

Mentor's Guide

European Voluntary Service





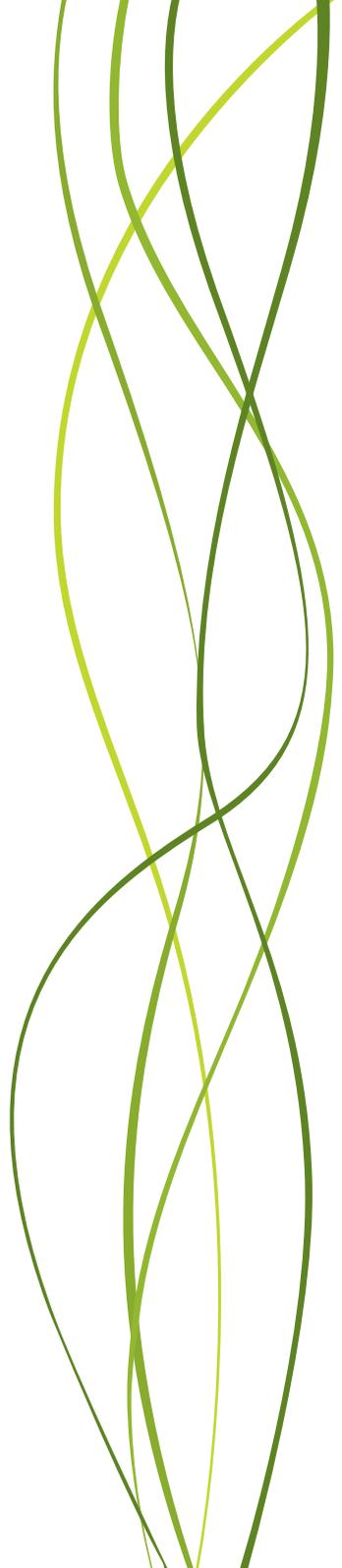


Mentor's Guide

European Voluntary Service

INDEX

	6
1. THE FRAMEWORK OF EVS MENTORING	7
1.1. INTRODUCTION: WHAT WE REALLY MEAN BY A “MENTOR”	7
<i>Erzsi Kovács</i>	
1.2. THE EVS MENTOR	9
<i>Erzsi Kovács</i>	
1.3. THE TASKS OF AN EVS MENTOR	12
<i>Erzsi Kovács</i>	
1.4. AN EVS MENTOR’S QUESTIONS – Could I be an EVS mentor?	14
<i>Erzsi Kovács</i>	
1.5. ONE FOR ALL – ALL FOR ONE: EVS AS TEAMWORK	17
<i>Gabi Nagy, Annamária Jászai</i>	
2. MENTOR WORK IN PRACTICE	26
2.1 THE ESSENCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MENTOR AND VOLUNTEER.	26
<i>Diána Hajdú Kis, Erzsi Kovács</i>	
2.2 THE SUPPORT THAT THE EVS VOLUNTEER GETS THROUGHOUT THE LEARNING PROCESS. THE YOUTHPASS CERTIFICATE.	36
<i>Judit Salamon</i>	
2.3 WORK, HOSTING ORGANIZATION	40
<i>Gabi Nagy, Emma Kékesi</i>	
2.4 INTEGRATING INTO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY	44
<i>Emma Kékesi</i>	
2.5 HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE	46
<i>Gabi Nagy</i>	
2.6 INTERCULTURALITY	48
<i>Gabi Nagy</i>	
2.7 ACCOMMODATION, LIVING TOGETHER	53
<i>Gabi Nagy</i>	
2.8 SENSE OF SECURITY	57
<i>Diána Hajdú Kis</i>	
2.9 CRISIS SITUATIONS	60
<i>Diána Hajdú Kis, Kriszta Györy</i>	
2.10 VOLUNTEERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS	65
<i>Róbert Kovács</i>	
2.11 GROUP EVS PROJECTS	69
<i>Kriszta Györy</i>	
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND LIST OF LINKS	74



1. THE FRAMEWORK OF EVS MENTORING

1.1. INTRODUCTION: What we really mean by a “mentor”

“...and had been left in charge
of everything with full authority...”
Homer’s Odyssey

Volunteers and mentors in Europe and in the rest of the world

Every year there are thousands of mentors in the European Union and in other countries who receive young people doing European Voluntary Service.

The European Voluntary Service is part of the European Union’s youth programme, called Youth in Action. It started in 1996, and it is gaining more and more popularity each year. Hungary joined the EVS programme in the year 2000. Since then several thousand young people have worked as volunteers at different European – amongst others many Hungarian – societies and foundations.

The EVS programme ensures and requires that every young person who is doing voluntary work abroad should have a mentor, knowing that it is quite difficult to get by in a foreign country, in its society and in its bureaucratic labyrinths. It is hard to get to know people and their language, as well as their customs; it is not easy to understand the reasons for successes and misfortunes, it is difficult to learn how to live, how to make friends and how to work efficiently in another country. Everything becomes a lot easier if there is a person one can ask questions to and one can turn to for advice – in other words if there is a mentor who provides help in all these respects.

Do you happen to be a mentor?

The word “mentor” means the same in every European language, though there is still great uncertainty about what a mentor’s task actually involves. Because either we have not read the *Odyssey* or we don’t remember it...

how unfortunate that we don’t know when we might have use of our obligatory school literature in order to be able to call ourselves Europeans...

Mentor is one of Homer’s characters who was asked by Odysseus to be the support for his son in case he would need someone’s help while his father was away. So the word “mentor” originates from a person’s name just like the

sandwich was named after an earl called Sandwich. We know that not everybody is a patron who has wealth, and not every piece of bread is a sandwich. Nor is everybody a mentor who helps young people – but we will specify what we mean by this later in the text.

Through the example of Mentor, the more experienced and more knowledgeable person who helped the development of Telemachos, we know now what it means to be a mentor. Pallas Athena, the goddess of wisdom, also often helped Telemachos on his own journey, appearing in Mentor's shape, so she was able to say: "you can trust me".

The European Commission has also realized that they have to find and value **those who support, encourage and keep their promises by helping young people when away from their home countries.** There cannot be a greater disappointment than being promised to be understood and helped and still being let down when in trouble. *Have you ever been in an awful situation like that?*

Mentor programmes here in Hungary and abroad

All over the world we can find many mentors both at schools and workplaces, at civil organizations and in small rural communities, due to the fact that mentoring is a very effective form of support system. The European Voluntary Service is only one of the vast programmes in which young people receive personalized support and counselling for a certain period of time.

- For instance *in the USA* there are 3 million young people who already have mentors, and according to a public survey presented on www.mentoring.org there are in fact a lot more, approximately 17 million young Americans who would like to have a mentor.
- In Hungary there are also a number of mentor programmes. At the time of writing the present publication we have, for example, the Roma Mentor Programme whose goal is to get to know and cherish the values of the Roma culture.
- IT-mentoring has become a separate occupation. It has been approved that if someone – even a computer illiterate person – during his studies follows a personalized programme with the help of a mentor, he or she would then be able to learn to use the latest informational and communicational technologies.
- There are also people at civil organizations, people working with tenders, people tutoring etc., who can also be called mentors, although they undertake much simpler tasks than mentors do.

What is the function of a mentor?

As in the ancient Greek world, today's mentors also have the function of supporting and helping young people through difficulties, when they come to obstacles in their career, at times of making choices, when choosing a profession, or during their studies.

A mentor is

- not a teacher or a presiding examiner
- not a mother or a father
- not one of the volunteer's buddies
- nor a boss
- furthermore, not a person who provides the volunteers with concert- or train tickets, not a person who fixes the dripping tap or the broken rucksack, nor a person who measures blood sugar levels.

A true mentor is a mentor who helps a person to find his own answers, helps him to resolve problems on his own, and helps him to become integrated into various communities

- *within a personalized life coaching programme, studies or vocational development*
- *for a decided period of time*
- *through regular meetings (or in other ways)*
- *with his questions and pieces of advice*

1.2. THE EVS MENTOR

The EVS mentor within the frames of the European Voluntary Service **supports the personal and vocational development of young people who stay here for a 2-12 month long voluntary work period, and helps them to integrate into the local community.** In order to do this, the mentor meets the volunteer regularly (for instance every week or every second week).

The mentor provides personalized help. This can be possible only if the cooperation between the mentor and the volunteer is based on mutual trust. This trust has to be created and maintained by the mentor. Even though the volunteer himself asks the person to be his mentor, it should still be the mentor's duty to establish and earn that trust. However, in reality it doesn't always work that way.

Who can offer a person mentor work?

In the European Volunteer Service the civil organizations who send and host volunteers are the ones who assign the mentor work to an individual. Then, with the assisting help of these organizations, two strangers meet each other. They have to find out what is interesting and worthy of respect in each other's personality. Later on, during the period of the voluntary service they might have to make this discovery over and over again so in the end they can both say: „good job done!”

Why do we need mentors?

Because he supports the foreign volunteers

- at the beginning of the voluntary work, when the volunteer still doesn't know anybody else.
- in order to get by in a foreign environment, and to fully understand what happens and why.
- in fighting their homesickness, in handling crises and the awkward situations that occur as a result of the differences between the two cultures.
- in making plans about what they would like to study and gain experience of, and in regularly assessing together with others what they have already achieved, so they could gain the most benefit out of their stay and participation in the project.
- in talking about problems that they may experience due to the difficulties of the Hungarian language, or conflicts with colleagues or roommates.

Can I be an EVS mentor?

Yes. Even if you happen to be very young, you still know a lot more about this place than a foreign volunteer who comes here. You have an enormous amount of experience about what it means to live, to study, to work here, how things actually function or for what reason they don't function. **You can be an EVS mentor based on your life experience and knowledge of the local culture.**

In order to become an EVS mentor you need three or four things:

1. Responsibility and determination in guiding the volunteer and giving support whenever necessary, and the desire and ability to dedicate time and energy to do the mentor work.
2. Creativity, good ideas
3. Open mindedness, willingness to learn from the other person.
4. Knowledge of languages.

Why is it worth being a mentor, and why is it beneficial?

Because somebody gets to know the country through you.

You can see the world through other people's eyes. You would have friends from all over the world and you can learn a lot about other countries. Furthermore you can get to know things about your own country as well – you notice small things that you otherwise take for granted, for instance that buses come often, or that we have a great treasure in the form of many thermal baths.

Because you can make developments in your personal and vocational life when eventually – after some hesitation – you make the decision to become a mentor.

As a mentor you can gain skills that you can have use of already the next day. (Although you could have used them already the day before, but you were not willing to invest any energy then.) You can put yourself to the test. You can also develop and practise your language skills.

Because becoming a mentor can bring many wonderful moments, exciting events, variety and adventure into your life.

You would have the opportunity to get to know lots of interesting people, who you would be an important person for, and who would become important people for you. It is a precious feeling to take on responsibility for meaningful goals and for those young people who do not fear facing challenges. You can be part of a team, a civil organization, which is working for a worthy cause.

Those who have already been mentors consider this experience as one of the most meaningful ones.

What does an EVS mentor do?

All the things that are extremely **important** for a volunteer.

Most of them are simple, everyday duties that could easily be done by any savvy adult. The other part of the tasks – for instance **making study plans for the volunteer and helping him through his studies** – can be inspirational even for the mentor's own personal and vocational development. Don't be afraid! It is not as difficult as it looks! There's no mystery in it. There are homepages, trainings, guides and well-experienced mentors providing help, and furthermore there is this handbook and mentor diary which introduce all the tasks a mentor has to handle.

The most important and fascinating task is to build up a relationship, so the volunteer feels that he can turn to his mentor in case of difficulties.

1.3 THE TASKS OF THE EVS MENTOR

I. Before the volunteer arrives the mentor

- gets in touch with the volunteer, sends and requests a personal introduction, tries to get to know in advance the young person whom he is going to be the mentor of.
- Makes sure that the volunteer knows about the hosting partner's project, understands the organization that he will work with, is aware of where he will work and what type of tasks he would have, what kind of accommodation and services he would be supplied with.
- Gathers information about where the volunteer comes from: what type of organization, what kind of society, what kind of background.
- Gets to know those people whom he would work with on the reception of the volunteer and later in the project: the coordinator, the representers of the hosting organization, and the future colleagues of the volunteer, the sending organization and its mentor (if the volunteer has a mentor back at home) – in other words all the partners working on the project.

II. At the reception of the volunteer the mentor

- is present when the volunteer arrives
- gives his contact details, makes clear when and how the volunteer can reach him
- discusses with the volunteer what the mentor work means in reality, what they expect from each other, what the needs of the volunteer are, where the boundaries are of the mentor work.
- Initiates the first meeting.
- Gives some time to get to know and accept each other properly. Tries to get to know as much as possible about the volunteer. Introduces his own work and hobbies.
- Shows the places that later could be important for the volunteer. Helps in getting around at the beginning of the volunteer's stay.
- Introduces the volunteer to the locals.
- Helps the volunteer to design a feasible study plan: finds out what skills and knowledge the volunteer wants to achieve, in what areas he would like to make developments, how much Hungarian he would like to learn.
- Confers with those people with whom he cooperates in the reception of the volunteer and in the project.

III. During the time of the project the mentor:

- Initiates and organizes regular meetings.
- Listens to the volunteer, asks questions, gives advice.
- Helps to get familiar with the national and local circumstances.
- Helps to resolve possible crises (depending on the seriousness of the matter, asks further help from an expert)
- Meets the volunteer's colleagues, obtains information about the volunteer's work, keeps in touch with and consults those with whom he cooperates in the reception of the volunteer and in his project.
- Together with the volunteer he assesses what has been already achieved, and what there is that the volunteer would like to change; finally he discusses with the volunteer how the set goals can be reached. In other words he helps the volunteer's studying process.



