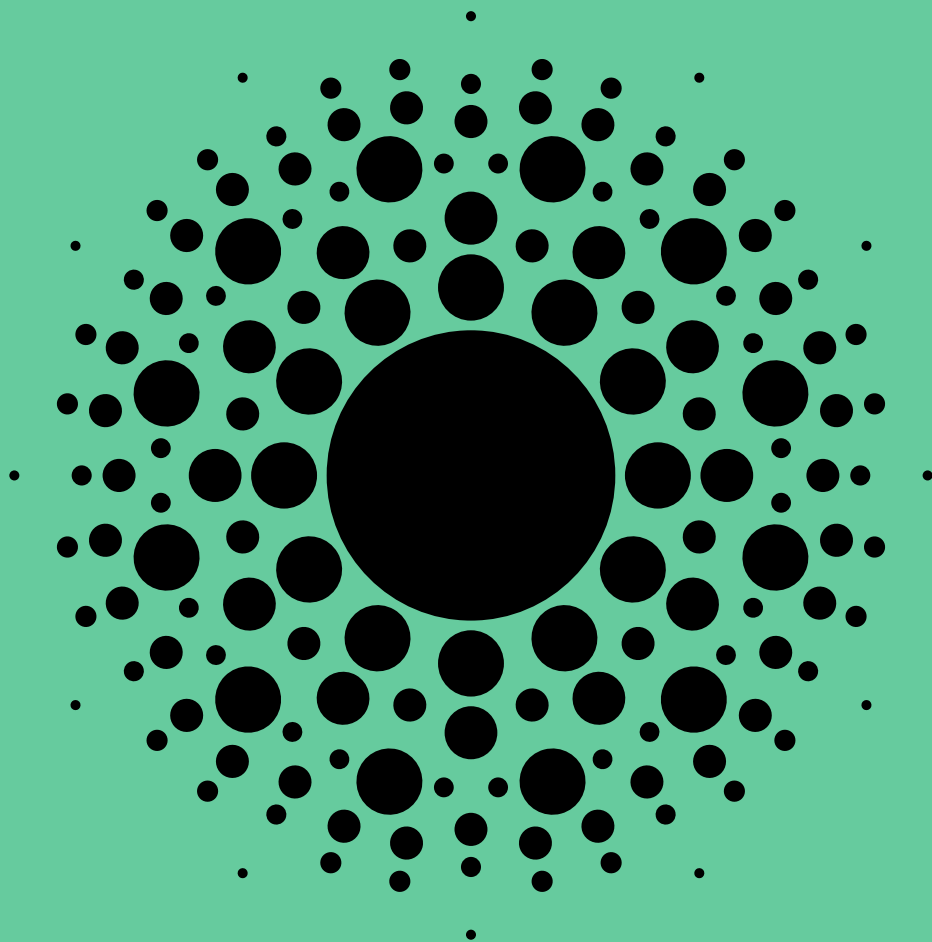


The impact of European Voluntary Service projects on local communities

Transnational report



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Transnational report
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Contents

5	The European Voluntary Service
8	Research rationale
10	Research design and methodology
12	Challenges and limitations of the study
13	Transnational report – key findings
20	Country-specific findings
24	Case studies in Poland
52	Case studies in Hungary
64	Case studies in Lithuania

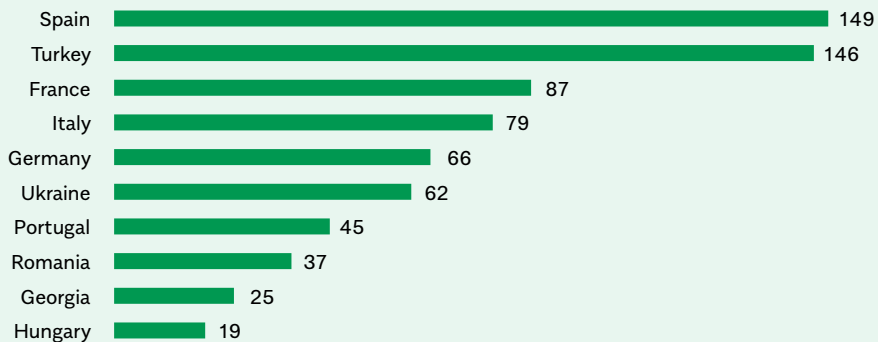
The European Voluntary Service¹

The European Voluntary Service (in the present report also referred to as “the EVS”) constitutes a part of the Erasmus+ programme and allows young people aged 17–30 to express their personal commitment through unpaid and full-time voluntary service for up to 12 months in another country within or outside the European Union. Young volunteers are given the opportunity to contribute to the daily work of organisations (referred in the present report to as “the hosting organisations”) dealing with youth information and policies, young people’s personal and socio-educational development, civic engagement, social care, inclusion of the disadvantaged, environment, non-formal education programmes, ICTs and media literacy, culture and creativity, development cooperation, etc. Young people with fewer opportunities can receive additional support to enable their participation and would also be allowed to go on EVS for a shorter duration of time (from 2 weeks and up). The participation in an EVS activity is free of charge for volunteers, with the exception of a possible contribution for travel costs (if the Erasmus+ grant does not fully cover these costs) and additional expenses not linked to the implementation of the activity. The essential costs for volunteers’ participation in the EVS activity are covered by the Erasmus+ grant or through other means afforded by the participating organisations.

The European Voluntary Service, within the Erasmus+ Youth Programme is one of its most popular actions in Poland, Hungary and Lithuania. In 2014 and 2015 Polish organisations hosted 872 long term EVS volunteers from 40 different countries, mostly from Spain (149), Turkey (146), France (87), Italy (79) and Germany (66). At the same time, the young Poles are very eager to do their voluntary service abroad: in 2014 and 2015 as much as 529 of them went abroad to implement an EVS project.

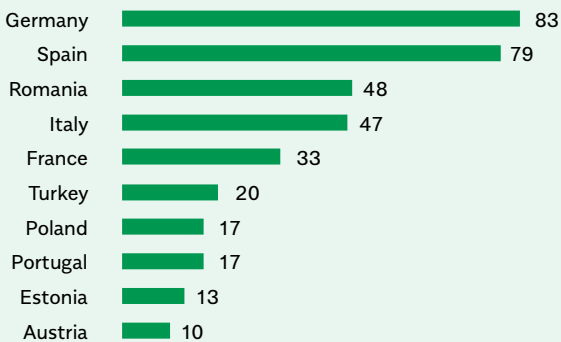
1. Based on the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, version 2 (2016): 07/01/2016

Figure 1. The number of EVS volunteers hosted in Poland in 2014 and 2015 (by 10 most popular countries of origin).



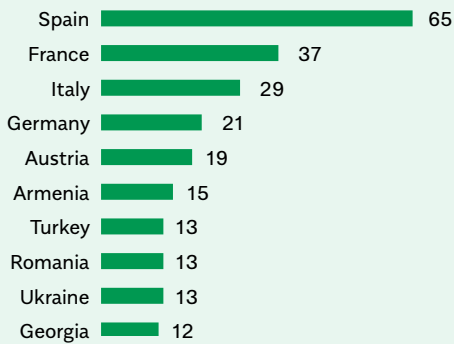
In 2015 and 2016 Hungary hosted 432 foreign EVS volunteers, mostly from Germany (83), Spain (79) and Romania (48). At the same time 28 Hungarian volunteers went abroad to carry out their service.

Figure 2. The number of EVS volunteers hosted in Hungary in 2014 and 2015 (by 10 most popular countries of origin).



In 2015 and 2016 Lithuania hosted a total number of 358 foreign EVS volunteers. 65 of them were Spanish, 37 French and 29 Italian.

Figure 3. The number of EVS volunteers hosted in Lithuania in 2014 and 2015 (by 10 most popular countries of origin).



In all three countries taking part in the research the number of hosted volunteers is significantly higher than the number of volunteers sent abroad.

Research rationale

The RAY research (Research-based analysis and monitoring of Youth in action and Erasmus+ Youth programmes)² results indicate that European Voluntary Service projects have a significant impact on local environment in which they are implemented³. According to RAY 2014 study, 95,1% of EVS project leaders claimed that the local community had showed interest in the EVS project carried out in their town or community. Moreover, 92,6% of project leaders said that the EVS project was perceived as enriching by the local community and over 91% of leaders also admitted that, in their opinion, the local community had been directly involved in EVS project activities. Hence, the European Voluntary Service could be the most (or one of the most) influential activity of Youth in action and Erasmus+ programmes as far as the impact on local communities is concerned.

Basing on the above-mentioned findings, the present research aims at conducting a qualitative analysis in order to observe and explore the impact of long term EVS projects (and foreign volunteers who implement them) on the local environments where they are implemented, including in particular the target groups of hosting organisations as well as the local communities. The research aims at answering the following questions:

- What are, in general terms, the results of a long term EVS project?
- What is the influence of long term EVS projects and volunteers on the target groups of the hosting organisations?
- What is the influence of long term EVS projects and volunteers on the local communities in which they live and work?

2. RAY stands for „Research-based analysis of Youth in action and Erasmus+ Youth – it is a transnational research project implemented by 29 National Agencies of Erasmus+ Programme (as of 2016) and coordinated by the University of Innsbruck.

3. Based on: Fennes, H., Gadinger, S., Hagleitner, W., RAY transnational analysis, Innsbruck, 2014

Figure 4. Effects of the project on the local environment – by project types in the Youth in Action programme (2007–2013). YE – Youth Exchanges, YI – Youth Initiatives, YD – Youth Democracy projects, EVS – European Voluntary Service, T&N – Training and Networking projects, SD – Structured Dialogue projects. Answers of project leaders.

N=1 215 (total of percentages “somewhat true and very true”)	YE	YI	YD	EVS	T&N	SD	Total
The local environment/community was actively involved in the project	85,1	89,9	86,4	91,1	76,1	90,0	85,9
The project was perceived as enrichment by the local environment/community	89,1	93,0	90,9	92,6	81,7	96,6	89,5
The local environment/community became more aware of the concerns and interests of young people	80,8	92,8	86,4	84,3	66,7	88,9	83,6
The intercultural dimension was appreciated by the local environment/community	93,4	65,9	90,9	93,1	86,9	76,0	88,6
The local environment/community became more committed to the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities	58,9	70,8	47,6	67,3	56,2	62,5	64,2
The European dimension was received with interest by the local environment/community	86,6	65,8	86,4	89,7	78,6	88,9	84,3
The local environment/community showed interest in similar projects in the future	90,5	91,8	90,9	95,1	79,5	96,4	90,4
The local environment/community expressed readiness to support similar activities in the future	85,9	92,5	90,5	89,9	74,1	88,9	86,7

Moreover, the research helps to picture the expectations of both hosting organisations and the volunteers themselves towards the long-term European Voluntary Service projects and to observe whether these expectations have been fulfilled or not.

The present research project has been implemented by 3 National Agencies of the Erasmus+ Programme, from Poland, Hungary and Lithuania and has allowed to compare national realities, find similarities and differences in regard to local impact of EVS projects.

The research was financed under Transnational Cooperation Activities (TCA) scheme of the Erasmus+ programme.

Research design and methodology

In order to be able to discover and to describe the EVS projects' influence, the three National Agencies of the Erasmus+ Programme responsible for the present study selected to the sample three to four EVS hosting organisations each, according to the following criteria:

- At least one unexperienced EVS hosting organisation per country – that has not hosted any volunteers yet or that has very little experience with volunteers (has hosted volunteers for not longer than 3 years);
- All organisations located in communities up to 50 000 inhabitants;
- All organisations working rather with/for local communities than implementing nationwide projects;
- All projects subject to the study came from the 3rd round of 2014 applications (where the volunteer(s) arrive to the organisation at the end of January 2015 at the earliest);
- The projects selected (hosting volunteer in a specific Hosting Organisation) for the research involved not more than 4 EVS volunteers and its main activities were dedicated to local community;
- The research was carried out for long-term EVS projects only, lasting longer than 6 months.

There were no specific requirements as to the geographical location of the hosting organisations. It was therefore allowed that more than one organisation from the same region was selected for the study. Each National Agency selected 3–4 hosting organisations to take part in the research, in total the research was carried out in ten organisations hosting long term EVS volunteers.

In order to explore the research questions the research design was based on a combination of the following qualitative and quantitative methods:

- Individual in-depth interviews – allowed to picture the profile of the hosting organisations and to put the EVS project in the context of their activities. Moreover, the individual in-depth

- interviews helped to define the expectations of both hosting organisations and volunteers towards the EVS project.
- Focus group interviews – allowed to deepen the information gathered during the individual in-depth interviews, for both hosting organisations, volunteers and local communities.
 - Participatory observation – was used in order to notice the volunteers' influence on target groups of hosting organisations, especially in cases where no in-depth interviews were possible to conduct (babies or people with intellectual disability).
 - Online survey – allowed EVS volunteers to anonymously express their opinion on the project, after it had finished.

Figure 5. The research project consisted of three phases and used the following research methods:

1
PHASE 1
 Ex-ante research
*(carried out before
 volunteer's arrival)*

Time: October ———→ December 2014

Aim: To provide a general description of the hosting organisation, its target group as well as local community where the EVS project will be implemented; to find out what are the expectations and fears towards volunteers and EVS program in general.

Research group: Representatives of hosting organisations; representatives of other similar organisations from the city, not hosting EVS volunteers

Research method: Individual and group in-depth interviews

2
PHASE 2
 Mid-term research
*(carried out during
 volunteer's work)*

Time: March ———→ June 2015

Aim: To carry out in-depth analysis of volunteers' tasks and their involvement with the target group of the organisation and local community; to get to know how the EVS project is perceived by the members of the local community and the volunteers.

Research group: The volunteers, the hosting organisation's target group representatives and hosting organisation representatives

Research method: Individual in-depth interviews and participatory observation

3
PHASE 3
 Ex-ante research
*(carried out before
 volunteer's arrival)*

Time: November 2015

Aim: To picture the situation in the organisation and in the local community after the volunteer's departure; to grasp what were the changes in organisation and community because of EVS and the presence of volunteers; to find out what were the challenges and success of implementing EVS and what were the benefits of EVS for organisation and local community.

Research group: The hosting organisation's target group representatives and hosting organisation representatives; the volunteer

Research method: Individual and group in-depth interviews; online survey

Challenges and limitations of the study

The present research is to be treated as a case study – the findings concern the surveyed organisations and communities only and should not be expanded to the entire population of hosting organisations and their local communities in all three countries. However, several similar trends have been observed in all hosting organisations (see the next chapter – Transnational report – key findings).

It is also worth mentioning that the National Agencies found it challenging to select the organisations fulfilling all the criteria mentioned in the part 3. This might be due to the fact that in many cases, due to its complexity and long-term character, EVS projects are implemented by relatively experienced organisations and the programme sees very few newcomers. Furthermore, basing on the the experience of the National Agencies, European Voluntary Service projects tend to be implemented rather in big cities than in small towns or in the countryside.



Transnational report – key findings

The present chapter outlines the key findings of case studies conducted between 2014 and 2016 in Poland, Hungary and Lithuania (the detailed description of all ten case studies have been also included in the report – pages 24–64). In order to illustrate the overall influence of EVS projects and volunteers on local communities, the present report focuses on the profile and motivation of the hosting organisation and of the EVS volunteers, volunteers' tasks and responsibilities as well as on the hosting organisations' approach towards the volunteers. The combination of these elements helps to reveal the picture of the overall influence of foreign volunteers and their European Voluntary Service projects on local communities in which they are implemented.

Hosting organisations' profile

The research sample included three hosting organisations from Poland, four from Lithuania and three from Hungary. Some of them have already hosted EVS volunteers in the past, but most of them have little experience in long term EVS projects. Some of the organisations were also experienced in working with local volunteers and most of the them had implemented some international projects (but not always dedicated strictly to young people) prior to carrying out the EVS project in question. All the organisations provided some sort of services for the local community and for the majority of them youth was the main target group.

Volunteers' profile

The volunteers' profile is very similar in all three countries. In most of the surveyed cases EVS volunteers were people in their mid or late twenties. Some of them wished to gain international experience, others decided to leave their country to take part in an EVS project because they were not certain what they wish to do in the future. Some of them even thought that there were no perspectives for them

in their home countries and this was their prime motivation for EVS. Most of the EVS volunteers who took part in the study chose the particular EVS project because they were interested in its topic.

Motivation for hosting EVS volunteers

Most of the surveyed organisations decided to host EVS volunteers because they wanted to develop and needed a sustainable and regular assistance in their functioning. Many of them had contacts with other organisations who had hosted EVS volunteers and had a positive feedback about it. Several organisations admitted also that EVS volunteers are a source of fresh ideas, they make everyday life more interesting and that they count a lot on the volunteers' own sense of initiative. Some of the organisations claimed that hosting a foreign volunteer could improve their image in the local environment.

