



EVS Realm: Masters of the Learning Path

Policy Recommendations for Improved ESC Quality



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I. The Recommendations

I. A. Introduction

The following recommendations have been compiled as a result of the activities conducted as part of the EVS Realm Erasmus+ project 2017-2019 (see **Annex 2**). They provide suggestions on how to improve the quality of European Solidarity Corps (ESC) long-term, full-time volunteering projects, both in-country and cross-border, with a particular focus on the crucial role of mentors, and others involved in supporting roles, in ensuring that volunteers have a successful and impactful placement.

More details about the context, history and practice of ESC can be found in **Annex 3**. The recommendations target the actors involved in the implementation of the ESC and the mentoring process: the organisations, the volunteers, the mentors, the National Agencies and the European institutions. For additional details and explanation of the recommendations, see **Annex 1**. A summary of the survey results, as well as a more detailed analysis of the situation in the four countries engaged in the project can be found in **Annex 4**.

I. B. The Recommendations

1. Redefining the terminology and structure of the mentoring process

1.1. Clarification on the role and a common understanding of the profile and competencies needed to be involved in the ESC mentoring process should be developed, mentors informed about it, and knowledge and practice of it for sending, hosting and co-ordinating organisations should become a component of the ESC Quality label. This clarification should be reached through a consultative process involving representatives from all relevant stakeholder groups.



1.2. Role profiles should be created to define at least two distinct support-person roles. One, to pay attention to guiding volunteers through the integration process eg. show them around, introduce them to the host culture, support them in administrative, technical and practical needs in the community, and another one to support their learning and personal development process. Careful attention should be paid to the titles attributed to these roles, in order that they clearly communicate what the role does and does not imply and/or deliver.

1.3. Adequate training for anyone involved in the mentoring process should be included as part of the ESC Quality Label and provided via the ESC portal and/or in face-to-face opportunities offered by NAs. The training should include focus on their role, intercultural learning, validation of non-formal and informal learning and other important elements such as language support for mentors (to establish a fruitful communication with the volunteers), health & wellbeing etc. The training should lead to an ESC mentor certification, if the mentor desires.

2. Resource allocation for the mentoring process

2.1. Organisations should be provided with additional dedicated funds in all ESC volunteering opportunities to be able to organise pre and post-placement meetings with their mentors and others involved in the support process, in addition to moments during the placement itself, as this is essential for the delivery of quality support. More synergies between national and regional level full time volunteering schemes and ESC should be made, leading to a more flexible and coordinated approach, including in relation to mentoring and other support mechanisms.

2.2. An online peer learning “community of practice” for people involved in the mentoring process for ESC members should be developed, in order that knowledge and practice about mentorship in ESC can continue to develop. In addition, it could provide mutual support for effective and innovative ways of motivating new mentors to take on the role. This should be available at both national and EU levels and be supported by annual meetings at national level for people involved in the mentoring process. Its implementation should be monitored by the ESC Resource Centre or other entity responsible for monitoring ESC implementation.

2.3. A specific budget devoted to the constant improvement and coordination of the mentoring process should be allocated at centralised level, including for the online “Community of practice”, and with sufficient funds for all training and certification of ESC mentors and other support persons.

3. Connection between the projects and the real societal needs

3.1. ESC volunteers should undertake their activities in projects that are designed to be implemented alongside local volunteers, to ensure that they gain a better understanding of the local volunteering reality, contribute to the real local needs through local volunteering objectives, and gain a greater understanding of how volunteering in their free-time can be part of their own post-placement lifestyle.

3.2. Projects in organisations whose only volunteers are ESC international volunteers, should be avoided, in order to bring extended added value to communities and individuals. When ESC volunteers are placed in organisations with no local volunteers, efforts to engage local volunteers in their activities should be a component of the continued allocation of the Quality Label.

3.3. Post-placement integration and adjustment should be better supported through increased integration in the hosting local community that allows volunteers to maintain a link outside the direct volunteering placement project. The role of the mentor and other support-persons should provide adequate guidance and support in this regard.



II. Annex 1

Rationale for the Policy Recommendations for imProvinG the Quality of an ESC Project

(based on survey results and other analysis and information obtained during the project)

The project partners have come up with the above 3 main recommendations, based on a more extended analysis process, starting from the results of the survey we conducted in the project (see Annex 4), the information gathered during the EVS Realm project and tendencies observed in the evolution of volunteering projects and their mentoring dimension. We feel it is important to bring more light on our common process of formulating the recommendation and on the long-term expertise in implementing European volunteering projects, interacting with hundreds of volunteers, mentors and organisations, which are all reflected in the rationale points below.

II.A. Organisational Management

According to the experience collected during many years of the EVS programme, what has been demonstrated is that there are situations in which organisations exist largely due to EVS projects, creating a dependent relationship between the creation of projects and the “survival” of the organisation (either hosting or sending organisations).

This existence due to EVS projects is not only based on a funding perspective, but also on a lack of sufficient staff to carry on the activities promoted by organisations. This is why it can happen that volunteers find themselves dealing more with a working experience rather than a real volunteering activity, with bigger responsibilities and duties, and performing tasks and activities going beyond the basic volunteering actions.

In order to avoid this kind of situation, it is important to guarantee the real need and objective of the project proposal, by also making clear to organisations, for example in the ESC guide, which kind of actions are required to be performed for recognising the project as “volunteering activity” within the programme.

Communication between the different stakeholders involved is crucial, but also the monitoring performed before, during and after the project.

The ESC Resource Centre and SALTO Youth Resource Centres will have a monitoring role³, according to the ESC Guide. This monitoring action can be truly effective if there is collaboration among stakeholders, but particularly coordination in the way the different actors communicate and act within the projects’ implementation. This is why more synergies between national and regional-level full time volunteering schemes and ESC should be made, leading to a more coordinated approach and more flexibility of the programme, able to deal with any geopolitical changes arising, that can possibly require these programs to change or adjust.

At the same time, specific ad hoc meetings on mentoring (face to face or even online) should be put into place at national level, initiated by the NAs and gathering the organisations, their mentors and potentially also the trainers who work with volunteers during On Arrival Trainings and Mid Term Meetings (even if they are working under Trainers Pools or not). Such meetings would allow all stakeholders to be kept up to date on the national mentoring situation and its specifics, on the issues met by organisations in the implementation of the mentoring role and on the feedback coming from the volunteers. They would also foster the development of new strategies based on positive examples, but also help formulate coherent and unified messages concerning the role of the mentoring support process, which are then transmitted by trainers, organizations and also the NA, in their different moments of interacting with the volunteers and the mentors, reducing the risks of misconceptions, misinterpretations or contradicting expectations regarding this role.

³ The European Solidarity Corps Guide, https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/2019_european_solidarity_corps_guide2_clean.pdf



II.B. Connection between the projects and the real needs of the communities

It has been demonstrated that sometimes volunteers come back home from their volunteering project having lived in a sort of “dreaming bubble”, containing both their tasks and daily activities, as part of professional development, but also their personal challenges and growth, which may many times lead to them not really confronting themselves with the local realities. In this way, in the post phase of the volunteering project, they have difficulties in integrating themselves in their home community or in the hosting one, if they decide to move to another country (i.e. the one where they had done their volunteering project). This sometimes leads to a general disorientation and sense of failure for the “ex-volunteers”, because they feel themselves unfitting to any realities. In addition to this, their skills acquired through volunteering projects, are not always fully recognised or understood by future employers.

To solve this gap, ideally ESC volunteers should be placed in projects where they can undertake their responsibilities alongside local volunteers and in this way get a better understanding of the local volunteering reality and contribute to the local volunteering objectives. In this way, a sense of belonging to the local dimension is developed, making the post-volunteering adaptation process easier. Being integrated in the local community allows the volunteers to maintain a link outside the volunteering project, dealing with different situations, reactions and behaviours than those of their project, and creating a network outside the usual or more familiar structure of the organization, thus expanding their circles of knowledge and awareness.

In addition, coordination of instruments of validation of skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning (such as Youthpass, ESC Certificates, etc.) is an asset to minimise the risk of gap-years and/or of unemployment, which many ex-EVS volunteers have found after their volunteering project.

II.C. Redefining the terminology of the mentoring process

Mentoring is a process considered crucial by all stakeholders involved in the ESC programme. Despite its undoubtedly recognised importance, the role of the mentor is still suffering from a lack of common definition and clarity of responsibilities included in the role, along the different moments in the entire project process. This discrepancy is not only visible among the different stakeholders at different levels (volunteers, organisations, NAs and EU institutions), but also between the different countries, making sometimes the cooperation and implementation of the projects difficult, if not impossible.

Coordination is required and it can be seen as the pillar solution of all other issues connected to the role of the mentor. A European-wide accepted definition on who are the mentors and what their role is, as well as any other step forward in characterising and building the mentoring process and minimum standards is needed and can be cooperatively built. National Agencies should take initiative in defining the role of mentors based on the reality of their accredited organisations and ESC projects within the country, leading the way in defining the minimum requirements, based on the European Solidarity Corps Guide². National Agencies should be provided with funding supporting trainings specifically focused on mentorship, creating and formulating national communities of mentors.

In addition, mentors are not always sufficiently prepared to confront themselves with specific cases in which they are asked to intervene, particularly those related with the psychological/mental and learning & personal support areas. In these situations, lacking the sufficient knowledge or experience to identify it, for the mentors it is difficult to fix a boundary where their role ends and an expert should intervene. Coordinators and mentors should define these boundaries together, at the start of any project, taking into account the concrete situations and resources, volunteer profiles and needs, as well as the limitations, making plans for the implementation of the support role and constantly reviewing them. Hosting organizations should be able to split the complex role of the mentor among different people with different qualifications, depending on the needs of each volunteer and this can come only from a proper preparation process before the volunteering activities and from a constant

² The European Solidarity Corps Guide, https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/2019_european_solidarity_corps_guide2_clean.pdf



monitoring process during the project. A **prior knowledge of the ESC programme and of the volunteering project specifics**, as well as the tasks and activities of the volunteers and their profile, are crucial for the mentors to be able to play their role qualitatively. Moreover, organisations must familiarize mentors with the topic and the different resources the organisation has (i.e. it could be that the organisation has a psychologist in the team, or an educator, that can support the mentors and mentees or that the organisation knows other specified organisations in the local community which can be tapped into as resources, for example in case additional support for sensitive cases is needed).

There is confusion on the **limitations of the mentor's role**. From one side, mentors are somehow "accused" to not be proactive enough, while from the other side they are seen excessively present in the volunteer's life, during the project (depending on their personal mentoring style and personality). Despite positive and negative subjective experiences related to particular structural situations, what emerges as general confusion regarding the role of the mentor is: lack of coordination, completely different definitions and perceptions or interpretations on the role of the mentor, a gap between the role they are asked to fulfil and their skills and preparation for it, particularly concerning their language and communication skills, but many times also regarding their ability to facilitate reflection on learning and to guide the volunteer in becoming aware of the project's impact. This emerges from the replies received to our surveys, about the need to give mentors access to training, to language courses and to exchange of experiences, where they can learn from each other and fill in some gaps. Support in solving possible questioning on the role of mentors could come also from changing the wording "mentor", which can be perceived as intimidating (both for the volunteer and the mentor), as it can put a lot of pressure on the mentor to perform a high counselling task or it can even suggest a need of support or an inability to cope, that the volunteer does not feel or recognize and therefore can reject the need of a mentor, during the project. Instead, it may be more helpful to use a more specific wording for the role, replacing it with a phrase, such as "person who supports the personal well-being of the volunteer". This different wording reflects better the specific role of mentors, avoiding the vagueness that the "mentor" word brings (*also because of the way it may be translated in different languages or understood in different cultures*), being more related to their actual responsibility of caring for the volunteer's overall state of well-being and, at the same time, being closer to the realities mentors approach and diminishing the weight the word "mentors" puts on the shoulders of

those who are interested to take over this role, without lowering the importance of the role.

Even though in some cases trainings for mentors are already put into place, they do not always receive the expected participation and involvement from the mentors. The reasons are mainly due to a lack of **recognition of their efforts**, from the other actors involved in the process, resulting in a general demotivation. Guaranteeing a recognition of their efforts, which could be represented by an award or a financial support, can maybe positively influence their motivation and perhaps their interest and commitment to improve their skills and abilities for a better mentoring process. Also the creation of a “**mentors’ community**” is seen as a positive additional support element, in order to best carry on their role for more sustained periods of time and to greater depth, also finding incentives for their own personal development.

II.D Resource allocation for the mentoring scheme

What comes across from all the previous policy recommendations is that the mentoring scheme needs to be improved and better structured within the ESC programme, and then during the implementation of the projects (compared to its previous version in EVS), so as to ensure the high-quality it aims for.

Further trainings are needed on the role of mentors, on the understanding of specific documentation crucial for the volunteers (Youthpass, ESC Certifications, reports to be written at the end of the project), as well as language courses for mentors, seminars or workshops focused on their work with volunteers, as well as exchanges of experience for all stakeholders. These would be valuable in order not only to reflect on mentors’ personal abilities gained, but also to enable them to learn how to deal with the situation they are living.

Organisations should be able to devote time and funding to a pre and post meeting/training with their mentors, but should also be trained in how to design qualitative volunteering projects, that take into account the real community needs, but which also have sound supporting mechanisms and strategies, which are based on real organizational capacities. Organizations have an important role in defining how the mentoring relationship will be set out and it is vital that organizations and mentors have a clear regulation of their own relationship and cooperation, all throughout the



project, determining their own responsibilities towards each other, not just the ones required from mentor-mentee relationship. This can allow better communication and understanding between the two actors, but also a better supportive action of the mentors towards the mentees, in the reality the organisations live in. Awards or funding (in the form of mentoring activity costs or resources for the activities the mentors want to develop - i.e. stationery, physical spaces, specific timing devoted to activities, a specific room where the mentor has an "office", outside activities for the mentor-mentee meetings) recognising the role of the mentors and supporting them through their activities, can give them the feeling they can have an impact on the overall volunteering project, creating and proposing different moments within it, supporting the volunteer in a variety of ways and with different methods and approaches, becoming an active actor in the entire project, not a passive back-up, placed there to just hear the volunteer complain.

A specific budget line devoted to the constant improvement and coordination of the mentoring scheme should be allocated and recognised. This additional financial support should be given besides the funding support allocated to reinforced mentorship and should not replace or include it, as it addresses a different need than the one of integration of youth with fewer opportunities. This budget should be devoted to NAs to implement activities supporting the development and training of mentors; and to organisations, throughout the project, supporting their activities for a successful mentoring structure and approach.



III. Annex 2

Project Description

The project “**EVS Realm: Masters of the Learning Path**” was implemented by Pro Vobis - National Resource Center for Volunteering - Romania (www.provobis.ro) in partnership with Politistiko Ergastiri Ayion Omoloyiton - Cyprus (www.politistiko-ergastiri.org), Stowarzyszenie ANAWOJ - Poland (www.anawoj.org) and the European Volunteer Centre - Belgium (www.europeanvolunteercentre.org), from March 1st 2017 until August 31th 2019, and funded by the European Union within the **Erasmus+ Program**, Youth Strategic Partnerships, under the contract number: 2016-3-RO01-KA205-035560.

The project was initially aimed at increasing the quality of EVS projects, implemented all throughout Europe and especially in the 4 partner countries. Since the announcement by the European Commission in 2016 that EVS would be replaced by the European Solidarity Corps, the project partners have closely monitored the process of conversion to the new programme and adjusted the project to ensure that the outputs are useful and relevant for the development of the organizational capacity of volunteer involving organizations in relation to ESC projects, with a special focus on the mentoring dimension, highly underestimated and underused in EVS projects. Bearing this in mind, the partners aimed at improving the quality of the proposed ESC volunteering experiences, developing tools and resources for mentors engaged in ESC and increasing the awareness of key stakeholders as to the role of mentors and other support-persons in enhancing the overall quality and impact generated by an ESC project.

All 4 organizations are active in the field of volunteering in general and EVS and now ESC in particular. The partners have extensive experience in EVS project and volunteer management and are keen promoters of a qualitative approach to all elements of these projects.



The project had a duration of 30 months and its main 4 results are the following intellectual outputs, which were created as resources for the leading stakeholders in European volunteering projects:

1. **EVS Strong Houses Mastery Class** – a Training Design for beginner ESC hosting organizations – focused on organisational management in relation with quality ESC project design, generating meaningful learning experiences for all those involved (volunteers, organizations, community).
2. **Mentors' Initiation Journey Itinerary** – a Training Design for ESC mentors (current or future) or other support-persons – focused on understanding and defining the mentoring process and the overall support-role to be offered within an ESC volunteering project, and at the same time to equip support-person with needed tools to build support-schemes adapted to the needs, personality and evolution of hosted volunteers.
3. **TreasureBox for Mentors and other support-persons in ESC** – a concrete set of 26 working tools for ESC mentors and other support-persons, gathered in a toolbox structured in 4 support-categories, each containing proposals of tools and mentoring techniques for different phases in a mentoring relationship and different mentoring needs.
4. **Policy Paper on Improved ESC Quality** – containing concrete policy proposals for the improvement of the transnational volunteering program ESC, along the rationale for these recommendations coming from the project and partners' experience, but also the description of ESC and other volunteering programs in Europe, and national EVS/ESC fact sheets and other research results.