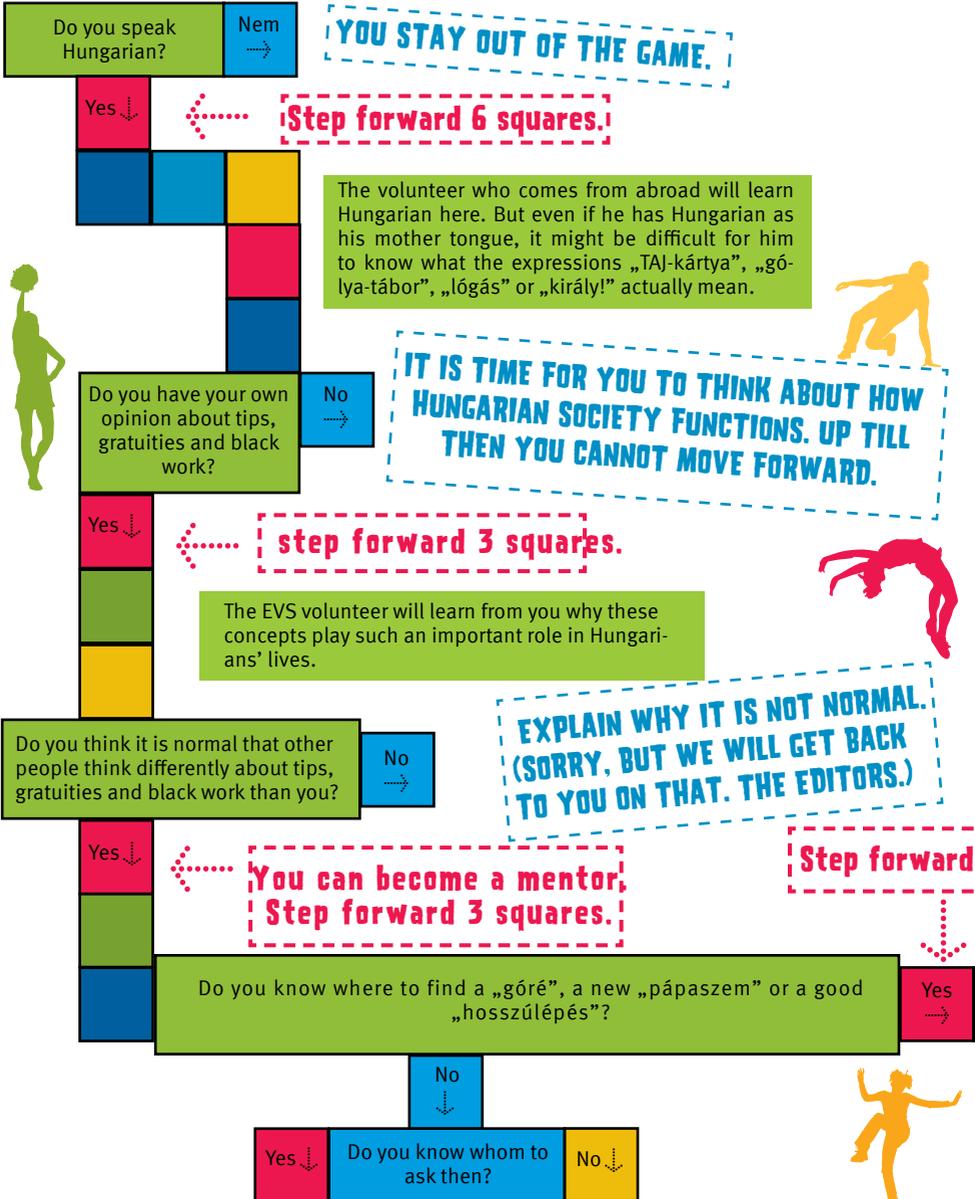
IV. At the end of the project the mentor

- prepares the certificate (the Youthpass), that shows the progress of the volunteer.
- He is present when the hosting organization thanks the volunteer for his work, and bids him farewell.
- He participates in the assessment of the project.
- He shares his experiences with other mentors, with the coordinator of the EVS project, and with the sending and hosting organization.

1.4. A FUTURE MENTOR'S QUESTIONS:

Could I be a mentor of a foreign volunteer who comes to Hungary?

It depends how far you can get in the following sequencing game:



A sticky but not impossible situation.

The very first person I bump into in Hungary.

Step forward 4 squares.

Unfortunately until you find some solutions to your problem, you stay out of the game. How could you help others, if you cannot even solve your own problems?

↑
Yes

↑
Yes

Do you have any problem in either your private life or at your work that makes you feel helpless?

No
→

Do you like to finish what you once started?



Thanks for bothering to answer these questions. In case you would want to participate later, start the game again. You would not regret getting further than this point.

Step forward 5 squares.
Don't worry,
you too will get help.

YOU WON AN INVITATION TO THE CLUB OF FOREIGNERS WHO LIVE IN HUNGARY. STEP FORWARD 1 SQUARE. (DON'T WORRY, THEY WOULDN'T EAT YOU ALIVE - WE PROVIDE INTERPRETING)

↑
Yes

↑
No

Do you feel like helping (two, three, etc.) foreign youngsters to become more independent and more creative?

Step forward 3 squares.

↑
No

Would you like to know what foreigners think of Hungary and the Hungarians?



WHAT A SHAME! WHAT ABOUT STARTING RIGHT NOW TO LEARN SOME LANGUAGES. THEN NEXT YEAR YOU COULD GO ON TO WORK WITH A VOLUNTEER.



WELL, IT IS DIFFICULT INDEED, BUT THE EVS VOLUNTEERS DO IT ANYWAY. SHOULDN'T WE HELP THEM?

Step forward 4 squares.

6 squares.

Step forward 3 squares.

↑
No

↑
Yes

Do you speak English, German or French?

Yes
→

Would you go abroad (again) for a few months, alone, to a country that you don't speak the language of, and where you don't know anybody at all?

Yes



Step forward 4 squares.

Do you like to finish what you once started?



DON'T GIVE UP!
THERE ARE ONLY
TWO QUESTIONS
LEFT.

I would love to, but I can't always succeed

I would rather stop doing it, if I am not interested in it

Yes



Step forward 3 squares.
There is an opportunity
to change it.



MÁR MEGINT
KIMARADSZ
VALAMIBŐL.

Do you keep what you promise even if you are very busy?

No



Yes



Step forward 4 squares.



ASK QUICKLY WHO THE
COORDINATOR IS, AND HE
WILL TELL YOU WHAT
TO DO.

Tudod, ki a koordinátora annak az EVS projektnek, amihez mentornak kértek fel?

Nem



Igen



A célegyenesben vagy,
hívd fel, hogy vállalod!



1.5 ONE FOR ALL, ALL FOR ONE – EVS AS TEAMWORK

The purpose of the European Volunteer Service is to get youth and the different organizations that support them to cooperate with each other on resolving and reducing current social problems. The EVS therefore is not only the volunteer's individual responsibility. Every EVS project is a result of teamwork. In the team there are 5-10 people who have different tasks, cultural backgrounds and ages. The team has a coordinator, but doesn't have a boss. Everybody is equally important. You too.

The partners that work together on an EVS project:

1. Young volunteer(s)
2. Sending organization
3. Hosting organization
4. Mentor
5. The organization that submits and coordinates applications (this can be both the hosting, the sending or a third, independent organization).



The volunteer has many supporters who support him in many different ways:

Roles	Coordinator	Helper at work	Helper in free time
Keeping contact and cooperating with the other participants of the project and with the National Agency	x	x	x
Inviting tenders	x		
Organizing administrative tasks	x		
Providing financial help for the volunteer	x		
Arranging accommodation	x		
Preparing the hosting organization (workplace) to receive the volunteer	x		
„Welcome party”	x	x	x
Arranging a language teacher/language course	x		
Involving the volunteer in local society		x	x
Introducing Hungary			x
Establishing confidence			
Teaching the volunteer about the tasks that have to be fulfilled.		x	
Supporting the volunteer's individual development, helping to design a study plan.			
Providing professional support at work.		x	
Assessing (feedback)	x	x	
Providing the volunteer the possibility of training.	x		
Issuing the Youthpass certificate.	x		
Delivering a farewell speech, and giving thanks to the volunteer.	x	x	x
Helping to resolve conflicts and difficult situations.	x		
Supporting a volunteer that needs special care or who finds himself in crisis.	x	x	x

Other participants: language teacher, National Agency, assistant for those volunteers who have special needs



Manager of finances	Head of hosting organisation	Sneding organization	Trainer	Mentor
x	x	x		x
x		x		
x		x		
x				
	x			x
	x			x
			x	x
				x
		x	x	x
				in the role of coach
		x	x	x
		x	x	x
		x		x
	x			x
		x		x
	x	x		expert

In the above graph the roles are clearly distinguished. However in reality it is not always the case. In practice the different organizations and individuals can divide the tasks among themselves in various ways.

For instance there is no golden rule about how to arrange a welcome party for the volunteer. The most important thing is that there should be an introductory ceremony of this kind.

Sometimes the lack of human resources is what limits the options: therefore it can occur that the same person takes several roles, being both the mentor and project coordinator; while in another project the mentor can take upon himself certain elements of the coordination, for instance undertaking to arrange accommodation on the behalf of the coordinator.

Of course it is not realistic that 10 supporters are continuously dealing with one volunteer – one has to find the best possible solution under the given circumstances of the organizations.

But in order to find the most satisfactory solution it is crucial to have a clear awareness of the different roles and of the different arranging methods' advantages and disadvantages.

A FEW RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COORDINATOR AND HOSTING ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNING POSSIBLE MODELS OF DIVIDING TASKS / DIFFERENT ORGANISING METHODS.

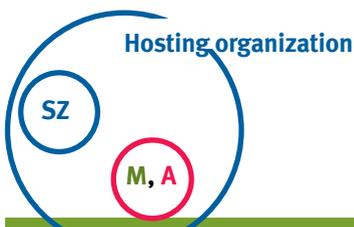
I. WHO SHOULD BE A MENTOR?

Is it better to have a mentor from within or from outside the organization? Who should spend free time together with the volunteer? Is it the mentor who is supposed to take the volunteer to „party“?

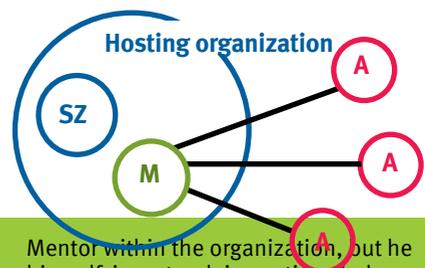
SZ: professional helper

M: mentor

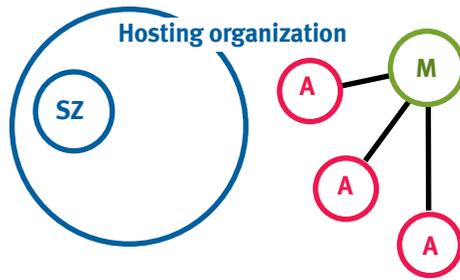
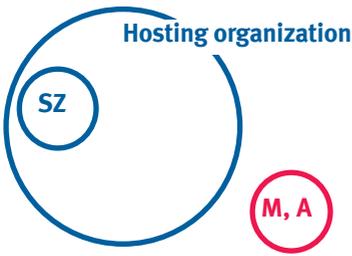
A: leisure time helper



Mentor managing tasks both within the organization and as a leisure time helper (but according to the rules of the programme the mentor cannot under any circumstances be the professional helper of the volunteer and the one responsible for the volunteer's work!)



Mentor within the organization, but he himself is not a leisure time helper; instead, he searches for (and organizes) leisure time helpers for the foreign volunteer.



Mentor managing tasks both outside the Hosting organization and as a leisure time helper.

Mentor outside the Hosting organization, but he himself is not a leisure time helper; instead, he searches for / organizes other leisure time helpers for the volunteer.

Mentor within the Hosting organization

Advantages/possibilities

- has a better grip on the volunteer's professional development (is knowledgeable in the given profession/field, is in touch with the volunteer on daily basis).
- If changes need to be made concerning the organization of the work, or the mentor has to be the mediator between the volunteer and the Hosting organization, the colleagues accept suggestions and requests more if they come from a mentor who is within the organization than from a bystander who is outside the organization. (He knows better both the potential of the organization and the colleagues within it.)
- The mentor's job description can include mentoring; time that is put into this is documented, and the mentor can be better called to account

Disadvantages/ risks

- In case of a conflict the mentor within the organization can be biased (he might not want to jeopardize his own career or his good relationship to his colleagues in order to defend the volunteer.)

Mentor outside the Hosting organization

Advantage/possibility

-He can see the volunteer and the workplace in an unbiased way. If any problem occurs, the volunteer can turn to him more easily and can feel more honest than with a colleague.

Disadvantages/risks

- If the Hosting organization is not the mentor's workplace (he may have another job or study), one cannot demand availability from him 24 hours a day. For instance, it can happen that the volunteer needs medical help or has some other type of urgent problem, but the mentor is not available at the time (he might be working or doing some exam, etc.).
- It can also happen that the mentor has no real contact with the Hosting organization (he doesn't know the volunteer's working conditions, colleagues – or the hosting organization doesn't know him, they don't communicate with him properly about the project, or about possible suggestions about changes).

If the mentor accompanies the volunteer during free time activities:

Advantages/ possibilities

A strong relationship – based on trust - can develop between the mentor and the volunteer and the continuous contact can provide the volunteer with a feeling of security.

Disadvantages/risks

- For the mentor-colleague it means overtime alongside his own work, which cannot be accepted by everyone. Mentors are often too busy and too tired for these extra activities such as partying together.
- Not everybody is open enough or cut out for this type of „work” because of personality or situation (especially after having received several volunteers).
- If the mentor is an older person, he might not be familiar with the party places or might not have enough contacts.
- If the mentor works within the hosting organization, and supports the volunteer even in his free time, it might be a disadvantage – especially with a more independent volunteer – that they spend too much time (almost 24 hours a day) together.

If the mentor looks for other supporters for free time activities for the volunteer:

Advantages/possibilities

- Usually it is very easy to find enthusiastic young people who can help the volunteer to socialize, to get in touch with other young people, to have fun. This is actually not a job for them but rather an exciting opportunity.

Disadvantages/risks

- „Too many cooks spoil the broth.” The volunteer is surrounded by too many „supporters”, but cannot really be attached to any of them. Lack of organization.

The supporters don't co-ordinate the different activities (for instance, either they suggest the same activities or suggest ones whose times clash with each other).

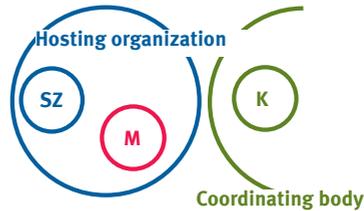
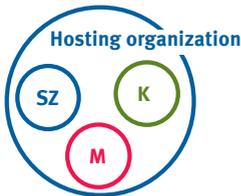
II. HOW MANY HELPERS DOES A VOLUNTEER NEED? COULD THE ROLES OF THE COORDINATOR, THE PROFESSIONAL HELPER AND THE MENTOR BE HARMONIZED WITH EACH OTHER?

The volunteer needs at least 2 helpers, because according to the rules of the programme the mentor of the volunteer cannot be the same person who gives the tasks to the volunteer.

This is also necessary because if one of the supporters is not available for some reason (he is ill, or he is on holiday), then the volunteer could still turn to the other one with his problem.