In several cases surveyed, a clash of expectations was observed: openness of volunteer vs closeness of the local society. EVS volunteer was expected to be open and pro-active, however needed to work for a relatively closed society that very often operated with stereotypes. This could lead to potential clashes between volunteers and the local community. The overall effect of the project, both for the volunteer and for the local community depended therefore to a large extent on the openness of the volunteer.

Volunteers' tasks

EVS volunteers were expected to help in everyday functioning of the organisation and work for the local community. Some of the hosting organisations also cooperated with other local ones (for example cultural centers, kindergartens, schools or youth centers), where the EVS volunteers also worked (some even on a regular basis). Volunteers worked, among others, with young and elderly people, handicapped persons and tourists, depending on the current needs and target groups of the hosting organisations. They very often provided classes of their mother tongues as well as English, mostly for local young people. Many of the volunteers who took part in the research were expected to come up with their own ideas and all the hosting organisations stressed the importance of volunteers' own initiative and engagement. In general, the hosting organisations were satisfied with volunteers' work and underlined that they could rely and count on them on a regular basis.

Volunteers' influence on the target group of the organisation and on local communities

The research proved that EVS projects have a significant impact on local communities in which they are implemented (as local community the authors of the research understand: the hosting organisation, the target groups of the hosting organisation as well as all other inhabitants of the city/village where the organisation is located).

First of all, the foreign volunteers influence the hosting organisations and their workers. They not only support them in their everyday tasks, but also contribute to their professional development. Hosting organisation workers learn how to function in a multicultural and multilingual environment, learn how to plan and delegate tasks (often for the first time in their career) and develop foreign language skills. The workers also underlined that thanks to the presence of EVS volunteers they had a chance to take a different perspective on the work and mission of their organisation. Moreover, the presence of EVS volunteers, in most of the cases, contributed to improving the image and capacity of the hosting organisations. Their representatives claimed that thanks to the presence of foreign volunteers they are able to attract more people and cause more regional interest, for example among local authorities or media. In two cases the presence of EVS volunteers helped to attract more local volunteers to the hosting organisation.

Secondly, the EVS volunteers have a significant impact on the target groups of the hosting organisations. They are present in their lives for almost one year, bringing their culture and language closer to people, who otherwise, would have a small chance to spend time with a foreigner. The representatives of the target groups (young people, people with disabilities, the unemployed) many times reported that the presence of the EVS volunteer changed their perception of certain issues and had a positive influence on them. On the other hand, in some cases, the EVS volunteers had a very limited and unsustainable influence on the target groups of the hosting organisations (for example on tourists who visited a national park), however this was due to a particular character of the hosting organisation and volunteers' tasks.

Thirdly, in some cases, the EVS volunteers had a visible influence on the inhabitants of the towns and villages, where the EVS project took place. They were, very often, the only foreigners in town, and their presence was visible from the very beginning of their work. The local communities got used to seeing and communicating with a foreigner on a daily basis

(for example at the shop, local café or in neighborly relations). At the beginning of the research communities were sharing many stereotypical attitudes towards foreigners. Communities which first time hosted EVS volunteer from abroad, had the very first, real and authentic experience working with foreigner, that broke the stereotypes. Locals started to be interested in other cultures, tried not to judge, but to understand.

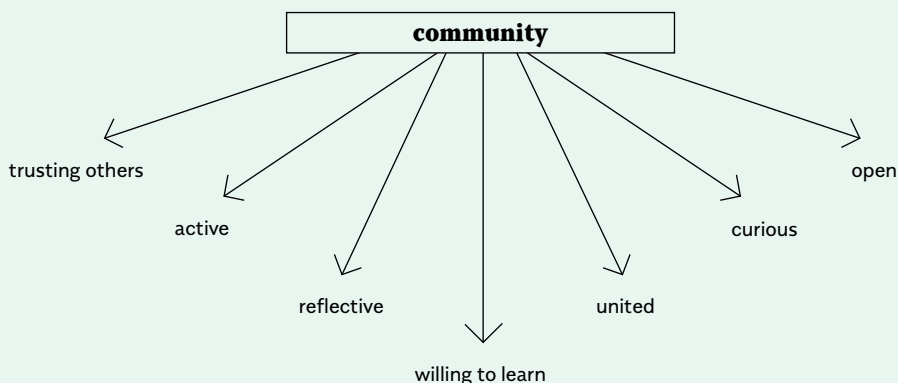
The research showed that people communicating with EVS volunteers started to be more open to "other" people, to "other" or different attitudes. There was decreasing mistrust and fear towards foreigners and increasing trust, willingness to understand and empathy. Hence, in some cases communities have changed under the influence of EVS volunteers – they have become slightly more open and able to trust "others".

The research also showed that EVS helps to unite members of community for common activities. In this way the social capital of communities are growing. Locals have become more active, taking part in various activities, organised around EVS volunteers (for example foreign language classes or cultural events). Community members take care of the volunteers and volunteers have become the tool of gathering the members of community together. EVS volunteers have encouraged communities to start cooperation with local organisations.

In some cases, EVS was one of the factors that provoked a reflection – both representatives of the hosting organisations and the representatives of local communities started to reflect (and sometimes even question) on themselves, identify their weaknesses and by consequence, deal with them. Participating in EVS program encourages communities and organisations to raise the questions, to doubt and rethink the attitudes and working principles of organisation or community. For example, at the beginning of the research there were stereotypical attitudes towards foreigners, communities didn't know how they could work with foreigner and had some negative attitudes towards foreigners. At the end of the research communities started to question their own attitudes and discuss about the differences.

According to the research data it was visible that some of the communities were growing their own social capital. Members of communities started to be more active, organising and participating in various events. They started to trust each other and "others" much more, started to be more curious, willing to learn and reflect the experience.

Figure 6. Characteristics of the local community



In a few cases however, the influence on the local community was hardly visible, for many reasons. This was mostly the case where the EVS project did not run smoothly. In some cases the hosting organisations did not know how to manage conflict situations, in other – the concept of EVS project was not well-thought and therefore influenced negatively the quality of volunteers' performance. In some cases some problems with long-term motivation of EVS volunteers occurred and the organisations did not manage to deal with it. In two cases the local impact was not visible, because the EVS volunteer either lived in another city, or in a secluded area.

It should be stressed that EVS volunteers have generally speaking a lower perception of their influence on local communities in which they worked than the representatives of hosting organisations. This may be due to the fact that EVS volunteers are present in the local community "only" for a limited period of time and hence are unable to recognize the changes in the local environment. The representatives of the hosting organisations, who know their communities much better than the EVS volunteers, are much more objective when it comes to assessment of EVS influence on local communities and in most of the cases, their assessment of volunteers' influence was much higher.

The perception of volunteering by the hosting organisation

In general, two approaches of the hosting organisations could be observed: some hosting organisations treated volunteers as guests (please see "the guest syndrome" on page 22) and tried not to entrust

them with any serious tasks. These organisations seemed to be less aware of the importance of volunteers' learning process. Some other organisations however put the volunteers' learning process in the centre of the project and treated them equally to regular workers – in these cases volunteers felt well integrated in the hosting organisations' team and identified with their tasks more. Paradoxically, these two completely different attitudes have one thing in common: the volunteer is the most important point of the EVS project, however for different motivations. The organisations characterised by the "guest syndrome" want the volunteer to feel good and comfortable whereas the other organisations want the volunteer to learn as much as possible.

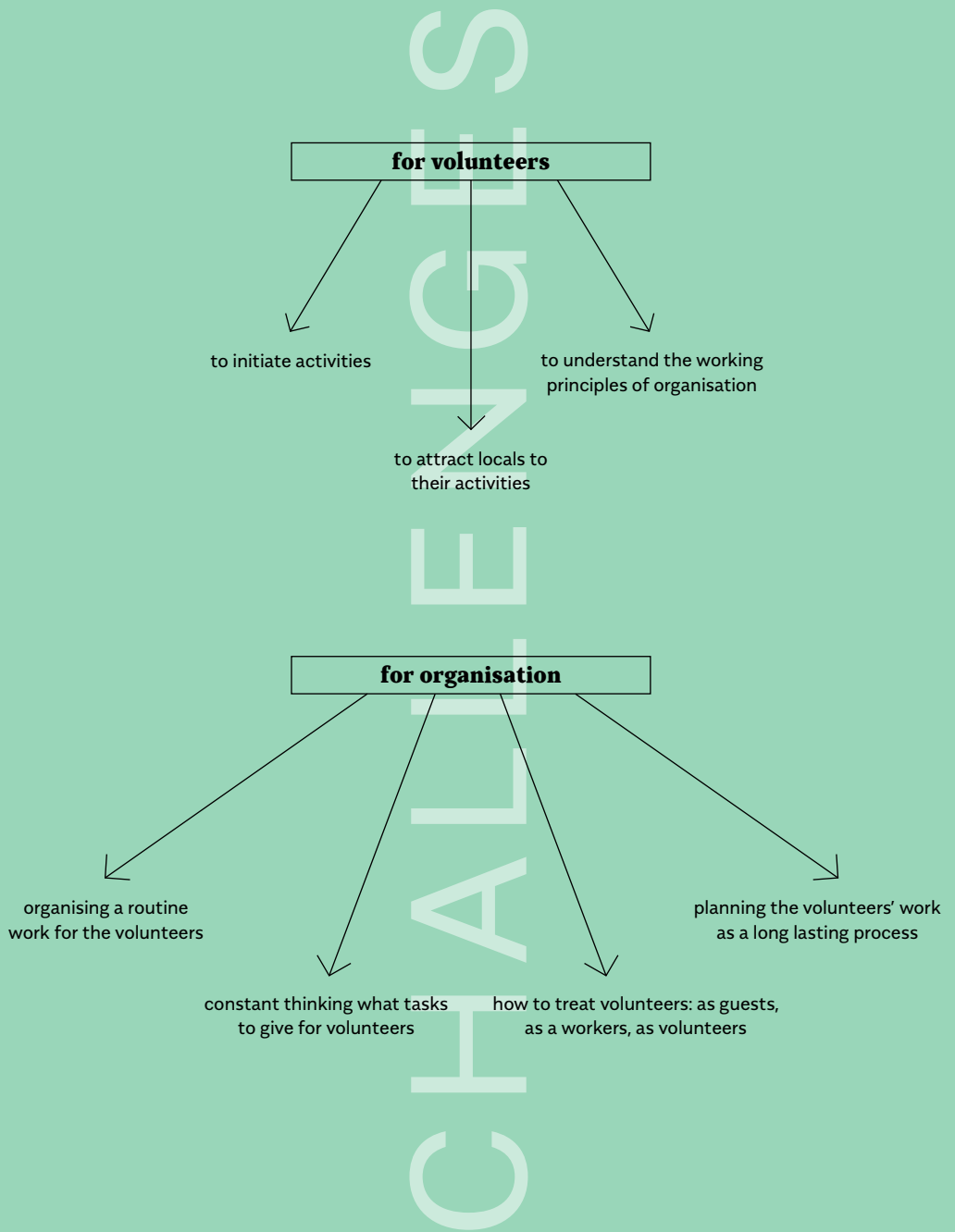
Some unexperienced organisations admitted also that they did not put enough attention to volunteers' selection process, which they now perceive as one of the key factors to the success of EVS project.

Factors that helped volunteers to integrate into the community

- Personal features of the volunteers: EVS volunteers were communicative, willing to understand and adapt generally were more satisfied with their projects and felt well integrated in the local community and the hosting organisation.
- Good relation with young people: after volunteer got to know some of the local people (mostly youth) with their help they start to be friends also with other representatives of the local communities. A snowball effect could be observed – EVS volunteers, with time, gained more and more local contacts, not necessarily related to their work at the hosting organisation.
- Common activities with local communities helped volunteers to feel like locals.
- The head of organisation plays important role showing other workers how to help volunteers to feel welcomed and integrated.
- Ex EVS volunteers (if present at the hosting organisation) can play a crucial role in volunteer's adaptation process and are credible mentors should a crisis in volunteer's motivation occur.

It is also worth to stress that in many cases EVS volunteers helped to reduce the isolation of "others" in the community – EVS volunteers don't have prejudices about locals and therefore they are trying to create contacts and communicate with all locals. At the beginning of their project EVS volunteers don't recognize any differences between locals, they treat them equally and they tend to be equally open for all of them. Their attitude could be, for all the community, a symbol of tolerance.

Figure 6. Challenges during EVS project



Country-specific findings

Poland

The idea of volunteering is not common among the inhabitants of the three locations where the research took place. Volunteering is associated mainly with irregular activity rather than an organised and constant service. Therefore, two of the three surveyed organisations couldn't always count on local volunteers (with the exception of one organisation, that cooperates with a large number of volunteers on a regular basis). However, it needs to be noted that local volunteers' involvement depends very much on the type of activities implemented by the organisation. Furthermore, the idea of international volunteering is still unrecognized. EVS volunteers, by their service and work, play an important role in bringing closer the idea of voluntary service to the inhabitants of the three towns where the study took place.

In the case of Polish organisations, all three were strongly focused on the volunteers and in two cases, of their learning process. The volunteers were treated on an equal basis as workers and were given responsible tasks. In general, it can be stated that the EVS volunteers had a chance to observe and participate in regular work life of the organisation, which could have contributed to development of professional skills such as teamwork, project management or interpersonal relations.

In two of the surveyed cases the EVS volunteers were the only chance for the organisation to count on a regular and sustainable volunteer service. This might be due to the fact that volunteering (especially the regular one) is still quite an uncommon and often unrecognized practice in Poland.

In all three surveyed cases, two attitudes seemed to clash: openness of volunteer vs closeness of the local society. EVS volunteer was expected to be open and pro-active, however needed to work for a relatively closed society that very often operated with stereotypes. This could lead to potential clashes between volunteers and the local

community. The overall effect of the project, both for the volunteer and for the local community depended to a large extent on the openness of the volunteer.

The hosting organisations tend to see more influence of the EVS volunteers' presence than the volunteers themselves. This might be explained by the fact that the representatives of the hosting organisations know their towns from before the arrival of the volunteers and are able to see a bigger picture than the volunteers.

Lithuania

The specifics of Lithuanian cases was the perception of volunteer. „The syndrome of guest“ – is *in vivo* category, which means that organisations and communities were treating EVS volunteers as guests. Members of organisations and communities tried to be hospitable, didn't want to dedicate hard and not pleasant works to the volunteers. Volunteers usually took active participants' role, but not the organisers.

The reasons of “the syndrome of guest”: communities were afraid and shamed that volunteers could come to the conclusion that something is not good, not nice or not working in their community. Members of community wanted to protect volunteers and finally, communities didn't trust the volunteers fully because they didn't believe volunteers could do the work that requires more responsibility and quality.

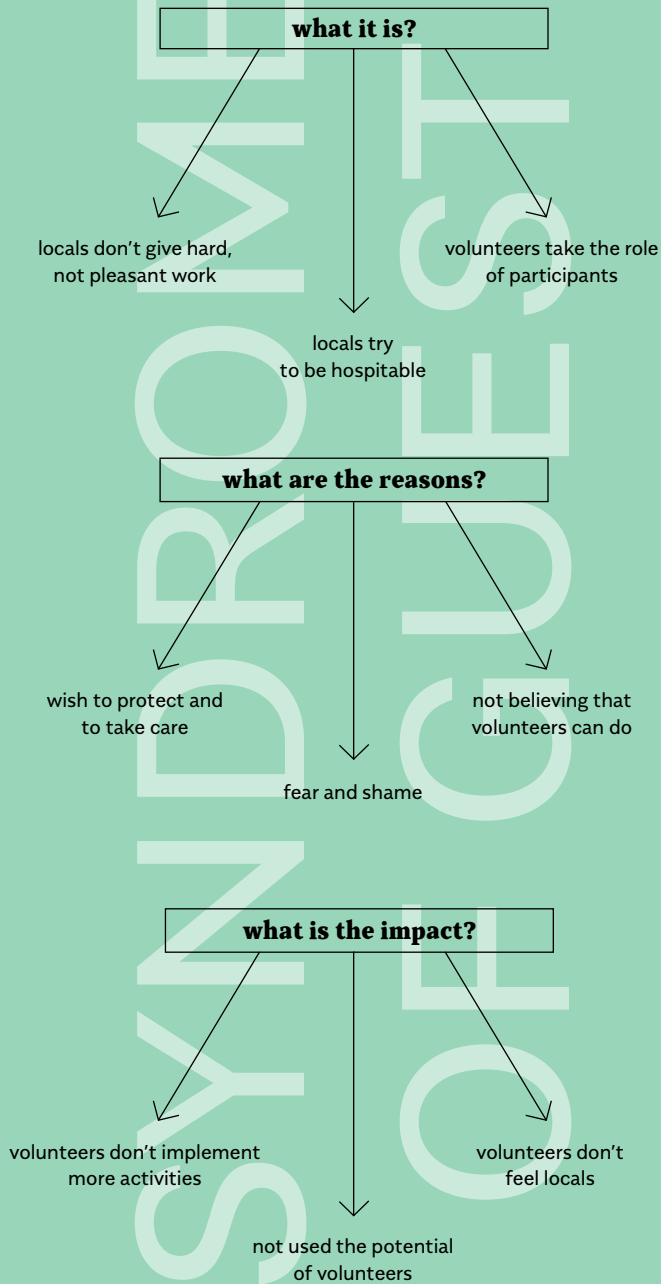
The impact of “the syndrome of guest”: volunteers didn't implement more activities, because they felt like guests, but not locals. Communities didn't use the potential of volunteers, because volunteers could do much more.

