



USE YOUR HANDS TO MOVE AHEAD

Using Practical Tasks to Increase
Participation of young people with fewer
opportunities in (Individual) EVS Projects

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INCLUSION
RESOURCE CENTRE



USE YOUR HANDS TO MOVE AHEAD



SALTO-YOUTH STANDS FOR...

...‘Support and Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the Youth in Action programme’. The European Commission has created a network of eight SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres to enhance the implementation of the European Youth in Action programme which provides young people with valuable non-formal learning experiences.

SALTO’s aim is to **support European Youth in Action projects** in priority areas such as European Citizenship, Cultural Diversity, Participation and Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, in regions such as EuroMed, South-East Europe or Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, with Training and Cooperation activities and with Information tools for National Agencies.

In these European priority areas, SALTO-YOUTH provides **resources, information and training** for National Agencies and European youth workers. Several resources in the above areas are available at www.SALTO-YOUTH.net. Find online the European Training Calendar, the Toolbox for Training and Youth Work, Trainers Online for Youth, links to online resources and much more...

SALTO-YOUTH actively **co-operates** with other actors in European youth work such as the National Agencies of the Youth in Action programme, the Council of Europe, the European Youth Forum, European youth workers and trainers and training organisers.

THE SALTO-YOUTH INCLUSION RESOURCE CENTRE WWW.SALTO-YOUTH.NET/INCLUSION/

The SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre (in Belgium-Flanders) works together with the European Commission to **include young people with fewer opportunities** in the Youth in Action programme. SALTO-Inclusion also supports the National Agencies and youth workers in their inclusion work by providing the following resources:

- training courses on inclusion topics and for specific target groups at risk of social exclusion
- training and youth work methods and tools to support inclusion projects
- practical and inspiring publications for international inclusion projects
- up-to-date information on inclusion issues and opportunities via the Inclusion Newsletter
- handy, annotated links to inclusion resources online
- an overview of trainers and resource people in the field of inclusion and youth
- bringing together stakeholders to make the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities more effective and easier

For more information and resources, have a look at the Inclusion pages at

 www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Inclusion/

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INTRO

While the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities remains a top priority within the European YOUTH programme, this goal has proven easier to achieve in some areas than in others. Statistics for the year 2003 show that the percentage of inclusion projects in Youth Exchanges (Action 1) and Group Initiatives (Action 3) range between 38-47%, forming a respectable part of the total activities in that year. The situation with European Voluntary Service (Action 2), however, is considerably less optimistic. In spite of many efforts to publicise the programme and improve access, the number of inclusion projects in EVS remains quite low, although it has increased. Between 2007 en 2009, 23% of all EVS projects involved young people with fewer opportunities (in 2003, this was 19%). Within that total, approximately 50% of the projects were Group EVS projects, 20% were a mix of Group and Individual EVS projects, and only 30% were exclusively Individual EVS projects.

After several years of experience, it has become clear that there are many complex reasons for the low level of participation of young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Young people from this target group and their organisations must overcome a whole range of obstacles before they can take part in EVS projects. One of the most important of these is a serious shortage of hosting projects. There are relatively few host projects which propose a programme of activities that match the skill levels and specific needs of these young people.

Fortunately, some youth organisations have been successful in creating Individual EVS projects for this excluded target group. Many of these organisations use practical tasks as their methodology. The organisations have developed a strategy where practical activities are used as a vehicle to help develop a young person's personal and social skills. Their experience has shown beyond a doubt that, under the right conditions, a period of volunteering abroad can provide a valuable learning opportunity for this target group.

To stimulate the creation of more hosting projects for this target group, the SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre decided to examine the educational value of this methodology to see to what extent it can be adopted by new or existing Hosting Organisations. A select group of 7 youth workers, all with a high level of experience with both the socio-economic target group and with EVS, was invited to take part in a 4-day Round Table discussion in Deinze, Belgium (September 2004). During this event, the participants analysed their methods and described how the methodology of practical activities can be used to achieve a variety of other learning objectives. The results of their analysis form the basis of this booklet.

“Use Your Hands to Move Ahead” is aimed at organisations who may be newcomers to the EVS programme as well as to those with previous sending or hosting experience. The SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre hopes that this document will inspire more organisations to adapt the methodology of practical tasks and use it to create new hosting projects for young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The booklet is also aimed at National Agencies and funding bodies with the intention of raising awareness about the usefulness of practical tasks. Ultimately, the SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre hopes to contribute to a greater appreciation and recognition of the educational value of practical tasks for volunteers from this target group.