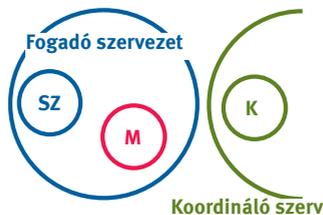
Ideally, there are therefore three different people:

K: Coordinator **Sz:** Professional helper **M:** Mentor (and leisure time helper)



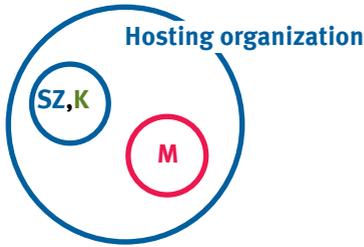
Coordinator within the Hosting organization (but not the mentor or the professional helper)
Mentor within the Hosting organization

Coordinator outside the Hosting organization (there is a coordinator organization that co-operates), mentor within the Hosting organization

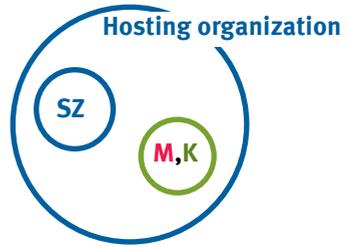


Coordinator outside the Hosting organization (there is a coordinator organization), mentor also outside the Hosting organization

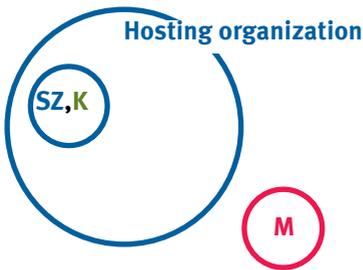
There could also be two:



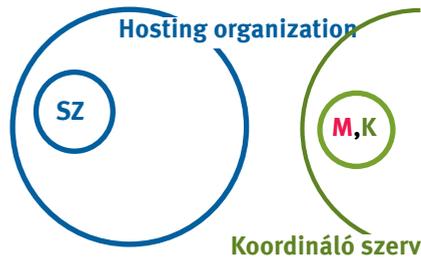
Coordinator within the Hosting organization who supports the volunteer concerning professional issues as well. Mentor within the organization.



Coordinator within the Hosting organization who also has tasks as a mentor. (This form is questionable – does the volunteer have somebody to turn to if he has practical problems, for instance concerning accommodation, organizing things or getting the pocket money?)



Coordinator within the receiving organization who also supports the volunteer concerning professional issues; the mentor is an outsider



Coordinator outside the hosting organization who also has tasks as a mentor (this form is also questionable!).

Professional helper and mentor in one person

According to the rules of the programme this is not possible!

Coordinator and mentor in one person:

This form is not advisable, because if the volunteer has some problem with the project as a whole or with the organizing of the project, or he is not satisfied with the mentor, he has no one to turn to. Furthermore it isn't certain that the coordinator – besides his other tasks – would have enough time or whether he can pay enough attention to mentoring – especially if he has several volunteers at the same time.

If this happens anyway, one has to make sure that the volunteer has the chance

to express and discuss his problems (for instance through providing „complaints days”, through regularly keeping in touch with the sending organization, etc.).

Professional helper and coordinator in one person:

In this case it is also uncertain whether the person in charge would have enough time and energy for both tasks. It might be an advantage though that more focus can be put on the professional aspect of the project and the volunteer’s work can be more in the spotlight.

Organizational issues worth considering:

- What kind of human resources do they have at the hosting organization? Would it be possible to use outsiders (local volunteers, other civil organizations, etc.) to fulfil certain tasks?
- Are all the above mentioned tasks fulfilled by somebody?
- How do they decide who should be doing what? What motivations do the colleagues and supporters have who participate in the project?
- Do the volunteer supporters have enough time for the tasks that have to be done? Did they reckon on setting aside some time besides their working hours for supporting the volunteer?
- What kind of relationship is there between the different participants, the colleagues and the partner organizations? How do they keep in touch with one another? How do they communicate? How seriously do they take one another?
- Does the volunteer have the opportunity to turn to an „independent” person for advice in case some conflicts occur?
- Do they document the mentor work properly, so if necessary another colleague can take over the work?

Why is all this important to a mentor?

- It is important to know the range of your duties – and also their limits. Don’t let yourself be the one who picks up the pieces after others, otherwise you would have problems because of others not doing what they are supposed to do. The coordinator and the cooperating organization have to be aware of the diversity of the tasks. When you become a mentor you have to make it clear to them who is responsible for what.
- If you have various roles, it is necessary to be aware of which role you are taking at the time: whether you are in charge as a mentor or as something else. This should be communicated clearly to the volunteer as well.

2. MENTOR WORK IN PRACTICE

2.1. THE ESSENCE AND THE WORKINGS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MENTOR AND THE VOLUNTEER.

The essence of the relationship

Your task as a mentor is that you should help the volunteer you take responsibility for to reach all the goals concerning studies and project work that he has set for himself, in such a way that, with his presence, the volunteer should also be able to efficiently contribute to and enrich the everyday functioning of the hosting organization.

Who is responsible for what?

It is the *volunteer's* responsibility to take his project work seriously, to set realistic goals for the period of the project, and finally to reach those goals. He is also responsible for fulfilling the tasks that he volunteered to take on, and for reaching the goals that he set for himself in his studies.

The *mentor* helps him so he doesn't have to feel alone, experience major setbacks, be pressed for time, feel being bored, or take onto himself too great or too small a workload. The mentor should not resolve any problems instead of the volunteer or interfere with the volunteer's life, but shouldn't either let him become submerged, or let him idle his time away.

The characteristics of the mentor relationship

Continuous and regular: Although this seems obvious, it is easy - because of everyday tasks - to fall into a pattern where the meetings that were first regular after a while don't come about.

The frequency and the circumstances of the mentor-volunteer meetings

The frequency of the meetings is influenced by the needs of the volunteer and the capacity of the mentor.

At the beginning of the project the meetings usually have to be held more often: it is advisable to have at least one meeting a week with the volunteer to start with. Later on it could be enough to have meetings held less often.

After the integration it would still be important though to have the meetings regularly. You should agree with the volunteer on a certain time in order to have

the possibility of looking back regularly on the period that has passed since the last meeting, and to be able to plan the next period.

Besides the regular meetings you can naturally meet some other times as well, but it is important that the volunteer should know for sure that there is a time when he is sure he can meet his mentor, when the mentor can pay full attention to him.

The time length of the meetings

Experience proves that usually one or two hours are enough for the meetings.

The venue of the meetings

It is good to have the meetings always at the same place. But even if such a place is not possible, it is important to provide calm circumstances (a quiet, not too crowded, friendly place).

Personal and empathatic

You can get in touch with the volunteer through phonecalls, via emails, on Skype, etc. The technical possibilities show an ever- expanding range, although the mentor relationship is primarily based on a face to face dialogue; because besides words, metacommunicative signals – for instance body language, tone of voice, or even putting on weight (which is mentioned in the section „Crises”) - also have their importance. What cannot be revealed from an email of only a few words can be revealed immediately from just a brief look.

The various phases of the relationship

1. Establishing a connection, becoming acquainted, building trust – before the arrival through emails/telephone, and later on through the first few personal meetings.
2. Situation analysis, goal setting, agreement („entering into a contract”) – at the beginning of the project.
3. Support, regular evaluations and planning together, supervision of the goals / re-signing the contract (if necessary) – during the whole period of the project
4. Concluding the project, farewell – at the end of the project



I. ESTABLISHING A CONNECTION, BECOMING ACQUAINTED, BUILDING TRUST

Ideas about how to take the first steps:

Before the arrival of the volunteer

It is highly advisable to get in touch with the volunteer and inform him about what to expect already before his arrival. Even though many of the volunteers initiate this themselves (by asking about practical issues, and closer to the arrival time about the accommodation or about other EVS volunteers, etc.), one should not expect the volunteer to come up with these questions, but the mentor himself should initiate the contact, at least to the extent of exchanging a few emails.

It is a time-honoured practice to give the volunteer before his arrival the email addresses of those EVS volunteers who are already in the country, or those who used to be here, so he can directly ask questions and get answers for many of his questions. This aids his rapid integration after arriving.

Initial (informal) group meetings, friendly gestures

If possible you should receive the volunteer already at the airport/train station. It's a nice gesture to give a „welcome” present: for instance a bouquet or a humorous object that is typical of the country. Since the first impressions – as everyone knows - are of great value, it is worth paying attention to the volunteer's accommodation and how friendly and atmospheric its environment is. A colourful carpet or a nice picture on the wall can make miracles. This can be done at a very low cost, if we use our creativity.

On the first working day, the team at the workplace could take the volunteer by surprise by giving some small welcoming present: a coffee mug with the volunteer's name on it, or a piece of chocolate put into the locker or onto the shelf that is going to be used by the volunteer. Besides this being a kind gesture, it could also be the ritual of admission into the team.

„Welcome package”

There is a temptation to feed the volunteer on his arrival with as much information as possible, but be careful: despite the fact that he nods in a friendly way, and sometimes even asks questions, on the first few days he will be bombarded with so many new impressions that a large portion of detailed information won't be absorbed.

That is also why a „welcoming package” can be important: it can include the volunteer's first monthly travel ticket, a map where we have marked the address of the organization, the accommodation of the volunteer, the restaurants, and the

places where he can do sports and other free time activities. It is useful to include a leaflet – written in a language the volunteer understands - that introduces the organization and the weekly plan of work. Even if the volunteer happens to know about these already, it is good if he could have this information printed out.

The mentor introduces himself

At the beginning, right after the volunteer's arrival, it is especially important that the mentor should take initiative and be open-minded. It helps to build a mutual connection if you as a mentor speak not only about yourself and your work, but also share your thoughts about your motivations for becoming a mentor and what it means for you.

What motivates you to take on tasks as a mentor?

The traditional supporting attitude is that I help you unconditionally, because you need my help. Well, whether you feel that way or not, you could still be a great EVS mentor.

Of course there is nothing wrong with being unselfish, but scientific research shows that we very seldom help others in a truly altruistic way. There is always something we would like to get in return, and we indeed do gain from these situations. We get to know people from remote countries, we practise languages, we get a nice feeling of being helpful towards someone, we get appreciation, people ask for our advice, etc. We shouldn't be ashamed of this, since one of the risks involved in the helper's work - and a direct way of becoming burned out - is if we always just give and give and we can never charge our batteries through someone or something.

Be honest! What was your own motivation?

II. SITUATION ANALYSIS, GOALSETTING, AGREEMENT („ENTERING INTO A CONTRACT”)

Besides the informal way of becoming acquainted there should be a separate occasion when you put down the foundations of and start the mentor work.

The first meeting is of particular importance, since this creates the foundation of the framework and the content of the mentorship contact. What is it that would be worth mentioning at this point?

Opening conversation

- Informing each other, interpreting the process, the framework (EVS project) and the primary conditions.
- Making the roles and expectations clear: What does the role of a mentor involve (and what doesn't it)? What do you expect from each other? What do you take upon yourself? In what matters can the volunteer count on your help? What does he need, and what would he like to gain from your contact?

- What is the goal? What does the volunteer want to achieve, and in what way can you help him?
- An agreement regarding how to keep in touch with each other (how often and where to meet, when can the volunteer get in touch with you?, etc.)
- Making a study plan together.

At the first discussion you should present your suggestions about the way you want to help the volunteer, and how directly or indirectly you want to do it. You should find out whether the volunteer can accept your suggestions or if he has any questions or requests.

III. SUPPORT, REVIEWING THE GOALS/REENTERING INTO A CONTRACT (IF NECESSARY)

This is the longest phase.

The initial excitement surrounding the arrival of the volunteer has worn off; now the *monotonous daily routine* begins, when the volunteer has to accomplish more and more at his place of service, while in the meantime he also has to establish a life outside work.

At this stage the main aim is that the *volunteer should gradually take more initiatives*. If he gets by alright on his own, don't make him too attached to you. But even in this case the regular discussions would still be needed. The well constructed discussions and the careful assessment of the goals will all protect the meetings from becoming a matter of routine and meaningless, and will help to support the volunteer according to the demands of his current situation.

Every month or every second month your meetings should include an evaluative discussion in which the volunteer's direct colleague(s) can participate as well. Don't forget: it is just as important to highlight the positive aspects as to criticize constructively the negative ones, in order to make the person aware of what does work and what has to / could be improved.

The most important tools of the mentor work at this stage are:

- giving personal feedback
- asking questions
- reflecting
- setting tasks that can aid progress
- counseling
- sharing knowledge
- evaluating

A discussion can include the following elements:

- Initial informal chatting
- What has happened during the recent period, what kind of experiences, emotions, feedback has the volunteer had?
- What kind of achievements and success has he had?
- What has he not succeeded in and for what reason?
- What are the mentor's questions, observations, suggestions?
- What is the next step?
- Clear agreement on what the volunteer has to do and how to achieve it by the next meeting.
- Rounding off the discussion, agreeing on a time for the next occasion.

Making notes

It is not worth making long notes during the discussions (it might be disturbing for the volunteer that you constantly write or look into your papers); you should write down only a few thoughts. The main topics, your observations or the tasks that have to be done by the next meeting should be noted down in your mentor diary after the discussion.

For the support of long term study aims you should use the suggested appendix with the title „Supporting study goals“.

IV. CONCLUDING THE PROJECT, FAREWELL

The time that at the beginning seemed to be so long – even half a year or a year – passes quickly. That is why it is important to plan the evaluation and the concluding of the volunteer's stay and to do the preparation for the homecoming in good time. During the last few months of the volunteer's service you should start to make sure that you don't leave loose threads, or that the volunteer should not take upon himself any new tasks that he has no possibility of accomplishing in the time that remains.

The evaluation, the „rounding-off discussion“ shouldn't be left until the final days, and you should definitely not finish your mentor work by saying „later you could send back that evaluation questionnaire“. Experience shows that the efficiency involved in sending back the documents is very poor, not mentioning the fact that a personal discussion (which can be completed by means of a questionnaire) can always lead to a lot more conclusions which can be useful both for the volunteer and for the mentor. The topic of the final evaluative discussion can be mutually decided by the volunteer and the mentor, based on the volunteer's personal development/ study plan. *Besides this*, the topic of the evaluation can be something else as well: for instance the project itself, the receptiveness of

the organization, etc. Make sure that the focus of the evaluation is on the future and not on the past: looking back on the past period, what would the volunteer do differently in the future / in a similar situation, and how would he use the experiences from his service in the future?

Homecoming can sometimes be just as demanding as the beginning of the volunteer service. Therefore not only is the evaluation an important part of the concluding of the project, but also of the preparation process for the homecoming. Even if the volunteer cannot give a precise answer to such questions as „What are you going to do with your life?“, it is still important to talk to him about the first few concrete things he will definitely do at home? Whom is he going to get in touch with? Will he still be interested in civic life, in social activity? How is he going to make use of his EVS experiences? Does he have any ideas about how to continue cooperation between the sending and the hosting organization?

The transition period can be made easier by asking if the person needs any further contact with his mentor after finishing the project, and if the answer is yes, in what way does he wish to keep the contact? The mentor of course also has a say in this. Whether you decide to stay in touch or not, the mentor-volunteer relationship has to be - both formally and informally – terminated. The possible continuation of the contact is the beginning of a new chapter, not part of the EVS project.

The mentor's questions:

Before you set about doing the work:

- What motivations do I have to become a mentor? If this is not my own decision, what can I learn from this experience, and what can I gain professionally and personally?
- Which of my skills, abilities, and items of knowledge can I use as a mentor, and which are those that I still have to improve?
- Whom can I consult as a mentor? (Perhaps with another mentor? Or should I also have a mentor of my own?)
- Where should I draw the lines? What is the minimum and maximum amount of time I want to set aside for this task per week, per month? When can the volunteer get in touch with me? Would I invite him to my home? Would I offer, for instance, to have him spend Christmas with me?