The European Solidarity CorPs (ESC) Programme

IV.A. EU policy Context

The history of volunteering service in Europe differs from country to country. While some countries have long standing volunteering traditions, other EU states are only beginning to create their own culture of voluntary action. As it is possible to see from the Volunteering Infrastructure in Europe Publication³, the volunteering situation in Europe lacks in coordination, being affected by different definitions, conceptions and legal frameworks (where existing). This is why the presence of European volunteering programmes has helped in making a step further into the common understanding of volunteering, particularly those volunteering programmes and activities focusing on young people. Volunteering gives the chance not only to support community needs and to increase personal and professional skills of the volunteer, but also to enhance the feeling of Europe-ness and internationality. Volunteering abroad or in-country, within the structure of a European programme, makes the relationships with other realities, even those far from the usual ones, closer, building up a stronger feeling of solidarity and of being together.

The presence of European volunteering programmes not only supports the general creation and development of volunteering activities, but also supports the recognition and validation of competencies & skills acquired through volunteering, thanks to certifications, specific steps to be achieved by volunteers and sending & hosting organisations, through the entire project implementation:

³ Volunteering Infrastructure in Europe Publication, 2012, Brussels, Belgium,
https://issuu.com/european_volunteer_centre/docs/volunteering_infrastructure_in_europe, last seen January 11th 2019



Transparency and recognition of all types of skills and qualifications is necessary to enable people in Europe access opportunities to be truly mobile between employment, learning opportunities or within and between countries.

Systems, tools and supports need to enhance visibility of skills and qualifications acquired in different settings and establish trust and understanding of qualifications from different education and training systems⁴.

According to Principle 1 of the European Pillar of Social Rights “Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market”⁵. In order to achieve this, it is crucial to provide validation systems for non-formal and informal learning acquired through activities like volunteering.

Recent times have shown the fact that volunteers are the backbone to the support being offered to people seeking sanctuary in Europe. It is a current example, and a visible symbol of the importance of volunteers and the way that they embody European values, contribute to resilience, and are available to offer flexible and pragmatic solutions to shared challenges.

Europe is being reminded, through this situation, that if the potential of these Helping Hands to offer HOPE for Europe is to be maximised, then there needs to be the organisational infrastructure available to welcome, recognise and value them. Only in this way will enough quality volunteering projects be provided, with the capability to harness their enthusiasm, commitment and energy. In this context, the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012)⁶ states that the right to validation is fundamental because “recognition relates both to the individual – as a means to gain self-awareness and feel empowered about their capacities and abilities – as well as to external stakeholders (such as formal education institutions, employers and societal actors at large), as a means to foster opportunities

⁴ “Showing and Using Skills”, DG EMPL, European Commission, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1217&langId=en>, last seen September 11th 2018

⁵ The European Pillar of Social Rights, European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en, Last seen September 11th 2018

⁶ Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01), Council of the European Union, December 20th 2012, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32012H1222\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32012H1222(01)), Last seen September 11th 2018

to build synergies and establish cooperation among them”⁷. To achieve this, coordination is fundamental in order to guarantee full recognition of the skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning activities.

A crucial document into the coordination process is the Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe - P.A.V.E., which provides policy recommendations for a more efficient and effective policy framework in Europe to support and promote volunteers, volunteering and volunteer-involving organisations:

*P.A.V.E. aims to ensure a lasting legacy for the European Year of Volunteering 2011 (EYV 2011), by encouraging all stakeholders to address the shortcomings of current policies. The P.A.V.E. recommendations promote and support volunteering as a demonstration of European values, providing a vehicle for active citizenship and contributing to economic and social-capital growth. P.A.V.E stresses the need for a partnership approach which involves all stakeholders continuing to work towards an enabling volunteering infrastructure in Europe. Such an infrastructure would involve appropriate and necessary support mechanisms for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations, including appropriate and sustainable funding. It should provide coherent and cross-cutting policy approaches that reduce barriers to volunteering and involve the development of appropriate frameworks for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations, which include recognising their rights and responsibilities*⁸.

IV.B. The ESC Programme

On 14 September 2016 the idea of a European Solidarity Corps was addressed by President Juncker⁹.

The European Solidarity Corps aims to foster solidarity in the European society, engaging young people and organisations in accessible and high-quality solidarity

⁷ Validation Of Non-formal Education In The Youth Sector: Key Success Factors & Recommendations, European Youth Forum, 2016, <https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/Publication-Validation-NFE.pdf>, Last seen January 15th 2019

⁸ Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe (P.A.V.E.), EYV 2011 Alliance, 2011, https://issuu.com/european_volunteer_centre/docs/eyv2011alliance_pave_copyfriendly, Last seen January 15th 2019

⁹ Communication From The Commission To The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic And Social Committee And The Committee Of The Regions, A European Solidarity Corps (COM(2016) 942 final), Brussels, December 7th 2016, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TEXT/?qid=1481272643295&uri=COM:2016:942:FIN>



activities¹⁰. It offers young people opportunities to show solidarity, express their commitment to the benefit of communities and help resolve challenging situations across Europe. At the same time, these young people have the opportunity to develop their skills and get some invaluable human experience in the process.

With a budget of €375.6 million for 2018-2020¹¹, it offers opportunities to young people to carry out volunteering activities, traineeships and jobs and run their own solidarity projects. The European Solidarity Corps builds on the achievements of more than 25 years of European programmes in the fields of volunteering and youth, especially on the experience of the European Voluntary Service (EVS).

N.B.1. The EVS Programme

The EVS (European Voluntary Service) was an international volunteer program funded by the European Commission as part of the official Youth Programme, aiming to develop solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance among young people and to promote active citizenship¹².

The European Voluntary Service started in 1996 as a pilot action but given its successful start, the Commission launched the European Voluntary Service Community Action Programme that operated during 1998-1999¹³. Since that moment, close to 100.000 young people, aged between 17 and 30 years old, have taken part in EVS, having the opportunity to develop their skills through international volunteering projects in the European Union and beyond¹⁴.

It enabled all young people legally resident in Europe to carry out an international volunteer service in an organization or in a public body in Europe, Africa, Asia or South

¹⁰ European Solidarity Corps State of Play, European Commission, June 2018, https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/0036_youth-2018-09_esc-factsheet_26june-02.pdf

¹¹ "Agreement Reached on the new European Solidarity Corps", Press Release CUL Committee, European Parliament, June 27th 2018, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180618IPRo6042/agreement-reached-on-new-eu-solidarity-corps>

¹² "The European Voluntary Service Programme", Voluntary Service International, <https://www.vsi.ie/volunteer/european-voluntary-servic.html>, last seen September 11th 2018

¹³ European Voluntary Service celebrates 20 years in 2016, DG EAC European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/20151205-european-voluntary-service-20-years_en, Last seen September 11th 2018

¹⁴ Pierfelici L., "Mentoring and Pre-Departure Training in European Voluntary Service (EVS) Ideas, tools and suggestions for practice", Pesaro (IT), December 2016, <http://mobilitytoolkit.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/EVS-Guide-to-Mentoring-and-Pre-Departure-Training-in-European-Voluntary-Service.pdf>



America, for a period from 2 to 12 months. It provided the reimbursement of travel expenses and complete coverage of the costs of food and accommodation for the international volunteer. Within each project there were three actors: the volunteer, the sending and hosting organisations, and one of the countries involved in a project was required to be an EU Member State or an accession country.

The programme worked by helping volunteers to make contact with accredited hosting organisations. Organisations selected the volunteers that they would like to host based on the interest and motivation that the volunteer brought to the project and the way their profile suited the planned activities¹⁵. The project was expected to take place in a country other than that where the volunteer lived; it was required to be non-profit-making and unpaid; to bring an added value to the host organisation and the local community; it was not supposed to involve job substitution nor be a substitute for military service¹⁶.

In general, EVS served to promote universal peace, dialogue, tolerance and solidarity; and contribute to building long-lasting and solid partnerships.

I.V.B.2. Mentoring within EVS

"Mentors have played a significant role in the European Voluntary Service projects starting with the Youth in Action Programme till now, the Erasmus+ Programme. Over these years, the EVS support structure has been developed by host organisations and by National Agencies"¹⁷. The mentor's role is perceived by many involved in the programme to be constantly redefined and agreed on with every single volunteer for every project and organisation¹⁸. The profile of a mentor depends very much on the reality of the project, the organizational context and on the volunteers themselves¹⁹.

¹⁵ "The European Voluntary Service Programme", Voluntary Service International, <https://www.vsi.ie/volunteer/european-voluntary-service.html>, last seen September 11th 2018

¹⁶ "European Voluntary Service", Volunteer Ireland, <https://www.volunteer.ie/resources/links/evs-links/>, Last seen September 11th 2018

¹⁷ Erasmus + Volunteering Activities, European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities/individuals/young-people/european-voluntary-service_en, Last seen September 11th 2018

¹⁸ Kimming M., "Meant to be a mentor", SALTO Youth, Foundation for the Development of the Education System, Warsaw 2015, https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-1300/2015%20EVS%20Meant%20to%20be%20a%20Mentor.pdf?

¹⁹ Pierfelici L., "Mentoring and Pre-Departure Training in European Voluntary Service (EVS) Ideas, tools and suggestions for practice", Pesaro (IT), December 2016, <http://mobilitytoolkit.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/EVS-Guide-to-Mentoring-and-Pre-Departure-Training-in-European-Voluntary-Service.pdf>



IV.B.3. The structure of volunteering within the ESC

The European Solidarity Corps brings together two complementary strands: volunteering and occupational activities (or professional training).

Volunteering activities are distinguished between: individual volunteering; volunteering teams and solidarity projects.

Individual volunteering is a full-time unpaid solidarity activity for a duration from 2 to 12 months (or of 2 weeks to 2 months, particularly for young people with fewer opportunities)²⁰. "This type of solidarity activity will give young people the chance to take part in the daily work of organisations and perform tasks that can have a real impact. Activities can take place either in a country other than the country of residence of the participant (cross-border) or in the country of residence of the participant (in-country)"²¹.

Volunteering teams are solidarity activities allowing teams of 10 to 40 European Solidarity Corps participants, from at least two different countries, to volunteer together for a period between 2 weeks and 2 months. Such solidarity activities could especially contribute to the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in the European Solidarity Corps²².

Participants are covered by complementary insurance and they can access a range of support services such as online linguistic support and training. Their travel costs from home to the venue of the project and back will be covered, as well as their accommodation and food. Participants will also receive a small allowance for their personal expenses. Organisations which receive a Solidarity Corps grant will be responsible for the preparation, implementation and follow-up of the solidarity activities. They will manage the logistical aspects of their project, provide volunteers with training and/or mentoring and help them recognise their learning experience through Youthpass²³ or similar tools. Organisations are also responsible for issuing the European Solidarity Corps certificate of participation to all their project participants.

²⁰ European Youth Portal, https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/faq_en

²¹ European Youth Portal, https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/faq_en

²² European Youth Portal, https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/faq_en

²³ Youthpass, <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/>

According to the Guide²⁴ developed by the European Commission on the ESC, volunteering activities must be preserved as based on the willingness of the ESC member to make a contribution to solidarity in all levels and dimensions, and this is why the distinction with any kind of paid activity is made: "It does not include activities that are part of curricula in formal education, vocational education and training systems and activities for emergency response, and must not interfere with the functioning of the labour market. Activities supported under volunteering must constitute a rich experience in a non-formal and informal learning context, which enhances young people's skills and competences. They must not substitute traineeships or jobs and should be based on a written volunteering agreement. Volunteering projects should cover the participants' expenditure arising from participation in such solidarity activities, but should not provide them with salaries or an economic benefit".

IV.B.A. Mentoring within the ESC

As ESC is based on the experience of EVS, mentoring still maintains a crucial role in the programme. Particular attention has been given to find a common idea of the role of the mentor and in general on the influence the mentoring process has in the entire volunteering activity carried within the programme. "Personal support through mentoring should be provided to all participants in volunteering activities. Mentoring consists of regular meetings between the mentor appointed by the host or supporting organisation and the participant, within as well as outside the place where the activity takes place. The meetings should focus on the personal wellbeing of the participants. Mentoring is targeted towards the individual participant and thus the content and frequency of the meetings will vary according to the individual needs. Possible topics of mentoring meetings are: personal wellbeing, wellbeing in the team, satisfaction with the tasks, practicalities etc"²⁵.



²⁴ The European Solidarity Corps Guide, https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/2019_european_solidarity_corps_guide2_clean.pdf

²⁵ The European Solidarity Corps Guide, https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/2019_european_solidarity_corps_guide2_clean.pdf



Analysis of Survey Results

V.A. Summary of Survey Results

The surveys have been conducted from May 15th 2017 and closed on July 30th 2018, using the webtool *Survey Monkey*®. Four surveys have been created, each one devoted to a different stakeholder in the EVS process: Mentors, NAs, Organisations (sending and hosting) and Volunteers (mostly former volunteers).

Each of the partners has sent the surveys out to those stakeholders with consolidated experience in EVS, focusing on the 4 project countries (i.e. Belgium, Cyprus, Poland and Romania - for which country factsheets have been created - see section V.C), but also extending beyond, towards their regular partners from a wide range of countries (more than 20 European countries).

During the period of collecting answers, a general willingness in replying was noticed from Volunteers (**165** respondents), Organisations (**90** respondents) and Mentors (**65**), while a general difficulty in gathering answers from NAs has been identified (**13** respondents). In order to secure a more representative sample of responses from different NAs, the deadline for responses was extended.

Even if between 2016 and 2018 changes have been made at EU level concerning the EVS programme, the project sees the added value of mentoring also in the ESC programme (as it is mentioned to be a crucial aspect in the ESC Guide). Questions on the ESC programme have been added to the initial version of the surveys. NAs were asked if they can still see the role of mentors as a relevant one within the new programme. Their positive answer underlines the importance and relevance mentoring has, since the questionnaire was closed before the publication of the ESC Guide (September 2018), so no official role was yet at that time devoted to mentors in the initial programme description, even if it was mentioned.

All survey results show a **variegated mentoring structure**, showing multiple ways of defining/structuring/living the mentoring process, but also with similarities concerning the needs of the respective actors in order to guarantee good quality in the mentoring process and structure.

The need of support for mentors and organisations is underlined as, due to lack of funding, organisations are not able to guarantee qualitative mentoring support to their volunteers. Active mentors feel unprepared in certain aspects, such as linguistic skills, they declare a lack of proper support coming from on-going trainings, lack of communication between organisations and mentors, as well as not enough possibility to exchange ideas, practices and knowledge with other mentors.

Volunteers consider the support coming from a mentor crucial during their volunteering project. However, many of them highlighted a very **difficult process of communication** with their mentors and sometimes not easy relationships with them, caused mainly by scarce knowledge of the language and lack of time of the mentor to guarantee a continuous support when needed.

Concerning the **Youthpass** filling in support, volunteers stated they received generally a basic support or sometimes none at all.

Responding NAs are willing to involve more mentors in their activities and to develop structures and spaces for exchange of expertise and good practices. However, to reach this, **more funding** should be guaranteed.

Responding mentors and volunteers feel that the possibility to receive an **economic support** could become an incentive, increasing motivation and it could support the activities mentors want to perform, in order to valuably sustain their mentees and their varying needs throughout the flow of a volunteering project. A specific funding would also help NAs and hosting organisations in guaranteeing trainings and seminars to mentors.



Overall, reading the survey results from all 4 stakeholders, despite their different perspectives, it appears that a **common understanding of the role of the mentor** and the mentoring structure is still a goal to be achieved. However, the willingness to reach this common view and afterwards to implement it, for higher quality of volunteering projects, is noticeable from all responding actors, and is for us a justification for the policy recommendations we have included in the present paper.

In the 4 country factsheets in section V.C, you can discover in more detail the answers we collected to the surveys, which drove us to develop three **resources for implementers of European volunteering projects**, which we invite you to discover in depth:

- a Training Design for beginner ESC hosting organizations
– **ESC Strong Houses Mastery Class**
(<http://tiny.cc/ESCStrongHousesMastery>)



- a Training Design for ESC mentors and other support-
persons – **Mentors Initiation Journey Itinerary**
(<http://tiny.cc/MentorsInitiationJourney>)



- a ToolBox for Mentors with concrete mentoring tools and
activities – **TreasureBox for Mentors and other support-
persons in ESC Volunteering projects**
(<http://tiny.cc/TreasureBoxforMentors>)



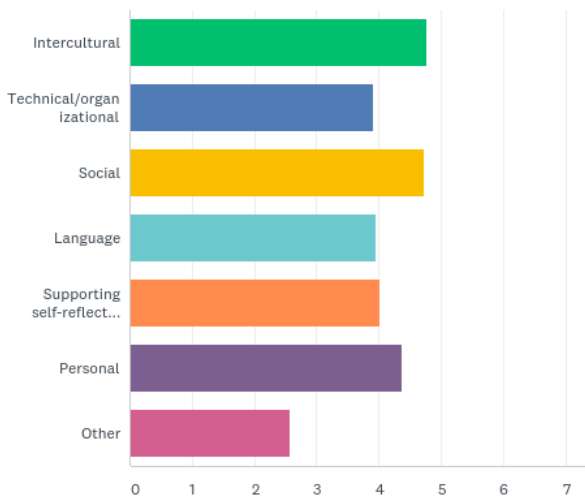
V.B. Extracts from Survey answers

You can find here a sample of the replies offered by respondents to the 4 surveys included in our research. The complete list of questions can be consulted in the reference document [EVS Realm – Research Questions](http://bit.ly/EVSRealmResearchQuestions) - <http://bit.ly/EVSRealmResearchQuestions>.