Individual EVS for young people with fewer opportunities is more than just a way to go abroad. In the proper context, it can be a powerful tool for change. Practical tasks and activities may be the key to opening the door for many more young people from excluded backgrounds.



“Sometimes one month spent abroad is more useful than several years spent at home.”

- Volker Geist – Sealand, Germany

SALTO Inclusion would like to express its thanks to the organisations and youth workers whose contributions, both inside and outside of the Round Table event, made “Use Your Hands to Move Ahead” possible.

“The aim of the European Voluntary Service (EVS) is to develop solidarity and promote active citizenship and mutual understanding among young people (...) It fosters solidarity among young people and is a true ‘learning service’. Beyond benefiting local communities, volunteers learn new skills and languages, and discover other cultures.”

- Programme Guide of the Youth in Action programme

UNDERSTAN “INCLUSION”



DING EVS

EVS stands for European Voluntary Service. Through this programme, young people aged between 18 and 30 years are able to spend up to 12 months abroad as European volunteers helping in local projects in a wide range of fields; social, ecological and environmental, arts and culture, new technologies, leisure and sports, etc. In an EVS project, volunteering is the method

whereby young people learn new skills while they contribute their time and effort to support local projects and local communities. During their stay abroad, young people take part in a series of daily activities which help them get to know new cultures and experience different ways of living.

However, the focus in this booklet will be on EVS with specific criteria, and more in particular, Individual EVS and of a short duration. This "Inclusion" EVS is developed in order to enable young people with fewer opportunities to experience this specific volunteering concept and to learn new skills and competences.

EVS shares many points in common with other international voluntary service programmes, however in many respects it is completely unique. This is because "Inclusion" EVS was developed directly in response to the needs of excluded young people.

THE HISTORY OF EVS

The EVS programme can trace its roots to various youth projects throughout the 1990's including the "Combating Poverty & Social Exclusion" project and the "European Citizens Programme". As the first steps were being taken to develop EVS, various questions were asked – how should problems of exclusion be addressed on European level? How can young people be made more aware of their European identity? What solutions exist for the problems created by youth unemployment? In response to those questions, different types of programme ideas were put forward and debated. In its early stages of evolution, EVS was considered as a possible informal vocational training programme, among other possibilities.

The full EVS programme was launched in 1998 for a period of two years. Its aims and philosophy were defined as follows:

- to provide an intercultural learning experience for young people
- to stimulate the social integration and active participation of young people
- to promote skills, learning and personal development
- to give young people the opportunity to show solidarity with others
- to support the development of local communities
- to encourage new partnerships and exchange of practice

Since then, the aims have changed slightly and put in a broader European context (2008):

- to develop solidarity
- to promote active citizenship
- to promote mutual understanding among young people

EVS is only one of many programmes which offer young people the chance to travel abroad. Many volunteer programmes require participants to have high levels of education and professional-level skills. Others ask participants to pay an expensive registration fee and to contribute to their own travel and accommodation costs. The EVS programme was designed to open up the world of international voluntary work to include young people who may not have high-level skills or the financial means to take part in traditional programmes. The main distinguishing characteristic of EVS is that it strives to be open to all young people. No special skills or qualifications are required to take part in an EVS project and there are no registration fees.

It was felt that these fundamental changes would allow large numbers of young people from excluded backgrounds to become involved. However, EVS did not come close to meeting its original participation targets in its first two years. This was particularly the case for excluded target groups who remained severely under-represented in the programme as a whole. Although very few projects were actually carried out with excluded youngsters in this early phase, those that did go ahead showed beyond a doubt that there was a future for excluded young people in EVS projects. However, the feedback from the young people and their youth workers proved that many changes would need to be made to the EVS structures if participation from excluded young people was to be anything more than just symbolic.

DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

The low level of participation of excluded target groups posed quite a dilemma. EVS had been conceived as method to work against the larger problems of exclusion in society. Now it appeared that the structure of the programme itself was serving to exclude these young people.

Extensive discussions began to take place which aimed to discover new ways to facilitate access to EVS for these target groups. A study carried out 1997-98 examined the participation of “socially excluded” young people and highlighted the conditions needed for their inclusion in the EVS programme. An international Working Group on Inclusion was established in 1998-99. An international conference titled “Maximising Inclusion” was held in Portugal in 1999. International voluntary organisations also contributed by increasing the number of places available in their summer workcamp programs for excluded young people in order to experiment with short-term placements.

All of this reflection and discussion produced concrete results. A range of proposals were made; some of those were put into practice when EVS was fully integrated as a part of the YOUTH programme in 2000. The European Commission expressed its commitment to inclusion by developing the short-term stream within the traditional EVS programme.