On the arrival of the volunteer:

- Am I aware of what kind of expectations the volunteer has towards me?
- Am I aware of my own expectations?

- What is the aim of the mentor work? Whose aim is this? Mine, the volunteer's or is it our common aim? Am I doing a service for other people because of a sense of duty or do I have my own goals in being a mentor?
- What is the plan? (The schedule of meetings; ways of supporting study goals; evaluations – with whom and when... etc.)
- What position, what kind of style am I going to use while mentoring the volunteer? To what extent am I going to be involved in his everyday life? Do I enjoy being with him outside work as well or do I prefer to keep some distance in order to have some perspective on things? How directly or indirectly do I work together with him, and how much and in what way do I intervene if it is necessary? In such circumstances do I give advice or do I rather just ask questions?

Questions that can be asked any time:

- To what extent am I able to be objective, to see the situation / the volunteer's work from an outsider's point of view?
- How consistent am I, how much do I keep to what we agreed on?
- Do I respect the times that we had set in advance?
- Do our discussions have some aspect of calling the volunteer to account? If yes then why, and what is it based on?
- Am I prepared for our discussions or do I just improvise?
- Are my questions interesting to the volunteer, and are his questions interesting to me?
- Is the frequency and the content of our discussions adapted to the current situation or has it become an empty routine? Am I truly interested in the volunteer's situation?
- What is the focus? The volunteer's goals, general condition, integration into the organizational and the local environment, or his spare time activities? In which part do I want to be directly, personally involved in order to help him? In which part do I want him to manage on his own?

At the time of the farewell:

- How would I prepare the volunteer for the big change that going home involves?
- What feelings do I experience when the project is finished and the volunteer is travelling home?
- Would we still be in touch after the volunteer has travelled home? If yes, in what capacity?
- What would we evaluate together with the volunteer, and in what way? What would we evaluate together with other participants of the project, and in what way? How would we document and make use of the experiences?
- What did I get out of being a mentor?
- What tried and tested method is worth continuing with?

- What skill, knowledge and attitude should I improve – based on my own judgement and on the volunteer's or others' feedback? How/where do I have the opportunity to do that?
- Would I like to be a mentor again or is it enough for me as a one-time experience? (Or maybe the time has come to become a volunteer myself?)

Tips and good advice:

The document (on page ...) can be a useful aid in the support of the volunteer's studying process:

You can help the volunteer if you give him concrete tasks and questions for the period between two mentorship meetings. This can save time, but more importantly it gives the volunteer certain viewpoints for self-reflection and provides him with the opportunity to have a better perspective on his own situation, which can be discussed together later on.

If the volunteer and the mentor don't get on well...

First, one should ask some questions oneself – afterwards if we cannot find the answers, we should discuss with the volunteer why we are not on the same wavelength.

- Have we made clear what kind of expectations we have of each other? Amongst these, what are the unrealistic ones?
- Do I know and do I accept the real needs of the volunteer?
- Do I pick up on what the volunteer tells me, do I pay attention to him, or am I just doing my thing as a routine?
- Do I make myself clear?
- What can irritate me, and what can irritate him? Why?
- How can we harmonize our different communication styles? (For instance a dominating, loud volunteer with a good sense of humour, and a quiet, introverted mentor...?)

If the mentor is too busy...

It can happen that we misjudge the time that it takes to do our mentor work or it can also occur that our professional or personal life changes in the meantime to that extent that it makes it impossible to help the volunteer in a proper way, as needed. It is very important – if the situation cannot be changed – to be aware that under these circumstances we cannot fulfil our tasks as a mentor. Then for the sake of the volunteer we should – with his agreement – try to find another mentor instead of ourselves. The half-hours squeezed between our other types of tasks, when our mind is set on something else, when our telephone rings all the time, when our parking

time runs out, etc, can have a very demotivating effect. Not everybody is cut out for being a mentor, not even in a demanding situation, especially not temporarily, only for a few weeks. It is not a good solution if the volunteer's boss takes over the mentor work, just in order to take care of the person who remained without a mentor. The hierarchy that exists between them and the task-orientedness stops them from having a supportive, trusting relationship.

If there is sexual attraction between the volunteer and the mentor...

According to the rules of the caring professions there is no place for such a relationship. The mentor has to be able to recognize these kinds of situations already at the start.

If the attraction occurs on the volunteer's part:

Even if in most cultures it is not customary to talk about it, if the situation requires this, one has to find the time to sit down and clear the air.

It is possible that the volunteer is not in love with the mentor, but in love with the role that the mentor plays in his life: he listens to him, pays attention to him, helps him to get through difficulties. These aspects can make anybody attractive.

If the attraction is mutual, or the clarifying discussion doesn't lead anywhere - in other words, if one of them cannot handle the situation - there is only one solution: the volunteer gets another mentor.

Supporting study goals

Name of volunteer:

Name of the project that
he works on:

2.2. THE SUPPORT THAT THE EVS VOLUNTEER GETS THROUGHOUT THE LEARNING PROCESS, THE YOUTHPASS CERTIFICATE

The European Volunteer Service is a „study service“, in other words gaining informal study experience is one of the most important aspects of the EVS projects. The study process is significantly influenced by the length of the given project: the longer the project, the more wide-ranging the experience becomes; that's why it is worth encouraging the initially timid volunteers before the trip to take part in a longer project, because even if they would like to extend their stay afterwards, the Programme does not provide any possibility for this. Everyone can take part in an EVS project only once in a lifetime, even if he or she has done short-term service (exceptions can be only disadvantaged people who, after doing short-term service in groups, can participate in a new project).

The essence of nonformal studies is that the studying process takes place outside school (the formal framework) and people participate in it voluntarily. The participants are aware that their activity helps their own development. That is why an EVS project is prepared in advance very thoroughly so it can help the development of the volunteer's personality and social skills in the most effective way.

During their service the volunteers can be involved in countless so-called informal studying processes, since resolving everyday life situations also provides opportunities for development. Even though these are not conscious or planned processes, their importance is still not negligible.

The nonformal and informal studying processes give opportunities for youngsters to gain fundamental skills, contribute to their personal development, help their integration into society and their active participation in civil life, and thereby improve their chances on the job market. Participating in an EVS project has as great a value for the youngsters as for the whole of society and the economy.

There are different „study helpers“ involved in the volunteers' studying process (trainers, mentors, vocational coaches). Apart from them, the project partners have to provide every EVS volunteer with appropriate, personalized language and administrative support that is related to the volunteer's service, so the studying process has a reliable backup system.

But what kind of functions do the different helpers really have in this process?

The volunteers meet the so-called trainers – those who help in the nonformal studying process – approximately three to four times during their service. First

before the journey, during the 4 day long, residential training in the sending country, which gives them the opportunity to review their own expectations and motivations, as well as to be able to collect more detailed information about the hosting country and about the Youth in Action programme. Amongst the different components of the programme there is also the possibility for the volunteers to meet other former EVS volunteers.

This is followed by the **training after arrival** and by the **half-way evaluation meeting** in the hosting country, which in Hungary is a 5 day long activity organized together under the name EVS club. The goal of these trainings is to help the volunteers to gain a deeper understanding of the hosting country's cultural life, and to help the participants to build a stronger social network amongst each other, which throughout the time of service can have great value for them. During the half-way evaluation meeting they analyze and judge the worth of their gained experiences, and they try to find solutions for possible difficulties.

Finally there is the **3 day long closing evaluation meeting** which aims to assess the whole EVS activity, the short and long term goals, as well as the motivations, expectations and achievements during the service. The participants can evaluate together their experiences, they can look back on what happened during the period of the EVS project, and they can evaluate the help they got from their project partners, as well as the quality of the relationship and communication between the partners. The goal of the meeting is also to help the volunteers to reintegrate into the everyday life and environment of their own home country.

The common component of the above-mentioned trainings and meetings is that the activities follow a previously designed plan, but they are not built up in accordance with a school schedule or the framework of traditional subjects. The individual components of the programme deal with important matters, and they document the study process in a specific way (through verbal and written, individual and group evaluations). It is also typical that during the training they use the help of volunteers. Throughout the training sessions the participants become familiar with the **Youthpass Certificate** step by step. This certificate is supposed to document the development of the skills and competence gained by nonformal studies.

The basis for constructing the Youthpass Certificate was the system of crucially important competence needed for lifelong learning. This system was accepted by the European Parliament and the European Committee in December 2006.

The reference framework points out eight different kinds of key competence:

1. Communication in the mother tongue.
2. Communication in foreign languages.
3. Mathematical competences and fundamental skills in natural and technical science.
4. Computer skills
5. Learning how to study
6. Social and civic knowledge
7. Competence in taking initiatives and entrepreneurship
8. Cultural awareness and ability of expression

The system defines the term „competence” by a combination of different skills, attitudes and items of knowledge that are relevant in a given situation. The key types of competence are those that help us in our self-realization, in integration into society, in our active civic participation, and in being successful on the job market.

The order of the competences doesn't reflect the grade of their importance; each of them is equally significant. There are several elements that can be found in every single skill: critical thinking, creativity, initiative taking, problem solving, risk management, „decision making and a constructive handling of emotions” all play a role in each one of the eight key competences. Furthermore, they all have cardinal importance in the broader non-formal studying process.

Every volunteer who participates in the EVS has the right to get a Youthpass Certificate which shows and certifies the experiences that were gained in the nonformal study process during the project.

The Youthpass Certificate includes the following pieces of information:

- the volunteer's personal data
- a general introduction to the European Volunteer Service
- fundamental information about the project and the activities accomplished within the frame of the project.
- an introduction and evaluation of the volunteer's study experiences gained during the project

By means of the Youthpass Certificate, the European Committee ensures that participation in the Youth in Action Programme is valued as a study experience, as nonformal and informal study during a given period of time. This document might be of great advantage to the participants in their future studies or during their professional career.

The volunteer decides whether he or she wants to obtain the Youthpass Certificate or not, so this – as well as the participation in the EVS – is optional. What is more, the volunteers fill in the certificate themselves (naturally they get help during the trainings or from their mentors to do this), which indicates that it is the volunteer who is mainly responsible for his or her own studies.

At the beginning of the service, this kind of responsible attitude is something fairly new for youngsters coming from the Hungarian educational system, and it often surprises them that the Youthpass is not issued as a ready-made document but they themselves have to fill it in first. It seems that this approach – that everyone is responsible for his or her own life and everyone has to be able to make decisions individually - is one the most crucially important study experiences for the Hungarian volunteers.

Therefore the Youthpass is not a goal, but rather just another tool to create this „responsible attitude”. It is of additional value that by using this document the volunteers can gain further advantages (for instance during a job interview).

What is the role of the mentor in this study process? According to the EVS programme’s guidebook for competition, the hosting organization has to provide the volunteer with a mentor who is responsible for giving personal support to him or her. The mentor cannot be the same person who gives tasks to the volunteer and who checks up on his or her achievements (that person is instead called a vocational adviser).

This is a very broad definition. The very aim of this guide is to define this role and to help in the everyday work of the mentors.

Therefore in this chapter we study only the mentor’s role as a helper for the volunteer. In an optimal situation, at the beginning of the project the mentor and the volunteer together set aside a certain amount of time once a week or every two weeks in order to decide on the goals of study which, during the project, would be assessed. They would try to get through possible difficulties together, and at the end of the project they would evaluate what has been achieved on what level. The Youthpass Certificate provides help in doing this by giving a viewpoint system for setting goals and evaluating achievements. In order to understand and use the key competences it is absolutely necessary to get help from the mentor, who can interpret them in such a way as to make them understandable and usable for the volunteer in his work.

From the viewpoint of the mentor work, perhaps the most important issue is to harmonize on the one hand the time allocated for the mentor work, and on the other hand the way the mentor work is accomplished with the volunteer’s needs and ability. People start the volunteer service with very different (family,

educational and emotional) backgrounds, therefore – adapting to this - the approach on the part of the mentor has to be very different as well. But since the mentor is just a human being too, however empathetic he might be, it is not at all certain that his approach is equally satisfying in each case. That is why in projects involving more than one volunteer, not necessarily the same mentor is in charge of all the volunteers.

More information about the Youthpass Certificate can be found on the following link: <http://www.mobilitas.hu/flp/youthpass/melleklet>

2.3. WORK, RECEIVING ORGANIZATION

The volunteer also spends most of his time on work which is an important part of the project and within the project, an important part of the studying process. Therefore it is important in any case that the mentor follows the volunteer's work – although strictly speaking this is not necessarily the mentor's task. If the organization receives volunteers for the first time, or because of occasional difficulties cannot pay enough attention to the foreign volunteer, the mentor might have to take on a role as a mediator, or might have to support the volunteer to resolve problems that can occur. It is beneficial if the mentor keeps up a good relationship with the hosting organization and has an overview of what happens at the workplace. At the workplace/hosting organization they usually welcome any advice coming from the mentor who knows the volunteer well, concerning whatever might be worth changing.

Expectations regarding the project and the work

It can often occur that the volunteers' expectations don't match up to the reality. The volunteers usually mention this as well, which is not a problem in itself. He can also say „I expected something else, but I don't regret that things turned out this way.”

When the volunteer chooses a project mainly based on the theme of the project, thinking that that is connected to his profession or to his studies, disappointment can occur more often. In this case the volunteer might expect vocational development from the project, or may have a very specific vision about what he wants to achieve. If he does not feel this vision is realised, he becomes dissatisfied. Therefore it is wise to make it clear already at the beginning of the project what the vocational expectations of the volunteer and what the real possibilities are. (It's worth defining the differences between the apprentice training and the volunteer service already at the outset.)

What can influence the expectations of the volunteer?

Many different things: motivation, interest, information about the project, preparation, personality.

From where does the volunteer get information about the project?

- From the description of the project on the website www.evsdatabase.eu
- The sending organization can inform the volunteer about the project. The organizations that have been involved with EVS for a long time usually have experience concerning what the volunteer can expect, based on the description in the database and the relationship with the hosting organization. The sending organization can collect information not only through the description and the dialogue with the receiver, but they can get a picture of individual hosting organizations and of the characteristics of the programme in different countries through the reports of the former volunteers if they already have returned ones.
- From the Activity Agreement (it is advisable to adapt it to the expected tasks according to the current period of time, since the volunteer can refer to it in case reality doesn't seem to match his/her expectations).
- From the emails and telephone calls between the sending and the hosting organization
- Perhaps from informal sources as well (from the reports of former volunteers and from acquaintances, blogs, etc.)

What could be the main reasons for the discrepancies between expectations and reality?