Organisations understood that volunteers are not guests, workers or practitioners, but volunteers who came here to help the community, but organisations were confused and didn't know how they should treat volunteers.

Organisations and communities trusted volunteers as humans, but thinking about the work context, they were not supporting the ideas of volunteers. The organisations didn't give volunteers job that required more responsibility and it gave the impression that they didn't trust volunteers in work context. It is possible it happened so because of “The syndrome of guest”.

Moreover, communities and organisations experienced the process of the integration of volunteer who was seen as “other” and becoming “one of them” – the local. People start to be more willing to understand and to support the life of “other” – “the guest”

Figure 7. Challenges during EVS project



The research showed that organisations have different approach towards the integration process of volunteers into organisations and communities life. In the communities where was paid a lot of attention to volunteers integration and was preparing for it, volunteers got integrated easier and quicker. In these cases volunteers got to know norms and existing rules of the organisation and felt like locals.

But there were cases where organisations considered integration of volunteer as natural process which shouldn't be planned. In these cases volunteers needed much more time to integrate into organisations and communities' life. Some of the volunteers till the end of the service were feeling not integrated.

Hungary

It was very difficult for all the Hungarian hosting organisations taking part in the research to define their exact target groups and local communities surrounding the organisations. This concept was even referred to as *artificial*. This attitude was reflected in the activities carried out by EVS volunteers – they found it very hard to define who is the exact recipient of their activities and work. It was also very difficult for the hosting organisations to speak about the impact of their work.

As far as the project design was concerned, it was noticeable that in two cases the EVS volunteers did not have regular work, activities, or target groups to work for. Furthermore they worked in several locations and groups, which made their experience rather scattered.

Since all surveyed organisations were beginners, where the EVS projects happened for the first time, they put a lot of energy, focus into administrative, management issues. They also sometimes led to ignoring or not taking care of the local inclusion of the volunteers. From the researcher's point of view it was interesting to see that there are points where all the involved parties (volunteer, hosting organisations, target group, where volunteering is actually carried out) have different experiences, understanding and perceptions of certain basic aspects of the project. Some hosting organisations had a rather idealistic vision of volunteering and seemed not to be prepared for any difficulties that might occur during the EVS project.

Case studies in Poland



Case study 1 – location: Sępólno Krajeńskie

Sępólno Krajeńskie (population of 9,312 as of 2012) is a town in north-eastern Poland, in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship, about 63 kilometres northwest of Bydgoszcz – the capital city of the region.

Sępólno Krajeńskie has a fairly high percentage of young people as well as of those in pre-retirement age. In the town there are 2 kindergartens, 3 lower secondary schools and 3 secondary schools.

Hosting organisation – Stowarzyszenie Dorośli Dzieciom (Dorośli Dzieciom Association)

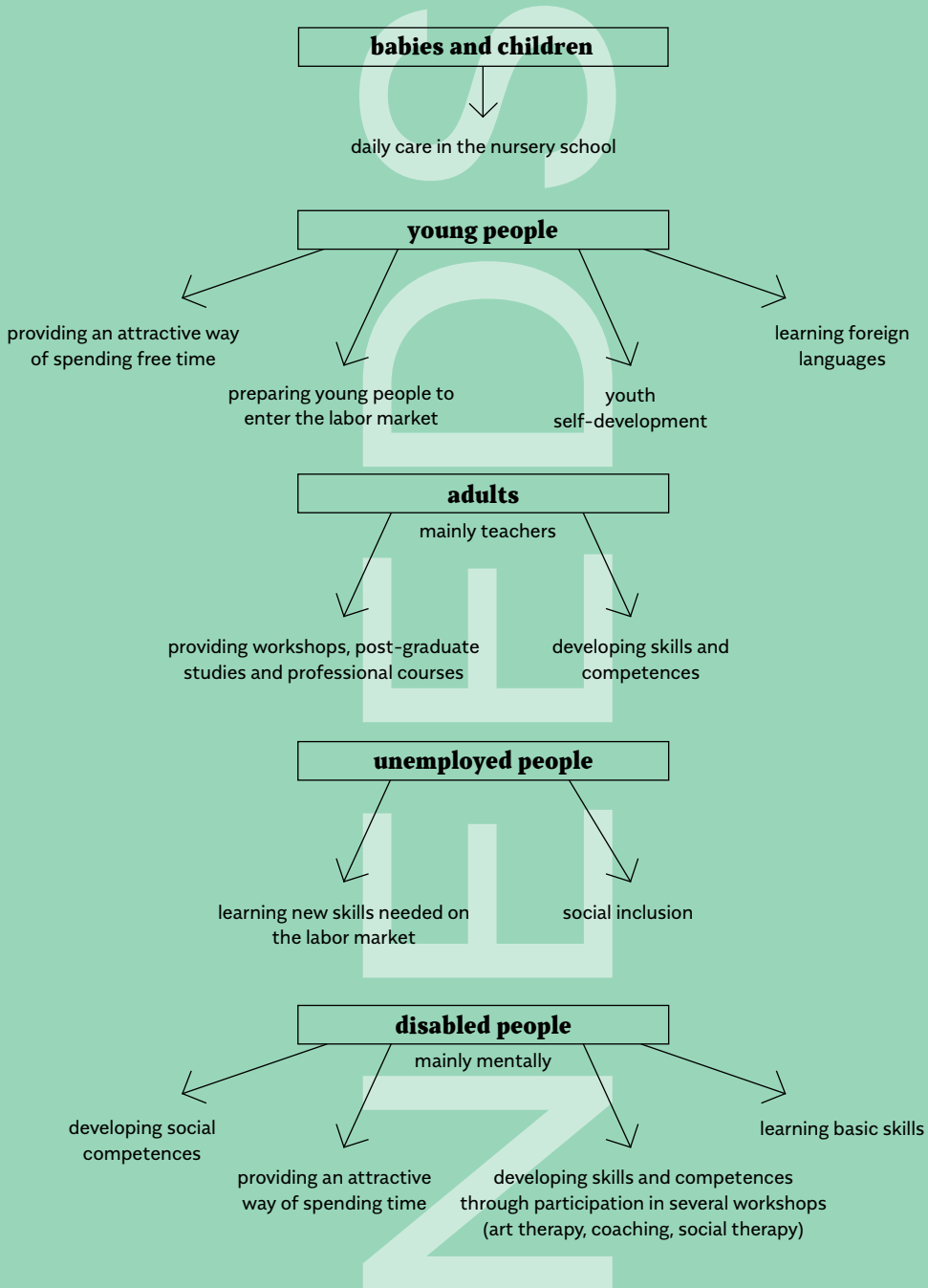
The organisation was established in 1999. Over 17 years it has contributed to the creation, and is in charge of management, of several satellite institutions such as for example: Teachers' vocational training facility, Occupational therapy workshops, Nursery school, Local information centre or Local tourism information centre. The European Voluntary Service (carried out since 2005) is one of the many activities of the organisation and the volunteers are able to engage in several activities of the satellite organisations. Until June 2016 Stowarzyszenie Dorośli Dzieciom has hosted 44 EVS volunteers.

The organisation implements local, regional and national projects, financed through the Erasmus+ Programme (formerly Youth in Action programme), Polish-German Youth Cooperation and several corporate foundations.

The international projects include European Voluntary Service, several youth exchanges and trainings. National projects, apart from daily management of the satellite institutions and involvement in their activities, include for instance the Academy of skills – a project aimed at raising the skills and activating unemployed people under 25 years old. Smaller, regional activities comprise mainly youth initiatives (financed through Youth in Action programme or other, regional and national sources).



Figure 8. The target groups of the organisation and their needs are the following:



Target groups of the hosting organisation and their needs

The organisation is open to all sexes and age groups, however, with the support of the nursery school, it implements also a special programme exclusively for mothers – the antenatal classes. There are no activities for the elderly people, since there is another organisation in Sępólno Krajeńskie that specializes in this field. Every year the organisation provides services to hundreds of people, whose needs have been subject to needs analysis that were carried out some time in the past.

Cooperation with local volunteers

Stowarzyszenie Dorośli Dzieciom has a vast experience as far as the cooperation with the volunteers (both local and foreign) is concerned. The organisation efforts to engage young local volunteers in most of its special events or activities, however there are no local volunteers available on a regular, daily basis. Hence, the cooperation with local volunteers is described by the organisation as tough and problematic –

- *It's getting more and more difficult to attract young inhabitants of Sępólno and to involve them into voluntary activities. I feel that year by year we have fewer and fewer of them. It's really hard to take young people off the computer screen nowadays. We need to invest in the children in Sępólno – if we show them the idea of volunteering at a very young age, I hope they will come join our activities as teenagers.*

The organisation admits, that it can count on up to 10 intermittent local volunteers (at most once a week).

Motivation for EVS project

The organisation hosted the first EVS volunteer 10 years ago. Back then, a coordinating organisation from Warsaw (Robert Shuman Foundation) was selecting and sending volunteers to Sępólno, which, according to Stowarzyszenie Dorośli Dzieciom, was problematic because of the lack of influence on who will come. Nowadays, Stowarzyszenie Dorośli Dzieciom makes the selection of volunteers by itself, moreover, it serves as a coordinating organisation to another body from the region.

Stowarzyszenie Dorośli Dzieciom claims that EVS brought new quality to its functioning. ● *By giving a chance to EVS volunteers, we gave a chance to ourselves. 10 years ago, when we started hosting EVS volunteers I did not speak any English. Now I graduated from the university and I teach English at the local school. At the beginning we were mentored to by other organisations and institutions, today we serve*

as experienced mentors to others. EVS volunteers give us a fresh look and a new perspective on many aspects of our work – that’s a huge value. I remember one volunteer from Italy, who worked in occupational therapy workshops. One of the disabled persons there had huge difficulties holding a spoon, because of muscle weakness. The Italian volunteer spent several days making by himself a special-shaped spoon, adapted to the wrist, so that this person could eat more comfortably. And he made it! None of us here thought of that before.

EVS projects

The EVS project at Stowarzyszenie Dorośli Dzieciom has been basically the same since the beginning. The volunteers work in 4 places: in occupational therapy workshops, extraschool centre, youth club and nursery school. ● *The volunteers do a great job.*

EVS volunteers give us a fresh look and a new perspective on many aspects of our work – that’s a huge value.

We give them a chance to choose where they want to work – their effort should be helpful to the organisation, but it should also be a pleasure and a learning experience for them. We are lucky to have that many possibilities for them here.

Each of the above mentioned places has regular opening hours, usually from 7–8 am to 4–6 pm. This means that it is very difficult to recruit and sustain local volunteers to help the regular staff – the potential local volunteers are either at school or at work during the opening hours. Hence, the local volunteers can only be of help occasionally, which is not enough to assure proper functioning of these facilities, especially when it comes to work with the disabled people or babies in the nursery school. Both groups need someone they know and trust, and that is a the advantage of the EVS volunteers, as they are able to provide service every day for a long period of time – it is a predominant advantage comparing to the local volunteers. ● *They are always here, on the spot. Our satellite organisations, namely the occupational therapy workshop or the nursery school operate every day, hence we need to have volunteers present there on a daily basis. We can’t count on our local volunteers in this respect – they are either at work or at school. Anyway, they can’t be of help every day, unlike the EVS volunteers.*

EVS volunteers seen by the hosting organisation

The approach towards the EVS volunteers has evolved with time and experience at Stowarzyszenie Dorośli Dzieciom. ● *At the beginning, I focused more on what the volunteers can give us, how they can be useful to the functioning of all the places they work here. Now I focus*



more on the volunteers, on what they can learn from us. It is also crucial that the volunteers are open to help. This openness is something we look for in EVS volunteers. The EVS project is not only for us, as the organisation. It is for the volunteers to get to know and to test themselves, and especially, to learn and to take initiative.

Stowarzyszenie Dorośli Dzieciom informs in detail the potential EVS volunteers about the facilities they would work at, therefore the volunteers have an image of where and how they will spend their time in Sępólno Krajeńskie. ● The background, both educational and professional has no meaning to us. I dare to say, that the people who graduated from pedagogical or other suitable (for us) studies have it harder here than the ones who didn't. At the university there's a lot of theoretical classes, people think they can save the world. Working here is a pure practice, and sometimes it's brutal, you just can't overcome certain obstacles – this is something you don't learn at school, you learn it by practice.

The EVS volunteers are also, to put it simply, an attraction for the local community. ● They are very often invited to local schools, to say something about their language, culture or history. Such invitations happen on a weekly basis. They also inform about the idea of volunteering – something still not very common in Poland. What is more, in some periods of the year, the EVS volunteers are spread thin, for example on Christmas when they usually go dressed as Santa Claus to almost every school. We need to adjust our schedule to make it possible. You can say that they become celebrities in our community.

The EVS volunteers are baked into the local community in Sępólno Krajeńskie – most of them are recognized on the streets. ● *10 years ago, when we hosted the first volunteers, people on the streets were very curious and did not know what to expect. Now they are still curious, but they know exactly who the volunteers are, where they work and what they do. They are blended in the local community.* Many people from the local community, even not connected to Stowarzyszenie Dorośli Dzieciom, have contact with the volunteers, for example parents who bring their children to the nursery school or to occupational therapy workshops or the friends of children who spend their time at the extraschool centre.

The expectations of the hosting organisation towards the EVS volunteers

The representatives of the Stowarzyszenie Dorośli Dzieciom underlined that

The mind of the volunteer should be open. Only in this way can he or she learn (and teach us) something new.

the background of the volunteer (both educational and professional) is of a very little importance to them. ● *What we really care for is the willingness of the volunteer. The willingness to help and to learn. The mind of the volunteer should be open. Only in this way can he or she learn (and teach us) something*

new. The period of the EVS project, close to one year, is a time for the volunteers, for them to learn about themselves and to take initiative – in my opinion we give them plenty of occasions to do just that. All the volunteers, prior to their arrival, are informed in details on the hosting organisation, its location and their future tasks and responsibilities. This part of volunteers' selection process is of a particular importance, given the hosting organisation's profile (work with the disabled people and babies) and the high level of responsibility. ● It happened once that, after completing the project, a volunteer told us that she had learned nothing during her stay in Poland. But I made her realize that when she first came here her English was coarse and it improved over the year – that one thing only is the proof that there is a learning process going on here. Very often volunteers realize how much they learned only after coming back home.

The expectations of the EVS volunteers

Within the present study, interviews with two volunteers at Stowarzyszenie Dorośli Dzieciom were conducted, one from Romania and one from Moldova. They both graduated from a university (journalism and international relations) and both come from big cities. In Sępólno they both worked at the occupational therapy workshop, the extraschool centre and

at the nursery school. ● *Our tasks include coming here and helping with anything they need, both participants and staff.* One of the volunteers also gave English classes at the extraschool centre. It is worth to mention that both volunteers use Polish language to communicate with both staff and participants (they have started learning it only a 5 months ago, upon their arrival to Sępólno Krajeńskie). Still, one of them thinks that an effort should be made by the staff of the nursery school or the occupational therapy workshops to communicate also in English. ● *I am disappointed with the staff of the working places, some of them don't speak English, so we need to use Polish. We had 30 hours of Polish, but I think it's not enough.*

Both volunteers chose to come to Poland because they found the EVS project activities interesting. The location, in Sępólno Krajeńskie, was of a secondary importance to them. ● *I didn't chose Poland or the place, I chose the project.*

Volunteers' influence

Both volunteers feel that their presence was noticed in the city of Sępólno Krajeńskie. ● *Everybody, from our neighbors to people on the streets and in the shops, noticed that we are strangers. I was used to another kind of life, in a big city you are more anonymous. And you have access to all the things a big city has to offer: pubs, theatres, cinemas. Here you don't have all that, but on the other hand, you spend more time with people, with other volunteers for example.* Both volunteers described their relations with the inhabitants of Sępólno Krajeńskie as friendly. ● *I am in good relations with my neighbors, very nice old ladies, they are always helpful. And in the pub everybody comes and asks us*

I heard several times local people saying that I am here to steal their jobs. It took me a lot of time to explain that I am here to work for the Polish society and to give what I have best. Some people changed their mind – I think this is a huge influence.

different questions, people want to know where I am from and talk to me about their lives, even when I didn't speak any Polish. According to the volunteers, the idea of volunteering is not always understood by the local community of Sępólno Krajeńskie. ● *I heard several times local people saying that I am here to steal their jobs. It took me a lot of time to explain that I am here to work for the Polish society and to give what I have best. Some people changed their mind – I think this is a huge*

influence. Still, some people can't understand why someone comes from abroad to work for free in Poland.