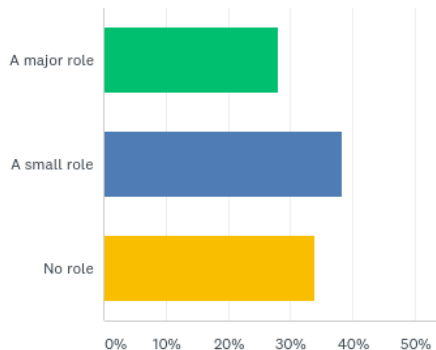


Volunteer Replies

Q15: What kind of support provided by the mentor is/was the most valuable to you? Put the answers in right order where 1 is the most important and 7 the least.

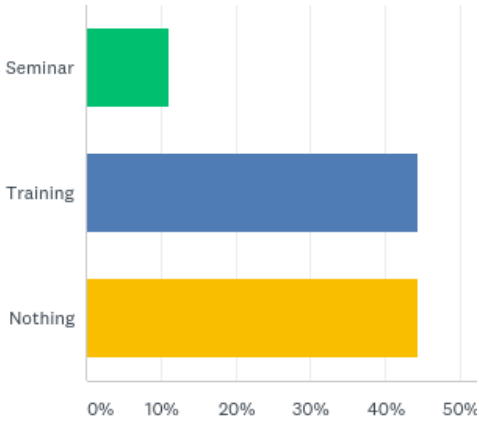


Q17: What role can the mentor play in your process of completing the Youthpass Certificate?

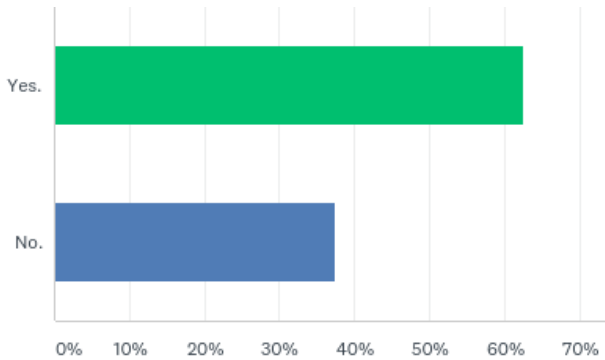


Mentors Replies

Q9: Have you followed a training about mentoring?

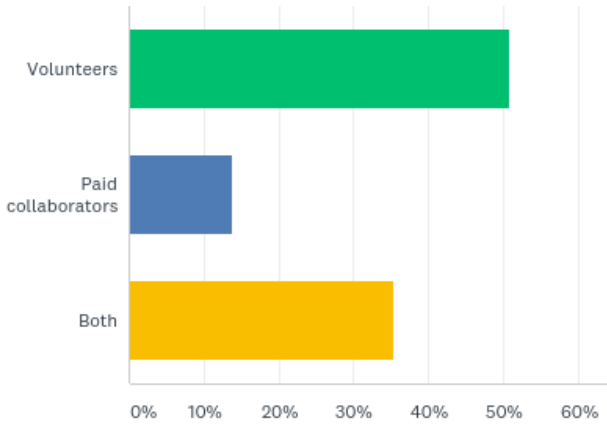


Q19: Do you think that an EVS mentor should have a fee for his services as a mentor?

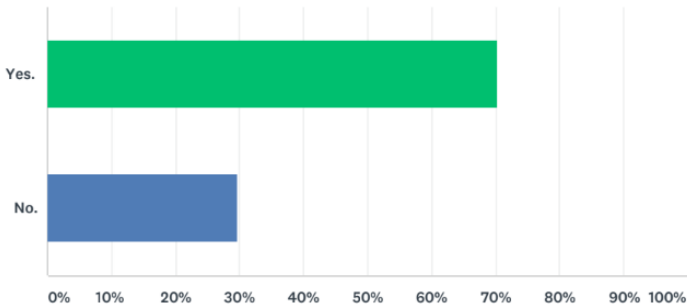


Organizations Replies

Q12: Are your EVS mentors...?

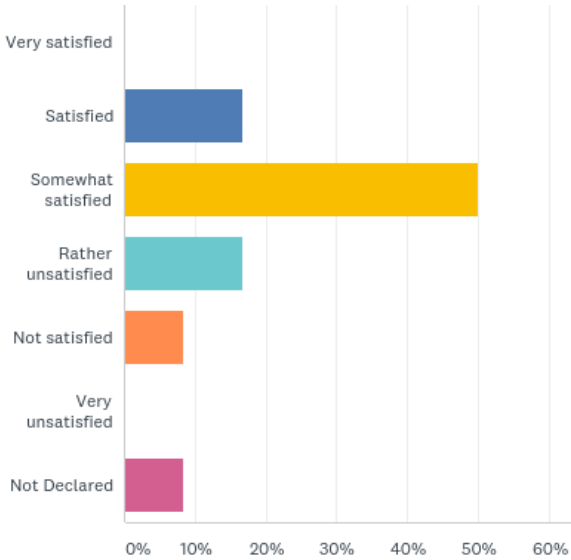


Q19: Do you organize evaluation sessions for your EVS mentors?

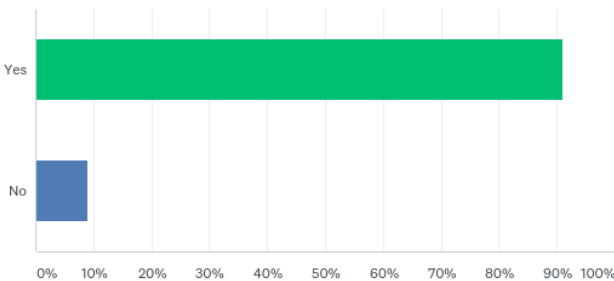


NAS replies

Q11: Annual EVS event – Final Evaluation. On returning from the EVS experience, what is the feedback of EVS volunteers concerning the mentoring process? They are generally:



Q18: Do you think EVS mentors and the EVS mentoring process should be more supported in EVS projects?



V.C. Country Factsheets

Focused analyses have been conducted on the replies to the surveys coming from the 4 partner countries.

What the survey results show is a general lack of coordinated approach and perspective among countries, particularly when defining and dealing with the role of the mentor in volunteering projects.

Mentoring is seen as a crucial and fundamental aspect in the entire EVS project. However, due to lack of appropriate tools and a real, more generalized and deeper understanding of the role of the mentor, more clarification is felt to be needed.

The role of the mentor is appreciated and characterised as "satisfactory" from the perspective of volunteers, organisations and NAs. The same 3 actors also agree that it is "crucial" within the volunteering project. The need to guarantee mentors more support, not just logistically, but also economically and through training, in order to help them improve their skills for a better mentoring process, has been underlined in all four countries.

Lack of concrete tools in the mentoring process is one of the frequently-mentioned challenges and importance has been given to the relationship of the mentor with the sending organisation as well as with the volunteer. A communication process with the sending organisation has been seen as a valuable support to the understanding between the mentor and the volunteer.

In order to be able to improve mentoring conditions and structures, a claim for increasing funding arises from the four countries surveys results, to guarantee there is space, time and capacity to support all actors involved in the volunteering project and to assure a mentoring process of high quality.

V.C.1. Country Factsheet – Belgium – pg. 29

V.C.2. Country Factsheet – Cyprus – pg. 43

V.C.3. Country Factsheet – Poland – pg. 56

V.C.4. Country Factsheet – Romania – pg. 72



V.C.1. Country Factsheet Belgium



Dissemination period: from March 2017 till February 2019.

Tool used: SurveyMonkey.

Respondents: Volunteers from Belgium; Volunteers volunteering in Belgium; Mentors in Belgium; Organisations based in Belgium with EVS accreditation or with ESC Quality Label; National Agency of Belgium.

Survey Realized and disseminated by the "EVS Realm: Masters of the Learning Path" partners: Anawoj - PL, Pro Vobis - RO, Politistiko Ergastiri - CY, European Volunteer Centre (CEV) - BE.

Analyses realised by Intellectual Output Coordinator: European Volunteer Centre (CEV)

1. Volunteers

No. of Respondents:

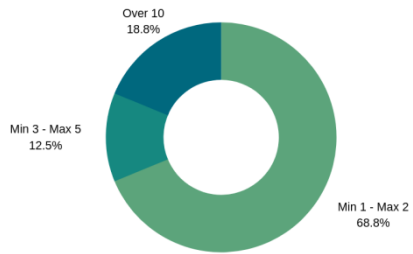
18 respondents who have done their volunteering experiences in Belgium;
1 respondent from Belgium who has done their volunteering experiences in another Country.

1.1 Volunteers in Belgium Responses

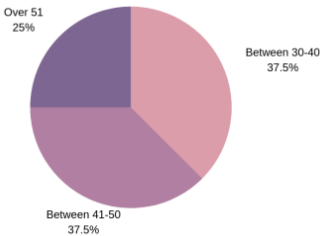
11 of the respondents were currently doing their volunteering experience in Belgium, while 7 of them they have already finished it. 18 of them reported their volunteering experiences were as long-term activity.

Mentors' respondents have managed at the same moment an average of 1 volunteer as the graphic shows:

Question:
How many EVS volunteers did your mentor have as mentees?



And Volunteers had the chance to meet with their mentors mostly every two months (1 respondent met with his/her mentor once a week, 5 respondents met their mentors every month and 6 respondents reported every 2 months).



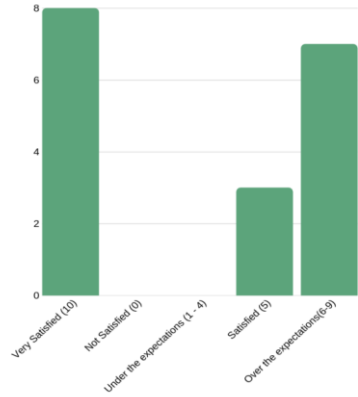
The average of their mentors' age is fixed under 40 years old:

Question:
What was the age of your mentor?



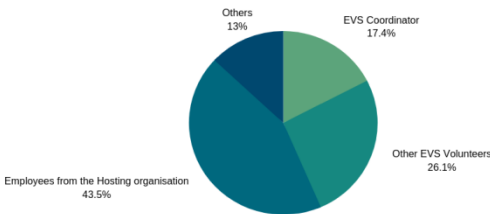
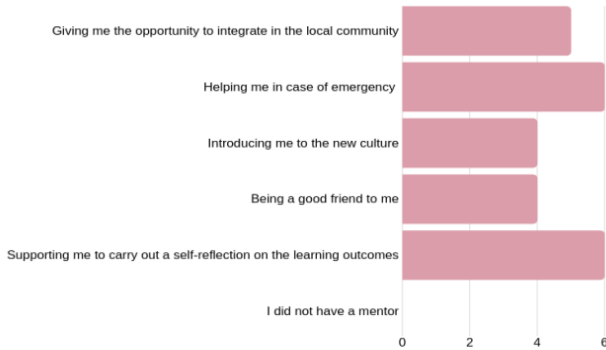
Eight of the respondents reported to be very satisfied with the support provided by their mentors during their Volunteering experience:

Question: On a scale from 1 to 10, how satisfied are/were you with the support provided by your mentor during your EVS?



Overall, the respondents' mentors supported them within these situations during their volunteering experience:

Question: How did your mentor support you mainly? (You can pick more than one answer)

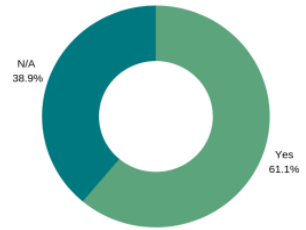


Also supported by other actors during their permanence:

Question: Who else (additional to the mentor) is/was supporting you during your EVS? (you can pick more than one answer)?

Concerning personal medical matters, the majority of the respondents reached as feeling comfortable in sharing those matters with their mentors:

Question: Would you feel comfortable in sharing personal medical matters with your mentor?



Seven of the respondents reported that their mentors had a minor role in supporting them with the process of completing the YouthPass certificate; the remaining respondents underlined a big support.

Five respondents remembered particular moments when they needed their mentors the most, such as:

- *"When I had to make a decision of what I'm doing next".*
- *"My laptop was stolen out of my room and I was very upset and needed someone to comfort me and who knew what to do next".*
- *"When I have had problems of health".*

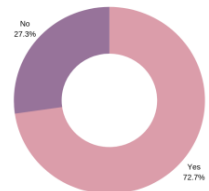
According to respondents the qualities of good mentors are:

- *"Sensible & open-minded enough to pay attention to his volunteer";*
- *"Caring, taking steps towards his mentee and offer help and support and presence";*
- *"Take time for the volunteer, being able to listen to and recognize the problems of the volunteer and help but also give a different perspective that they can share with the volunteer. This helps to work with the problem and reevaluate it";*
- *"A good mentor for the EVS would have the same age and is able to help the volunteer to integrate into the local community";*
- *"Sincere & friendly. The most important quality is listening (empathy)".*

Question: Do you think that having a mentor during your EVS is helpful?

And respondents' advice towards mentors were:

- *"Take your time, ask questions and be interested in what the person tells you";*
- *"Try to connect the volunteer to the culture and people from the country";*
- *"Meeting once per month with his mentee, even if there is no specific reason";*
- *"Give the volunteer the feeling that you have time and interest and give your opinion and tips";*



- *"If you like your EVS volunteer then try to give him/her a social base for living in your country";*
- *"Be patient, but sincere";*
- *"Be open minded. And you should know that what is in your responsibilities what is not";*
- *"Don't hesitate to speak if the volunteer don't good feeling or if the volunteer behaves badly".*

The majority of respondents (7) think that it is important for mentors to keep contact with the sending organisations. Four of the respondents do not see it as important, while the other respondents did not express an opinion.

11 of the respondents agreed on the importance of having a mentor as a helpful element during their volunteering experience:

- *"My mentor was someone who had nothing to do with my hosting organisation or my work place. It was good to have the chance to tell her how I felt about everything";*
- *"It helps to know that there is someone who can give you advice and help you when you need it, but also tell you when you have to push through a difficult situation alone to learn instead of depending on others all the time. A mentor is a good middle ground between giving support and giving the freedom to do things independently".*

Respondents opinions on what should be improved in the mentoring process were:

- *"Not everybody had a mentor";*
- *"I think there should be some criteria as to who can be a mentor and how they should function. I personally am very satisfied with my mentor and the experience I have made so far. But I heard from others that it doesn't work as well, for example because the communication doesn't work. With criteria this could be avoided".*

1.2 Volunteers from Belgium responses

Only one person answered the questionnaire. No sufficient to establish an analysis.

2. Mentors

No. of respondents: 3

Respondents were all experienced in long-term volunteering mentoring:

Question: Have you mentored EVS long-term volunteers (between 2 and 12 months) and short-term volunteers (between 2 weeks and 2 months)?



All of them have mentored long term volunteers and none of them has been involved in any kind of training.

The respondents' motivations of being a mentor were:

- *I first wanted to be a volunteer myself, but due to circumstances this did not work anymore. By being a mentor I could keep that connection. I also wanted to learn and coach people, have fun and get to know cultures.*
- *The experience to coach young people from abroad and know their culture.*
- *Helping volunteers and make sure they get the same amazing experience I had.*

According to respondents, being a mentor means to support the volunteers and to answer their needs during the volunteering experience:

- *"It gives me satisfaction;"*
- *"To help them with all kinds of matters in their new country, habits, food, culture, administration, etc. Also to be there for them if they need to talk or a shoulder;"*
- *"Mostly listening and supporting. I try to answer the needs of my volunteer. So it depends on what the person needs."*

The Mentor also encourages and evaluates the learning process as well as creating supportive and trusting atmosphere, having mentors specific qualities such as the ones on the right.

interestintheperson
knowledgeofcountry

languageknowledge
time
positivism
objective
listener
interestinculture
Openness

Respondents declared of having being supported through regular meetings.

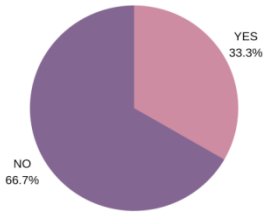
Concerning the need for more support/knowledge about mentoring, the three respondents disagreed: one answered "yes", one answered "no", and the last one did not express any opinion.