- The volunteer didn't read thoroughly the description of the project
- He isn't really interested in the activity, he just wants to become an EVS volunteer (this doesn't exclude though the possibility of becoming a good volunteer!)
- Because of language difficulties or for other reasons the volunteer misunderstands the description and the information he was given. One of these misunderstandings can be that the description found in the database includes exciting activities, for instance excursions, riding, etc, which in fact during the volunteer's limited stay may only take place once or twice or not at all. If the volunteer believes that it is some regular activity, he will be disappointed and will say that the description did not reflect reality.
- Regarding the database, it is important to know that the general descriptions that can be found there are primarily not written for the volunteers, but - as a part of the accreditation - for those who run the competitions and evaluate the projects. The organizations therefore try on one hand to paint a positive picture of themselves, but on the other hand they don't take into account the volunteers' possibly modest language skills.
- Besides this, the descriptions of the projects in the database are valid for three

years, and in the meantime slight changes may occur. The Activity Agreement is often constructed with the help of the so-called „copy paste” method, based on a project carried out in the previous year. It might happen that the description doesn't really reflect the project.

Besides this, you have to be ready to face – and avert – unrealistic expectations. The volunteer hears only what he wants to hear – he often pays attention only to positive information, or the information becomes transformed in his memory or imagination.

If all the above-mentioned steps are taken successfully, and the volunteer is well informed and appropriately motivated, that particular „first impression” can still be problematic. The volunteer is both before and after his arrival in an emotionally tense state: in his life it is a special, great event that he expects (and gets) a lot from and he wants to experience a sense of achievement already at the beginning of the project. Therefore it can happen that – especially during the first period of his stay – he expects special care, kindness and exciting activities while taking part in the project. Even though his helper at the workplace is competent, if the other colleagues cannot be won over to the programme, he might be disappointed that his contribution is not taken seriously and the others don't pay attention to it. In addition, he might have to face the fact that it is a lot more difficult to gain acceptance, to be understood, and to find one's own place in a foreign environment. The tasks might not always be as interesting as he imagined beforehand either. At a new place, where he doesn't know the customs, the language, and where his abilities are not yet known, at the beginning he would mostly have simple tasks, for instance photocopying, cleaning, folding leaflets, etc. Who hasn't ever experienced how it feels to be starting out at a workplace?

At times like that it could be good to have a skillful MENTOR!

The mentor's questions:

- Does the volunteer have an appropriate place? (with his own table, computer, shelves or locker where he could store his things)?
- Do the colleagues know that a foreign volunteer works with them? Do they know who he is and what he does?
- Does the volunteer take part in the informal life of the workplace (for instance coffee- and lunchbreaks, etc.)?
- Do the volunteer and the colleagues have a common language to use? If not, how do they communicate with each other?
- Is there a person at the workplace (a helper at work) whom the volunteer can turn to in case of needing vocational advice? What kind of relationship is there between the volunteer and his helper at work? How often do they

meet? Who is the helper at work? How can I be in touch with him? When did I last meet the person? When am I going to meet the person again?

- Is it a skilled colleague who will train the volunteer and follow his work? If not, who needs to do what?
- What kind of training did the volunteer get at his workplace? Is he aware of what kind of tasks he has to do? Does he understand the rules and customs of the workplace?
- Are the description of the project in the database and the description of the activity written in the Activity Agreement harmonized together, or are they adapted to the expected activity during the period of the project? If not, who is going to make the corrections? Is the volunteer informed about possible changes or about the expected activities and events? If not, who is going to inform him?
- Who gives the tasks to the volunteer and who checks whether he has accomplished them? Is there weekly/monthly planning?
- How many hours does the volunteer work per week? (Is it enough / too demanding?)
- Does the volunteer have appropriate tasks? Amongst his tasks, is there a simple one that doesn't demand language skills or previous knowledge, which can easily provide the volunteer with a sense of success? Are there more creative, more challenging tasks as well, which he has real interest in?
- How much influence does he have on the project or tasks?
- Does he possess all the knowledge and skills that are needed for carrying out the work? Does he have the chance to study? Is he motivated?
- What kind of feedback does the volunteer get?
- What kind of problems occurred concerning the volunteer's work performance? How can one make corrections?

Tips and good advice

You should discuss with the volunteer his work experiences as well during the planning and following-up of the studies. Then consult on these matters with the vocational supporter too – two heads are better than one.

Be continuously in touch with the receiver organization/vocational supporter. If there are any difficulties, find out both parties' opinions. Try to remain objective and unbiased (the volunteer doesn't have to be overdefended, sometimes he might make mistakes too...).

Make the scope of your activities clear: do not take upon yourself tasks that are created out of lacking support at work. (For instance, it shouldn't be you who

checks up on the translation done by the volunteer, or it shouldn't be you who searches on the Internet for cheap accommodation if the volunteer got the task of arranging an excursion...)

Changes might occur in relation to the original agreement. For instance the volunteer might occasionally have to share his room with another volunteer, although according to the original agreement he would have his own room. Any possible changes must be discussed with the volunteer in advance!

Check the description of the project and the Activity Agreement in terms of how up-to-date and accurate the information included is; if you find some inaccuracies, inform the volunteer about them.

Be informed about **what type of preparation the volunteer went through**, and whether the sending organization discussed with him his motivations, the philosophy of the volunteer service, and the aims of the programme.

During the first period of the volunteer's service, you, together with the workplace, should design those kinds of tasks for him that don't need any language skills but give the opportunity for experiencing satisfaction – for instance decorating, taking leaflets to places that are popular amongst youngsters, etc.

2.4. INTEGRATING INTO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Even though the volunteer likes his workplace, and is satisfied with the hosting organization and his work, if he is not able to accommodate himself to the life of the locals, his life becomes very dull. He might be missing out on things, and might suffer from homesickness. Then he wouldn't be able to achieve one of the most important goals of the programme: to see what influence the project has on the local environment and on the local youth culture. He can also become familiar with our country and culture more easily if he takes part in local events and the life of the locals.

The sooner the volunteer becomes integrated, the easier the situation becomes for the mentor. The volunteer also feels better when he is not attached to only a few people and when he has a private life that he manages himself.

The mentor's questions:

- Do I have contact with local communities, to whom I can introduce the volunteer? Whom am I going to contact in what case?
- What is the volunteer's typical or special field of interest? What is his hobby, and what does he like to do in his free time? What activity has he wanted to try out for a long time, but hasn't had the chance to yet?

Tips and good advice

The importance of having hobbies and favourite free time activities

The volunteers usually mention their hobbies in their CV or in the summary of motivations – if not, then you should find out in advance what the volunteer likes to do in his spare time. If he has a hobby (choirs, music, sport), one can find him in advance a community where he can pursue his interest, become a member of a community and find friends and helpful people. (We know about a volunteer who was a member of five different choirs, went to rehearsals every evening, and sometimes even performed.)

If the volunteer doesn't have a hobby, one should find a youth club, a youth association, or a local place to go where young people gather, where the volunteer can find company and friends. You might know some youngsters who are regular customers at these kinds of places and also know English - or another language that is also used by the volunteer – and would like to help out.

The role of the Hungarian volunteers who are planning to go abroad, and that of the former EVS volunteers.

Youngsters who are just planning to go abroad to do volunteer service usually like to take on the above mentioned tasks. It is an excellent opportunity for them to practise languages and to become familiar with the volunteer service programme.

If possible, already at the beginning of the project we should organize a free activity where the volunteer introduces himself – to this event one should invite both former and future EVS volunteers.

Meeting of EVS volunteers

The hosting organization can also arrange this kind of meeting. Otherwise, if they have several volunteers at the same time, or if the EVS volunteers staying in Hungary stick closely together, the hosting organization doesn't need to arrange the meeting. (For the foreign EVS volunteers staying in Hungary, Mobilitas arranges meetings regularly. The so-called „EVS clubs” are held every few months. Each of the volunteers has the right and also the obligation – according to the length of

the project - to participate in at least 1-2 EVS clubs.) In any case you should obtain reliable information about this – those volunteers who have been here for a longer period can help the newcomers a great deal.

Invitations for the weekend

If the volunteer is on his own, especially during the first few weekends, while he hasn't managed to get friends, and hasn't been in the EVS club yet (and therefore doesn't know any other EVS volunteer), it is beneficial if the colleagues invite him for lunch at the weekend once in a while.

Later on one would hardly be able to arrange any time for this kind of event, because the volunteer would be so booked up in advance.

2.5. HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE

The special status of the Hungarian language

Hungarian is not an Indo-European language. Its grammar and the majority of its vocabulary is very different from other European languages. In addition, it is a minority language which is used by approximately only 13 million people in the world. We cannot reckon that an EVS volunteer would already on his arrival be able to speak Hungarian (although it does happen very rarely). Most foreign volunteers find it very difficult to get over the language barriers.

Learning languages

In spite of the public belief, it is not true that being in a foreign country we will immediately pick up the language. It is not true that we can learn languages without making an effort. The shorter the time we have, the more energy we need to put into it. A kid can pick up his/her own mother tongue within several years, while a volunteer has only a few months for language studies; besides, during that period of time he has to accomplish other tasks as well.

The study process therefore has to be planned and conducted carefully and all the participants have to put time and energy into it.

Why does a foreign volunteer have to learn Hungarian at all?

The lack of language skills can put the volunteer into the position of an outsider, can make him isolated in his environment; and the misunderstandings and unspoken problems based on the language difficulties can all become sources of conflicts. Despite this, the volunteers often don't feel motivated enough to learn Hungarian. They usually give up when facing the first difficulties, and instead try

to communicate in English or in another common language. But you should not give up! Believe that learning Hungarian is not a mission impossible, and your volunteer is also capable of mastering it.

The mentor's questions

- Is there any common language that I can use efficiently with the volunteer?
- Is there any vitally important participant in the project (for instance a boss, a room mate, etc.) with whom the volunteer cannot communicate because of language difficulties, and therefore they would occasionally need an interpreter or mediator?
- Can the volunteer orientate himself in everyday life? (Can he read Hungarian street names, various texts, labels?)
- Does the volunteer have the necessary language skills for accomplishing his tasks (in the different phases of the project)?
- Is the volunteer properly motivated for learning Hungarian?
- How can I help him in this? How can I convince the volunteer that he can learn the language if he really wants to?
- Does the hosting organisation provide suitable language training for the volunteer?
- Who are the teachers and what kind of contact do they have with the volunteer?
- Do we have any measurements of progress in studying the language? Does the volunteer get a language certificate?
- What can I do? How can I find someone to get to know, to like and to practise my own language?

Tips and good advice

If possible, we should find a professional Hungarian language teacher or a language course for the volunteer (or we should encourage the hosting organisation to do so). Having Hungarian as a native language is not necessarily enough to be able to teach Hungarian effectively to a foreigner; sometimes not even the teachers of other languages (English or German) can manage this task. We are not aware of applying the rules of our mother tongue, so usually we cannot explain them in an understandable way either. Could you explain for instance where one should put the word „only” in the sentence, or why we say „Budapest-en” and „Debrecen-ben” to mean „in Budapest” or „in Debrecen”?

Even though a professional *Hungarian language course* costs more than a teacher who doesn't have specific qualifications, or a volunteer who helps out, it is still

worth the money invested in it: if the volunteer learns Hungarian more quickly, he would be a more useful help for the hosting company.

As well as the professional language course it might be helpful to involve local volunteers who readily take on the task of teaching Hungarian, coaching, conversing - sometimes as an exchange with the volunteer (for instance the local volunteer teaches Hungarian to the foreigner who, in return, gives lessons in his own language).

In the volunteer's schedule there should be time set aside not only for the language course but also for the preparation for it.

We should work out strategies for facilitating language studies either outside school or after having finished the language course. Some of the well-functioning methods are putting labels on the wall with the names of different objects, or a language diary, learning about 10 words each day, etc. These kinds of written documents help the volunteer to be able to follow up his own progress.

Take initiatives, dare to speak Hungarian with the volunteer – but during important meetings you should offer the possibility of switching to an intermediary language.

Even if a volunteer already speaks Hungarian quite well, he might not be able to understand absolutely everything. Moreover there are many volunteers who don't dare to admit that they cannot understand something. If we share important information (for example tasks, times and places of meetings, etc.) we always have to check if the volunteer really has understood everything. Speaking on the telephone in a foreign language without the help of meta-communication is even more difficult, so try to avoid having important conversations on the phone, and make sure that the volunteer isn't given tasks of this kind either (especially not during the first period of time).

Help the volunteer to *get in touch with, talk to and make friends with Hungarian youngsters*. If the volunteer moves only in circles with other foreigners and you talk to him in a common language, he would not be motivated to do language studies.

2.6. INTERCULTURALITY

What does „being a little late” mean for you? How many minutes? Does the volunteer who comes from southern Italy mean the same thing by that? What does the word „clean” or „loud” mean to us? Is it natural that we have our fruit soup

before the main dish and not as a dessert? Do we get embarrassed if our male colleague gives us a hug and places a loud kiss on our cheek? Do we consider it strange if someone in the morning turns on the computer without saying even hello to us? Why is that the case?

Are we aware of what is behind our own customs?

Most of our own culture (values, norms, customs, behaviours, etc.) we are not conscious of; we only become aware of it when we meet someone who does things differently, in other words when we clash with people with different cultural backgrounds.

This – usually not totally painless – meeting with a new culture is inevitable for an EVS volunteer!

Culture

Anthropologists made the observation that the integration into a new culture and the dynamics of the adaptation to the local lifestyle in most cases are similar – the diagram presenting this phenomenon is a bell curve.

Ask your volunteer to say how his emotions changed over time, how he felt, and how his attitude towards the hosting country became modified. If you have your own experience from a long term stay abroad, take note of that as well – you can learn a lot from it.

Adaptation

In most cases, and probably in the case of your volunteer too, you can observe the following „adaptation curve“:

1. Panic before the trip: „Do I really want to go away? After all, my life is so comfy here... Do I really need this? Would it be good for me?“

2. Initial enthusiasm: everything is exciting and new, and the differences make the hosting country exotic and interesting.

3. First low point: homesickness. One starts missing the flavours that one is used to („Why don't they have proper bread here?“), the home environment, friends and family.

4. Adaptation after the first low point: suddenly we start to understand the local language, we get used to the new schedule and environment, etc. The positive experiences help us to reduce our tension, and we feel that we can after all live in the new environment.

5. Second low point: As a result of a conflict/problem, we start realizing that we don't understand perfectly the local traditions and values, or we cannot fully identify with them. Even though previously we thought we became well integrated, now we feel like outsiders, strangers.

6. Integration: we feel like being at home at the „new“ place, we function well in the „strange“ environment, our performance is improving, and our social and emotional needs are becoming fulfilled through meeting the locals.

7. Panic before going home: we realize that we soon have to go home; the thought of losing the secure environment fills us with fear and we get flashbacks from our life at home, especially the negative aspects of it, and the unanswered questions.

8. Going home: the first period of time is usually positive and eventful, family and friends welcome us warmly, and we feel that it is not too bad to be back at home after all; we have great plans.