As far as the influence of EVS volunteers on the target group of the hosting organisation is concerned, both volunteers agreed that it was



significant and that it went in two directions. ● *I have influence on them, I try to tell things in a constructive way and people appreciate it. I help the participants and I feel the participants are attached to me. We spend a lot of time together. On the other hand, they had a big influence on me. When I finish this EVS project, I would like to do something similar in my country. I feel that here, I discovered what I want to do in life, and that's working with the disabled people.* This volunteer, after coming back home engaged into working with the disabled people and is now working in the field in Italy, for an international organisation.

The expectations of the target groups of the hosting organisation

Given the character of two target groups of the hosting organisation (mentally disabled people and babies), and their limited ability to express their expectations and feelings, one participatory observation and one interview with permanent staff representative was conducted.

The participants of the occupational therapy workshops have very basic needs that ought to be satisfied. Many of them are not self-reliant and they need assistance in most of everyday activities. There are 19 permanent staff working on a daily basis in the nursery school and 12 in the occupational therapy workshops and volunteers constitute an important support for them. EVS volunteers' tasks include daily care of the participants, helping them in the working groups (each participant is assigned to several working groups, for example sewing group, artistic group or everyday life activities group). It is worth to stress that the participants do not speak English, hence all communications with the EVS volunteers is in Polish, which was a challenge for the volunteers at the beginning, however with time, it is unexpectedly smooth, also due to the fact, that the volunteers got to know

the participants and their needs very well. From what was observed, the EVS volunteers knew exactly their tasks and were willing to help the participants of the occupational therapy workshops. The participants felt comfortable with the volunteers and could count on their assistance. Moreover, the EVS volunteers acted as a part of the team and the interactions with the permanent staff were professional and friendly.

As far as the nursery school is concerned, the volunteers' tasks include daily care of the babies. According to the representatives of the hosting organisation, the volunteers chose themselves the degree of responsibility they are ready to take while working there. ● *The volunteers can choose the tasks they want to undertake. If someone doesn't feel comfortable changing diapers, they are free not to do it.* The representatives of the hosting organisation also noticed that the service in the kindergarten is often chosen by female EVS volunteers.

In both facilities, the main expectation towards the EVS volunteers is to support the permanent staff and to provide daily care to the mentally disabled people and babies. The interviews and participatory observation showed that these needs are fulfilled to a large extent.

Overall results of the EVS project

Both volunteers came back to their home countries after 12 months of EVS project in Sępólno Krajeńskie. The hosting organisation, as well as its satellite facilities declared to have been very satisfied with their service. The EVS volunteers helped in the everyday functioning of the organisation and their presence had a positive influence on its target group. This could be treated as the biggest project achievement. Furthermore, their work was somewhat appreciated and valued by the local community that, in the opinion of the hosting organisation representatives, got used to foreigners in Sępólno Krajeńskie after several years of hosting EVS volunteers. The volunteers themselves claimed they were satisfied with the project, however in their opinion they did not have a very significant influence on the local community and on the organisation itself. This feeling might be caused by the fact, that Stowarzyszenie Dorośli Dzieciom Association is an experienced organisation, hosting many EVS volunteers and the impact of 2 volunteers that took part in the study is somehow dissolved among many people serving the organisation. Still, from the hosting organisation's point of view the EVS volunteers make a significant impact on its target groups and constitute a valuable asset. They can be compared to gems in the crown – they make the hosting organisation more attractive (also to new groups) and provide support in its key activities.



Case study 2 – location: Mińsk Mazowiecki

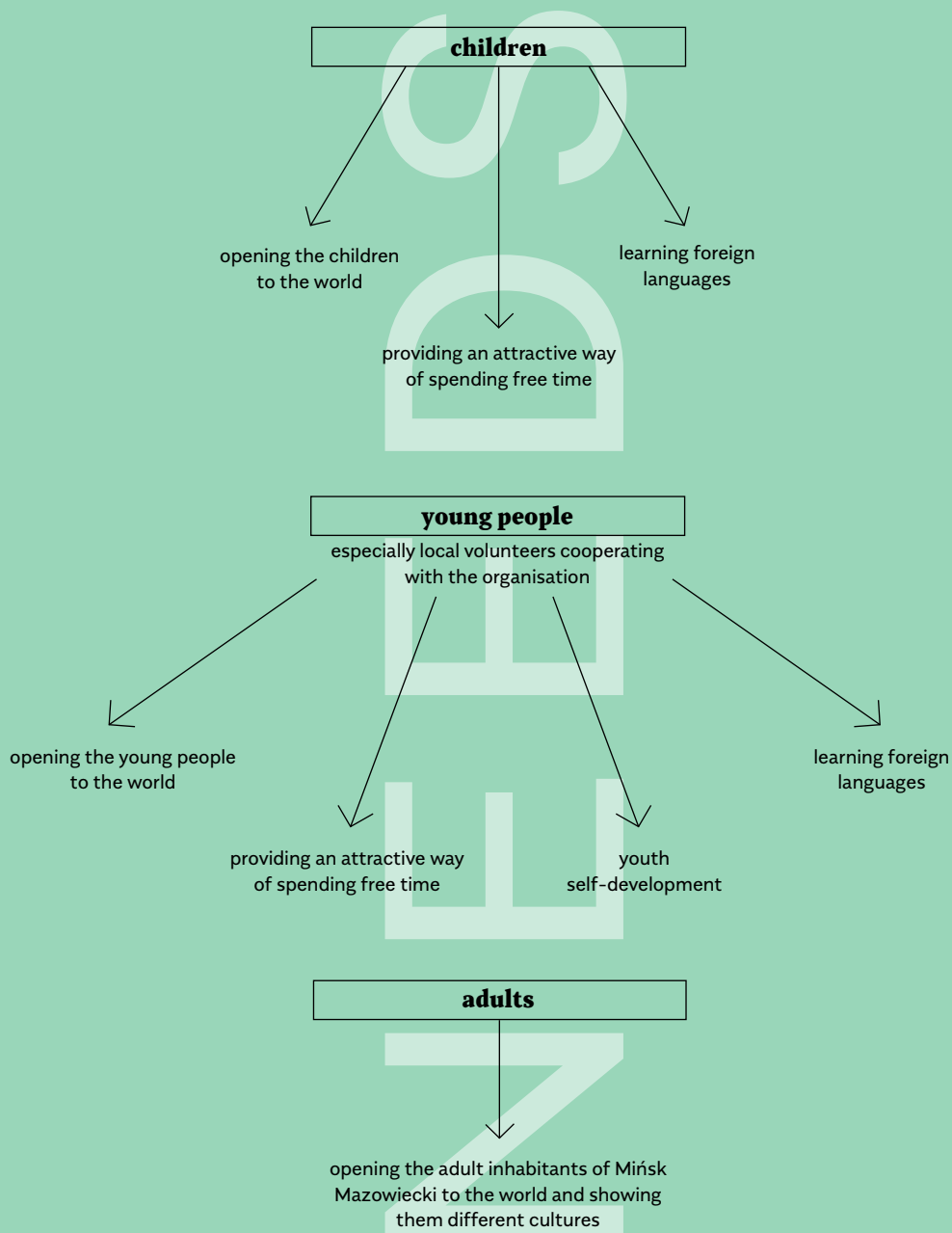
Mińsk Mazowiecki is a town in central Poland with an estimated number of 40,211 inhabitants (as of 2015). It is situated in the Masovian Voivodeship. In Mińsk Mazowiecki there is 1 private university, 2 high schools and 4 comprehensive secondary school complexes. Mińsk Mazowiecki has a relatively old population, with a high percentage of 70+ people. It is worth to stress that the population of young people (aged 5–19) in Mińsk Mazowiecki is relatively small, which can be explained by the proximity of the largest Polish city – Warsaw, that attracts and absorbs the younger inhabitants.

Hosting organisation – Fundacja Rozwoju Międzykulturowego EBU

Fundacja Rozwoju Międzykulturowego EBU, established in 2013, implements intercultural and international activities for several target groups (inhabitants of Mińsk Mazowiecki), from children and youth to adults. Mińsk Mazowiecki is a relatively small community and foreigners are few and far between there, therefore bringing their culture closer is one of the main aims of the EBU. Another important goal is to promote the idea of volunteering in the local community, especially among young people. The activities of the organisation include meetings with foreigners, discussions about their culture or history, foreign language classes for children and youth, games and other activities in English for children. Youth and children (as well as their families) are the predominant recipients of the organisation's activities. At the beginning it operated with foreign volunteers, invited to the organisation privately (friends of the founder and their friends). The representatives of the hosting organisation would also like to reach students with their activities, however it is quite difficult, since students prefer to spend their time in Warsaw and not in Mińsk Mazowiecki. Another difficulty the organisation needs to face is finding the premises where it can implement its activities – for example, every year it has to look for a new location for summer youth activities.



Figure 9. The target groups of the organisation and their needs are the following:



Cooperation with local volunteers

The activities implemented by Fundacja EBU to a large extent are based on voluntary work. ● *We have a database of our local volunteers with 70 names on it. Of course not everybody works with us at the same time, besides some people get married, have kids, so naturally become more distant from the organisation, but still we can count on many local people who support our activities.* The organisation constantly looks for new local volunteers and involves them in its activities. According to its representatives there are no major difficulties finding local volunteers to support the activities, however given the organisation profile, it is natural that it hosts international EVS volunteers, who are in constant contact with the local ones and are involved in common projects and activities.

Motivation for EVS project

The representative of the Fundacja EBU is an ex EVS volunteer herself. In fact, the first EVS volunteers hosted in Mińsk Mazowiecki were acquaintances of hers met during her EVS project in Portugal. Given the intercultural focus of the organisation, EVS is the core of its activities and foreign volunteers are involved in most, if not all, the projects. At the beginning of its activity, Fundacja EBU invited foreign volunteers in a non-official way – it hosted friends and friends of friends who were willing to work for some period of time in Mińsk and support the organisation. Involving in EVS helped to give a proper framework to the projects, provided financing and therefore assured continuity and regularity of the activities. ● *EVS gave us the possibility to do what we did before, but on a much larger scale. We organise longer activities and we can finance them. The effects of our work are more sustainable.* The organisation has been hosting both long term and short term EVS volunteers since 2014.

EVS project

The EVS project at the Fundacja EBU has a general framework of intercultural exchange and is adaptable to the needs of both hosted EVS volunteers and the local community. The volunteers are involved in intercultural meetings, they are active at the local kindergarten and schools, talk about their countries and culture, they also teach English and their mother tongues at the local library. Furthermore, EVS volunteers help to organise free time for local children and youth. Each EVS volunteer has a Polish mentor, who helps them around during the EVS project. The mentors work on a voluntary basis and are involved in the majority of activities implemented by Fundacja EBU.

EVS volunteers seen by the hosting organisation

The hosting organisation has a very clear idea about the EVS volunteers. ● *EVS is for the volunteers. It's their chance. Of course, they very often cause a bit of a stir in the local community, but that's the added value.* The representative of the hosting organisation stated, that she wanted the volunteers to feel needed and useful to the local society. ● *I also want them to feel they learned something. I try to involve them in complex activities, that need first of all needs analysis, then careful planning, execution and finish. These are practical things that not all people have, and they can be trained here.* The organisation also gives a lot of space for volunteers' own initiatives. ● *We are always very fragile on what the volunteer can bring to our activities. We give them freedom to do what they are good at. For example we had one volunteer from Spain who was willing to carry out a workshop on expressing emotions. We thought it was a great idea, also because Spain is a country, where people are rather emotional, so the workshop also had the intercultural element. It worked out great.* The representatives of the Fundacja EBU stressed that EVS project is a great learning opportunity. ● *Some volunteers never lived outside their family home. Now they live with strangers in a foreign city of Mińsk Mazowiecki, in a foreign country. They left their comfort zone. Or some others who were preparing a workshop at the local school and were presenting in front of the teachers. The volunteers were much younger, still were put in the leading position, before teachers. This takes courage, but it will pay back in the future.* The representatives of the hosting organisation also wished more young people from Mińsk Mazowiecki did an EVS project abroad and then came back.

We are always very fragile on what the volunteer can bring to our activities. We give them freedom to do what they are good at.

The expectations of the hosting organisation towards the EVS volunteers

According to the representatives of the Fundacja EBU, the volunteers should have a sense of initiative. ● *I don't want them to expect that I will do everything for them. I want them to have good ideas, I am open to almost everything. We had a volunteer who wanted to organise a flash mob. The first ever in Mińsk Mazowiecki! People on the streets were very surprised, but it turned out to be a good idea. And such visible activities also promote the volunteers' presence in the city.* The second important characteristics a volunteer should have according to the hosting organisation is the positive attitude. ● *They should not focus on the fact*



that their apartment here is too small or that Poland can be very cold in winter. I want them to look for positive aspects of being here and to take this chance and do something really interesting for themselves and for the people in Mińsk Mazowiecki. According to the representative of the hosting organisation, there are no particular traits of a good volunteer. ● It all depends on the hosting organisation and its activities. Here, at Fundacja EBU, we look for people who have courage to try and learn something new. We need people with open mind. They will receive from us all the support we will be able to give. Flexibility was also listed as an important aspect of volunteers' presence. ● Volunteers need to learn not to give up. If something can't be done in one way, maybe it's worth to look for other alternatives to do it. That's the mechanism we try to show them as well. The interviewed representative of the Fundacja EBU admitted that the organisation uses EVS volunteers to tempt and to attract the local community. ● By hosting an EVS volunteer we show, that we, as an organisation, have interesting things to offer. We make people leave their homes, we engage them, we show them that it feels good to do something for the others. The EVS volunteers, their activities and



attitude help us to promote this idea. According to the representatives of the hosting organisation, the educational or professional background of the volunteer is of a minor importance. ● We have a volunteer who has a very good contact with little children, but back home, he studied criminology. The contact with people is not something you learn at school or university. Knowledge is one thing and abilities are another. You just need to have it in you. On the other hand, another volunteer had background in working with mentally disabled people and worked with them also in Mińsk Mazowiecki. ● We gave her this possibility. She could test in practice what she had learned at school.

The expectations of the EVS volunteer

One interview with a Spanish volunteer hosted in Mińsk Mazowiecki was carried out. She had background in educational studies and in the future she would like to work with children and youth. She came from a large city in the north of Spain and had a very clear idea about her EVS project. Prior to coming to Poland, she was looking for volunteering opportunities abroad and she encountered the EVS project in Mińsk Mazowiecki. She decided to come there, because she wanted to do something she liked, and to do it outside Spain. ● *When I found this project, I liked it because they work with children, with young people and this is something I feel good at.* The volunteer claimed that she chose the project rather than

the country. ● I chose the project I liked. When I arrived to Poland, everybody asked me: why Poland? I didn't know this part of Europe at all, but I heard good things about Poland. I have friends who came here for Erasmus and all of them were really happy. The volunteer's expectation and motivation was to learn new skills in her profession of working with children. Even though she had solid educational background in the field and some relevant professional experience, the project turned out to be a challenge at the beginning. ● Before coming to Poland I worked with children, but with one or two. I have never worked with such a big group like here. Summer camps, workshops, big events for families – all that was new to me. The volunteer was also surprised by the scope of activities of the hosting organisation and the people involved in them. ● All the Polish volunteers who help in the organisation, it's a lot of people. It's crazy! All the young people want to help and they are very happy about it.

The local community welcomed me with open arms. During my first days I worked in the library and everybody there was very friendly and helpful. They don't speak English, but we tried to communicate.

Volunteer's influence

Despite the fact that Fundacja EBU has been hosting EVS volunteers only since 2014 they are very visible in the city of Mińsk Mazowiecki and, according to the representatives of the hosting organisation, its inhabitants show a lot of interest in the volunteers and the activities they take part in. ● In 99% of cases the inhabitants of Mińsk Mazowiecki show a friendly curiosity towards the EVS volunteers. They want to know who they are and what they do. At first they don't know what to expect from them, so it takes time before they get used to their presence. But they are getting used to it. The EVS volunteer seemed to confirm this opinion. ● The local community welcomed me with open arms. During my first days I worked in the library and everybody there was very friendly and helpful. They don't speak English, but we tried to communicate. The same with people on the streets. During my EVS project I had contact with so many children, that I am unable to recognize them all on the streets of Mińsk Mazowiecki. But they know me, recognize me and always say hello.