All respondents considered good to encourage other people to become mentors. Some challenges are anyway there such as:

- *"Making time in my busy work schedule;"*
- *"The openness of the volunteer."*

Respondents met their volunteers generally once a month. They structure their work with the volunteer on the needs of the volunteers.





According to respondent answering the questionnaire, the possibility of receiving a fee for the services that the mentor gives, there was a majority of negative responses (2 responded "no"):

Question: Do you think that an EVS mentor should have a fee for his services as a mentor?

Agreement among respondents on the importance of knowing the structure of the organisation in order to achieve the most from mentoring activities, and for not supporting the idea that the mentor should be in the same age group as the mentees. It is not given great importance to the communication between the sending organisations of the mentees (2 respondents answered "no").

All respondents considered important to follow up the implementation of the learning experience of their mentees after the end of the volunteering experience: "Very important for your own experience and a better follow up for the next mentees".

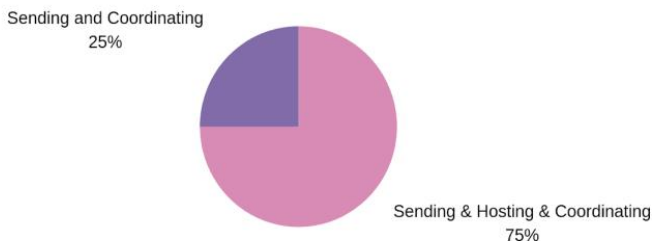
No suggestions were given by respondents on what should be improved in the mentoring process.

3. Organisations

No. of respondents: 4

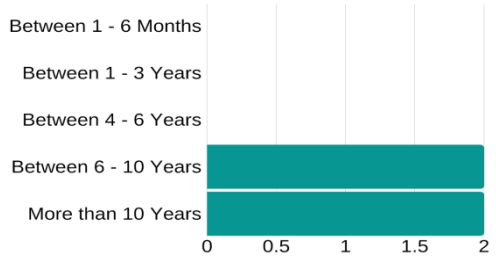
Responding organisations were experienced with hosting, sending and coordinating roles on a different scale:

Question: Are you a hosting, sending &/or coordinating organisation?



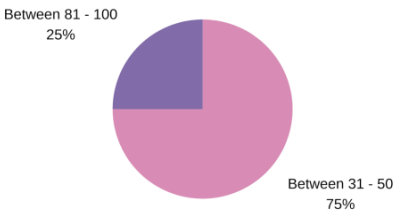
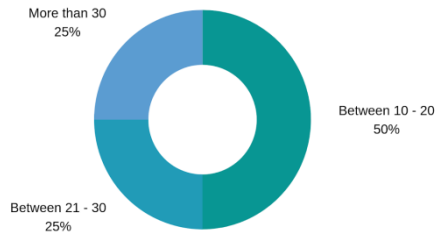
And have being an EVS accredited organisation from an average of more than 10 years:

Question: How long have you been involved in EVS?



Responding hosting organisations had implemented an average of 15 hosting projects:

Question: How many EVS hosting projects have you implemented?



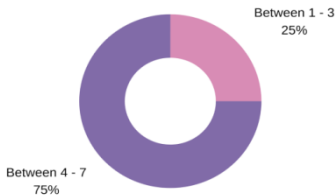
Sending and hosting responding organisations had respectively sent and hosted these amounts of volunteers:

Question: How many EVS volunteers have you hosted?

Question: How many EVS volunteers have you sent?

All respondents have sent between 21 and 30 volunteers.





Half of the responding organisations offered them a mentoring service. The average numbers of volunteers hosted within one project are:

Question: What is the average numbers of EVS volunteers you host within one project?

With a respectively allocation of mentors per volunteers:

Question: How many EVS volunteers does an EVS mentor have allocated?



The respondents selected their mentors in different ways:

- For their pedagogical and relational skills;
- Local volunteers, students that did their internship in our organisation - There is not a real selection;
- Local people that know the environment and have some feeling with international people or students that did an internship in the organisation and like to support a volunteer. A short explanation or we ask if we see a good person, not really a selection;
- Volunteers that live in the region, ex internship students social work from our organisation.

All respondents declared that their mentors were volunteers.

Responding organisations offered to their mentors continuous training through:

- Explanation of the specificities of the tasks, continuous support and evaluation;
- Explanation of the EVS cycle, talking about what are the do's and don'ts in mentoring, some training if there is from the NA;

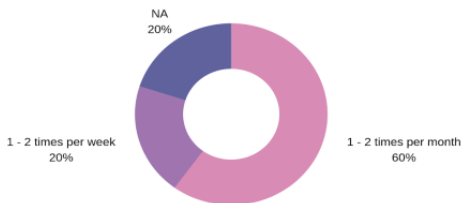
- Short description of the EVS flow during the year. We explain before arrival which EVS we expect, we evaluate the year before and make agreements on what to improve. During the year we give some support in coaching, youth pass, and what we see is needed on the way;
- Short explanation of what EVS is, what we expect from the mentor and during the year we have some supervision moments.

According to the organisations answering the questionnaire, the good qualities of a good mentor are:

- Open-mindedness, kindness, empathy, professional distance;
- Supportive, listening, coaching the volunteer in overcoming difficult moments;
- Being supportive in the first months and being able to teach the EVS developing their independence bit by bit. Listening, giving advice or tools to deal with problems. Make time to listen to the process of the EVS volunteer, not just having fun informal moments. help to integrate into local life;
- Active listener that can guide the volunteer in his personal process.

Their mentors met usually with the volunteers once per month:

Question: How often do mentors meet with EVS Volunteers?



The main challenges their mentors declare while relating with their mentees are:

- Communication, language difficulties, personal problems of the volunteers;
- Find a balance between coaching and helping;
- When the evs volunteer faces problems in the work, how to deal with this. coaching of the volunteer, dealing with youth pass;
- In the past it was to find a way to get a good relationship volunteers really talk about what they face. At the moment get into a deeper learning process.

As positive aspects mentors' respondents underlined are:

- Be in contact with young and dynamic persons, intercultural exchange, new professional input, new and creative ideas, fresh blood;



- The new contacts, the social life they share with the volunteers;
- Great people to meet, the social contact, being able to be helpful;
- Get involved with other cultures.

Respondents to the question “What tools or support do you think could be useful for your mentors to perform better in the mentoring process?” answered:

- Short national trainings / exchanges with other mentors;
- Support from the evs coordinator during the year in learning moments (give them the tools to reflect with their mentee etc.) - coaching moments for them;
- Guidance during the whole project by us, exchange with other EVS organisations and mentors, get a good understanding of what EVS is.

4. National Agencies

No. of respondents: 2

The Belgian National Agencies reported an average of 100 EVS volunteers hosted in Belgium (BIJ 50, JINT 200+) and they reported an average of 80 accredited organisations (BIJ 60, JINT 108).

According to the NAs the mentoring process is very important for the success of a volunteering project and the role of the mentor with the progress of time from one side “keeps the same level of importance to an EVS project”, from the other is “a more important aspect to manage in an EVS Project”.

During the preparation of the on-arrival training, mentors are not involved for both NAs, however their involvement in this phase is seen important: “So far the NA did not have the capacity to work on this, but we're looking into it. In some other countries, they organize trainings for mentors that are very successful”. They are also not involved in the implementation of the on-arrival training but a possible involvement could be possible if some obstacles can be overcome: “I wouldn't know how that could look like (and if the mentors have the time for it)”.

On the Mid-Term Evaluation preparation, the responding NAs reported that mentors are not involved, mainly because “We don't have any connection/relation with the

mentors of EVS". For its implementation, mentors are not involved, but one of the respondents said "I think it would make sense to invite them for a session, or to involve them in a reflection about the learning of the volunteer."

At the end of the volunteering experiences, volunteers' feedbacks on the mentoring process are about a general dissatisfaction: "A lot of EVS volunteers come back with a positive project experience. However, many of them mention that they did not have a mentor, or if they had one it was a person that was either too close to the organization or a person that didn't really have the skills to be a mentor".

The responding NAs do not delegate their activities to mentors in its activities and one the respondents meets them on the basis of "exchanging good practices". The communication between NA and mentors for BIJ respondent happens annually while for JINT never. Anyway it is maintained by both a connection with mentors through sending/hosting organisations. BIJ also uses other tools such as:

- Online tools (forums, emails, mailing lists, newsletters);
- Face to face meetings (including web calls);
- National training for developing mentoring processes.

Mentors are reported by the Belgian NAs to be generally willing to be engage and collaborate with the NAs (50/60%).

The NA have not developed booklets, guides, leaflets for mentoring, but thinks that mentors and the mentoring process should be more supported in the ESC projects: "Being a mentor for EVS volunteers should be something that is more valued by the social sector. A lot of Belgium people go away from the country to experience intercultural learning. Being a mentor for EVS volunteers is a way to gain intercultural experiences in their own country. I personally believe EVS mentors should be invited on OATs and they should have the possibility to organize at least one activity a year for EVS volunteers. Also the community of mentors should be more connected with each other. This could be reached by organizing events and trainings for them".



According to the respondents, a qualitative mentoring is based on:

- To have time to support the young, know the basic rules of the program, good communication and mediation;
- Someone who is involved from the very beginning of the volunteer's EVS and who supports the learning process over the whole project cycle. I personally believe that being a mentor works best if you have EVS experience yourself.

While according to respondents, the main challenges that they are aware of are:

- To have enough time for the youth to know EVS program, its framework and the role of each stakeholder;
- We're not really aware of any challenges for mentors, as we do not have contact with them at all. Our challenge is to create a contact with them.

EVS volunteers' complaints in regards to the EVS mentoring process and reported to the NAs are:

- The mentor is not present enough and his role is not well defined
- They complain about not having a mentor.

What it could be improved in the mentoring process is "a mentoring guide" and "some of the budgets of the EC could be allocated towards mentorship training, to improve the quality of projects for volunteers".

The respondent, according to its experience as NA role, connected mentoring with the words: "Support, listening, mediator, Challenge, community-building, work-time".

5. Conclusions

The role of the mentor is perceived by all respondents as a fundamental additional support that becomes crucial in certain phases of the project. However, despite their crucial role, they remain a “unexplored world”, that neither organisations and NAs can truly identify with a homogeneous definition. Many volunteers have underlined the absence of a specific person covering the role of the mentor during their volunteering experience.

According to the majority of respondents, mentors lack certain skills and they need to be trained prior to the start of the volunteering experience; trained mentors, that can update their competencies and knowledge with the learning-by-doing, but that they have already acquired language knowledge and peer skills in order to be fully in charge of their responsibilities when they meet with the volunteers.

Despite the requirement of this prior preparation, there are no structures or sufficient tools yet put in place to make this happen. Lack of time is also considered a big issue by the majority of the respondents.

The responding NAs suggest that an additional funding could also be seen as a boost for them to start an active national mentoring structure.



V.C.2 Country Factsheet Cyprus



Dissemination period: from March 2017 till February 2019.

Tool used: SurveyMonkey.

Respondents questionnaires: Volunteers from Cyprus; Volunteer volunteering in Cyprus; Mentors in Cyprus; Organisations based in Cyprus with EVS accreditation or with ESC Quality Label; National Agency of Cyprus.

Survey Realized and disseminated by the "EVS Realm: Masters of the Learning Path" partners: Anawoj - PL, Pro Vobis - RO, Politistiko Ergastiri - CY, European Volunteer Centre (CEV) - BE.

Analyses realised by Intellectual Output Coordinator: European Volunteer Centre (CEV).

1. Volunteers

No. of Respondents:

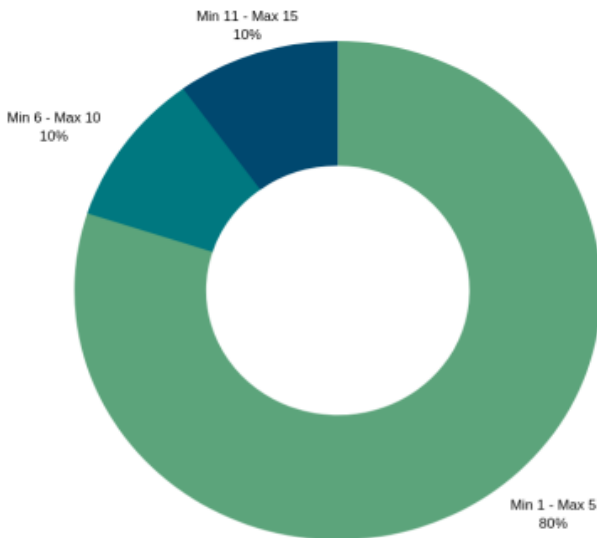
- 12 respondents who have done their volunteering experiences in Cyprus;
- 2 respondents from Cyprus who have done their volunteering experiences in another Country.

1.1 Volunteers in Cyprus Responses

Half of the respondents were currently doing their volunteering experience in Cyprus, while half of them they have already finished it. The majority of their volunteering experiences were as long-term activities; just one of the respondents had a short-term volunteering experience.

Mentors' respondents have managed at the same moment an average of 7 volunteers as the graphic shows:

Question: How many EVS volunteers did your mentor have as mentees?



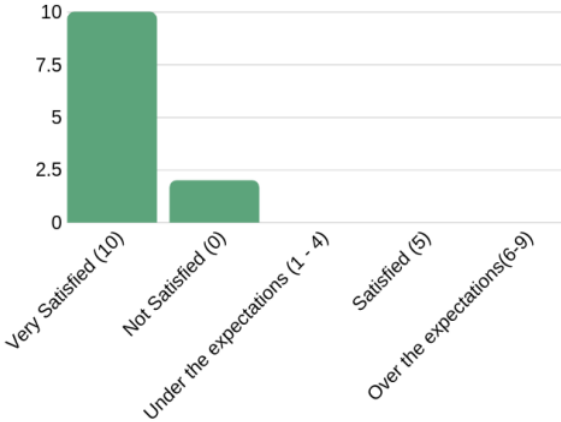
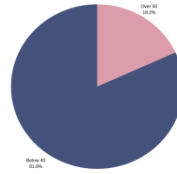
And Volunteers had the chance to meet with their mentors mostly on a monthly basis (6 respondents) while 5 respondents reported to meet their mentors occasionally or just when needed.

The average of their mentors' age is fixed around 30 - 40 years old, with two respondents having a mentor over 50 years old:



Question: What was the age of your mentor?

81% had mentors younger than 40.

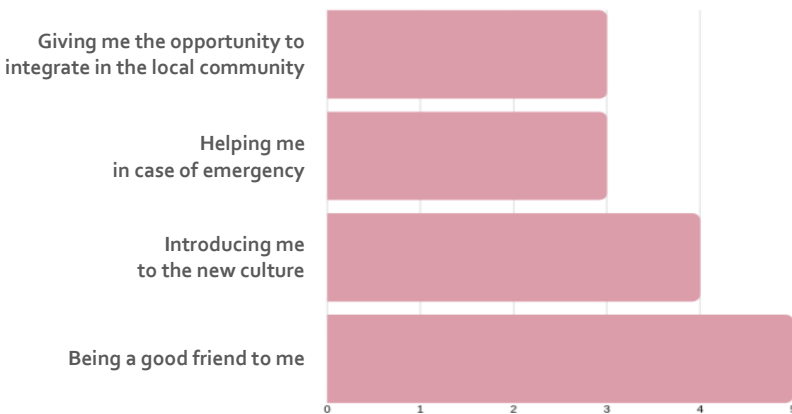


Two of the respondents reported to not being satisfied with the support provided by their mentors during their Volunteering experience:

Question: On a scale from 1 to 10, how satisfied are/were you with the support provided by your mentor during your EVS?

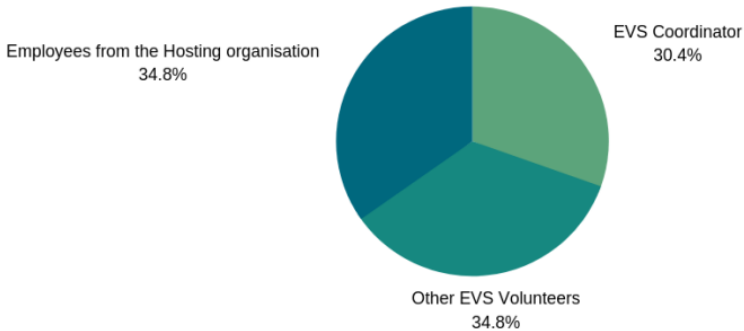
Overall, the respondents' mentors supported them within these situations during their volunteering experience:

Question: How did your mentor support you mainly? (You can pick more than one answer)

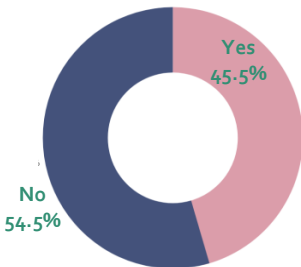


Also supported by other actors during their permanence:

Question: Who else (additional to the mentor) is/was supporting you during your EVS? (you can pick more than one answer)



Concerning personal medical matters, respondents reached a general average between those feeling comfortable in sharing those matters with their mentors and those not:



Question: Would you feel comfortable in sharing personal medical matters with your mentor?