9. Low point after coming home: we get back to our daily routine and we have to face again some unresolved problems and predicaments (for instance unemployment). Conflicts can be triggered by the fact that we have changed but we feel that our environment is still the „same“ and they don't understand us; we start longing for the place where we were guests, and for the friends and relationships that we left behind.

10. Equilibrium: we become re-integrated into local life, but at the same time we cherish the things we learnt and experienced abroad.

(The model described above is based on the research of the anthropologist Steven Rhinesmith: Rhinesmith, S. /1985/. Bringing home the world. New York: Walsh & Co.)

These phases are often followed by somatic symptoms such as feeling tired and having minor stomach infections right after having arrived in the hosting country, etc.

Naturally the intensity of the process as well as the number and frequency of the periods changes from person to person and from case to case. We go through similar processes in our home country too, for instance when we try to fit in at a new workplace. The volunteer's situation can be very different though, since during his stay in a foreign country he doesn't have access to the same social network (for instance the presence of friends and family members) that could help him to get through difficult times. On top of that, it is a lot more difficult to understand the reasons behind people's behaviour and the underlying meanings of it. The role of the mentor is thus essential in helping the process of integration.

The mentor's questions

- Do I have prejudices against the volunteer and his country, religion and culture, and if so, what kind of prejudices are they?
- What knowledge do I have about the volunteer's country and culture? If I know shamefully little about it and my information is just general, what can I do to improve the situation before the volunteer's arrival?
- Besides his national culture, what subculture or minority does the volunteer belong to?
- Are there any religious or other type of regulations, or special needs, which one should take into consideration? (For example, for muslims, drinking alcohol and eating pork are forbidden, men and women cannot shake hands, etc.)
- Am I open to intercultural learning, am I really interested in where the volunteer comes from?
- From where can I collect more information about the concept of intercultural learning?
- Do I feel ready to handle possible (probably inevitable) intercultural conflicts? Do I notice if there are cultural differences behind a certain problem/conflict?
- Am I ready to accept that my point of view, my behaviour and my values have a relative nature? Am I able to recognize my own cultural embeddedness and identity; in other words, can I recognize the incentives for my own behaviour and can I accept that members of other cultures can have different opinions and might have different approaches?
- Do I see the various phases of the cultural adaptation and the signs of it in the volunteer's behaviour? Have I ever talked about this with him? Have I talked about it accidentally, regularly, or in a planned way?

- Do I provide the volunteer with the right amount of help, in order to become fully familiar with Hungarian culture? What kind of strategies do I have for this?
- Can I accept the fact that Hungarian culture is not the standard measure that the volunteer has to adapt to?

Tips and good advice

Adaptation

Help the volunteer to become familiar with the model of the adaptation curve, prepare him for possible crises. Pay attention to possible physical symptoms. Show empathy if the volunteer is experiencing a low point, and take advantage of momentum during high points.

Stress management

Already at the beginning of the project you should ask the volunteer about the strategies he has for eliminating stress. You should find out what he likes doing when feeling down, and how one can pull him out of this state (does he need kindness, special care or does he prefer to be left alone? etc.)

Intercultural communication

Always try to express yourself accurately. (Instead of saying: „Let’s have a little break”, say „Let’s have a ten minute break, etc.)

Don’t take anything for granted!

Talk slowly, and with simple language. Try to explain the metaphors, phrases, slang words and cultural references.

If you feel that the volunteer behaves in a peculiar way, and doesn’t keep to certain social rules, try to investigate the situation, its circumstances and the possible explanations very carefully before you draw conclusions!

Try to see that *everything is relative*, don’t believe that our values are the ones to adjust to, that they are the ones that the volunteer has to learn in every case. (This is often very difficult, for instance in the case of notions such as „cleanliness”, „order”, or „respect”.)

Try to look into your own cultural conditioning as well. And *question the unquestionable: what is „natural” or what is „normal”!* One can learn a lot from knowing what these mean to other people, and with which values and traditions they live their lives.

A short guide in how to handle intercultural conflicts:

- I notice the intercultural conflict
- If I give a thought to what is „strange” in the other person’s behaviour, then

in fact I would learn something about the expected but unspoken behaviour in my own culture.

- I accept that in my own culture and in my own value system, things happen in a certain way, and in other cultures /other value systems things happen in a different way (in other words we don't need to convince the other person, and we don't need to give up our own conviction either!)
- I try to find solutions to a concrete problem, while we are aware of each other's view points and respect each other's values.

Countries and cultures

Obtain information about the specific country, where the volunteer comes from (for example, gather information on the Internet about current affairs that the public is interested in, what it's like to be a youngster, a student, unemployed, a member of a minority, etc. Try to think through what seemed to be difficult and strange for a previous volunteer in Hungary from the same country.)

Encourage the volunteer to tell you about his own country and culture!

Inspire the volunteer to ask questions or to tell you what he finds strange or surprising in Hungary! Arrange events or club-meetings, create leaflets, blogs, etc, where the volunteer can share his opinions about why and in what way Hungarians seem to be strange/foolish/unbearable/incomprehensible/"UFOs" (You can read a number of interesting books and articles about this topic in English.)

Try to introduce the different aspects of Hungarian culture to the volunteer, including the seemingly unimportant things such as the „körözött" (=spiced cottage cheese mixed with butter), the cartoons that we used to watch in our childhood, the connotations of a T-shirt that has CCCP written on it, or what Transylvania means for us. Take the volunteer on excursions, invite him to your home, suggest books (there is Hungarian literature translated into English, and there are Hungarian newspapers written in English as well).

Find out whether the volunteer has ever been offended in Hungary or ever been exposed to prejudices against his country or identity, and if so, help him to digest these issues. Don't underestimate the importance of them! You would be hurt too if you experienced the same when abroad...

2.7. ACCOMMODATION, LIVING TOGETHER

Appropriate accommodation

The well-being of the volunteer is fundamentally influenced by where and with whom he lives. The first impressions after arriving are especially important, but during the whole period of the project the quality of the accommodation has great importance. If the volunteer doesn't feel safe there - if he is stressed about it, cannot become rested, etc - then he would see the whole project in a negative light, his performance would be poorer, and he would lose motivation.

What you have to check together with the person responsible for the accommodation:

Fundamental conditions

There has to be:

- a bed (with 2 sets of bedclothes)
- a table, chair, lamp
- a cupboard (enough space for storing things that are packed for several months)
- a kitchen (with stove, sink and utensils)
- a bathroom (with warm water), washing machine
- heating in winter time

Before the volunteer moves in, make sure that the accommodation has everything, and that the flat/room has been cleaned!

The volunteer's well-being also depends on:

- the place being light and dry
- it being situated in an area where public safety is good

It is an advantage if the volunteer lives together with local young people who are interested in the possibility of cultural exchange, and are not interested only in gaining money by having a „lodger“.

Exaggerated expectations

Sometimes the expectations of the volunteer are exaggerated, as they do not take into consideration the financial means provided by the hosting organisation or the application.

For example it is not a fundamental condition that the volunteer should have his own room, a TV, a DVD player or an Internet connection or that the accommodation should be in a central part of town. In order to avoid exaggerated expectations,

it is necessary to discuss with the volunteer the details of the accommodation already before his arrival.

Living together with others

Living together with others often includes conflicts.

This is especially true in the case of young volunteers who beforehand lived with their families; because of this, they have little experience of sharing accommodation and they have only few problem-solving strategies. The differences between cultures also become most clear when sharing a flat with others. At the mentor-volunteer meetings it is worth bringing up the question of whether the volunteer's difficulties and conflicts are due to personal differences in lifestyles or to cultural differences. And if the reason is the latter, what can one do about it during the intercultural learning process?

What are the most common conflicts?

„Total insanity”

The „Again, you haven't washed up the dishes!” and the „Ugh, the drain is full of your hair!” type of conflicts

The *definition of „cleanliness”* is determined by culture and differs from person to person. Whether someone feels good about cleaning every day or just every second week, whether someone rinses off the dishes or lets them be soapy, and where one usually keeps the laundry - these are all fixed habits which are very difficult to change. Our idea of cleanliness is usually not conscious – but if the person who we live with functions according to other kinds of standards to ours, the differences often become clear very early on. We usually give a very strong emotional response to these differences: „dirtiness” triggers disgust and negative judgement.

8 hours' work, 8 hours' rest...?

The „What is this horrible music? I want to sleep!!!” type of conflicts

The *difference between room-mates' schedules and daily rhythms* can also be a reason for quarrels. The volunteer who comes home late at night, who invites guests and listens to loud music can be a nightmare for the volunteer who goes to bed early, who needs quiet, and who in return drives his roommate to insanity by vacuum-cleaning early in the morning... Volunteers/roommates who live by similar schedules can also have difficulties because of sharing communal rooms.

The expectations that the room-mates have on each other can also be different: there are some who look for a room-mate who can be a friend, a

chatting partner or someone to party with, while others instead want to shut the door on themselves, and want to be left alone...

Who has slept in my bed?

The „*You have eaten up my yoghurt!*” and the „*Who let you use my cd-player?*” type of conflicts, or not respecting personal space or personal belongings, can also be the source of friction. This can especially be a problem when the room-mates have very different economic backgrounds, or because of the volunteers having limited financial resources the bagatelles (for instance pinching a little food from the other person) become loaded issues.

The mentor's questions

- Are the fundamental conditions guaranteed in the volunteer's accommodation?
- Does the volunteer feel good about the place where lives?
- If not, how can he be helped?
- Are the rules clear for the volunteer? (concerning smoking, using the landline, the regulations of the house, what he can use in the flat and what not, hosting guests, etc.)?
- What kind of relationship does the volunteer have with the room-mates, the landlord or the landlady, the neighbours?
- What would he like to change?
- Can the volunteer cope by himself with the conflicts arising from living with others or does he need mediation?

Tips and good advice

Already before arrival one has to check everything with the volunteer concerning the accommodation. One definitely has to ask the volunteer whether he smokes, whether he is allergic to animals or dust, and also ask about his personality and lifestyle, in order to find the right accommodation and room-mate that suits the volunteer's character. The information about the volunteer is of significance for the colleague who is responsible for arranging accommodation.

Making the volunteer's accommodation cosy – especially if the flat is not too nice/ comfortable otherwise - by putting some fabric on the wall, or placing a lamp or candle somewhere can make a great difference. After his arrival, ask the volunteer if he needs any help in this. For instance you could go with him to a department store, or you can lend some items that he might need badly: a radio, a carpet, etc.

It is worth getting the volunteer to sign a *document about his responsibilities* concerning the regulations for tenants, including compensation for possible damage caused by the volunteer.

It is indispensable to know whom the volunteer can phone and when those people are available in case some *technical problem* occurs in the flat (if the washing machine breaks down, if there is a burst water pipe, etc.).

Solving technical problems does not belong to the tasks of the mentor!

Don't ever drop in on the volunteer, not even when you would need to resolve something concerning the accommodation.

If there is any *conflict between the volunteer and his roommates*, it is worth considering whether intervention is needed. Because resolving conflicts could be an important part of the volunteer's learning process, leave it up to him to handle these incidents; don't try to find solutions instead of him, and don't move him somewhere else immediately.

2.8. SENSE OF SECURITY

For a successful project it is necessary that the volunteer feels secure both physically and mentally in the new environment. What does this actually mean?

In order to be able to make the volunteers feel secure we offer you a clearly arranged system of viewpoints which, in many cases, can also help to resolve motivational problems. We talk about the hierarchy of needs arranged into a pyramid by the psychologist Abraham Maslow. Summarising it briefly, Maslow created a hierarchical system where the physiological and psychological needs for our existence are based on each other. In his opinion, some motivations can have influence on our behaviour only if the needs on a lower hierarchical level have already been satisfied.

One of the criticisms that this theory received is that these needs do not necessarily occur only when others on a lower level have been fulfilled (taking a simple example, probably many of us have experiences like sitting at a concert that captivates us even though we are extremely hungry and thirsty, or spending all our money on a season ticket for aikido, although we still have unpaid gas bills at home). The Maslow pyramid presents our human needs in the form of a clearly arranged, hierarchical system, although these needs can be present parallelly as well, or some more „primal” needs can occasionally be prioritized over „higher level” ones.

However, it is still worth keeping the Maslow model in mind, because we often might have to face such motivational problems and conflicts which are in fact rooted in some unsatisfied primal needs (for instance not having proper accommodation, or not being appreciated) that can be easily resolved as long as we find the sources of them.



Examples of **physiological needs**: eating, sleeping, sexuality

Need for safety: physical protection, security, accommodation

Love: relationships, need of belonging

Recognition: self-confidence, self-esteem, need of getting appreciation from others

Cognitive needs: need of thinking, knowing, understanding

Aesthetic needs: creating something

Self actualization: achieving things that our potential predestinates us for

The mentor's questions

Let's interpret the meaning of various needs in the context of EVS.

- **Physiological needs**: How does the volunteer arrange his meals? Does he sleep enough?
- **Need of safety**: Is the volunteer's accommodation appropriate? Does the volunteer enjoy living there? Does he have enough space to have some privacy, to rest, to study? Is there anything that could regularly disturb his nightly rest? (Loud roommates, barking dogs, the sirens of a nearby ambulance station, etc?) Can he safely leave his things, including valuable belongings, at the accommodation? Does he feel safe in the surroundings of his workplace and accommodation, is he afraid of going home after dark? Does the volunteer know the town well enough, is he anxious about getting

lost? Is he afraid of getting insulted or attacked? Has he developed a regular daily/weekly routine?

- **Love, relationships:** Has he managed to build some social contacts at the workplace or outside the workplace? How much need does the volunteer have of spending time with other people and is that need fulfilled? Is he able to stay in touch with people at home, or is there some obstacle to this? (If his family cannot send emails, does the volunteer have enough money or the possibility of phoning home once in a while?) Who does he think is fond of him here in Hungary?
- **Recognition:** Does the volunteer get recognition at the workplace for the work he does? Does he get any feedback? Is it important what the volunteer does? Do they trust him enough to give him some responsibility? Do they ask the volunteer for his opinion?
- **Cognitive needs:** Does the volunteer like to think through things and reflect on people, or does he just jump from one situation into another? How much is the volunteer able to use his mental capacity during his work? If he doesn't have the opportunity to use it, is there any possibility for doing so outside work? If the work is fairly monotonous, does the volunteer know anybody with whom he can share his experiences and thoughts about staying in a foreign country?
- **Aesthetic needs:** Does the volunteer experience the pleasure of creativity, of being able to create something in his work or in his sparetime?
- **Self actualization:** Does the volunteer have the chance to realize his own ideas at work? Does he feel he's developing? What is it that being in a new environment and foreign culture can offer him as an opportunity for personal development?

Tips and good advice

Take the volunteer's feelings and possible anxieties seriously. It doesn't lead anywhere to think that the volunteer's complaints are not well-founded; if he feels bad, bringing up rational counter-arguments and trying to prove that he in fact doesn't have any reason to feel bad probably wouldn't bring results. For instance, if the volunteer is afraid of going home alone, it isn't worth trying to convince him that the area is safe. Accept it as a fact that the volunteer feels this way; for him it is a realistic fear. Try to find some possible solutions together (in this case maybe by changing accommodation, sharing the place with another volunteer or possibly by making changes in the schedule so the volunteer can get home while it is still light outside.)

