period) to the volunteer(s).

## Local transport

- ensures that means of local transport are available for the volunteer(s).

## Allowance

- gives the due allowance to the volunteer(s) on a weekly or monthly basis.