Two of the respondents reported that their mentors had a major role in supporting them with the process of completing the YouthPass certificate, the remaining respondents underlined a general absence of support.

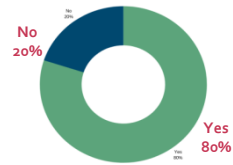
Six respondents remembered particular moments when they needed their mentors the most, such as:

- *"When there were Problems in the Apartment with the other volunteers I would have needed my mentor"*
- *"I think mentor should be the link between you, the hosting place & its culture. It is especially important at the very beginning when you feel a bit lost in a new surrounding".*



According to respondents the quality of good mentors are focused on a closer relationship with their volunteers "Being a person more that the "role" and "To give you a feeling of closeness, openness and warmth so that you could feel that you can discuss anything with him/her:

Question: Do you think that having a mentor during your EVS is helpful?



And respondents' advice towards mentors were all dealing with the commitment of mentors, the willingness of covering this role and to come closer to their volunteers, "Do not just listen, also work on the Problems even if it requires some time", by also building a stronger relationship with them: "Build the relationship with your volunteer from the very beginning, show him that you are available and that you care. In the difficult moment we turn to people we trust the most so if the trust is missing, the mentor is very much needed.

The majority of respondents (8) think that it is not important for mentors to keep contact with the sending organisations, mainly because the two realities and roles are different and because "I see mentor-volunteer as more personal relation and I think what is discussed during the meetings should stay between two of them. Unless it is an emergency situation or some sort of crisis than, SO should be informed about it.

The remaining respondents (2), justified their affirmative response towards the importance of the relationship between mentors and sending organisations "Because the sending organisation needs feedback regarding the behaviour and skills of the volunteers so in the future they would make better choices/decisions regarding what volunteers they want to send to the hosting organisation".

8 of the respondents agreed on the importance of having a mentor as a helpful element during their volunteering experience, supporting in the integration in a new community. Particularly when everything seems news, having a reliable person is case of support is crucial.

Respondents opinions on what should be improved in the mentoring process were:

- They should be sure that the mentors chosen really want to do that.
- It shouldn't be compulsory.
- Let the volunteer to be involved in the choosing process of mentor because many volunteers do not want their mentor to be their mentor because it is unnatural.

- For me I think Mentoring is not just something you can do just like this next to Job, other voluntary work, Family and other stuff, it also requires some time and some listening skills as well as skills in communication. Therefore, I think a Mentor should be better trained
- I have no idea because I had a perfect experience! (I think it depends a lot on the personality of the mentor, and to have a good connection with him/her).
- I think mentors should know more specifically, what their role is, it is sometimes misunderstood. Are they friends of a volunteer? Someone who helps to reflect on the learning process? A person that helps in case of emergency?

1.2 Volunteers from Cyprus responses

Both volunteers were currently doing their long-term volunteering experience and their mentors were mentoring correspondently 2 and 1 volunteers organising meetings in one case on a monthly basis on the other on a weekly basis. Their mentors were aged 20 and 30 years old and both respondents were satisfied with the support provided by their mentors.

One of them was supported with the compiling of the YouthPass certificate while the other not, but both underlined a good and close relationship with their respective mentors. One respondent remembers a particular situation when the mentor support had been crucial: "Make clear to my colleagues of what is my role as a volunteer. Volunteers are part of the staff but they shouldn't consider being a staff member".

A mentor according to the two respondents should be mainly a good listener, be flexible and have initiative.

The support they received from their respective mentors was crucial, particularly to "share thoughts, feelings and experiences and create more opportunities for professional and self- development"; "it's good to have someone outside the environment of the organisation that provides any kind of help".

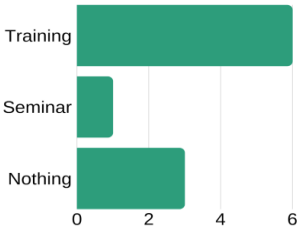


2. Mentors

No. of respondents: 10

Respondents were all experienced in long-term volunteering mentoring:

Question: Have you mentored EVS long-term volunteers (between 2 and 12 months)?



All mentors worked with long-term volunteers and the majority of them had followed at least one training or seminar on mentoring:

Question: Have you followed a training about mentoring?

The respondents motivations of being a mentor were:

- To support other people;
- To meet new people and to take part in projects in my community;
- To increase my capabilities in the counselling profession and facilitate the smooth experience of volunteers in my country;
- Keep contact with volunteers and people across the world;
- To share my knowledge;
- To Meet foreign people and to learn from them.

According to the respondents, being a mentor means being a support for the volunteers and also being supportive during their volunteering experience: "An EVS Mentor for me is meant to be a person who provides to the volunteer the "on going personal support throughout the duration of the activity". The mentor supports socially, emotionally, culturally and learning-wise a foreign volunteer. The Mentor also encourages and evaluates the learning process as well as creating supportive and trust atmosphere", having mentors' specific qualities such as the ones on the right.

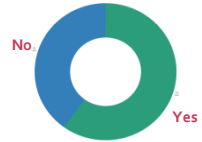


Respondents declared of having being supported through meetings (4 respondents), but also financially (1 respondent) and through the Salto Trainings (1 respondent).



Overall, the majority of mentors responding the survey underlined a need for more support/knowledge about mentoring:

Question: Do you feel you need more support/knowledge about mentoring?



All respondents considered good to encourage other people to become mentors "Because it is a role that has a good purpose". Some challenges are anyway there such as:

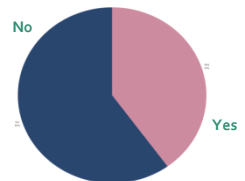
- To align programs with volunteers
- To deal with volunteers personal issues and situations arising from personality/ character clashes
- To build trusting relationships.
- To coordinate and manage time and expenses
- The distance between my town and the volunteer's town (2 respondents)
- No interest on the side of the volunteer to communicate with the mentor.
- To say goodbye to them.

Respondents met their volunteers generally on a monthly basis, while 2 respondents reported once per week (one respondent answered "during the first period every week, then diluted"). They structured their work with the volunteers through:

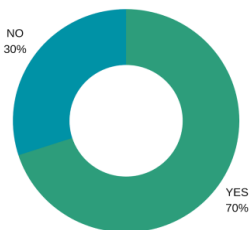
- Personal meetings
- The progress regarding their job, project planning and personal situation. Also include some games/tools that will open a conversation regarding goals and self-reflection.
- My structure was the same as the one I follow in Career Counselling: Build trust, Assess skills and difficulties, Action Planning.
- I don't have a specific structure. Each volunteer is different, so I work according to his/her needs (4 respondents)

According to respondent answering the questionnaire, the possibility of receiving a fee for the services that the mentor gives, there was not unanimity:

Question: Do you think that an EVS mentor should have a fee for his services as a mentor?



While there was agreement among respondents to the importance of knowing the structure of the organisation in order to achieve the most from mentoring activities, within 9 respondents not supporting the idea that the mentor should be in the same age group as the mentees (one respondent supported the idea of mentor and mentee being within the same age group). It is given great importance to the communication between the sending organisations of the mentees:



Question: Do you feel that it is important to be in communication with the EVS mentees' (EVS volunteers) sending organisation?

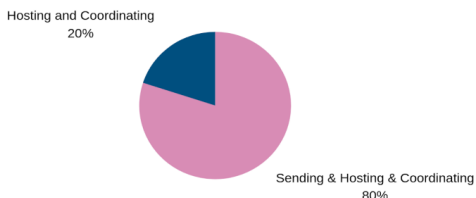
7 of the respondents considered important to follow up the implementation of the learning experience of their mentees after the end of the volunteering experience, for the learning process of the volunteer ("It is absolutely important. Without a follow-up the mentee might lose motivation in working on their self-development"), while the remaining three respondents said that it is important but not necessary ("Would be nice but depends on the relationship you develop with them. Otherwise it could prove to be a nuisance for both parties").

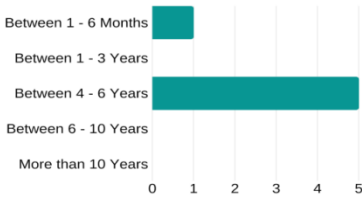
Respondents opinions on what should be improved in the mentoring process are:

- More engagement by the organizations, perhaps to arrange it earlier so there will be a connection with the sending organization before the volunteer arrives, but also with the volunteers themselves
- The mentor should have a more active presence in the hosting organisation. Something like a mentoring office would be nice and it would make the role more credible.
- Pay mentors and frequent feedback.
- A unified guide on what is expected from mentors, so that EVS programme function on a high standard and mentees are assisted to make the most of their experience.
- Mentor should have training and also meetings with the organisation every month for suggestions.

3. Organisations

No. of respondents: 6
 All organisations responding were experienced with hosting roles:



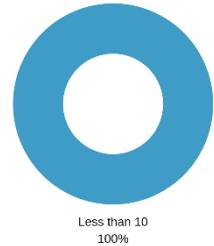


And having been an EVS accredited organisation from an average of 3 years:

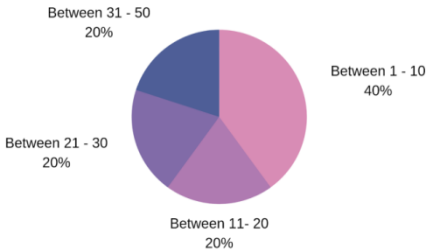
Question: How long have you been involved in EVS?

Responding organisations had implemented an average of 4 hosting projects:

Question: How many EVS hosting projects have you implemented?

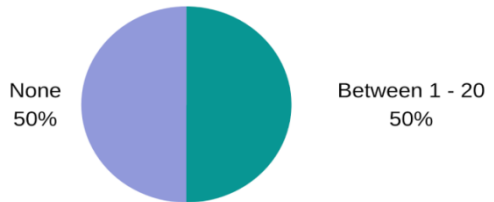


They respectively sent and host these numbers of volunteers:



Question: How many EVS volunteers have you hosted?

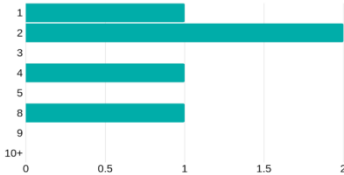
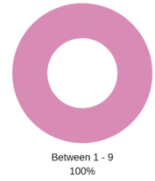
Question: How many EVS volunteers have you sent?



For those organisations who resulted as sending organisations from the answer above, they all implementing trainings for the volunteers (3 respondents said YES: 2 respondents with training before, during and after volunteering experiences, and 1 responders with training before the volunteering experience). The average numbers of volunteers hosted within one project are:



Question: What is the average numbers of EVS volunteers you host within one project?



With a respectively allocation of mentors per volunteers:

Question: How many EVS volunteers does a EVS mentor have allocated?

The respondents selected their mentors in different ways:

- We select people that are already involved in exchange programs and we prefer people who have already participated in exchange programs and/or have lived abroad. We also select people who are open minded and willing to help the volunteers. So the selection is based on personal contacts;
- On their interest to be part of an EVS project;
- We invite friends of our volunteers to get involved or people we have also sent abroad to help us;
- We have only one from the beginning of our EVS Projects. She was selected from the Organization because they thought she could be more helpful if she knew the organization works;
- by recommendation and interest.

Three respondents declared that their mentors were volunteers, the others didn't answer.

Responding organisations offered training as preparations to their mentors, giving them preparatory documents and by informing them of the volunteers' backgrounds.

According to the organisations answering the questionnaire, the good qualities of a good mentor are to be open-minded, friendly, easy-going, supportive, understanding, good listener, positive. Their mentors met usually 1 or 2 times per month (3 respondents said once per week). And the main challenges their mentors declare while relating with their mentees are mainly related with lack of time and communication obstacles. As positive aspects mentors' respondents underlined are:

the possibility to “learn new things about different cultures, religions, lifestyles, languages, beliefs” and “positive reinforcement, opportunity to help, empowerment”.

Respondents to the question “What tools or support do you think could be useful for your mentors to perform better in the mentoring process?” answered:

- Tool-platform for self-evaluation, evaluation of the organization and the volunteers. Platform for communication with other mentors in other organizations and/or other countries;
- Some trainings and a booklet with important information of what EVS volunteers need in general;
- Guiding info packs regarding their role and specific for each stage of mentoring; for long term program a midterm evaluation and a mini capacity building session would be useful.

4. National Agency

No. of respondents: 1

The National Agency of Cyprus reported 70 on average EVS/ESC volunteers hosted in Cyprus (at the moment of filling in the survey), with 18 organisations with an EVS accreditation.

According to the NA the mentoring process is very important for the success of a volunteering project and the role of the mentor is becoming more relevant than before.

During on-arrival training, mid-term evaluation, mentors are not involved “Because the preparation of MTM is a task of the NAs and the trainers”, even though their support could be taken into consideration “they are not involved but they could contribute to the preparation”.

On the Mid-Term Evaluation, the responding NA reported that the performance of the mentor perceived by their mentees in Cyprus “depends on the mentors chosen by the EVS HO. There are cases where volunteers express their satisfaction with their mentor and other cases, where the performance of the mentors is disappointing”. Generally, at the end of the volunteering experiences, volunteers’ feedbacks on the mentoring process is somewhat satisfying and the complaints are mainly related to three aspects: “1. The non-availability of the mentor whenever needed; 2. The lack of experience or skills of the mentors; 3. The fact that they do not develop a strong sense of trust with their mentor”.



The NA in Cyprus do not involve mentors in its activities and meet them “Only during on-site visits to accredited organisations”. The communication between NA and mentors in Cyprus is maintained through sending/hosting organisations and generally mentors are willing to collaborate with the NA when needed (83% level of willingness reported by the NA).

The NA have not developed booklets, guides, leaflets for mentoring, but thinks that mentors and the mentoring process should be more supported in the ESC projects, throughout “A supporting approach throughout an EVS project, with a mentor ready to assist the volunteer in any possible problem or obstacle and facilitate the learning process”.

According to the respondent, the main challenges of the mentoring process are “To have an experienced and committed mentor, who is not involved in the daily supervision of the volunteers' tasks “. What it could be improved in the mentoring process is “A pool of mentors could be created, and the organisations could select among them, in cooperation with the NA. Moreover, a specific grant could be provided by the EC for the mentoring process”. The NA supported fully that mentoring for future ESC participants in full time volunteering projects similar to the EVS approach will be crucial for their success.

The respondent, according to its experience as NA role, connected mentoring with the words: Quality, Support, and Guidance.

5. Conclusions

For the respondents from Cyprus the mentoring support is seen overall satisfying. The results underline the need of giving guidance to mentors and support them not only with training and exchange opportunities, but also financially, by guaranteeing an economic support that can also motivate mentors to be more active.

There is no agreement on the definition of the role of the mentor, even though tasks result defined and clear. Mentors are mainly selected people outside the organisation, and this raises the need of respondents volunteers to devote to mentors a specific area within the building of the organisation, where the mentors can meet them and develop their activities, or do online trainings, etc.

The responding NA has also proposed the creation of a “pool of mentors” with a specific EC grant dedicated, to guarantee a quality national mentoring structure.

V.C.3 Country Factsheet Poland



Dissemination period: from March 2017 till February 2019

Tool used: SurveyMonkey

Respondents questionnaires: Volunteers from Poland; Volunteers volunteering in Poland; Mentors in Poland; Organisations based in Poland with EVS accreditation or with ESC Quality Label; National Agency of Poland.

Survey Realized and disseminated by the “EVS Realm: Masters of the Learning Path” partners: ANAWOJ - PL, Pro Vobis - RO, Politistiko Ergastiri - CY, European Volunteer Centre (CEV) - BE.

Analyses realised by Intellectual Output Coordinator: European Volunteer Centre (CEV).

1. Volunteers

No. of Respondents:

- 15 respondents who have done their volunteering experiences in Poland;
- 33 respondents from Poland who have done their volunteering experiences in another Country.

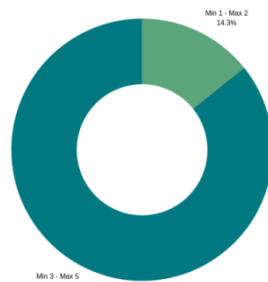


1.1 Volunteers in Poland Responses

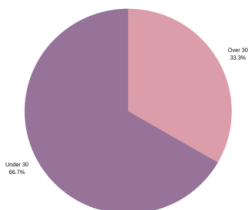
5 of the respondents were currently doing their volunteering experience in Poland, while 10 of them they have already finished it. 15 of them reported their volunteering experiences was as long-term activity.

Mentors' respondents have managed at the same moment an average of 3 volunteers as the graphic shows:

Question: How many EVS volunteers did your mentor have as mentees?



And Volunteers had the chance to meet with their mentors mostly on a monthly basis (3 respondents met with their mentors once a week, 4 respondents met their mentors every month and 3 respondents reported every 2 months).

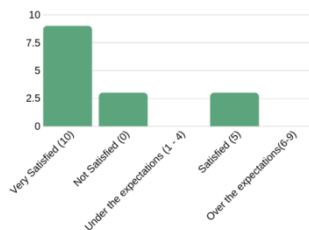


The average of their mentors' age is fixed under 30 years old:

Question: What was the age of your mentor?