If you don't do this, but instead belittle and laugh at any kind of anxieties, you might easily lose the volunteer's trust in you.

Pay attention to the volunteer's somatic symptoms (for example gaining or losing weight) and, if you feel it's necessary, talk about them with him.

Feedback, positive reflection (even if you are not entirely satisfied with the volunteer, you can be sure to find some aspect that is worth complimenting), just as well as expressing that the volunteer is accepted in the work team, are fundamentally important for making him feel confident about being in the project.

2.9. CRISIS AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The volunteers in the EVS project are in the position of being protected: they are provided with accommodation, the means of subsistence are guaranteed for them, they have the right to insurance, and they get support from a mentor. However, unfortunately this doesn't mean that they are protected from all kinds of problems, from all the difficult situations in life, from all the unfortunate incidents and crises which can actually happen to anyone whether they be a volunteer or a mentor.

Crisis:

An unexpected and unpredictable serious event, a critical situation, that influences the volunteer's physical and emotional state and therefore has an effect on the project as well.

Without aiming for completeness, we list here some concrete examples of crises that volunteers have experienced:

Severe illness, accident...

Anybody can come down with a serious illness (for instance appendicitis, kidney stone and the like), can break a leg, fall off their bicycle – it can happen to your volunteer too. He might end up in a hospital which, let's face it, is not a pleasant thing. We are all afraid of this, even if it happens in our own country. The whole incident can be made worse if the staff don't treat him right, or if the volunteer doesn't understand the language used when discussing his physical condition and health above his head.

Depression

The hosting organization has done what it can, but the volunteer doesn't try to build contacts with peers and colleagues, doesn't participate in anything, and

doesn't show interest in any kind of activity. In addition, the local entertainment facilities are not good enough for him, he spends more and more time alone, doesn't talk much, feels dispirited, and his work performance becomes affected by all this too.

Problems at home: illness, death in the family, or in the circle of friends

The volunteer gets some bad news from home: a person who is close to the volunteer has become severely ill or a close relative has died.

Using drugs

According to statistics, two-thirds of Hungarian secondary school students have already tried drugs. The situation in other European countries is similar. Being far from the family, partying, the feeling of having a great adventure – all these contribute to the weakening of the volunteer's aversion to drugs, so in the end he might fall for using them occasionally. At the present time, using drugs – whatever people may think about it – is illegal in Hungary.

The mentor's questions:

- What happens on a factual level?
- Is it only me who thinks that the situation is problematic, or does the volunteer share my opinion as well?
- Whether it is me or the volunteer who considers a situation problematic, is the problem real?
- Is it a crisis or a problem?
- Where does it originate?
- Did the volunteer bring it with him from home? Was the volunteer aware of the problem when he left home? Could it be the very case that the volunteer was trying to escape to us? Did we know about it beforehand or did we see in advance that it might occur?
- Did the problem arise here?
- Is the situation that has emerged part of the EVS project or is it the volunteer's own problem?
- How does this situation affect the project?
- Can we use the problem as a source of learning or should we rather eliminate it as soon as possible?
- Should we learn from it now, or should we resolve it first and then try to draw conclusions afterwards?
- If I have some problem or if I experience some crisis, how do I solve it? On my own? Or do I ask help from others? What can I learn from the fact that the volunteer might experience problems and crises in a different way than

I usually do?

- What I am going to do if the volunteer cannot find a solution to his problem?
- Whom can I turn to if I don't know any solution either?

Crisis and quick solutions:

- How quick does the solution have to be in this situation?
- Who else has to be involved in the process of resolving the problem?
- Have we informed everyone who has to know about the situation? (Coordinators, colleagues, sending organization, National Agency, room mates, AXA, family members)
- Besides the mentor, is there anyone who pays attention to the volunteer, helps him, gives support, listens, visits the volunteer in hospital, transports him to and from the hospital or the airport?
- How can I maintain my distance even if the events have an emotional impact on me?

During the processing of the problem

- How can I transform the crisis, the problem, into a learning situation?
- How can I help the volunteer to be able to see clearly his own situation?
- What is that element in the situation that the volunteer is not aware of or doesn't notice?
- How can I make him aware of it? Should I ask questions? Should I give any feedback? Should I let the volunteer figure it out by himself?
- How should I help the volunteer to find a way out of his problematic situation?
- Can I show the volunteer some alternative ways, can I bring his attention to some viewpoints that he might not see?
- Should we give the volunteer a „rest“, some time off?

Tips and good advice:

Strategy in case of disaster

One should have a strategy in case of disaster. You should discuss beforehand with the hosting organization how the different tasks should be divided in the event of a possible disaster, as well as what the coordinator of the project and the mentor should do (for instance in case of an accident who should contact the insurance company, etc). This could be written down – including important telephone numbers, so one doesn't have to look for the emergency numbers and those to the insurance company, in a highly panicky state. Ask the coordinator of the project to tell you or show you where they keep the most important documents and data related to the project (the contact details

of those who should be contacted in crisis, and the copy of the volunteer's insurance papers). This is worth taking care of at the beginning of all projects – and then one can hope that it will never be necessary to use.

If news of disaster comes your way, you should give yourself some minutes to get over the first shock: you don't have to react immediately! If they ring you, you could say that you will ring them back in five minutes, and in the meantime you could think through what you should do or whom you should turn to for advice.

Empathy

Yes, we are humans; it is only natural – or even necessary – that we are touched by another person's story, but our own emotions have to have the functions of an alarm system: we have to be able to feel or rather understand the volunteer's situation. Don't let yourself be overwhelmed by emotions. It doesn't help the volunteer if you join him in breaking plates, or you both cry on each others' shoulders, and as a mentor it would mean that you stepped outside your role. For the mentor it is very important to maintain the position of an outsider. That is why one is a mentor and not an intimate close friend.

What doesn't belong to the mentor's tasks...

Be aware of your own boundaries. If you feel that solving the crisis would go beyond your competence level, ask help from an expert.

The mentor doesn't have to be able to judge whether the volunteer has appendicitis or if he only has a stomach ache. The mentor doesn't have to catch the thief if the volunteer's purse gets stolen, and it is not the mentor's task to cure the volunteer's possible addiction. The task of the mentor is to recognize the crisis, to bring it to the attention of those who are involved in the project, and ask for help from an expert if necessary.

A few concrete tips on resolving the above mentioned problems:

Severe illness... accidents...

- Immediately get in touch with AXA insurance and with the coordinator of the project.
- Remind the volunteer that he should contact his family – if he cannot do it himself, you should contact them.
- If the volunteer needs hospital care over a longer period of time, but he is actually able to travel, it is - after his medical condition has stabilized – maybe worth considering sending him home to get the treatment in his own country, being amongst those who are close to him. Keep in touch

with the volunteer, ring him regularly, ask about his condition, encourage him, and assure him that he is welcome back.

- If the volunteer is not transportable, you have to make sure that every day there is someone who can visit him and take to the hospital whatever he might need. Talk to the doctors and explain to them the volunteer's special situation. Be there for him, translate everything accurately when he is being examined and when he talks to his doctor. If necessary, find an interpreter. Yes, this might be a complicated task, but you should still try to do your best – then you too will feel relief.
- If it is feasible, it might be a good idea to ask a relative or a friend to travel here and help the volunteer.

If you need a doctor, this is good to know:

Because the foreign volunteer doesn't have a Hungarian insurance number (TAJ-szám), he usually has to pay for the medical care – but if you do everything right the AXA- insurance company makes a refund very quickly (within approx. 10 days). Taking care of the insurance is actually not the mentor's task, but it might be still useful to know about the process, and to know what documents are needed.

1. Make sure that the volunteer has *AXA-insurance* that is covered by the EVS program.
2. One has to ask the doctor or the surgery for a bill regarding all examinations/treatments carried out on the volunteer. (If the medical condition needs a more overall and therefore more expensive treatment, one definitely has to get in touch with the insurance company to get an agreement as soon as possible.)
3. The costs of medicines can be covered by the insurance company only when there are copies of the prescriptions and the volunteer has kept the pharmacy receipts.
4. The volunteer can claim for the refund of the expenses by downloading and filling in the „Claim form” that can be found on the website www.europeanbenefits.com. The completed and signed form should be posted along with the original receipts from doctors/pharmacies, together with the copies of prescriptions.

The insurance company can be found at:

European Benefits Administrators

82, rue Villeneuve

Depression

- Pay attention to the volunteer, try to talk to him. (Is he disturbed by the situation? If so, what is it exactly that bothers or hinders him? What would he need? Since when has he found himself in this situation?)
- Did he feel different before, at home? Is there any external reason for his negative state?
- Has he actually tried those activities that he claims not to be interested in? Don't forget that you can only help that person who also wants to help himself, and who is also willing to take steps to make a change.
- If the seriousness of the problem demands it, turn to a psychologist/psychiatrist for help.

Domestic problems: illness, death in the family or in the circle of friends

- As soon as you get to know about what has happened, try to set aside at least a short time to meet the volunteer in person. Ask him how you or someone else can be of help.
- It is entirely natural that the volunteer should travel home and have some time off: in this kind of situation, the Hungarian volunteer too can have a holiday in order to be together with the family, who might need his support.
- If he goes on holiday/travels home, agree on when he intends to continue the volunteer service again.
- Keep in touch with the volunteer even while he is away, ring him regularly, make sure that he knows that he's welcome back.
- Make sure that travel expenses are provided for (or if the volunteer doesn't travel back, the expenses of long distance phone calls are covered). The AXA insurance company does in certain cases cover travel expenses.
- Pay attention to how all this influences the project, the tasks, the plans and the progress of the volunteer. If necessary, you should make some adjustments to these after the volunteer's time off.

Using drugs

- When the volunteer arrives, he should be made aware of the laws of the country. He doesn't need to know the constitution by heart but he has to know that we use tickets on public transport, and that drugs are illegal.
- Check the facts - don't rely only on the signs that indicate drug use. If your suspicions are proved to be right, talk to the volunteer and try to find out the real reasons for taking drugs. Is it boredom, escaping from problems, the influence of peers, or maybe he has used drugs already back home? Depending on the scale of the problem, try to decide on how to proceed. If necessary, turn to an expert for help.

2.10. VOLUNTEERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Some years ago, we started defining the notion of „special needs” in a more everyday way. In fact everyone has some special needs, but some of us have fewer than others, and some of us have less complex ones than others. What the law and special education mean by „special needs” or „special educational needs”, and by related notions, is not relevant in this guide. One doesn’t necessarily have to be a lawyer, a special education teacher or a psychologist in order to be the mentor of this kind of youngster. Some true human interest and empathy, attentiveness and naturalness sometimes have more value than a diploma.

There are some volunteers who

- think differently about the world, find it more difficult to understand its way of working, and find it difficult to make themselves understood; they process information more slowly and make strange associations / they have learning difficulties and mental disabilities/,
- have difficulties in communicating in their own language /have speech disorders/,
- have problems with their eyesight / partially sighted, low vision, blind /,
- have problems with their hearing / hearing impaired /,
- have difficulty in moving and getting around / mobility difficulties /,
- constantly struggle with health problems
- because of family issues don’t live together with their relatives / they live under the protection of a child-welfare organization/,
- live in a less developed region of their own home country /they are geographically disadvantaged/,
- have never been abroad before, have never been in a restaurant, don’t have any electricity in their home /they live in poverty/.

Usually the special needs occur together. The mentor deals with the individual, not with the disadvantage; it is the individual he has to understand, accept and support.

Trust is more valuable for youngsters with special needs than for others. They usually come for a couple of months, therefore one has to create the „circle” of trust within a shorter period of time.

Those organizations who send but mainly the ones who receive these young people with special needs are well prepared for helping to surmount obstacles, to get over difficulties. The selecting process and getting to know each other is more thorough. The sending mentor suggests hosting organizations to the volunteer

after he has investigated many of these organizations: it is typical that the cooperation is based on mutual trust and personal contacts. These organizations within a solid network of cooperating partners can do better planning; they can rely on each other's help, and on ensured free places that can receive youngsters. They know each other's working routines, and so fewer surprises can occur. (The volunteer can come up with plenty of them anyway.)

Special tools for special needs

The EVS programme provides special tools that help in hosting SEN volunteers.

- It can increase greatly the volunteer's self-confidence if he can participate in the project together with an acquaintance, a friend – a person who might have the same abilities. The sending organizations could recommend, and the hosting organization could require, that one or two volunteers should travel with one or two attendants. This could be a great help for both the mentor and the volunteer.
- A preparatory visit might be a useful tool as well, which the Programme also provides for volunteers with special needs.

Why does the volunteer come here?

The volunteer with special needs (the SEN volunteer) wants to become a volunteer, either because he really wants to develop his own personality or because his parents/caretakers suggest this challenging experience to him. The most important aspect is to increase the volunteer's independence. Emotional bonds play a more significant role in their lives than in other volunteers' lives. It might happen that the youngster wants to be a volunteer because he got to like someone or during a previous cooperation he became really fond of the hosting organizations and the local community. The desire to help in an altruistic way can also be a reason. Once there was a Belgian guy with autism who came to Hungary saying: „I want to help kids in a children's home.”

The mentor's questions

- To what extent can I let the SEN volunteer be close to me, to my family, to my acquaintances, to smaller children?
- How much do I know about the specific and general characteristics (as described in the specialist literature) of the volunteer's special needs? Where can I find information about it, from whom can I ask for help?
- What do I know about the volunteer's family background and financial situation?
- To what extent does one have to be strict or tolerant with the volunteer?

Whom can I ask about these things?

- When did I write/ will I write to the sending mentor?
- Would I be able to put up with the difficulties that the volunteer has caused or might cause? (for instance if the volunteer provokes someone, fights, doesn't wash himself, is rude to colleagues or to strangers on the street, etc.)
- The sexual life and attitude to relationships of people with a mental handicap can be very different from the average person; they can „fall in love“ quite easily. It might happen that the volunteer approaches the „chosen person“ fairly violently. If we know in advance that this could happen we would have to have an assistant who knows the volunteer well. Who can I rely on?
- Am I always available? At weekends as well? Can I have priorities in my life that suit the volunteer too?
- Why am I his mentor?

Tips and good advice

Preparation

Getting in touch already beforehand: it happens very seldom that the SEN volunteer tries to gather information directly from the hosting mentor about the project, since his possibilities, skills and knowledge in the field of information technology do not enable him to do so. In this case the sending mentor or coordinator helps out, and can forward any questions the volunteer may have.

We should dedicate lots of time to get to know the volunteer in advance. It often happens that they try to hide or trivialize certain personality traits, for instance that the volunteer is attracted to the same sex. We should ask for some photos and/or an introductory letter written by the family, which can bring our attention to some aspects. It is good to know: whether the volunteer is a forgetful person who often leaves things behind, whether he is allowed to drink alcohol, to smoke, or to listen to loud music.