As far as the work of the volunteer was concerned, she had a schedule packed with activities. ● Some days I work in the kindergarten, I teach English at the library, I have classes and meetings at the local primary school, every 3 weeks we have an intercultural evening, in the summer we will have a summer camp for the kids. In

August we did a flash mob and we were giving people flowers on the streets. The volunteer thought her work was appreciated and felt comfortable serving the local community. ● *Children and young people are always very happy when I come to work with them, they always ask when I will be back. The same for teenagers – after intercultural evenings they always ask me out to grab a coffee or a beer. There are many people here interested in getting to know me.* Furthermore, the volunteer thought she had influence on the people she worked for. ● *For example teenagers – they can see that English is not only a boring class boring at school, they use English to communicate. They know my Polish is weak, so they have to use English. And Spain is not a strange country on the map anymore. They know it's my home, they know what we eat there and have an idea how we behave.*

There are many people here interested in getting to know me.

Moreover, the volunteer stated that the project had a very significant influence on her. ● *This is a unique opportunity to live in another country, to practice what I had learned at the university, to have a clearer idea of what I want to do in life. This has been the best experience of my life, so far. Finally, it needs to be noted that the EVS volunteer had a significant influence on the teenage, local volunteers from Mińsk Mazowiecki who cooperate on a daily basis with Fundacja EBU. They assisted her very often in her activities, but also helped out in everyday life situations, especially during the first months of her stay in Mińsk Mazowiecki. ● I assisted the volunteer in many ways. I helped to translate at the shop or during the first encounters with the local kids or youth. But I also had to translate during bigger meetings or more official events. Sometimes I didn't know the words, but I was translating live, so I had to manage. It was a big challenge to me. I also helped in technical and organisational aspects of several events. The Polish volunteers claimed to have learned a lot from the Spanish volunteer, not only language (both English and Spanish), but also the attitude. ● Here in Poland I think we are very tense, the Spanish are more relaxed. For example I always rush to catch a train or a bus. The Spanish volunteer showed me that there will always be the next bus, so why hurry? They take things more easy and I like that. The EVS volunteer, after several months in Mińsk Mazowiecki, felt a part of the local community. ● I felt that during The Family Day, where we took part in the event with all the local community and we were making activities, songs, dance, happy actions with different families and with all the people that came... It was one of the best days in my EVS!*

I felt I belonged there. In a qualitative survey the EVS volunteer stated that the EVS project had **● a very big influence on her and on the local community of Mińsk Mazowiecki.**

Overall results of the EVS project

The Fundacja EBU is a relatively small organisation, however the scope of its activities and the engagement of people it involves is remarkable. It cooperates with a large number of national and several international volunteers as well as with local organisations and institutions. Its core mission is to promote intercultural education, hence the European Voluntary Service is a natural path to do it. The presence of foreign volunteers influences the inhabitants of Mińsk Mazowiecki. Even though the activities are mainly addressed to youth and children, a snowball effect can be observed: their parents and even grandparents become more and more interested in what their children do with the foreign volunteers, so step by step, they also start to participate in activities organised by Fundacja EBU (for example in intercultural evenings). A very significant influence on local volunteers from Mińsk Mazowiecki was also observed. Thanks to EVS projects they have a unique possibility to master their foreign language skills in a real life situations, they become aware of the importance of soft skills and by helping in organisational aspects of the events, they gain professional experience in project management. In Mińsk Mazowiecki this is one of very few places, if not the only one, where teenagers are given so much responsibility.



Case study 3 – location: Trzebcz Szlachecki

Trzebcz Szlachecki is a village in Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship, in north-central Poland. It is located 18 kilometres south of Chełmno, 23 km north-west of Toruń, and 35 km east of Bydgoszcz. It has a population of 505 inhabitants (as of 2011). There is one bus per day connecting Trzebcz Szlachecki with major cities of the region. There is one primary school (with a bilingual curriculum) and a kindergarten.

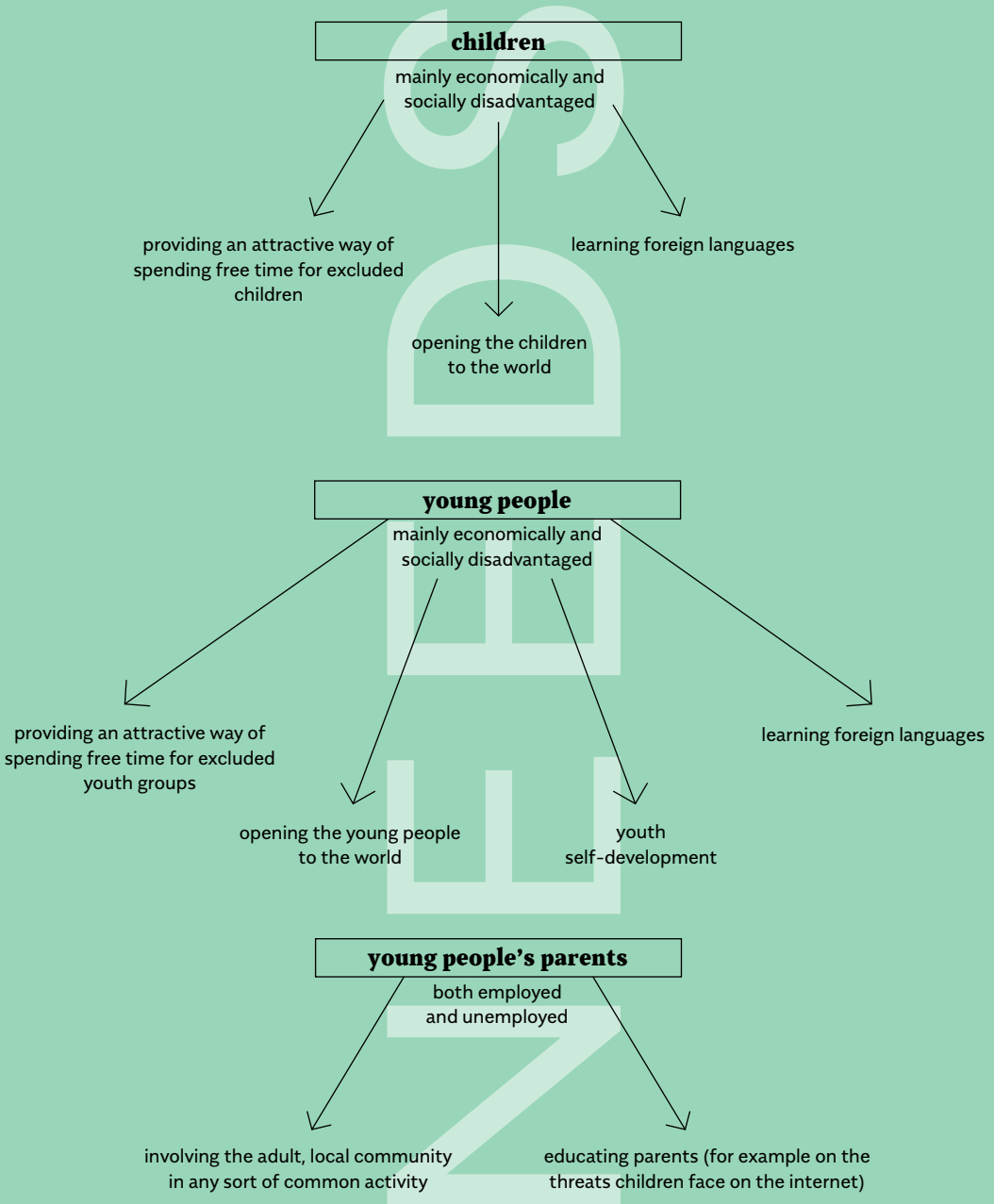
Hosting organisation: Fundacja Lepsze Jutro

The main aim of the hosting organisation is to support local communities as well as to enhance personal, professional, social and cultural development of the inhabitants of Trzebcz Szlachecki. Its target groups include children, young and elderly people or the excluded persons. It cooperates regularly with the local school, church and with other non-governmental organisations from the region (the organisation also cooperated with one international partner in the past).

At the moment of the research, the Fundacja Lepsze Jutro was not implementing any projects, however it applied for 2 grants and was awaiting the decision. The organisation faces several difficulties. First of all, the cooperation with the local authorities is problematic. On the other hand, according to the representatives of the organisation, the cooperation with the village administrator is smooth. She tries to encourage Fundacja Lepsze Jutro to undertake various activities and initiatives. Secondly, it is hard to get through to local people, many of whom are unemployed and are not looking for any employment, which influences negatively the situation of entire families (given their difficult situation 50% of them receive food subsidies from the local authorities). The organisation finds it very difficult to engage them in any sort of activity (be it sports, local picnics or cultural events). Occasionally, the organisation tries to employ the inhabitants of Trzebcz Szlachecki, for example for simple construction and restoration works.



Figure 10. The target groups of the organisation and their needs are the following:



Cooperation with local volunteers

The organisation cooperated with two local volunteers over the past two years. ● *We implemented two projects and we needed to provide our own contribution. We decided that engaging two volunteers would account for it.* The organisation has never hosted an international volunteer before and the EVS project was the first one in its history. However, two years prior to the research, there were two foreign exchange students in the local primary school.

Motivation for EVS project

The organisation, together with the local bilingual school had hosted foreigners before. They were very well received by the local community, despite vast cultural differences. ● *Two years ago there were two foreign exchange students at the local school and one year ago, within another school exchange, another two students from China and Tajikistan came to Trzebcz Szlachecki. We enjoyed their presence very much (especially the students from the school). Despite the cultural and religious differences we got along really well, we discovered different cultures and religions. Here, in such a small community, a guest from China or a Muslim from Tajikistan is someone you might see once in your lifetime. I think this uniqueness and curiosity were the main motivating factors to host a foreigner in Trzebcz Szlachecki for a longer period of time.* The organisation wanted the local children and youth to continue discovering different cultures and nations. ● *We wanted the children to feel comfortable with foreigners and we wanted to show them that they might also one day come to a foreign city or country and that it is not difficult to travel.* The representatives of Fundacja Lepsze Jutro stressed that the volunteer's selection process was very problematic. Firstly because the organisation had never done it before and secondly, because most of the selected volunteers refused to come to Trzebcz Szlachecki. In result, the organisation did not host the volunteer it wanted but the volunteer who in the end agreed to come. ● *The procedure was long, I spent hours selecting the volunteers. I have finally chosen 12 people, and one by one, they all refused. Maybe I was being too honest about Trzebcz – I told them that there is only one bus per day to the city. Finally, a volunteer from Ukraine agreed to come.*

EVS project

The EVS project implemented by Fundacja Lepsze Jutro foresaw hosting one foreign volunteer who would assist in the daily work of

the kindergarten and the primary school, conduct creative workshops and provide foreign language classes. The volunteer was also expected to help in all events and festivities organised in the village by the hosting organisation. *We counted very much on this project. On the one hand we thought our children would benefit from it, on the other hand, we, as an organisation, needed support in our daily activities. We are glad that these two needs have a chance to be satisfied with the European Voluntary Service.*

The expectations of the hosting organisation towards the EVS volunteer

The representatives of the hosting organisation were surprised by the motivation of people applying to become EVS volunteers. *● I found it really curious why people, who already have some professional experience and are almost in their thirties, give up everything in their home countries and decide to work abroad for free. Maybe it's the generation gap between me and them, but this is something people in my age find hard to understand.*

Fundacja Lepsze Jutro got to host one female EVS volunteer from Ukraine. When the organisation first came up with the idea of hosting an EVS volunteer, their expectations were slightly different than the final

We counted very much on this project. On the one hand we thought our children would benefit from it, on the other hand, we, as an organisation, needed support in our daily activities.

outcome. *● At the beginning we thought of hosting a male volunteer. We wanted to organise many sports activities for kids and we thought a man could be more suitable for the task. We had several profiles in mind, but they all refused to come to Trzebcz. Nevertheless, I think the female volunteer is also a good solution. First of all, she's a foreigner, she speaks a different language, this is something*

the children at school or in the kindergarten have not experienced before. We hope, that while assisting in our everyday work, the volunteer will have a good contact with our children and youth and they will experience the multicultural education with her. We also hope she will be creative and will take initiative. The children will have a chance to listen to Ukrainian language which sounds very similar to Polish, yet there are many differences. I think that most of the children will hear Ukrainian for the first time in their life. The representatives of the organisation stress that what really counts is the openness of the volunteer. ● To pack your stuff and to go that far for one year you need to be open. I hope she will be open and flexible.

The expectations of EVS volunteer

The Ukrainian volunteer hosted in Trzebcz Szlachecki was 30 years old and had background in journalism. Prior to coming to Poland she lived and worked as a journalist in the capital city of Ukraine – Kiev. During the war in Ukraine she lost her job and had to come back to her family town in the west of the country. She worked there as a volunteer and found out about a possibility to go to Poland for an EVS project. ● *I worked on television, I was making an entertainment programme which was put off the schedule when the war started. The television put more stress on information programmes. When I was already in Poland my colleagues called me that the programme is back, but I could not leave, I committed to working here.* After the EVS project in Trzebcz Szlachecki finished the volunteer came back to Kiev, to work on television. However, the fact that she had been unemployed before was not her main motivation to do an EVS project abroad. ● *For 5 years I had been working like crazy. I was really tired and I wanted to try something new. I wanted to slow down for a while. And then the EVS project in Poland came up. I was really happy it was Poland. I am not sure I would go to Italy or Spain. Poland is closer, the culture is similar and I understand the language, even though I had never learned it.* Before taking part in the EVS project, the volunteer had not heard about EVS. ● *I knew there are Erasmus students' exchanges, but I never heard of long term EVS volunteering. Before I agreed to come here I was looking it up on the internet. I have never worked with the kids or in a small village. My main motivation was to come to Poland and learn Polish. And to change something in my life, for a while at least.*

Volunteer's influence

It is worth to underline that despite working in the village of Trzebcz Szlachecki, the volunteer was accommodated in Toruń (a city of over 200 000 inhabitants, 25 km from Trzebcz Szlachecki). This might have had a significant influence on the perception of the volunteer and her impact on the local community. The hosting organisation expected the volunteer to have a positive effect both on its functioning and on the local community, be that children and youth or adults. At the beginning, the children from the kindergarten had trouble understanding the volunteer trying to speak Polish. ● *They would ask me why I speak English to them. And I would reply that I wasn't speaking English, I was trying to speak Polish, apparently not hard enough. But with time, they got used to my accent and the communication was much easier.* The volunteer claimed to have liked her duties and felt accepted by the children, youth

and teachers she worked on a daily basis. ● *What I liked most about my work was the contact with children. I am impressed by how fast they learn. I also tried not to be perceived as a teacher by them. For example when a child was crying I was told by the teachers not to hug them, but I did anyway. In the end, children treated me as their friend or sister and that was very moving.*

As far as the volunteer's interactions with the local community of Trzebcz Szlachecki were concerned, she had a limited contact with them, mainly due to the fact that every day after work she came back to Toruń. ● *I am a member of Greek-Catholic Church, I would go to a mass once a month in Trzebcz Szlachecki. It's a very small community, maybe 6 people, including the priest. Mainly elderly people, I got to know them. They were really the only people outside school and kindergarten that I would meet. Unfortunately, there was nobody my age.*

The situation looked slightly different in Toruń, where the volunteer came back every day, after work. ● *I went to a summer school in Toruń to learn Polish. I met many foreigners there, also Ukrainians. Still, the*



volunteer claimed not to have noticed any significant influence on the local community there.



The expectations of the target group of the hosting organisation

Given the young age of the target groups of the hosting organisation, the interview was conducted with kindergarten and elementary education teacher. The general expectation towards the EVS volunteer was to support the regular staff of the kindergarten and primary school. From the teacher's perspective, these expectations have been met. ● *In kindergarten children learn by doing and playing. The EVS volunteer had a really good and close contact with them. She could resolve the conflicts between children.* According to the

elementary education teacher, the children could tell that the volunteer is a foreigner. ● *Even though the children knew she was from another country, they could see that she is just like any of us. She was also telling stories about Ukraine.*

Overall results of the project

The researcher was unable to contact the representatives of the hosting organisation for the final interview, therefore the overall results cannot be fully described. However, basing on the interviews conducted during the EVS project and on the information provided by the volunteer after her departure from Poland, one can assume that the project, to some extent, met the needs of both hosting organisation and the volunteer. The scope and reach of this project was smaller than the two previous case studies, nevertheless some influence on the target group of the organisation as well as on its workers could be observed. Given the fact that the volunteer did not live in Trzebcz Szlachecki, her influence on the local community was hardly noticeable.