Nine of the respondents reported to be very satisfied with the support provided by their mentors during their Volunteering experience:

Question: On a scale from 1 to 10, how satisfied are/were you with the support provided by your mentor during your EVS?

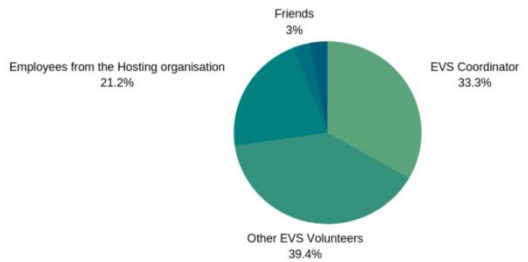


Overall, the respondents' mentors supported them within these situations during their volunteering experience:

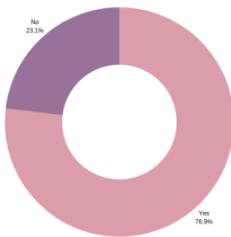
Question: How did your mentor support you mainly? (You can pick more than one answer)



Also supported by other actors during their permanence:



Question: Who else (additional to the mentor) is/was supporting you during your EVS? (you can pick more than one answer).



Concerning personal medical matters, the majority of the respondents reached as feeling comfortable in sharing those matters with their mentors:

Question: Would you feel comfortable in sharing personal medical matters with your mentor?

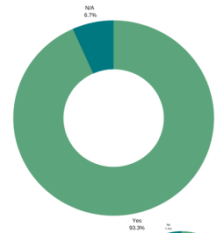
Seven of the respondents reported that their mentors had a major role in supporting them with the process of completing the YouthPass certificate, the remaining respondents underlined a general small or absence of support.

Five respondents remembered particular moments when they needed their mentors the most, such as:



- *“Purchasing an emergency return ticket home (special situation)”*;
- *“I broke my leg 2 weeks after arrival, so it was good to have some linguistic and mental support”*;
- *“When I had a medical problem because I was sick”*.

According to respondents the quality of good mentors is focused on a closer relationship with their volunteers, particularly in listening abilities (5 respondents), empathy (4 respondents).



Question: Do you think that having a mentor during your EVS is helpful?

And respondents' advice towards mentors was:

- Be aware that you will be needed when you don't expect it - try to connect with your volunteer (if possible), find things out about him, show interest - show volunteer that you are there for him;
- Be creative regarding the form of meetings;
- Share time with the volunteer, make him/her feel comfortable and open him/her the door to a new culture.

The majority of respondents (11) think that it is not important for mentors to keep contact with the sending organisations, because “It is important at first surely but not during the time of the project. Communication with the volunteer is enough for me”.

The remaining respondents (3), supported their positive answer by saying that a communication with the Sending organisation can help the mentor and the volunteer.

14 of the respondents agreed on the importance of having a mentor as a helpful element during their volunteering experience:

- Because the mentor is a help, which is more informal, more free and based on trust and friendship, you cannot tell your problems to an organisation sometimes, but to a person who is not too connected, who you trust and who is there for just you;
- Because it is the first person who is giving you impression of culture and first impression how someone is hosting you in his/her country gives you a lot of opportunity to be more open and free, when you feel that besides volunteers you have someone next to you who will help you anytime with the things which maybe is difficult for foreigners but easy for locals;

- There are things the coordinator is not entitled (or does not have time) to help with;
- Helpful to have someone who knows the locality and can give advice;
- Because the mentor represents an external person to whom you can talk and let out all the frustrations you accumulate. In the end this person would help you turn all the negative things in learning points.

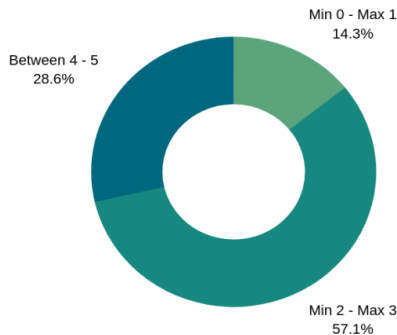
Respondents opinions on what should be improved in the mentoring process were:

- The work of the mentor should definitely be informed about the role as a mentor! In case of unexpected doctor visits or emergencies is necessary that the mentor knows about this and has a possibility to get a special permission to have time to help the volunteer in this case;
- choose mentors not randomly and not just because they know English;
- It could be interesting that the volunteer can contact the mentor before starting the EVS;
- The preparation of the mentors. The mentors should be prepared to deal with both personal problems that the volunteers have and the learning dimension;
- Giving him/her more money maybe, or paying him to feel inside the EVS spirit.

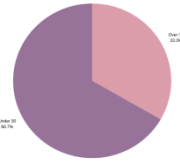
1.2 Volunteers from Poland responses

1 volunteers responding to the questionnaire were currently doing volunteering experience, while 31 of the respondents have been involved in the past. The majority of them (30 respondents) participated in long-term volunteering experiences. Their mentors were mentoring 2 volunteers on average, meeting with them for the majority once per week (where in detail: 10 respondents once a week; 4 respondents once a month; 6 respondents every two months).

Question: How many EVS volunteers did your mentor have as mentees?



Their mentors were the majority aged between 20 and 50 years old with just 1 of them with mentor over 50 years old.

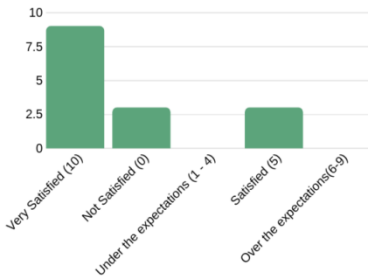


Question: What was the age of your mentor?

Two of them were supported with the compiling of the YouthPass certificate, other 16 respondents declared they were not supported, while 10 of respondents answered their mentors covered a small role in supporting with the compiling of the YouthPass certificate.

On their satisfaction with their relationships with mentors, 12 of the respondents were unsatisfied and 17 satisfied.

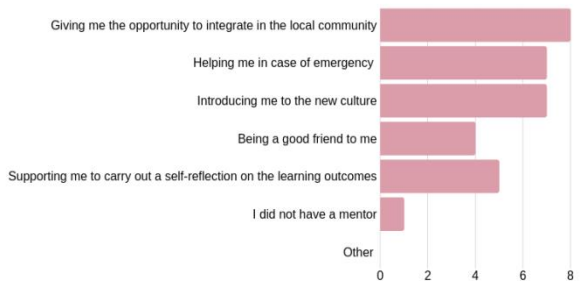
One respondent remembered a particular situation when the mentor support would have been crucial: *"After the mid-term meeting, I was quite depressed and very annoyed with how the organisation was treating me [...]. I needed a mentor to support me [...] and help me with explaining the situation to the coordinator/organisation so that they'd understand why I was so unhappy. The mentor was of no use at that time, she was scared that if she started criticising the coordinator and the organisation too openly, she will lose her job and I didn't want to be a cause of that [...]"*



Question: On a scale from 1 to 10, how satisfied are/were you with the support provided by your mentor during your EVS?

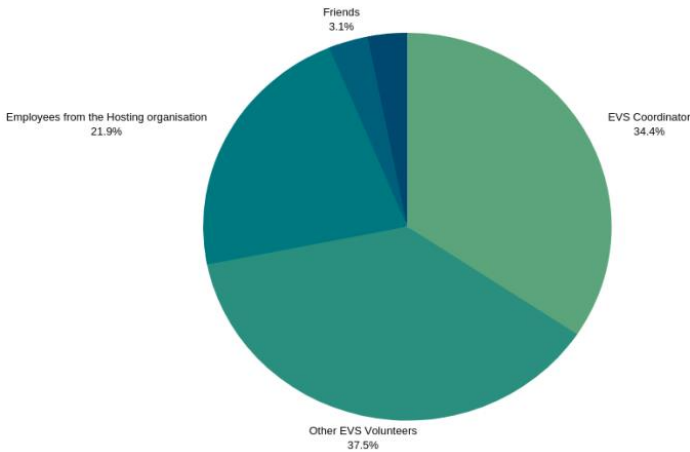
A mentor according to respondents should be mainly patient, inspire confidence, friendly, willing to help, open-minded, empathetic, sociable.

Question: How did your mentor support you mainly? (You can pick more than one answer)

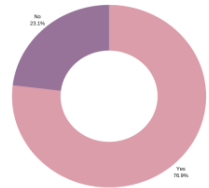


The majority of respondents (20) think that it is not important for mentors to keep contact with the sending organisations, because "I see mentor-volunteer as more personal relation and I think what is discussed during the meetings should stay between two of them. Unless it is an emergency situation or some sort of crisis than, Sending Organisation should be informed about it. " Those that answered yes, explained by saying "It depends on the sending organisation. But I think it might be useful for the mentor to grasp some of the cultural differences between him/her and the volunteer".

Question: Who else (additional to the mentor) is/was supporting you during your EVS? (you can pick more than one answer)?



26 of the respondents agreed on the importance of having a mentor as a helpful element during their volunteering experience.



Question: Do you think that having a mentor during your EVS is helpful?



Question: Would you feel comfortable in sharing personal medical matters with your mentor?



Respondents opinions on what should be improved in the mentoring process were:

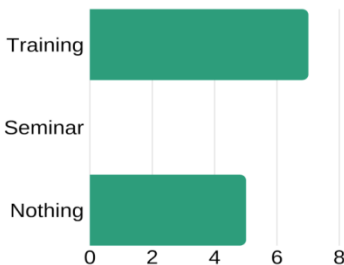
- Maybe it will be good to create king of platform or guide with rules of how to be a good mentor. I have the impression that different organisations have their own definition of mentor;
- Mentors should be informed what it actually means to be a mentor;
- A selection process for being mentors;
- Pay the mentors so they will have more motivation in their busy life to look after their volunteers too;
- Providing a system of training for new mentors;
- Mentors should not be a part of the organisation;
- Mentors should be impartial;
- I think mentors should know more specifically, what their role is, it is sometimes misunderstood. Are they friends of a volunteer? Someone who helps to reflect on the learning process? A person that helps in case of emergency?

2. Mentors

No. of respondents: 12

Respondents were all experienced in long-term volunteering mentoring:

Question: Have you mentored EVS long-term volunteers (between 2 and 12 months) and short-term volunteers (between 2 weeks and 2 months)?



And the majority of them had followed at least one training or seminar on mentoring (7):

Question: Have you followed a training about mentoring?

The respondents' motivations of being a mentor were:

- I want to meet people from different cultures, get to know the languages, customs and their way of living, as well as share my knowledge about Poland and history with them. I want to develop myself as a human being by non-formal education methods;

- I was an EVS volunteer in Germany. After my return to Poland, I wanted to be a part of this programme again and become a mentor, so that I could help EVS volunteer in Poland;
- To be able to help others to make the most of their volunteering in a foreign country;
- To be of help to those who arrive to my country, to show them it and help them learn something. I've been working as a teacher, so observing somebody's progress and seeing how they learn is very satisfying. Also, it allows me to get to know different, inspiring people and perhaps start some long-term friendships;
- It's just the part of my work. But still really enjoy it, especially meeting new people from different cultures;
- I had no mentoring during my own EVS;
- I wanted to have a new position in my CV, I wanted to learn the languages in practice;
- share my experience of being a volunteer, support the mentee, show them my culture and my city.

According to respondents, being a mentor means to guide and support the volunteers and also to discover themselves in their role as a mentor during the volunteering experience:

- To be the first person to contact in any kind of need. To help our volunteers to develop themselves and get comfortable with their new living place;
- Letting grow, encourage to explore inner potential, asking the right questions at the right time;
- To be an EVS Mentor means that I have to be part-mother, part-friend, part-touristic guide, personal translator, etc. It's many roles at once.

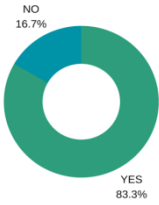
Empathetic
patient
openminded
flexibility

The Mentor also encourages and evaluates the learning process as well as creating supportive and trusting atmosphere, having mentors' specific qualities such as the ones on the right.

Respondents declared of having being supported through Facebook, the volunteer coordinator and trainings/seminars.

Overall, the majority of mentors responding the survey underlined a need for more support/knowledge about mentoring:





Question: Do you feel you need more support/knowledge about mentoring?

All respondents considered good to encourage other people to become mentors (10 respondents said “yes”). Some challenges are anyway there such as:

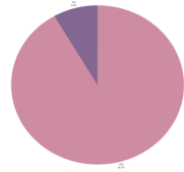
- Finding time for my mentee. I work full time and doing some additional trainings this year. It is also challenging to build trustful relationship with the mentee at the very beginning of EVS. It's also quite difficult to be a coach - setting goals, evaluation etc. and it requires some skill which I do not necessarily have yet;
- It is hard to predict how the relationship goes and sometimes it can be difficult to understand the other person;
- Looking for a good moment for stepping to the next stages. What if the volunteer is not ready for exploring?

Respondents met their volunteers generally once a month (5 respondents). They structured their work with the volunteers through:

- Meetings, trips, conversations, consultation;
- I had something like a diary where I was writing what was important or stressful or particularly pleasant for VO. I had also extra notes with goals and difficulties that we've formed together with VO and for discussing and modifying it we had separate meetings;
- Every time I meet with them I ask how they feel and always assure them that they can call me if they have a problem with something or need my help;
- We meet regularly once per month and aside from that we stay in contact through WhatsApp, Facebook;
- At the beginning of his EVS, together with the volunteer we looked at the goals of his work which was developed with the coordinator. After 3 months we looked at the goals to evaluate success. To be honest, unfortunately I quit doing that because at the beginning of my mentoring I had very little idea what my role of a mentor was. The training for mentors came only 6 months later, which was a little late. As a result, the meetings with my EVS became less structured. I'm definitely going to change it with my next volunteers.

According to respondent answering the questionnaire, the possibility of receiving a fee for the services that the mentor gives, there was a majority of affirmative responses (11 responded “yes”):

Question: Do you think that an EVS mentor should have a fee for his services as a mentor?



Agreement among respondents was also wide (9 of the respondents on the importance of knowing the structure of the organisation in order to achieve the most from mentoring activities, with 8 respondents not supporting the idea that the mentor should be in the same age group as the mentees (four respondents supported the idea of mentor and mentee being within the same age group). It is given great importance to the communication between the sending organisations of the mentees:



Question: Do you feel that it is important to be in communication with the EVS mentees' (EVS volunteers') sending organisation?

5 of the respondents considered important to follow up the implementation of the learning experience of their mentees after the end of the volunteering experience, for the learning process of the volunteer.

Respondents opinions on what should be improved in the mentoring process are:

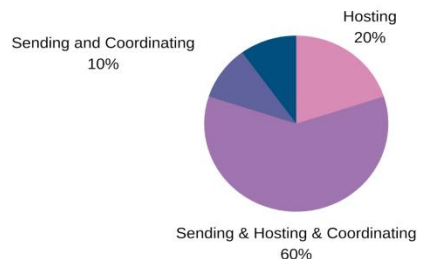
- More trainings for mentors;
- Mentor should be paid;
- Legislative adjustments in terms of legal responsibility of the mentor.

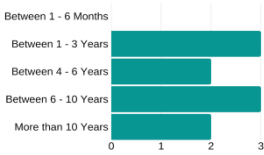
3. Organisations

No. of respondents: 10

Responding organisations were experienced with hosting, sending and coordinating roles on a different scale:

Question: Are you a hosting, sending &/or coordinating organization?

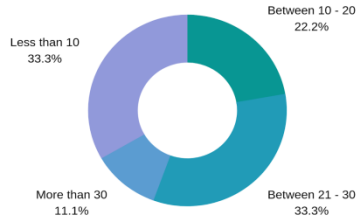




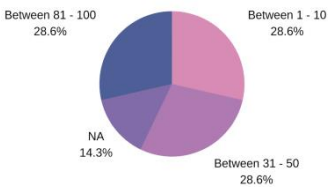
And having being an EVS accredited organisation from an average of more than 5 years:

Question: How long have you been involved in EVS?

Responding hosting organisations had implemented an average of 10 hosting projects:



Question: How many EVS hosting projects have you implemented?

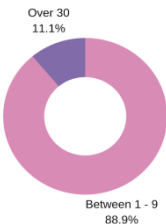
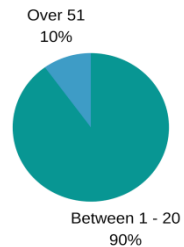


Sending and hosting responding organisations had respectively sent and host these amounts of volunteers:

Question: How many EVS volunteers have you hosted?

Question: How many EVS volunteers have you sent?

For those organisations who resulted as sending organisations from the answer above, they all implement trainings for the volunteers (6 respondents said YES).