The hosting mentor in 90 % of cases should receive the volunteer at the airport or at the railway station. It might happen that the volunteer wants to prove that he is able to get to the hosting organization on his own. In this case it is advisable for the mentor to have access to a car, so if necessary he can immediately go to look for the volunteer.

Before leaving for abroad, the sending mentor of the volunteer should check whether the volunteer's mobile is charged and loaded with money, that the necessary numbers are entered correctly (together with the country codes), and that the volunteer has some cash as well.

It is a nice and useful gesture if the hosting mentor lets the sending mentor know that the volunteer has arrived. Those who have already sent an SEN volunteer abroad know what a relief it is to know that he has arrived safely.

Time schedule

The mentor should meet the volunteer often, always at the regular time that they have agreed on. For the volunteer with a mental handicap it is beneficial if we organize his time very precisely, to the minute; in this way we create a timetable for „everyday use”, which can give reference points for the day. In case of problems, one usually has to provide quick and immediate help. An SEN volunteer often has very concrete questions that he demands an instant answer to.

Time has a major influence for SEN volunteers: they usually come for a shorter period (3-4 weeks), and so everything happens faster – you have to react faster too. There are fewer or none at all of the grey everydays; we „have to” introduce our country within a shorter time. The volunteer’s report has to be made earlier too – the mentor or the assistant should help in creating it!

The SEN volunteer with a more severe handicap may travel during the school holiday or between two major therapy sessions. The hosting organization should adapt to these times if they really want to be helpful.

If the SEN volunteer comes for a longer period of time, it is advisable to have several assistants. More background work or several people would be needed for the following: special diets, cleaning, washing, hairdressing, pedicuring, making excursions, assisting at the workplace, shopping, buying clothes, going to the bank, post office, transportation, etc.

Important: the SEN volunteer can only get to know and accept a few people within a short time. That is why there are only a couple of people who directly „deal with” the volunteer. For the volunteer it’s a big enough task to get familiar with some new faces and build up trust in them.

Communication

During communication, body language has great importance. The SEN volunteer’s language skills are usually fairly poor. (In most cases they are enough though to accomplish good project work. If they are not, we might turn to the personal assistant for help.)

The personal assistant

The personal assistant should be a relative, caretaker or a good friend. It is important that the assistant and the volunteer should know and accept each other.

It is advisable that the assistant also participates in the carefully chosen project that suits the volunteer's individual skills and field of interest.

The assistant also needs some time off. If we receive two SEN volunteers with severe disabilities, it is advisable to ask for two assistants with them.

The assistant doesn't always lead the volunteer in the right direction. It might happen that he prioritizes his own interests. In this case the mentor has to intervene and send the assistant off for a few hours' „rest”...

Pocket money

The SEN volunteers are often very poor. For them we should provide more financial help. This has to be done in a way that cannot be seen as an insult, and that the other volunteers would be able to accept, or maybe we can do it even without them knowing about it.

The hosting mentor should help the volunteer in using and exchanging his pocket money. The volunteer with a mental handicap doesn't usually comprehend the concept of value.

Appreciation

The volunteer should be able to feel that the work he does is important and valuable for the hosting organization.

2.11. GROUP EVS PROJECTS – HARMONIZATION PERFECTED

What is the group EVS project?

According to the Youth in Action Programme's regulation, the project is considered as a group one, if two or more volunteers do their service together within the framework of the same project. The group volunteer service can last from 2 to 12 weeks.

These projects *are primarily meant to be for disadvantaged youngsters*. One of their goals is to help these young people gain experience within the EVS, so in possession of this experience they would be able to decide whether they at a later stage want to participate in a longer, individual volunteer service.

In this chapter we discuss the characteristics of groups with 6-8 or more members.

Why? Because in this case one has to pay attention not only to the individuals, but also to the group. A group of this or even larger size has a complex, specific dynamic, with inner processes.

In what way is this different from the individual EVS?

Mainly in that the whole process is shorter, more intensive and more structured. In practice, every participant goes through the same phases, which are the subject of the previous chapters, though the process itself is faster. How intensive the experience becomes, how rousing an influence the new environment and new impressions have on them, depends on their personalities. Besides this, the group and the sense of belonging to the group also has a strong effect on every volunteer.

Is it possible to have the same-sized project team when doing a group project as when doing an individual project? It differs from the information summarized in the table about sharing work tasks, in the way that in this case there are more partner organizations, more participants, more mentors, and maybe there are even more hosting organizations as well. All in all, each participant of the project team has to divide their attention between, and harmonize, a lot more things than in individual projects.

The mentor's questions

- Am I ready for a shorter, more intensive process?
- How can I make it possible to meet the person or the group that I am responsible for more often?
- Is there anyone I can turn to with my questions/problems? Is there a leader mentor in the project or should I look for an external helper or advisor?
- What do I know about the group that I am working with or will work with?
- Do I base my attitude on prejudices or do I indeed know my group well?
- Do I know everything about the whole project: at what stage is it now; in what situation is the group as a whole?
- Am I aware of the roles that the volunteers for whom I am responsible have in the group?

(Besides the above mentioned ones, the questions that are listed in the previous chapters also apply to the group EVS.)

Tips and good advice – What are all the things we have to pay attention to?

Large number of participants

One of the most important differences between the individual and the group EVS is that in the individual one, everyone has an individual, personalized project, while in the group EVS the group has a common goal, a common project – despite the fact that the EVS is fundamentally an individual development program.

There are several parallel processes: on the one hand everyone has an individual integrational and study process, and at the same time there is also a group process.

It is important to create harmony: the individual should not get lost in the group or be subordinate to the wider common goals, and at the same time the common goals of the group should not become subordinate to the volunteers' individual self-realization. It might happen that a volunteer who has more difficulty in coping with the situation and who is generally more difficult to deal with, a problematic person, can take away the attention from the others. It is the mentors' responsibility to make sure that everyone gets equal care and attention.

More mentors – harmonizing the mentor work

One mentor ideally takes care of one volunteer. However, in the group projects, mainly in groups with fewer participants, this is not always the case. Depending on the numbers of participants in the volunteers' group, one mentor can follow the development of and help 1-5 volunteers. In this situation the mentor obviously has a shorter project, but a lot more to do. The tasks have to be divided according to the mentor's professional skills and capacity (it can happen that 8 volunteers would get 4 mentors in the following way: m1-1, m2-1, m3-2, m4-4).

If several volunteers have one mentor, they can meet in a group, or the mentor can also offer the possibility of individual discussion in case one of the volunteers doesn't want to talk about his problem in front of the group.

There might even be 100 volunteers at the same time and at the same place in a group EVS, for instance in the event of arranging large-scale festivals. Even with this number of participants, we talk about only one group project, but the studying process has to be organized and assessed in a differentiated way.

The mentors' work has to be harmonized and aided as well.

Every mentor who helps a very small group has to be aware of:

1. the situation of each and every volunteer for whom he is responsible
2. the whole project
3. the phase that the international volunteer group is in, and what happens to them at group level

Harmonizing individual development, project-learning and group development can be most easily achieved through planning and organizing the co-operation

1. between the mentors
2. between the mentors and the hosting organizations

The co-operation can be both organized by the mentors, the hosting organization, or the members of the project team.

Because of the short period of time, the project goes more quickly, and the process is also more intensive. Harmonizing the individuals, the groups, and the work of the mentors all requires the mentor work to be more concentrated, thought through, thoroughly planned, structured, and a little more directed from a practical point of view.

At the same time the „system” has to be just as flexible and adaptable as in the case of individual mentoring!

Harmonizing the preparation and the follow-up

If there are several sending partners, it is more probable that the various organizations prepare their volunteers in completely different ways: in some of those countries, the National Agency holds preparatory courses, and in some of them there isn't even a National Agency. Even if we try to harmonize the content of the preparation with the sending organizations, it is likely that a heterogeneous group with volunteers prepared in completely different ways - representing different cultures, maybe with disadvantages and also struggling with language difficulties - would come to us...

The mentors should be aware of this. They should help the participants to collect all the necessary information in good time, and later on they should keep the leaders of the project informed about the current needs observed in the group.

The hosting organization definitely has to start the program with the training after arrival. The National Agency of the hosting country – with this number of participants - is assumed to be willing to do post-arrival and half-way trainings together with the hosting organization, in a concerted action.

Follow the development of the project – do the volunteers have someone to turn to even after their arrival home? Is there anyone helping their reintegration or is there anyone who can help them to prepare for an upcoming long term EVS project?

The best situation is if you could send the volunteers off knowing exactly, by name, whom they can turn to at home (ideally they would have got to know him personally already before going on the trip). Because this type of EVS mainly concerns disadvantaged youngsters, it is important that during both the preparation and the follow-up process there should be a „sending” mentor also in the sending organization, who can take care of the youngsters.

Group-dynamics

Being knowledgeable about group-dynamic processes has great value for

those mentors who work with group EVS. In the Bibliography and List of Links at the end of this guide you can find useful subsidiary material on this topic.

Intercultural learning

Obviously, local society is of great interest to the volunteers; however, their peers in a multinational group also represent different cultures. Because of this, even the multicultural learning process becomes more intensive and complex. The goal of the EVS is personal development, to which the multicultural EVS group provides a suitable background. As long as the situation enables the youngsters to practise integration and adaptation in a new environment, helps them to become open-minded and to be able to handle their own prejudices, and to develop their personal skills, the project complies with the requirements. You don't have to demand from them that even within this short period of time they should integrate into local society just as well as they could during an individual and longer project. The intercultural learning process in the EVS group usually involves such a challenge for the participants that building contacts with the locals becomes secondary.

Naturally, with skilful project planning, it is possible to provide good knowledge about the local culture even within a shorter period of time. Where the work is located, the colleagues, the free time activities that are typical for the country, the accommodation and the meals: all these contribute to creating those conditions where the possibilities of getting to know the local culture are given. However, one cannot expect a lot more than this in the process of intercultural learning.

Difficulties due to disadvantages

We shouldn't think that a person with disadvantages will automatically have difficulties in the new environment. Often these youngsters have a greater working capacity, are more capable of adapting, and are more persistent and able to cope with setbacks than their peers who grew up under protective circumstances. They are used to working hard to gain results, and are used, for instance, to having room-mates - or to the fact that their budget doesn't allow them to have luxurious accommodation or meals, etc.

What they are not used to is the attention, interest and appreciation they get. Usually they are very happy about it, and some positive feedback can give them a real boost.

The mentor's task in this case is to assess his own thoughts: does he have realistic knowledge about the participants or is he led by his own prejudices?

The more attention the participants require, the smaller the size of the group should be.

In groups with many participants it is advisable to mix the disadvantaged youngsters with the non-disadvantaged ones, or one can also mix people with different types of disadvantages - the more difficult cases with the less difficult ones.

This way we would be able to rely on resources within the group as well: the participants can help each other a lot and can also learn a great deal from one other. For a social worker, a psychologist or for a student teacher, it could be a great learning opportunity to be in the same group with his future target group. With the help of creative solutions, one can easily get over the language or the motoric barriers as well.

The hosting organization has to be aware of its own competences. They have to make a responsible decision: what tasks can they take upon themselves and what tasks are those where they have to involve experts in the project.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND LIST OF LINKS

Nemzetközi Önkéntes Szolgálat– T-kit sorozat
Budapest- Mobilitás, 2005.

<http://www.mobilitas.hu/uploads/1/menu/241/fajlok/T-Kit%205%20Nemzetkozi%20Onkentes%20Szolgalat.pdf>

Interkulturális tanulás– T-kit sorozat
Budapest- Mobilitás,

<http://www.mobilitas.hu/uploads/1/menu/241/fajlok/T-Kit%204%20Interkulturalis%20Tanulas.pdf>

Egyenlő esély fiataloknak – T-kit sorozat
Budapest- Mobilitás, 2005.

<http://www.mobilitas.hu/uploads/1/menu/241/fajlok/T-Kit%208%20Egyenlo%20Esely%20Fiataloknak.pdf>

Coaching Guide – youth initiatives and participation.

Can be downloaded in English (but there is also a Czech and French translation of it): <http://www.salto-youth.net/download/1531/coaching%20guide%202008.pdf>

Egymásra utalva. Bevezetés a mentorálás gyakorlatába.
Budapest-OKI, 2006.

Mészáros Aranka: A visszajelzés, mint a kommunikációs hatékonyság egyik alapvető eleme. In: Kommunikáció és konfliktusok kezelése a munkahelyen. Budapest - Eötvös Kiadó, 2007.

Udvarhelyi Éva Tessa:

Vándorok kultúrák között. Az interkulturális tanulásról külföldre készülő fiataloknak

Budapest, 2007.

<http://www.artemisszio.hu/hirek51.htm>

Publications regarding volunteer service

www.onkentes.hu

In the „Bibliography” menu

Fiatalok Lendületben Program Pályázati Útmutató 2009

<http://www.mobilitas.hu/flp/letoltesek/palyazatiutmutato>

Publications concerning the European Volunteer Service:

<http://www.mobilitas.hu/niida/informaciotar/publikaciok>

By searching for the key word „önkéntesség” the following texts can be found, amongst others:

Az EVS önkéntes jogai és kötelességei

http://www.mobilitas.hu/uploads/fajlok/publikaciok/301/jogokeskotelesse-keg2004_200512011428.pdf

EVS = kiút a munkanélküliségből. (Lattenstein Dániel Ex-önkéntes gondolatai)

<http://www.mobilitas.hu/niida/informaciotar/publikaciok/331>

Válassz egy kalandot! Az Európai Önkéntes Szolgálat.

Budapest-Mobilitás, é.n.

Belekóstoltunk – Önkéntesek az önkéntességről.

Budapest - Periféria Alapítvány, 2007.

www.tankor.hu

Leonardo Projektben résztvevő portugál gyakornokok tapasztalatai Magyarországon:

„All coffees are different here”

www.artemisszio.hu

Leonardo gyakornokként Budapesten - Kutatási jelentés

Basic information on the Youthpass: www.youthpass.eu

Ifjúságügy- ifjúsági szakma, ifjúsági munka
Budapest, Mobilitás-ISZT-ÚMK 2010.

Short summary of group dynamics, written in Hungarian:

Móra, V. (szerk.): Hogyan tovább? Szervezetfejlesztés civileknek, Ökotárs Alapítvány, Budapest 2005. (p. 34-35, 98-101)

A more detailed version in English:

Tuckmann, B.W.: Development sequences in small groups, Psychological Bulletin, June 1965

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_dynamics

<http://www.wilderdom.com/Group.html>

<http://www.peak.ca/articles/formation.html>

[1] Usually it is the partner in the hosting country who applies for the grant. However, in theory it is also possible that the sending organization sends in the application to their own National Office – but this is rare. Thus in the description below we do not discuss it in detail.

[.4]Illusztráció emberkék sipkákban szerepekben?