Case studies in Hungary



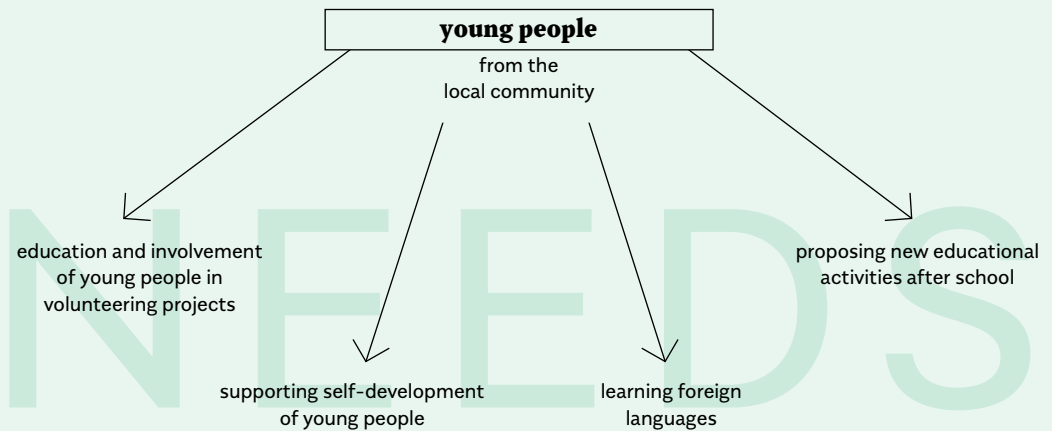
Case study 1 – location: Szeged

Szeged is a large city in the South of Hungary, close to Serbian border, with 161 837 inhabitants. The city has a relatively high rate of unemployment and faces several economic difficulties. Szeged attracts a vivid university life and hosts a large community of international students at the local universities.

Hosting organisation: Organisation 1*

Organisation 1, established in 2002, is an experienced organisation in the field of volunteering, long term and complex project management. Its mission is to represent and spread the culture of volunteering. The organisation is divided into several sub-divisions, including: Volunteer centre (part of a national network for promoting volunteering); Development and Methodology Centre (trainings and educational activities); Teenage Development Centre (for disadvantaged youngsters); Labour Market Service Centre (not operating the moment of the research). Organisation 1 is relatively new in coordinating European youth projects, which started in 2014 spring. The organisation is however well experienced in running researches, building up tools, materials for designing, facilitating learning processes and volunteer management (local, senior, short term). It is active in the local community; there seems to be a reliable professional network around the organisation. At the moment of the interview there is a structural, organisational change, mainly for financial reasons, reducing the employed colleagues (now 12 colleagues, to be reduced). Organisation 1 is hosting their first 2 EVS volunteers, at the time of the meeting they were there already for 6,5 months (even though the organisation has been accredited to host EVS volunteers since 2013).

Figure 11. Target groups of the hosting organisation and their needs



*the names and details of the hosting organisations from Hungary have been anonymised as a result of their contracts with the National Agency

Cooperation with local volunteers

The organisation is very active as far as cooperation with local volunteers is concerned. It cooperates with over 400 local volunteers annually, engaging them in a wide range of activities for young people. According to organisation's representatives it is easy to reach and engage local volunteers, however not from Szeged, but from other surrounding towns in Csongrád county. In this respect, the representatives of the organisation stressed the crucial role of Volunteering Points which facilitate reaching them.

Motivation for EVS project

The willingness to host EVS volunteers stemmed from the requests of local youth to do so. Moreover, the organisation wanted to become more open to European cooperation in the field of volunteering, to foster the intercultural dialogue in the local community, to promote further the idea of volunteering among youngsters and to add a new element into the cooperation with other local organisations (as EVS volunteers also take part in their programme activities). The organisation also hoped that EVS project would open new doors for fresh ideas and projects. The representatives of the organisation strongly emphasised building up on its own past (regional) volunteering experiences and to integrating this knowledge into EVS project.

EVS project

The organisation took the preparation for hosting EVS project very seriously. Before the volunteers arrived to Szeged, the employees took part in awareness raising and mentoring trainings. Moreover, the organisation uses tailor-made manuals, forms and learning plans supporting the EVS project. All these materials have been prepared by the employees prior to volunteers' arrival and based upon organisation's experience from the cooperation with local volunteers.

The representatives of the organisation underlined, that the EVS project has two main goals: the learning process of the volunteers and the development of their institution.

The expectations of the hosting organisation towards the EVS volunteer

The organisation expects the EVS volunteers to be willing to help and to be as open as possible. They will get to choose the activities they want to engage in and they will have space to implement their own activities.

An ideal volunteer would be a responsible initiator who does his or her best to fulfil a task.

The representatives of the organisation also stressed that while local volunteers do what is there to be done (hence are more task oriented and wait for their tasks to be commissioned), the EVS volunteers should be more creative and initiating (commitment is in the centre of her work). Age is not important for the hosting organisation. What is more important is that the volunteer can be a role model for others.

The expectations of EVS volunteers

There are two foreign volunteers hosted in the organisation – one from Italy and one from Germany. Both found the project in the EVS database of organisations and both searched for a specific organisation, not project. One of them wanted to go abroad, looked for a paid job as couldn't afford any trip, then found her sending organisation and heard about EVS in their info club. It was a 3 years long process to apply for EVS. She contacted the organisation, she wanted exactly this organisation, did not apply to anything else. Her main motivation was to gain professional experience on project management and consequently, to build a better. She also expected the project to be professionally managed and had, in general, very high expectations for professional development in the field of project management.

The other volunteer heard about EVS from her Hungarian boyfriend (living in near city to the place of EVS project) after visiting the region wanted to spend here more time. She wrote to organisations in South Hungary, received 3 answers but the organisation 1 was the only real option (the volunteer liked the project). She could get in quickly, had only 1 month to prepare as the previously selected Spanish male volunteer cancelled, so she was the replacement. Prior to joining the project the volunteer studied social work for 3 years and wanted to come to South Hungary and to have a kind of job experience in a safe environment. Her motivations were twofold: she wanted to learn and to be close to her boyfriend. She hoped for being active and taking part in actions or using creativity.

Volunteers' influence

The colleagues at the organisation fully accepted the EVS volunteers, one can say they even became friends. Hungarian youth on the other hand, according to both volunteers, are mainly closed and ignorant towards volunteers. Foreign students are nice, they try to integrate the

volunteers, they have empathy, they speak English. Both volunteers agree that it is difficult to read Hungarians, the cultural difference is big (especially to Italy).

As far as the volunteers' influence is concerned, they mainly did all their tasks together and did not interact so much with unknown people. The colleagues from the office took them to many places, introduced them to their families, friends, took them on family holidays. One-to-one meetings work better by their experience. The religious local dormitory, where they spent lot of time as it is their home is referred to as **horrible**: *they have no fun, they pray all the time and avoid meetings/talks, on the other hand there's heavy ignorance and gossips.*

From the perspective of the hosting organisation, the volunteers not only promoted EVS, but also did mini projects there. They even applied for a project, and after it was rejected, they tried one more time. The representatives of the hosting organisation also claimed that both EVS volunteers could fit into the organisation and had a good connection with the colleagues. This was their main aim first time hosting EVS volunteers: the organisation can integrate volunteers; can give important and valuable job for them.

One of the volunteers did not need too much instruction, wanted to be independent, but when she got freedom to do, create – she could not fully use it. The organisation searched for a way how to give her instructions (they have a high-class quality assurance system, as they always wants to bring out the best.

At the beginning the volunteers worked in pairs, later individually: maybe the safety, the company of the other was missing. They were very different personalities, could contribute to each other's work.

This problematic volunteer was incredulous, not motivated – can pass it on, influence others with it and than it's a lot of work for the organisation to motivate. If the volunteer does not believe in herself, in the task, maybe she was not serious about what she wants.

The tasks for the volunteers were also new to the organisation – learning together – sometimes resources for work, other times insecurity. A more creative person if better than an implementing kid. The volunteers knew that they are the first ones, it was a positive influence, and they really put themselves into the project.

They were integrated very well into the life of the local community; they had many friends, good network. Their accommodation was selected to offer them a good chance to integrate into local community,

They could not walk on the streets without people saying 'hello' to them.

but they did not use this chance but others ● *They could not walk on the streets without people saying 'hello' to them.*

The volunteers had a strong will, interest to integrate into local community; outside of EVS they also made connections. Other organisations, youth, book club that they invented. On purpose they avoided Erasmus parties and other international events, preferred Hungarian company.

Overall results of the project

The representatives of the hosting organisation are very satisfied with the volunteers' work, after the project ended. The EVS volunteers took part in diverse activities and work, their project had a lot of different effect. The organisational development, learning was the key element. They want to have new long term EVS hosting (12 months, 2 persons) and they also experienced the short term EVS (1 month, 10 person).

They learned that the long-term project is different in learning: the amount of work for volunteer sometimes was too much, other times not. Once the volunteers were integrated into the organisation they could take more weight and tasks.

Of course, there were some aspects that did not work smoothly. One of the volunteers did not want too much instruction, wanted to be independent, but when she got freedom to do, create – could not use it. Even at the end, when the responsibility was higher than at beginning, she could not take it. The organisation searched for a way how to give her instructions (they have a high-class quality assurance system, as they always wants to bring out the best).

At the beginning the volunteers worked in pairs, later individually: maybe the safety, the company of the other was missing. They were very different personalities, could contribute to each other's work.

This problematic volunteer was incredulous, not motivated – can pass it on, influence others with it and than it's a lot of work for the organisation to motivate. If the volunteer does not believe in herself, in the task, maybe she was not serious about what she wants.

The tasks for the volunteers were also new to the organisation – learning together – sometimes resources for work, other times insecurity. A more creative person is better than an implementing kid. The volunteers knew that they are the first ones, it was a positive influence, and they really put themselves into the project.



Case study 2 – Location: Szentendre

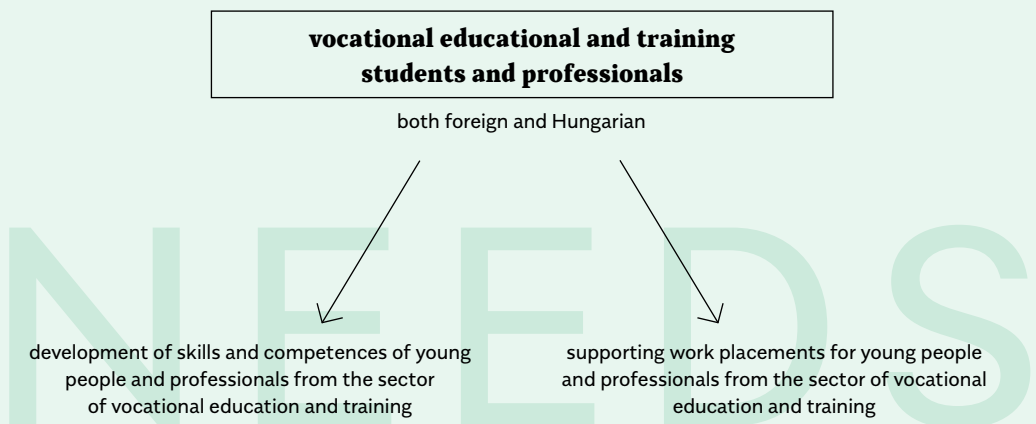
Szentendre is a riverside town of 25 000 inhabitants in northern Hungary, 20 kilometers from the capital city. The city is of a rather touristic character (located on the Danube river shore) and has a significant Serbian minority. The town is famous for its numerous museums and vibrant artistic scene.

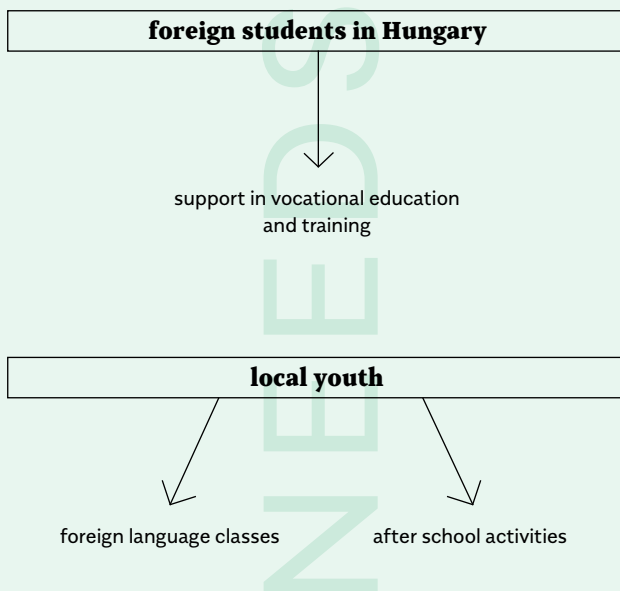
Hosting organisation: Organisation 2

The organisation 2 established in 2008, is an experienced organisation in the field of running international projects focusing on professional practice, cooperating with vocational education and training institutions and companies. It has no experience in the field of volunteering, youth projects and non-formal learning activities (no past experiences with Youth in Action or Erasmus+ programmes). Its mission is to promote and offer EU projects in the area of vocational education. It is implemented through practices for foreign students/trainees at local and international companies abroad (sending, hosting, 2–4 weeks long), study visits and trainings for vocational teachers/experts (sending, hosting) and multi-lateral projects with European partners to develop and share educational and youth work related teaching materials and methods.

The small town of Szentendre is considered as a well off place, there are disadvantaged groups (minorities, social disadvantages, mental and physical challenges) but they are rather invisible for the outside audience. The members of the organisation expressed their doubts on the use of EVS and the general structure and benefits of the youth projects using non-formal methodology. They miss the accountability of youth in Erasmus+ projects; they see that there is no responsibility for them (some youth projects have been referred to as *holiday trips*). Furthermore the administrative, documentation needs of Erasmus+ are considered to be high. The organisation 2 is hosting their first 2 EVS volunteers, at the time of the meeting they were there already for 2,5 months.

Figure 12. Target groups of the hosting organisation and their needs





Cooperation with local volunteers

The organisation 2 has never cooperated with local volunteers.

Motivation for EVS project

The representatives of the organisation claimed that one of their motivations to host foreign volunteers within an EVS project was simply curiosity. In more practical terms however, there was a need in the organisation to have a long lasting assistance in everyday functioning of the organisation. The organisation wished also to acquire interesting individuals who could become role models for the local young people. Its representatives also claimed that an EVS project could open up some new opportunities for disadvantaged youth from Szentendre.

EVS project

According to the representatives of the organisation, the preparation for hosting EVS volunteers in Szentendre was much more difficult and time consuming than anticipated. Its representatives relied on the experience of other organisations (for example schools who have

experience in international exchanges). It was not difficult to find volunteers for their project. The main task of the EVS volunteers is to assist and carry out classes and activities for local young people, including also language clubs (to be native speakers was obligatory when selecting volunteers, English, German).

The expectations of the hosting organisation towards the EVS volunteers

The organisation expects the volunteers to work and follow the agreements, but at the same time, to be independent and to have a strong sense of initiative. Moreover, the organisation wishes to recruit open, motivated, ready to communicate, flexible, engaged, cooperative, creative and emphatic volunteers. According to the representatives of the organisation the social background could be important, but over the course of the project it turned out not to be.

The expectations of EVS volunteers

There are two foreign volunteers at the organisation, one from the United Kingdom and one from Denmark. One found the EVS project by accident – he wanted to get away from home and saw the notice concerning an EVS project in Hungary. It was available soon, so made it possible to leave home situation behind quickly. It offered a new cultural experience in a smaller town, but close to the capital city. The volunteer hoped to experience something completely new, to meet unusual culture and people.

The other volunteer searched for EVS opportunities abroad and encountered this specific project. As he had just finished secondary education, he wanted to gain time to think over what to do, study next. The location of this EVS project also seemed nice and cosy, and seemed like a chance to live in a smaller town. His mother is Hungarian and the volunteer was here before, but only for shorter periods. EVS is a chance to live longer in this country and learn from mothers' culture, background.

Volunteers' influence

It can be stated that the organisation had no contact with local community which is reflected very much in the overall results of the project. They planned the EVS as a bridge to local community, but without knowing anything of its real needs, it had a direct and strong effect on the project.

Volunteers claim that they do not interact very often with the local community. They said they had tried but it did not work out. That is why the volunteers use online platforms to find foreigners in Hungary: people working here, EVS volunteers and go to Budapest to spend time with those groups or sometimes with the interns who come to the organisation they hang out together, but they don't stay long. For the one, who has Hungarian origin the situation looks a little bit better, as he speaks the language and meets sometimes with a local girl. In general, the volunteers perceive the local community as nice people, but the language barrier makes communication and interactions extremely difficult.

The expectations of the target group of the hosting organisation

- Learning languages: more open to study a foreign language, more communicative, interactive, playful way of learning, not only learning words.
- Culture: specialities of the volunteers culture. One of the volunteers is a multicultural person, it is interesting also for the HO, especially that there were no big emotional turbulences.

The target group of the hosting organisation was happy that volunteers came, told them what to do, positive welcome. Gave all the info, support, and contacts to them.

Overall results of the project

The hosting organisation had no contact with local community which is reflected very much in what happened, how and what situations emerged during the project. They planned the EVS as a bridge to local community, but without knowing anything of real needs, interest or so on. It had a direct and strong effect on the project. Even after the project they are not reflective on it, stay in the blind spot.

The hosting organisation also claimed that the energy invested is not proportional with the results, maybe because they were beginners in this and did not have experience in long term projects. Lot of energy was lost for administration.