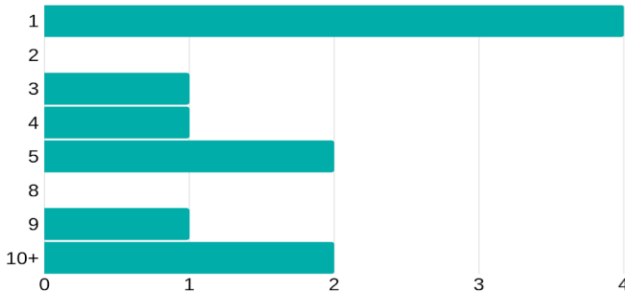


The average numbers of volunteers hosted within one project are:

Question: What is the average numbers of EVS volunteers you host within one project?

With a respectively allocation of mentors per volunteers:

Question: How many EVS volunteers does an EVS mentor have allocated?

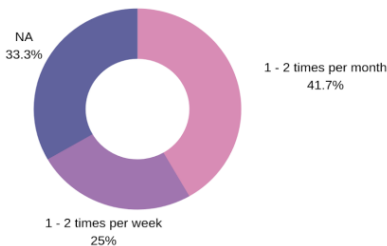


The respondents selected their mentors in different ways:

- Often mentors are ex EVS volunteers or our local volunteer involved in other projects.
- The important thing for us is that the mentor is open, flexible, tolerant, has initiative, is empathetic and understanding toward people from different cultures. The person has to be a good listener and observer and be objective.
- The coordinating organisation is selecting them.

One respondent declared that the mentor was volunteers and paid staff, four declared they were just volunteers, one that was just paid staff. Responding organisations offered to their mentor's continuous training through monitoring, training courses, individual support.

According to the organisations answering the questionnaire, the good qualities of a good mentor are openness, giving support, analysis learning, give feedback, ready for challenges and to have good skills on reflection on volunteers' learning process.



Their mentors met usually with the volunteers once per month:

Question: How often do mentors meet with EVS Volunteers?



The main challenges their mentors declare while relating with their mentees are:

- Sometimes cultural diversity is something that they have to struggle with, especially at the beginning. What is more, nowadays, volunteers are quite often people who demand a lot but - on the other hand - they are not able to give back the same. And this is something that mentors (also coordinator) have to work on;
- Lack of time, cultural differences, lack of responsibility of EVS, borderline kind of behaviour;
- Different age, life experience; not always ready to help with learning process, volunteers often demand huge time flexibility, be always for them, going every trip etc;
- To build the relation - not always it is working. They know they have to change the mentor if they don't get on well but often they don't do it and just don't meet at all.

As positive aspects mentors' respondents underlined are: learning new languages; management skills; building up relations with people from other cultures; friendship; conflict solutions approach.

Respondents to the question "What tools or support do you think could be useful for your mentors to perform better in the mentoring process?" answered:

- Training standardised made by the NA, by professional training or at least budget regionally (as small NGO who host 2volunteers gave 2mentors will not be efficient);
- More international training aimed at mentors but also more time of the coordinator to work with them and support them;
- English course, network of mentors to support each other and exchange ideas and methods
- A workshop for mentors.

4. National Agency

No. of respondents: 1

The National Agency of Poland did not report an average EVS/ESC volunteers hosted in Poland (at the moment of filling in the survey).

According to the NA the mentoring process is very important for the success of a volunteering project and the role of the mentor with the progress of time "keeps the same level of importance to an EVS project"

During on-arrival training mentors are involved since their involvement “could be an additional support for the trainers and space for building relations with volunteers”. On the Mid-Term Evaluation, the responding NA reported that mentors are not involved because “because it's more focused on individual process of learning”. As reported to the NA, the performance of the mentor perceived by their mentees in Poland is defined as “inactive” during the volunteering experience: “My general impression as NA officer who sometimes visits MTM is that volunteers don't communicate with mentors at this stage of the project very often. If they didn't build the relation with mentor from the very beginning or didn't have mentor so far, they feel lack of support in the project. If they have the same mentor and start the relation from the beginning of the mobility, communication/relation with mentor is more natural and flexible at this stage. They know they could contact with mentor but they don't use it if they manage to solve the daily life problems on their own”.

The NA in Poland do not actively involve mentors in its activities, but met them in NA trainings for organisation that were dedicated to mentors in previous years.

The communication between NA and mentors in Poland is maintained through the EVS coordinator and National training for developing mentoring processes. Generally, mentors are willing to collaborate with the NA when needed (50% level of willingness reported by the NA), the collaboration between Mentors and NA has been defined “average”.

The NA thinks that mentors and the mentoring process should be more supported in the ESC projects, “by coordinating organisations in cooperation with NA”. The NA has also developed a booklet for mentors:
http://erasmusplus.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Meant_to_be_a_mentor.pdf. According to the respondent a qualitative mentoring process consists in planned process of learning support of EVS volunteers during their activity.

For the NA, the main challenges of the mentoring process are:

- changing the mentors during project;
- short term involvement in this role;
- no award;
- no financial gratification.

And Volunteers reported to the NA EVS mentors are more focused on the technical, logistic support than on the process of learning during the projects.



What it could be improved in the mentoring process is “agree and accept that the role of the mentor could be different in different projects because it's based on the personal contract between volunteer and mentor”.

The respondent, according to its experience as NA role, connected mentoring with the words: Guide, safety, conscious.

5. Conclusions

A general conclusion of the survey results shows the situation of mentoring support not really satisfying – neither from side of volunteers, nor from side of organisations. There are too many roles and tasks addressed to the person covering the role of mentor. The results show that more clearness and clarification of this role is needed - for mentors, for volunteers and for organisations.

Based on the responsibilities of the mentor's role, it is very difficult for organisations to find good mentors – especially in smaller towns where it can become a real problem.

The support given to the volunteers is not carried out just by mentors. Indeed, volunteers use different form of support - offered by coordinators, other workers from hosting organisation, local people and friends. This shows the need of dividing the tasks, usually addressed uniquely to one mentor, between different people throughout the overall volunteering experience. What should be underlined it the flexibility in long-term volunteering projects: indeed, not all solutions are good for all volunteers in all places.

Mentors need regular support - in the form of methods, exchange of practice meetings and discussions, trainings, etc.

The results show that financial benefit (in the form of official salary for mentors) could be very helpful to motivate mentors to be active, engaged and become a professional long-term support for volunteers.



V.CA Country Factsheet Romania



Dissemination period: from March 2017 till February 2019

Tool used: SurveyMonkey

Respondents questionnaires: Volunteers from Romania; Volunteer volunteering in Romania; Mentors in Romania; Organisations based in Romania with EVS accreditation or with ESC Quality Label; National Agency of Romania.

Survey Realized and disseminated by the "EVS Realm: Masters of the Learning Path" partners: Anawoj - PL, Pro Vobis - RO, Politistiko Ergastiri - CY, European Volunteer Centre (CEV) - BE.

Analyses realised by Intellectual Output Coordinator: European Volunteer Centre (CEV)

1. Volunteers

No. of Respondents:

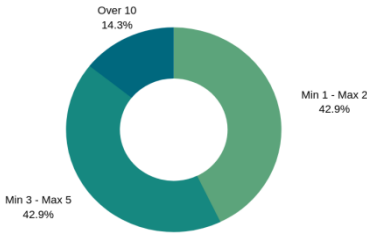
14 respondents who have done their volunteering experiences in Romania;

27 respondents from Romania who have done their volunteering experiences in another Country.



1.1 Volunteers in Romania Responses

4 of the respondents were currently doing their volunteering experience in Romania, while 10 of them they have already finished it. 12 of them reported their volunteering experiences was as long-term activity, while 14 of the respondents had a short - term volunteering experience.

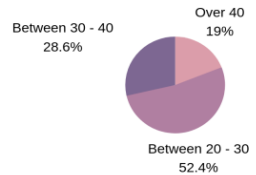


Mentors' respondents have managed at the same moment an average of 7 volunteers as the graphic shows:

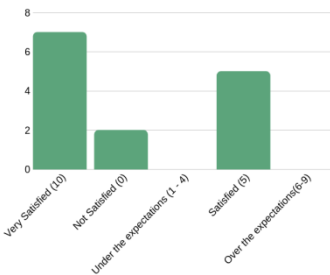
Question: How many EVS volunteers did your mentor have as mentees?

And Volunteers had the chance to meet with their mentors mostly on a weekly basis (4 respondents met with their mentors once a week, 5 respondents met their mentors every two weeks) while 1 respondent reported to meet with the mentor every day and 2 of them on a monthly basis.

The average of their mentors' age is fixed around 30 - 40 years old:



Question: What was the age of your mentor?

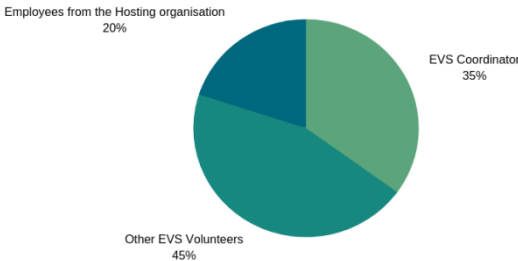


Seven of the respondents reported to be very satisfied with the support provided by their mentors during their Volunteering experience:

Question: On a scale from 1 to 10, how satisfied are/were you with the support provided by your mentor during your EVS?

Overall, the respondents' mentors supported them within these situations during their volunteering experience:

Question: How did your mentor support you mainly? (You can pick more than one answer)?

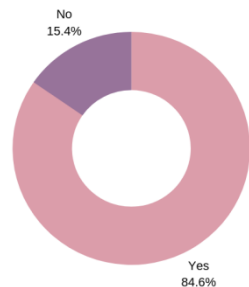


Also supported by other actors during their permanence:

Question: Who else (additional to the mentor) is/was supporting you during your EVS? (you can pick more than one answer)?

Concerning personal medical matters, the majority of the respondents reached feel comfortable in sharing those matters with their mentors:

Question: Would you feel comfortable in sharing personal medical matters with your mentor?



Five of the respondents reported that their mentors had a major role in supporting them with the process of completing the YouthPass certificate; the remaining respondents underlined a general small or absence of support.

Five of the respondents reported that their mentors had a major role in supporting them with the process of completing the YouthPass certificate; the remaining respondents underlined a general small or absence of support.

Eight respondents remembered particular moments when they needed their mentors the most, such as:

- “I needed my mentor the most in the first few months when I was having problems with a member of the organisation, who had power issues and was struggling to integrate myself fully in the local community”.
- “I remember two particular moments. The first one was before the Mid Term, when somehow she prepared me to think back in the months and understand how much and how many new things I had learnt. She gave me some inputs not just speaking, but also providing me some material that could help me. The second moment was when I had to fill in the Youthpass. In this last case we spoke a lot and speaking she was able to make going deeper in my self-reflection.”

According to respondents the quality of good mentors is focused on a closer relationship with their volunteers, particularly in listening abilities (5 respondents), empathy (4 respondents).

Question: Do you think that having a mentor during your EVS is helpful?



And respondents' advice towards mentors were all dealing with the availability guaranteeing their presence and the willingness of covering this role that comes with also enjoying this role, “Who wants to be a mentor has to really care about that role and enjoying in supporting a volunteer in his/her experience in a new country”.

The majority of respondents (8) think that it is not important for mentors to keep contact with the sending organisations, because “the relationship should be between the EVS and mentor. Only in extreme, necessary cases”.

The remaining respondents (5), justified their affirmative response towards the importance of the relationship between mentors and sending organisations “In particular cases in which the volunteer is in difficult situation in adapting to the context, I think that the communication within sending and hosting organization and mentor could help to find a common strategy in supporting the volunteer”. 12 of the respondents agreed on the importance of having a mentor as a helpful element during their volunteering experience.

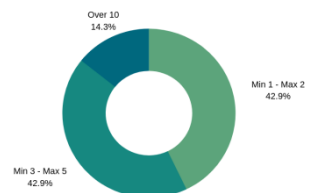
Respondents opinions on what should be improved in the mentoring process were:

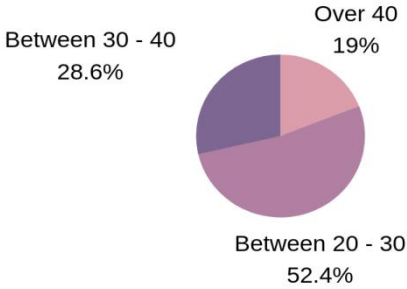
- Pay the mentors so they will have more motivation in their busy life to look after their volunteers too. (2 respondents)
- The mentor should receive formation for a better support. (2 respondents)
- To have a tool who defines their role as mentor. A better presentation of what is and who is a mentor for both the volunteers and the mentors.
- Mentors should be educated so that the volunteer can feel that can rely on them open-minded with strong personalities and empathy. From what I've heard from other volunteers their mentors really didn't come up with some specific, basic criteria.
- Maybe more initiatives in which mentors can meet each other and exchange tools, methods, opinions and experiences.
- Find better matches between mentees and mentors. More training for mentors; networking with other mentors who are more advanced.

1.2 Volunteers from Romania responses

8 volunteers responding to the questionnaire were currently doing volunteering experience, while 19 of the respondents have been involved in the past. The majority of them participated long-term volunteering experiences. Their mentors were mentoring 5 volunteers on average, meeting with them for the majority once per month (where in detail: 6 respondents once a week; 7 respondents once a month; 4 respondents every two months; 5 respondents they had no meeting at all).

Question: How many EVS volunteers did your mentor have as mentees?





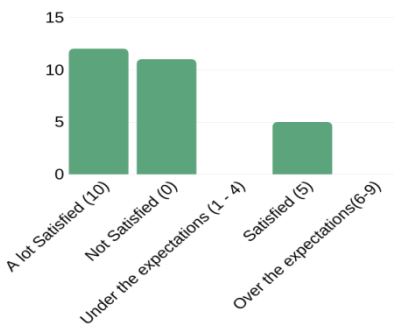
Their mentors were the majority aged below 30 years old with just four of them with mentors over 40 years old.

Question: What was the age of your mentor?

Seven of them were supported with the compiling of the YouthPass certificate, other 7 respondents declared they were not supported, while 5 of respondents answered their mentors covered a small role in supporting with the compiling of the YouthPass certificate.

On their satisfaction with their relationships with mentors, half of the respondents were unsatisfied and half satisfied.

One respondent remembered a particular situation when the mentor support would have been crucial: "I was in a cultural shock for most of my EVS experience, not understanding how things work, why certain decisions are taken in a certain way etc. My mentor did not help me and I had to deal with things on my own, but it would have

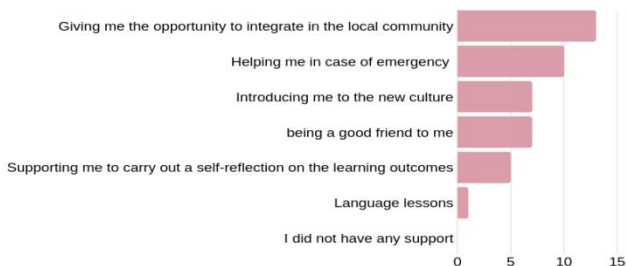


been nice to have some help. It was also difficult to integrate in the local community and separate work life from personal life, because the place was a little town where everyone knows everyone but nothing happens".

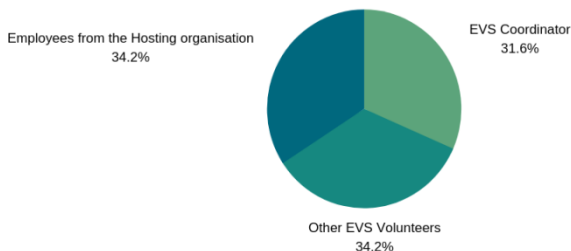
Question: On a scale from 1 to 10, how satisfied are/were you with the support provided by your mentor during your EVS?

A mentor according to respondents should be mainly an active listener, open-minded, non-judgemental and empathic.

Question: How did your mentor support you mainly? (You can pick more than one answer)



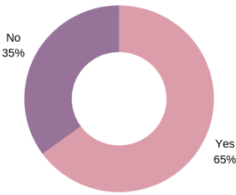
The majority of respondents (14) think that it is important for mentors to keep contact with the sending organisations, because “So that they can adapt and adjust to your work schedule and also, in advance, so that they can prepare and document themselves about the culture of the country from where the volunteer comes from; also, the organization can help providing useful tools for monitoring the learning process” and because “I believe there are situations when the sending organisation needs to be kept in the loop of whatever is happening in the project. Sometimes, the volunteer they send is a regular EVS volunteer of the organisation itself, so they could provide more information to the mentor/ coordinator, information that is needed in solving certain issues, for instance. However, this needs to be dealt with in confidence with discretion, the mentor needs to be objective and unbiased in their requests and sometimes maybe is good to also inform the EVS volunteers that their sending organisation has been contacted”.



Question: Who else (additional to the mentor) is/was supporting you during your EVS? (you can pick more than one answer)?



20 of the respondents agreed on the importance of having a mentor as a helpful element during their volunteering experience.



Question: Do you think that having a mentor during your EVS is helpful?

Question: Would you feel comfortable in sharing personal medical matters with your mentor?