The project was hardly a success. There have been many difficulties related to psychic health of one of the volunteers, which influenced the entire project. It turned out that the one of the volunteers had depression which provoked conflicts within the organisation. The organisation claims to have done all its best, but it did not bring any satisfactory results. The organisation claims that the selection

of volunteers is crucial: the problematic volunteer did not invest into the project, though her CV showed something different. The hosting organisation was satisfied with the work of the second volunteer, who was judged as mature and engaged. One of the representatives of the hosting organisation said: ● *The best moment in EVS project is the one when the volunteer is leaving, going home.*

Case studies in Lithuania



Case study 1 – Location: Musninkai

Musninkai is a village with 400 inhabitants. Musninkai community was founded in 2003, in 2015 had around 20 active members, most of them are seniors, but they are trying to involve young people in their activities.

Hosting organisation: Musninkai community

It is the first time Musninkai community takes part in Erasmus+ programme European Voluntary Service. The ex-EVS volunteer from Musninkai brought the idea to host international volunteers in Musninkai community.

Two EVS volunteers from Turkey were volunteering in Musninkai for 8 months. Their main activities were: working with children in day care centers; helping Musninkai seniors to do household activities; taking care of Musninkai community garden; organising different cultural events and organizing various handcraft workshops for Musninkai community.

In the community there is strong connection between community members, they are used to help and trust each other. Community members are sharing information between themselves and all these factors show that in the community exists strong social capital.

Main motivation to host EVS volunteers is a wish to gain intercultural experience

Musninkai community members had a wish and need to bring intercultural dimension into their village. Most of the people in Musninkai have never met foreigner in their lives, so two EVS volunteers were expected to help people to get to know other culture and to break stereotypes. As well it was expected that experience with EVS volunteers will reduce the fear towards foreign people. *● I was working with volunteers in other organisation and I thought that Musninkai needs intercultural experience. For example people living in bigger cities can meet different people from abroad, but in villages foreigners are seen like... who they are...there are certain attitudes toward foreigners, that's why I thought that Musninkai needs to get to know different culture and that's why we thought of hosting EVS volunteers.*

Intense preparation process to host EVS volunteers

Members of Musninkai community were actively involved in preparation process to host EVS volunteers. They paid a huge attention and importance to the preparation. There was a wish to prepare community and everything that EVS volunteers might need before their arrival.

Preparation process included:

- Sharing responsibilities between members of community, deciding who will be mentor, coordinator, Lithuanian language teacher and etc.

- Informing local people about the concept of volunteering and EVS volunteers.
- Planning activities for EVS volunteers, keeping in mind that the plan will be adapted according to the needs of volunteers.
- Planning the welcoming meeting with local people when EVS volunteers will arrive.
- Taking care of practical issues: accommodation, local transport, materials for activities.
- Reading the book about European Voluntary Service.
- Preparing the target groups with whom EVS volunteers will work.
- Preparing emotionally that members of the community will need to spend time with EVS volunteers.

Members of the Musinkai community have clear vision and expectations of what they want to get from EVS volunteers. They wish that EVS volunteers would bring fresh air to their community life, would foster intercultural learning and would encourage locals to be more active and willing to learn from others.

A wish to experience intercultural learning

Members of the community recognize that most of the people have certain attitudes towards foreigners that were created through media, because they don't have authentic experience meeting foreigners. It is expected that locals will meet EVS volunteers, will communicate with them and will get to know their culture, traditions and their way of working. Members of the community are curious to get to know foreigners, they want to get to know how they live. ● *Not everyday we have foreigners in our village, so people are interested how the foreigners look like, how they will integrate in the community life. Seniors in the community don't know much about Turkey, they wish to see Turkish people it's very interesting. It will be more intercultural work and exchange of different opinions, to understand what does it mean for a foreigner.*

A wish to get to know the life of muslim people

The most active community members think that media in Lithuania is showing the misleading side of muslim people and their lives. It was expected that EVS volunteers will help to break the stereotypes about islam religion and will encourage to change the opinion towards muslims and in general foreign people. ● *Well, Turkish people are muslims and their religion... we wish that locals would see that Turkish people are not*

terrorists, the way media is showing. They are people like us. It would be good to involve older people that they could change their attitudes and not be afraid of foreigners.

Locals are curious to know the islam religion, they have various questions that they want to get the answers to: how the muslim people pray; what are their customs; why they don't eat pork; how many wives they can have and etc.

A wish to encourage local to be active

There is a wish that EVS volunteers will help local young people to have more activities to do. As well it is expected that EVS volunteers will show example to young people and it will motivate them to become volunteers.

A wish that EVS volunteers would encourage community to be active, curious and willing to learn

All Musninkai community is waiting for EVS volunteers, EVS volunteers are the biggest news for locals. EVS project organizers expect that locals will learn english language and will start to wonder about different cultures. ● *For me personally, I wish to improve English language and get to know their culture, maybe one day I will go to their country.*

A wish to gain and improve professional competences working with volunteers from abroad

The worker from day care center is sharing that she is willing to gain new working experience and new competences working with foreigners. She already has experience working with local volunteers, but she understands its not the same. ● *I wish personally to gain new competences, how to help to integrate volunteers from abroad into local community. As well it will be extra activities working with EVS, so I will need to be prepared for it everyday.*

The biggest fear for local people is communication

Before starting EVS project locals were sharing that they have three main fears: the barrer of language; the reaction of volunteers towards their small village and the lack of competences working with volunteers from abroad.

The biggest fear and question for locals is how they will manage to communicate with volunteers. Part of the community speaks English

but other part of the community doesn't. They are wondering that communication could be not verbal and they are searching the ways how they could communicate.

Community pays huge attention to volunteers' integration process into community

At the beginning of the research community was preparing for integration process of EVS volunteers. Community members working in different local organisations were thinking how they will help volunteers to get to know their organisation and local people. There was a wish that EVS volunteers would feel like locals. ● *I think we should introduce EVS volunteers to all inhabitants of the village, that people could recognize them and say at least "Hello". We want that they would adapt to our life and would feel like home.*

At the end of the research community members and EVS volunteers themselves remember that the integration was very quick, easy and smooth. EVS volunteers got to know the life of Musninkai very quickly because they showed the initiative and were willing to communicate with all locals. The day care center worker was surprised that volunteers very quickly understood non-formal rules and rituals of their community. In the community there was a huge social capital with its' formal and non-formal rules. The formal rules were officially introduced to volunteers, but non-formal rules and norms volunteers needed to understand themselves and it was one of most important challenges while integrating into the community.

Factors that helped volunteers to integrate into the community:

- *Personal features of the volunteers.* EVS volunteers were communicative, willing to understand and adapt. Volunteers were learning and accepting the norms and rules of the community.
- *Perhaps it helped the character of volunteers, their ability to communicate with everybody, there were no inner barriers or complexes, they could come to any person and smile to him/her and start communication.*
- *Good relation with young people of Musninkai.* At the beginning volunteers were introduced to the community of Musninkai school, so there they found first friends. Later their social network was expanding and they got to know more and more people.
- *Local young people helped EVS volunteers to find new friends – it was very important. They knew many people and they got some really good friends.*

Approach of the community towards the volunteers: “The guest syndrome”

The research revealed that volunteers and local community had a special relation that they call “the guest syndrome”. The coordinator of EVS project recognized that local community was treating volunteers as guests: locals tried to be hospitable and was not giving hard work to do. ● *Community was treating volunteers as guests, all the time during EVS project they tried to be hospitable, I was explaining them that volunteers are not guests, they came to help the community.* Because of “the guest syndrome” volunteers usually were taking active participants role, but not the organizers. Volunteers were more getting than giving.

The reasons of “the guest syndrome”

The reason why community was treating volunteers as guests could be the feeling of fear and shame that was among community members. They didn’t want to show to foreign people that something was not good in their community, maybe something was not nice, not clean or something was not working. Most of the community members are senior females and they tend to protect and take care of volunteers like they would be their mothers.

The outcomes of “the guest syndrome”

Community members were not giving the volunteers to do some of the works, they were afraid that volunteers won’t be able to make it, will do it slowly and with little quality. Community was not trusting volunteers in work field and so they didn’t use the potential of volunteers. As well, volunteers usually were taking observers or participants role, but not organizers. Community treating volunteers as “others” or “guests” lost the opportunity to get more help from volunteers.

Community started to reflect about themselves

There was open and honest communication between volunteers and locals. Volunteers were sharing their opinion about different things they see in community life, they gave the feedback to the locals which made them to look at their lives from different perspective and to raise questions why it is the way it is.

Some of the examples:

- Volunteers shared the feeling that for them Lithuanians seem to be sad, a bit angry and rarely smiling people. Locals started to wonder

is it really so, specially when they saw volunteers were smiling all the time.

- Volunteers had impression that women in Musninkai work much more than men. This brought a discussion between Musninkai women wondering why volunteers thought so.
- There were discussions between volunteers and locals comparing how things are in Turkey and in Lithuania. Volunteers were admired by the beauty of Musninkai and was sharing with locals that their village looks very nice, clean and cosy. For the locals it was one of the reasons to be proud of what they have.

Musninkai community has become united

Organisations and members of community are getting closer to each other and are gathering for common activities. Locals has become more active, taking part in various activities. Community members took care of the volunteers and volunteers has become the tool of gathering the members of community together. As well, EVS volunteers has encouraged communities to start cooperation with local organisations.

EVS volunteers helped to reduce the isolation of “others” in the community

EVS volunteers didn't have prejudices about locals this is why they were trying to create contact and communicate with all locals. EVS volunteers didn't recognize any differences between locals, so they treat all of them equally. Their actions were example for all the community as a symbol of tolerance. ● *Not only with young people, with everybody they were communicating, they knew even all drunk people, everybody were friends to them. They don't judge people, they show respect to everybody, to old people, to drunk people, they respect all humans.*

Communities have become more open and more able to trust “others”

At the begining of the research there were many stereotypical attitudes towards foreigners that were created by rumors or media. Organizers of EVS project and local community have changed their attitudes about people from foreign countries.

Locals started to be interested in other cultures, tried to understand, but not to judge too quickly. People communicating with EVS volunteers started to be more open to “other” people, to “other” or different

attitudes. This process led from decreasing mistrust and fear towards foreigners to increasing trust, willingness to understand and empathy.

At the beginning of the research: ● *Well, we are interested in the religion... People are interested in different religions, how they are praying, what are their traditions, why they are not eating pork, if we are eating, so why their religion is not allowing them, how many wives do they have. We want to get to know.*

In the end of the research: ● *Well, you know, foreigner or lithuanian for me has become the same, there are no differences. If you are communicating with them normally like you would communicate with lithuanians, like you would communicate with any human, than they are communicating normally as well. There is no difference. Just people have experienced that they are also humans.*

Locals started to understand the concept of volunteering

At the beginning of the research EVS project organizers were sharing that locals barely knew what does it mean volunteering. Most of the locals couldn't understand what foreign volunteers can do in their village. Locals had many questions and doubts about the concept of volunteering. At the end of the research the EVS project organizers were sharing that locals understood the concept of volunteering much better. They saw in practice what volunteers are needed for and what they can do in their village. ● *The benefit was that we got to know what does it mean this kind of job and what are the volunteers. We also got to know the opinions of locals about volunteering. First reactions of the locals were like "why do we need them, what they are going to do here" but later people got to know that this is simply cultural exchange, their activities are related to this as well and their main activities were to help us to open our minds.*



Case study 2 – Location: Lentvaris

A town in eastern Lithuania with a total population of 11 105 inhabitants (as of 2011). Lentvaris is a transportation hub with several rail and road routes crossing there.

Hosting organisation: Open youth center in Lentvaris

Open youth center in Lentvaris was founded in 2008. In Lentvaris city lives around 11 thousand inhabitants. In Open youth center work 2 youth workers. The activities of the center are based on open youth work concept, it means that the center creates the opportunities for young people to meet each other and do the activities according their needs. In open youth center there are different workshops and activities young people can choose and take part. It is the second time Open youth center in Lentvaris organized EVS project. Main activities of EVS volunteer were: communication with local young people, helping in realizing young people ideas, organizing various workshops for young people, working with local volunteers, creating motivation system for local volunteers. EVS volunteer spent 8 months of doing voluntary service in Open youth center in Lentvaris.

Motivation to implement European Voluntary Service project

The idea to host EVS volunteer came after the evaluation of the first experience of hosting EVS volunteer. It was positive experience which made influence on making the decision to continue hosting volunteers. EVS volunteers are seen as people who make the daily life of Open youth center more interesting. As well the idea that EVS volunteer can bring some innovations into the organization motivated to take part in EVS.

- *We believe that volunteer will bring some fresh air in our daily work and so we decided to try and to host one more EVS volunteer.* Working in intercultural surrounding also motivated to host EVS volunteer. The Open youth center workers were curious and willing to host volunteers because they are different. Also workers wanted to take the challenge and to see how they are able to work with person from abroad for a long time. Despite the wish to take this challenge they are also worried if they will be competent enough for this kind of work with EVS volunteer.

The preparation process

There was an approach between workers of Open youth center that the most important thing is to prepare to react on the spot when volunteer comes. It was believed that in the beginning of the voluntary service volunteer will need time to adapt and integrate into organisation. But later on it was planned to listen to the needs of the volunteer and to create the detailed plan of activities together with the volunteer. The workers of Open youth center thought that to plan the program before volunteer arrives is not useful, according to them, it is possible to do

after volunteer gets to know the place and shares the needs. This approach came from the first experience of hosting EVS volunteers, this experience showed that the planned program which was written in application form didn't fit the reality and was changing all the time. That is why they thought to plan activities before volunteer arrives is the formal procedure.

Expectations towards volunteer

The first experience of hosting EVS volunteer was very positive, this was one of the reasons, why the organisation had quite a lot of positive expectations towards volunteer. As well the workers of the organisation believed that in such countries as Austria and Germany the culture of volunteering is much more developed than in Lithuania. The organisation was hosting volunteer from Austria and it was expected that volunteer will represent the quality standards of volunteering. It was expected that volunteer will be active, willing to do many activities and will take the responsibility to work and motivate local volunteers.

The youth workers expressed their need and wish that volunteer would give new energy and motivate them for their work. *● My personal expectation, at this moment I feel low energy in my job, I need something, but it is very hard to find. So I really wish that volunteer would give us energy and we will be alive again. Or maybe we will give her this energy. I really wish this and she is coming at the right moment.* There was some stagnation in organisation and it was expected volunteer will bring something different, some fresh air in their daily work. As well, it was expected volunteer will help local young people to gain intercultural experience.

Expectations towards youth workers in Open youth center

Youth workers of Open youth center had expectations towards themselves. They wanted to be people who would know how to help volunteer in a crisis situation. Moreover, workers expected they could create the atmosphere where volunteer would feel safe and would be able to integrate into the organisation and local community. The work with EVS volunteer was seen as an opportunity to develop and learn in professional way. It was expected there will be challenges which will provide the opportunity to grow up.

Expectations of volunteer vs reality

EVS volunteer before coming to Lithuania didn't have so much expectations, because didn't have any information about Lithuania

or its' culture. It was expected to learn and develop the skills as social worker in the field of working with young people. But the reality was different from what was expected. Volunteer wanted to learn from youth workers the way they work with young people, but it didn't happen. ● *Not really, I mean I don't want to say anything bad, but it's just my stuff, my feeling. I went there and I expected I can learn a lot how to work with youngsters, how to communicate, I want somehow to first copy them somehow, you know, they are working with youngsters speaking like this and I wanted to see how they are working and somehow also do like this. But they were also, they told me afterwards, that they were in winter depression somehow, were not motivated to do something, it was cold and people were really not coming.*

1
to create
relationship with
local people

—————
2
the concept
of open
youth center

Two main fears

The youth workers were worried that it will be hard for volunteer to create relationship with local young people. Working in Open youth center the relations between worker and young people are very important and this relation can be the key of good integration into youth community and organisations life.

The second fear was about the concept of open youth center, the workers were afraid that it will be hard for volunteer to understand the philosophy of open youth center as well the meaning and role of youth workers in the center.

Young people who come to the center were worried that it will be not easy to communicate in English with volunteer.

Difficult beginning for volunteer and youth workers

One of the fears that it will be hard for volunteer to understand the philosophy of open youth center as well the meaning and role of youth workers in the center came true. It was very hard at the beginning of the service for volunteer to understand the norms and rules of youth center as well meaning and role of the workers in the center.

Volunteer was confused, didn't know how the organisation is functioning and what are the tasks for volunteer. Before EVS, volunteer was in highschool which means, she was in very strict and clear system and now in open youth center nobody was giving clear instructions how and what to do. It was expected that volunteer will initiate the activities according the needs of local young people, but it didn't turn to be that easy. ● *But at work first month was bad, really*

bad. I mean I came here, I didn't know what to do, what are my tasks, if I have tasks, how it works, how they are working, for me was strange, because after one month I said that after one month I was really bad, because, I mean, at the beginning, wow, I am here I can do this and this for sure, like, but here I didn't have any work, they didn't tell me what can I do or what are my tasks or somehow to say me you can do this you can do this, because I was not used to, I didn't have this space before. Because I was in school there, people say, then I was at work people say what you have to and here I had to take my own initiative. After some time volunteer felt it was breaking point and she started little by little to show her initiative and to communicate with young people more and more. This was the way which helped her to feel better and integrate into the locals life.

Factors that helped volunteers to integrate into the community:

- Initiating the activities helped to create the contact with locals. After first months volunteer started to initiate activities and invite young people to take part in it. It helped the volunteer to start communication with young people and create trustful relationship.
- Honest and open communication without barriers. Volunteer was directly asking young people if she could join their company and was keeping the honest and open communication which helped her to become one of them.
- Common experience united people. Local young people thought that volunteer integrated in their community when they had common experience such as hikings and trips which helped the volunteer to create the contact with locals.

Challenges in EVS project

One of the biggest challanges for EVS volunteer was to understand the working principles of open youth center. It was also the challenge for the workers to help volunteer to understand the norms, written and hiden rules of the organisation. After half of EVS time volunteer got used to the idea that activities in organisation are flexible, irregular and depending on the needs of young people who visit youth center.

EVS volunteer tried to show the initiative and organize workshops for young people, but she faced the challenge to initiate the activity that would be suitable for young people. It was not easy to understand the needs of young people. After initiating the activities volunteer faced another challenge: how to attract young people to the activities.

Volunteer organized workshops of teaching German language or doing yoga, but young people were not interested in these activities. Volunteer was disappointed that she couldn't organize the regular activities in which young people would take part. ● *I wanted to have some routines like German classes or yoga, I mean yoga I made 3 time or something, but nobody was coming, so I said, ok, it's not their stuff. I tried to do German class, but I did just 1 or 2 times, because they also didn't like it. I mean I can understand they don't want to learn on their free time after school.*

Youth workers of the organisation started to reflect about themselves

Youth workers of the Open youth center recognized that they have changed their working habits because of EVS volunteer working with them. They felt they have learnt how to work with international volunteer. They improved the skills of being able to motivate volunteer and encourage to take the initiative.

The feedback from volunteer encouraged the workers to think about the specifics of their organisation and about the things that need to improve in their work that international volunteer could find the role in their organisation. In order to implement EVS project organisation had to provide the structure of the activities for volunteer.

The impact of EVS project

The impact on local young people

The fact of EVS volunteer presence in organisation and good relationship with young people motivated youngsters to be more active and to take part in more activities in open youth center. Volunteer was waiting for young people in the center all the time, so local young people felt that they are welcomed at the youth center. They also were motivated to come to the center because they wanted to communicate with international volunteer.

Increased motivation to be active in open youth center

Developed English language skills and gained intercultural experience

The workers of the youth center recognizes that young people are not ashamed to speak in English anymore and they improved the english language skills so they can easily communicate. Young people got to know the culture of volunteer. There started to be interested to get to know more about different cultures, they felt they opened their minds while communicating with the volunteer.

EVS volunteer was an example for young people

Local young people understood what does it mean volunteering, what activities volunteers do and what are the benefits out of volunteering. They also understood that they have chance to volunteer as well and it encouraged them to think of taking part in EVS program.

EVS helped to break the stereotypes about foreign people

EVS volunteer was real living example which helped to break the stereotypes and negative attitudes towards foreigners. Local young people started not to be afraid, but to trust foreign person. ● *You are not afraid to communicate with a foreign person who has different attitude. Because some time ago I was afraid to speak with foreigner in English. Maybe we started to trust foreign person, because you are with volunteer for half a year and you can trust that she won't do anything bad.*

EVS helped to understand "other" person and to be more empathic

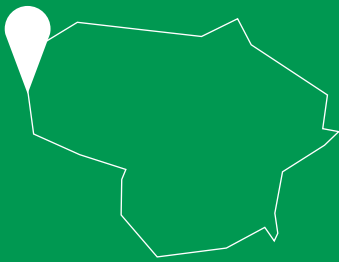
It was recognized that young people have changed the culture of communication, they started to be more willing to understand other person, paying more respect and tolerance to others who are socially isolated. Young people have changed their attitude towards foreigners. They understood that to be foreigner in their community is not that easy and it takes time to integrate and feel good.

The impact on organisation

The feedback of volunteer helped the organisation to improve their working system. EVS helped the workers to improve their professional skills, they recognized the importance of the feedback for the quality of work.

The impact on EVS volunteer

EVS volunteer felt she became more tolerant and willing to try to understand things, accept differences, search for opportunities and solutions to every situation. ● *I mean in private, in educational stuff and also get more tolerant. For example if I work like this – it's not the only possible way to work like this or accepting, tolerating the other way and maybe changing in other way. EVS volunteer gained the social work experience. She learnt to take the responsibility for the choice she makes and to be active and initiate the changes if it is needed. ● Most learning was to me, I mean I realised somehow that even if it's boring, you can make something. Like also in your free time, if you say it's boring, it's your fault somehow that it's boring and not the others. I learnt that somehow and experience it.*



Case study 3 – Location: Karkle

Hosting organisation: Directorate of seaside regional park. Directorate of seaside regional park is located in Karkle, the seaside of the Baltic sea. Karkle has 200 inhabitants. In the Directorate of seaside regional park work 6 people, they call themselves as family. The organisation for the first time took part in EVS program and hosted 2 foreign volunteers – one for six and other for 8 months. The main activities of the volunteers were: working in information center; organizing cultural events; monitoring of nature.

The expectations and fears

Almost all directorates of regional parks in Lithuania take part in EVS program and this was the reason why the Directorate of seaside regional park decided to take part in EVS program. It was believed that EVS volunteers could bring fresh air in organisations daily work.

The workers of organisation found difficulty to name what kind of expectations they have towards volunteers. It was new experience for them and they barely knew what to expect. They had experience working with local volunteers and foreigners who come to visit their park, but they understood that working with EVS volunteers will be unique experience.

It was expected to create good relation with volunteers and together to find the way volunteers could contribute to the activities of the organisation. It was expected that volunteers will share their different points of view which could lead the workers to look at the same things from different angles. The workers wanted that volunteers would create ideas for international projects and would find partners with whom organisation could cooperate. Volunteers were seen as the ones who will help to implement daily work of the organisation or even would stimulate a better quality of the work they do.

There was an attitude in the organisation that there is no need to have special preparation for EVS volunteers, because the activities volunteers will do are the regular activities of the organisation. To host international volunteers for the organisation was natural process.

The workers thought that it could be difficult to think of the activities for volunteers, because they believe that to make all activities by themselves is much easier and quicker than to explain and show how to do it for volunteers. They worried that at the beginning when volunteers are still not aware of the norms, rules and specialities if the organization, could be challenging to integrate volunteers into organisations life.

Successfull integration into organisations' life

The workers of the organisation together with volunteers were spending time during the working hours and freetime. Volunteers were happy that colleagues were naturally interested into their lives, they were curious to get to know how volunteers were living before EVS. There was open and honest communication. Both volunteers and workers recognized that the integration of volunteers into their organisation was very quick and according to them the reason of such succesfull integration was communication without barriers. In the organisation volunteers felt like

they live in the family. ● *And it was, yes yes, we felt together really like we were part of the system, of this family. And so its not like you know, I am going to work and I have to wake up and to go to work, its like I am going to i don't know to see my relatives, my friends, to stay there, maybe not working too much. But still even if we get bored, sometimes its very good atmosphere, I really couldn't ask more about this.*

The head of the organisation played important role for successful integration of volunteers. He was like role model example for the workers how to welcome and treat volunteers.

The role of the volunteers in organisation

There was a confusion in organisation not knowing how to treat volunteers: what is their role, are they guests, are they practitioners, are they volunteers or are they workers as everybody else in organisation. The workers understood that volunteers are not guests, but the people who came to help them and do the activities which maybe sometimes are not the pleasant ones, but the ones that must be done. ● *For me it is common that when some foreign people come, you treat them as your guests and we wanted them to feel as quests, but at the same time we needed to understand that they are volunteers and came here to work. But we wanted that they wouldn't feel that they are here only for work, we wanted to create them different activities.*

At the beginning of the service, volunteers felt lost, they didn't know what they should do in organisation and they felt the workers treat them as quests. From organisation side, it was felt fear and shame to ask volunteers to do something. ● *I was a bit lost in the park and in the beginning, because ok, they are friendly, but I am new, so we were like what do we do now, we were not sure, also they were treating some kind of guests: „can I ask you if you want to do some work, can you take the branches“ doing some small works lets say. The fact that volunteers were treated as guests stopped them from initiating the activities and implementing new ideas. Usually volunteers were waiting till they get the request to do the concrete work. At the same time the workers were a bit disappointed that volunteers were not showing their initiative as they expected them to do.*

The biggest challenge – constant thinking of the activities for volunteers

The directorate of the seaside regional park is a state organisation which part of the work is a routine work. The organisation understood

that volunteering is about discovering and learning, but not about the routine works. This is why the workers were constantly thinking what kind of activities dedicate to the volunteers that there would be balance between routine work and work which would provide learning opportunity. Finding this balance was the biggest challenge for the organisation.

The workers felt guilty to ask volunteers to do routine work, like cutting the grass in the yard. They felt responsibility to think of the activities that would be interesting for volunteers. ● *The hardest was the fact that you cannot leave volunteer alone, you always need to find some activities for volunteers to do. They are guests so we need to think of some more interesting activites, but taking in consideration that we are state organisation it is difficult, because to do some work requires responsibility and we trusted volunteers.*

The impact of EVS project on the organisation

The workers felt that they have changed their attitude and opinion towards foreigners. Before EVS project they thought that people from South Europe are lazy, they don't like to work so much, but after having working experience with EVS volunteers they understood they were wrong. ● *The most important was mutual understanding between us and volunteers. At the begining we were thinking that we don't need internatinal volunteers, because we heard various opinions about foreign people and it will be just extra work for us. But now we are very happy that we hosted EVS volunteers they did more than we expected, they didn't do something very big, but what they did– they helped us to break the stereotypes.*

Encouraged to question certain attitudes and opinions

EVS volunteers were discussing with the workers about different topics such as migration, human rights, politics and these discussions helped the workers to get to know different opinions, different angles and attitudes towards the things they discuss. ● *Talking about people of the park and I am talking not only professional level, but human level maybe to live them more open, staying a lot of time together, talking of many things, you know also like immigration, politics, Greece situation, migrants and i don't know gays, rights, all these kind of things and sometimes they can be very closed some of them, maybe my point of view can put the doubts in them when we argue, so I think this could be good for them as it is good for me to see their point of view.*

The perception of the organisation from volunteers' side

The research showed that it is hard for organisation to accept new ideas and innovations from volunteers. One of the examples was: volunteers were encouraging to translate the website of organisation in English, but organisation didn't see the need to do this. Volunteers felt that organisation didn't want to listen to their proposals and suggestions how to make better quality of the work. After trying to suggest innovative ideas and solutions to the problems volunteers stopped doing this and accepted the existing working principles of the organisation. These situations symbolized that organisation was quite closed for innovations and suggestions from outside. ● *Like I tell can we do this and you say yes yes and than you don't its' not like you don't listen its' more that you are not open minded enough to accept the suggests. I can give you example, they have horrible website that they want to change its' only in lithuanian and I say since the first day that we can translate it in english, italian, spanish and french and they say, no no there is no need, you can just copy and paste on google translator and you have the version in english. For me this makes no sense, so I say for many small things like this.*

Volunteers had very good relation with the workers on personal level so because of this the workers gave the volunteers freedom to choose what they want to do and to use all the materials of organisation. But thinking of profesional relation, volunteers felt they were not trusted and organisation were not supporting their ideas. It might be because of "the syndrome of guest", because volunteers were treated as guests which means that guests don't have enough power to change the existing norms and rules in organisation.

Volunteer believed that if organisation would plan activities from the begining, the impact of EVS project to organisation could be done much bigger. ● *They don't actually need volunteers for anything if I have to be sincere. I think they could need them, but for do this, they have to really organize and really think of activities and program that they can apply for volunteers, because you could do a lot of things in the park. You could you know, quickly go and clean some places in many sides, we say yes we can go to do this. and they say there is no need, there is woman who does this once in a while and so there are still trashes. so they really could organise some program and give things to do for volunteers, there could be a lot things to do, but if they don't organise it, I think they don't really need volunteers.*



Case study 4 – Location: suburbs of Kaunas

Hosting organisation: The Directorate of Kaunas lagoon regional park. Located near second biggest city in Lithuania – Kaunas. In the organisation there are 8 workers. In 2014 the directorate first time took part in European Voluntary Service program and in 2015 continued to take part in EVS. The main activities of the volunteers were: working in information center; organizing cultural events; monitoring of nature. The organisation hosted two volunteers for 8 months.

The expectations towards volunteers

The first experience working with EVS volunteers showed that volunteers are very good at doing daily work at the park such as picking the rubbish and doing the monitoring of the nature. This was the main motivation to continue hosting volunteers. Unfortunately there was part of disappointment that volunteers couldn't do the work that requires creativity and more efforts. Based on first EVS experience the organisation was expecting from volunteers the help in daily activities. The workers expressed that they wish volunteers to be more initiative. The members of organisation were sharing that they can expect volunteer to be creative, active and initiative, but in reality you never know what kind of volunteer will arrive. ● *You can think of the ideal volunteer, who would be smart, creative, initiative, you can dream about this, but in reality is not like this. We could dream that volunteers would make for us benches, would create movie about organisation, would play with children in the park and so on. But everything depends on a person that arrives.*

The attitude towards volunteering and the role of volunteers

The organisation had working experience with local volunteers, so they could compare national and international volunteering. According to them to work with national volunteers is much easier, first of all, because there is no language difference. Not all the workers in the organisation can speak in English, that's why it was hard for some of them to communicate with EVS volunteers. National volunteers are seen as more useful in organisation because they can give the work which requires the ability to speak Lithuanian. The workers also recognized that local volunteers are much more daring to do things, they much quicker understand written and hidden organisational norms and rules that's why they integrate into the organisation faster.

There are two workers who are responsible for taking care of coordinating EVS project. They implement preparation process, plan the activities for volunteers. They do believe that even if you plan all activities, anyways working with volunteers is everyday work. *Because you need to be with EVS volunteers all the time, you can not leave them alone, everyday you need to look after them and dedicate the concrete work to do.* The work of EVS volunteers are seen as situational help, everyday the workers in organisation share what kind of help they need and than volunteers help them to do these works.

The project coordinators recognize that not all workers in their organisation are interested and motivated to work with EVS volunteers.

They wish that the rest of their colleges would show bigger interest in working with international volunteers. And to do this, they are thinking, maybe some organizational workshops or trainings would help other workers to change their attitude towards volunteering. A small interest to work with EVS volunteers might be from the fact that the workers think of EVS volunteers as the ones who are not mature and still searching what they want in their lives. They don't treat volunteers as colleagues who could help to make important work.

The biggest challenge – constant thinking of the activities for volunteers

At the beginning of the research the organisation was sharing the fear of having too much of monotonic activities that could make volunteers to be bored.

At the end of the research it was confirmed that this fear came true. The biggest challenge for coordinators of EVS project was to think of the different kind of activities for volunteers. They tried to think of activities that would be useful for organisation and at the same time volunteers could feel the value of the things they were doing.

The impact of EVS project

EVS volunteers are like extra workers at the organisation who helped to implement the daily activities. ● *We are only 7 people in organisation and to take care of the whole regional park is a huge work and challenge. Only picking the rubbish takes a lot of time. So to have 2 extra people in organisation who could help – it is great.* At the beginning of the EVS service the organisation needed to put a lot of effort to integrate volunteers and to help them to feel good in organisation, but later organisation saw it was worth it. Volunteers started to be more independent and was helping the organisation a lot.

There was a bit of disappointment from the workers' side that volunteers were not initiating the activities, but were doing only the things they were told to do. So some of the workers were irritated of the fact that they needed all the time to think of the activities for volunteers. ● *For me personally, volunteers are not useful, they disturb my work, because I have plenty of work to do and plus I need to think of activities what volunteers could do. Because volunteers couldn't think of the activities themselves, they didn't suggest any of the idea.*

It was recognized that EVS volunteers after the service became more open minded. ● *Volunteers were sharing that they have both changed*

because of the EVS. They lived in other country, in other culture and they became more open minded, because people from different country can give you many things. Volunteers recognized the change in their way of thinking, they met different people with different attitudes and this helped not to judge but try to understand the differences. ● In myself, in my thinking, in experience, working experience also. I think it changes both ways you know, like cultural also, because I meet all the time volunteers from other countries and i see points of views, the way of being and sometimes it doesn't match with mine, i just need to observe and thats it because we are different, I don't need to judge anything, so its ok.

The Impact of European Voluntary Service projects on local communities

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