Respondents opinions on what should be improved in the mentoring process were:

- Provide more support to mentors in order for them to be better prepared for their role (3 respondents).
- I think that people who choose to be mentors should attend training. it should be mandatory for them to attend them otherwise they do not have any idea of their role and don't take it seriously.
- I think that, first of all, only those who are very dedicated should be picked to be a mentor. Secondly, offering the mentors some training (which probably happens, I am not certain). Then, meetings with the coordinator and mentors to see the progress of the volunteer, discuss any issues and try to be there as best as possible.
- Mentors should be paid, so then they are under a contract for providing certain services and put more effort into doing a good job as a mentor; there could be a general set of guidelines for mentors in EVS projects which can help the mentor in the beginning; they should also be involved in the activities of the organization, so they understand the context
- Clarify the ethical duties of mentors, not just the technicalities
- More meetings with the volunteer. They need it in order to know how to deal with a possible problem.
- Control of the mentoring process, the mentors to be confirmed by both sending and receiving organisation.

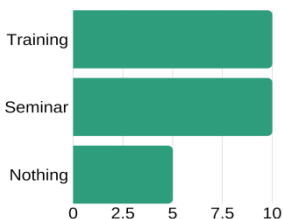
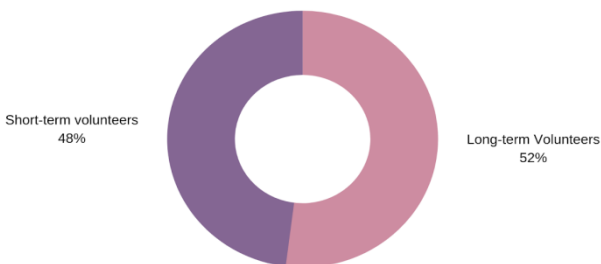
- The volunteer should have from the very beginning a clear perception of what the role of the mentor is - even before arriving in the host country.
- Special basic training for the mentors followed by an evaluation and constant monitoring.
- To have a real schedule of meetings, follow some to do list, list of tasks, to know what are volunteer objectives in the project

2. Mentors

No. of respondents: 15

Respondents were all experienced both in long-term and short-term volunteering mentoring:

Question: Have you mentored EVS long-term volunteers (between 2 and 12 months) and short-term volunteers (between 2 weeks and 2 months)?



And the majority of them had followed at least one training or seminar on mentoring:

Question: Have you followed a training about mentoring?

The respondents' motivations of being a mentor were:

- To learn and share new things, have an impact on someone's life. Contributing to its development and learning process.
- I wanted to help the volunteers during their EVS and also improve my English.
- It can complete my experience about volunteering and training.
- Helping young people in better integrate in the society.



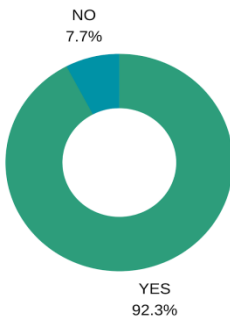
According to respondents, being a mentor means to guide and support the volunteers and also to discover themselves in their role as a mentor during the volunteering experience:

- preparation - gather information about the volunteer and the future activities - know the host organisation and its representatives, learn about the project in which the volunteer is involved, be aware of the living conditions in the host country; read the CV / motivational letter + make contact facilitated by the host organisation before arrival; 2. Build the relationship - listen, ask questions, reveal yourself as well, try not to impose authority, define the roles of mentor / mentee; limits of the relationship etc.; 3. Give support - focus on the volunteers' needs through the perspective of personal development: objectives, connect the objectives to day to day activities - structure the meetings, but keep them non formal; have knowledge of hospitals / health centers; leisure time activities, shops etc.; try to involve the volunteer in the local community, if not possible, present options, try to give local flavour to the meeting.
- It means to support the participants in their quest and help their personal development process through coaching techniques, training tips and sometimes a genuine friendly/motherly shoulder.
- It means: - setting a plan for the volunteer, a set of methods and instruments to be used and constantly improving those -try to familiarize with the outset of the volunteer's needs, objectives and expectations in regards to the project -use different methods and instruments aimed at knowing the volunteering, at evaluating his/her level of learning and the competences envisaged, as well as helping the volunteer in overcoming obstacles -listen the volunteer and try to understand his perspective, empathizing with him/her -adapting the methods and the reflection-analysis processes according to the changes in needs, objectives, desired competencies/personal learning -helping the volunteer whenever a more sensitive situation occurs but letting him take action and have his/her own decisions -all the time re-evaluating the degree of achievement concerning objectives and competences at personal and professional level -encourage the volunteer that he/she can attain more than he/she thinks.
- Listening, understanding, empathy, accepting all forms of expression and interactions.

The Mentor also encourages and evaluates the learning process as well as creating supportive and trust atmosphere”, having mentors’ specific qualities such as:

Empathetic
communicative
Goodlistener
friendly
Open-minded
Reliable
Willing to help
Patience
trustworthy

Respondents declared of having being supported through trainings/seminars (7 respondents); Team buildings (2 respondents); Logistics and informational support (7 respondents); Team management (2 respondents); Counselling (3 respondents).



Overall, the majority of mentors responding the survey underlined a need for more support/knowledge about mentoring:

Question: Do you feel you need more support/knowledge about mentoring?

All respondents considered good to encourage other people to become mentors. Some challenges are anyway there such as:

- To speak/interact with people from different places, culture, to create a connection.
- The most challenging was motivating the volunteers to get involved in activities outside the NGO.
- Capacity to understand all the needs of the volunteers.
- Sometimes, it may be difficult to help volunteers regain their motivation, to help them overcome more difficult personal experiences, sometimes they cry and it seems you cannot change the way they feel, sometimes it may be hard to drive them towards their inner self and make them discover themselves and understand their identity.
- Boundaries - between friendship and mentoring.
- Gaining their trust, assuring them that they can approach me whenever they feel the need to (within certain limits, that are usually established in the first meeting),



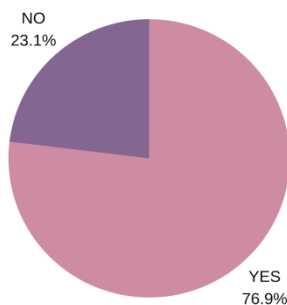
without feeling like they are bothering me. Another issue could be making them open up and being totally honest with me.

Respondents met their volunteers generally once a week (5 respondents). They structured their work with the volunteers through:

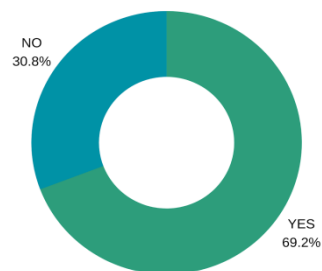
- Meetings in a non-formal way
- Papers/questionnaires
- Cards games, different questions to reflect on
- Outdoor activities

According to respondent answering the questionnaire, the possibility of receiving a fee for the services that the mentor gives, there was a majority of affirmative responses:

Question: Do you think that an EVS mentor should have a fee for his services as a mentor?



Agreement among respondents was also wide to the importance of knowing the structure of the organisation in order to achieve the most from mentoring activities, with 8 respondents not supporting the idea that the mentor should be in the same age group as the mentees (five respondents supported the idea of mentor and mentee being within the same age group). It is given great importance to the communication between the sending organisations of the mentees:



Question: Do you feel that it is important to be in communication with the EVS mentees' (EVS volunteers) sending organisation?

10 of the respondents considered important to follow up the implementation of the learning experience of their mentees after the end of the volunteering experience, for the learning process of the volunteer.

Respondents opinions on what should be improved in the mentoring process are:

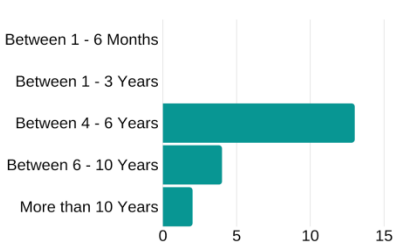
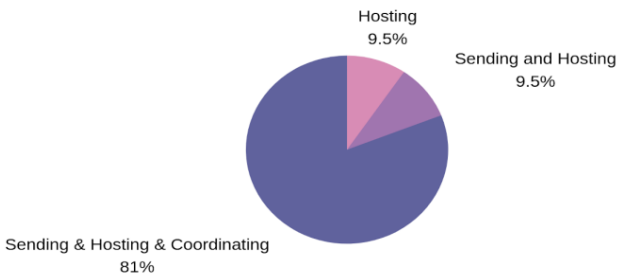
- More trainings for mentors;
- Mentor should be paid;
- Have meetings between mentors;
- More feedback from the organisation;
- Volunteers more aware on the role of the mentor;
- A clearer agreement between the organisation and the mentor.

3. Organisations

No. of respondents: 20

Responding organisations were experienced with hosting, sending and coordinating roles on a different scale:

Question: Are you a hosting, sending &/or coordinating organisation?



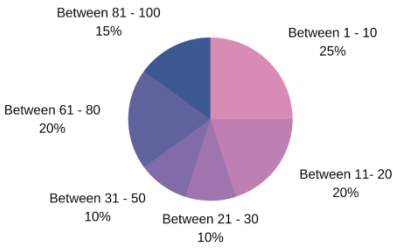
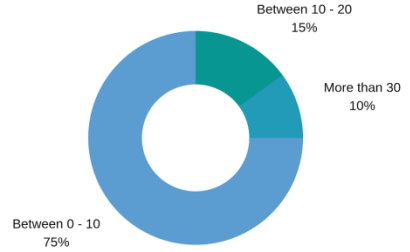
And having being an EVS accredited organisation from an average of more than 5 years:

Question: How long have you been involved in EVS?



Responding hosting organisations had implemented an average of 7 hosting projects:

Question: How many EVS hosting projects have you implemented?

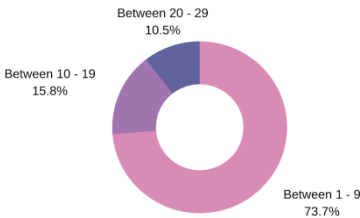
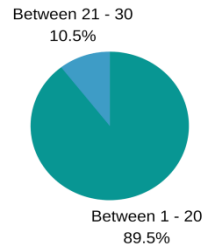


Sending and hosting responding organisations had respectively sent and host these amounts of volunteers:

Question: How many EVS volunteers have you hosted?

Question: How many EVS volunteers have you sent?

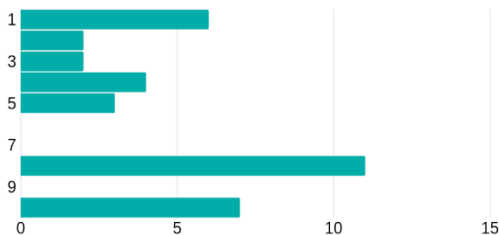
For those organisations who resulted as sending organisations from the answer above, they all implementing trainings for the volunteers (16 respondents said YES). The average numbers of volunteers hosted within one project are:



Question: What is the average numbers of EVS volunteers you host within one project?

With a respectively allocation of mentors per volunteers:

Question: How many EVS volunteers does a EVS mentor have allocated?



The respondents selected their mentors in different ways:

- According to his/her experience in working with EVS volunteers and his or her educational background and English language skills.
- Through Partners or former volunteers, with relevant experience in youth work, willing to volunteer as mentors.
- Volunteers from our organisation and young specialists in education and youth work from our community that share the values of the program and the aims of our organisation.
- From our group of local volunteers, colleagues etc.
- Usually we involve persons who are psychologists or who have done EVS.
- The mentor chooses to be motivated to engage in a multicultural team.
- We launch a call for mentors. We train them with 3/4 hours' sessions, we assist them in the process with many materials, tools and discussions in the big group of mentors using online channels and real working meetings.
- We usually work with people that have a degree and experience in counselling. For them, we afterwards organise a training in which we explain the roles and responsibilities of the mentor.

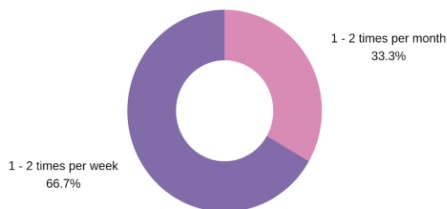
Eight respondents declared that their mentors were volunteers and paid staff, five declared they were just volunteers, five that they were just paid staff. Responding organisations offered to their mentors continuous training through Erasmus+ mobility for youth workers, on-line tools and informative materials, training on personal support and Youth Mobility tools.



According to the organisations answering the questionnaire, the good qualities of a good mentor are to have good communication skills, empathy, critical thinking, conflict resolution and management skills, mediation skills, to be open-minded.

Their mentors met usually with the volunteers once per week:

Question: How often do mentors meet with EVS Volunteers?



The main challenges their mentors declare while relating with their mentees are:

- Language barrier, lack of trust, lack of motivation, lack of personal evaluation skills in order for volunteers to assess the competences they gained or developed during the EVS stage.
- Some volunteers rely too much on them for things they could easily do by themselves.
- The expectations of the EVS volunteers that a mentor should be available always for them when they have a problem.
- Our experience with the EVS programme does not allow us to answer this question.
- At first, the impact with the Romanian reality, the diversity of culture, the opinions
- The main challenges declared by the mentors involved the different human nature of the volunteers and the struggle to find common solutions during the same project for the EVS volunteers involved.

As positive aspects mentors' respondents underlined are: the diversity in their daily work, with consequently high satisfaction at the workplace; personal development: "They develop their own language skills, learn about other people, make new friends, develop on a personal, emotional management level".

Respondents to the question "What tools or support do you think could be useful for your mentors to perform better in the mentoring process?" answered:

- Evaluation tools that can help the mentor follow up with the volunteers learning path.
- To have a complex guide with methods and tools related to mentorship and also be part of a community of mentors.
- Digital tools, hand-book or manual, sharing experience & being connected with other EVS mentors.
- A mentor's guide describing all the steps he has to take during an EVS internship, clear tools for assessing volunteer satisfaction and learning needs, a type of mentor report.

4. National Agency

No. of respondents: 1

The National Agency of Romania reported 350 on average EVS/ESC volunteers hosted in Romania (at the moment of filling in the survey), with 80 organisations with an EVS accreditation.

According to the NA the mentoring process is very important for the success of a volunteering project and the role of the mentor is becoming more relevant than before, indeed "it is more important aspect to manage in an EVS Project".


During on-arrival training mentors are not involved even though "in certain measures it could be useful".

On the Mid-Term Evaluation, the responding NA reported that mentors are not involved because "the Romanian NA has a network of specialised trainers in the Youth field". However, the NA does not exclude possible invitation to mentors during the MTE session.

As reported to the NA, the performance of the mentor perceived by their mentees in Romania is seen really supportive during the volunteering experience.

The NA in Romania do not involve mentors in its activities and does not meet them. A particular occasion was during "the previous YiA Programme where mentors had a dedicated course - Mentor2Be -".





The communication between NA and mentors in Romania is maintained through desk checks and monitoring during the implementation of the actions and on in a more periodical way by using online tools (forums, emails, mailing lists, newsletters). Generally, mentors are willing to collaborate with the NA when needed (50% level of willingness reported by the NA), even though the collaboration between Mentors and NA has been defined “poor”.

The NA thinks that mentors and the mentoring process should be more supported in the ESC projects, throughout “Specialised tools to be implemented”, like the one the NA has developed, the brochure “Mentor2Be”.

According to the respondent a qualitative mentoring process consists in the implementation of evaluation tools, methods and instruments.

For the NA, the main challenges of the mentoring process are:

- Intercultural communication with the volunteers;
- absorbing and preparing the volunteers for intercultural shocks;
- objective evaluation of the Youthpass key competences.

And Volunteers reported to the NA the lack of real mentoring, poor communication skills (mainly in the knowledge of the English language).

What it could be improved in the mentoring process are “intercultural tools for learning, sharing and evaluation of the EVS accumulated experience of each volunteer”.

The respondent, according to its experience as NA role, connected mentoring with the words: Commitment, Involvement, Objectivity.

5. Conclusions

The EVS process is seen almost in the same way by Romanian and foreign mentors and volunteers.

There are many similarities in their opinions on the importance of EVS mentorship, on how the process can be improved and supported in the future. The common ground is that mentors need additional support on the training side and on the financial aspects in order to improve their work with the volunteers and be more committed to their task. There is also a need for a clear definition of the mentor's role, beyond the technicalities of the position. How much a mentor is expected to get involved in the EVS process? What type of support can he/she offer to volunteers and how much availability is necessary?

While the need for specific trainings, better informational materials, online resources, and best practice guides for mentors is evident, the Romanian NA states that they have a brochure from a previous program, hold a few meetings with the mentors, and communicate with them through online tools such as newsletters and emails.

Organisations seem to offer the most support to mentors in the form of seminars or trainings, but not necessarily all information are on the mentoring positions. There is room for improvement even in the relationship between mentors – hosting organisations – volunteers and all three parties should make efforts in improving their communication and avoid arising conflicts.

The survey shows there is a need to better promote the mentor's role among volunteers, make them trust that people in this position are available to offer them support. And mentors should have a good definition of their responsibilities and the means to do a better job.



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Learn more about this project on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/evsrealm> or by contacting the project team at realmofvol@gmail.com.



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