In the new Youth in Action programme, launched in 2007, however, the distinction between Short Term EVS and Long Term EVS does not exist anymore. EVS for young people with fewer opportunities is integrated in EVS and is not a “different branch” of EVS anymore. Currently, within EVS specific criteria deal with some obstacles preventing these young people’s participation in EVS, by offering opportunities taking into account **Individual EVS with a short duration**. **This is what we call “Inclusion” EVS.**

 For more information, read the section on ‘general criteria’

THE INCLUSION STRATEGY OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

In order to stimulate Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, the **European Commission** developed in 2007 **an Inclusion Strategy** for the Youth in Action programme, of which EVS is an important part:

Inclusion in the Youth in Action Programme

One of the priorities in the European Commission's new Youth in Action programme (2007-2013) is the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. An **Inclusion Strategy** has been designed as the common framework to support the efforts and Actions which the Commission, Member States, National and Executive Agencies and other organisations undertake to make inclusion a priority in their work.

This "Inclusion Strategy" is based on two converging aims:

1. To Ensure the accessibility of the Youth in Action programme for young people with fewer opportunities (both those organised in youth organisations, youth councils, etc, as well as those not formally organised);
2. to stimulate the use of the Youth in Action programme as a tool to enhance the **social inclusion, active citizenship and employability of young people with fewer opportunities and to contribute to social cohesion at large.**

Specifically, the Inclusion Strategy aims to:

- Ensure a common vision and commitment among the different actors of the programme in defining the target group and implementing the strategy;
- Make it easier for youth workers working with young people with fewer opportunities to develop and implement inclusion projects with the Youth in Action programme;
- Support the quality and quantity of the projects involving young people with fewer opportunities and to maximise their impact;
- Promote the use of the Youth in Action programme as an opportunity for self-development and learning for young people with fewer opportunities and as a possible stepping stone in their personal pathway;
- To diversity and to counter mechanisms of exclusion and discrimination.

 You can find the complete strategy on www.salto-youth.net/InclusionStrategy/.

THE CREATION OF EVS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES

Created in response to the low level of participation of young people from excluded backgrounds, an "Inclusion" EVS project aims to offer an alternative framework to allow youth from this target group better access to EVS projects.

GENERAL CRITERIA

EVS for young people with fewer opportunities is not a separate programme. It can best be described as an European Voluntary Service with 'special options' for young people with fewer opportunities. In the Programme Guide of the Youth in Action Programme it is described as follow: "An EVS Activity involving *young people with fewer opportunities* includes **specific elements** to ensure that adequate support is provided to the volunteers."

In General - According to the number of volunteers (and promoters) involved, an EVS Activity are defined as an Individual or Group EVS Activity:

- **Individual EVS Activity:** 1 volunteer sent by one Sending Organisation to one Host Organisation
- **Group EVS Activity:** between 2 and 100 volunteers sent by one or several Sending Organisations to one or several Host Organisations.

EVS for young people with fewer opportunities has the following criteria:

- Volunteers with fewer opportunities can participate from the **age of 16** till the age of 30 years (at the beginning of the EVS placement)
- The EVS activity involving young people with fewer opportunities lasts a **minimum of 2 weeks** and a maximum of 12 months.

For volunteers with fewer opportunities there is also the opportunity **to take part in more than one EVS Activity** provided that the total duration of the combined periods of Service does not **exceed 12 months**.

In general the following criteria are important:

- Hosting and Sending Organisations must be approved through an ‘accreditation’ procedure, to ensure the minimum quality standards of EVS are met.
- The project should involve non-profit organisations
- The volunteer’s activities should in no way replace regular paid work

All EVS project should ideally maintain a balance between two elements: service to the hosting project on one side and learning opportunities and personal development for the volunteer on the other.

Although the basic criteria are the same, “Inclusion” EVS for young people with fewer opportunities is distinguished by several important characteristics:

- the target group
- the duration of the projects
- the possibility to finance exceptional costs

For more details we kindly forward you to the Programme Guide of the Youth in Action programme:

 http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc443_en.htm

THE TARGET GROUP

Different cultures use different words to characterise excluded target groups. In some contexts, the group is referred to as “marginalised”, or “disadvantaged”. Some youth workers prefer to focus on positive traits and use terms like “youth with alternative skills”, or “good kids”. Over time, the YOUTH programme has adopted the term “young people with fewer opportunities”. In the specific context of EVS, the term “fewer opportunities” is used to describe youth who are typically excluded from participating in traditional European exchange programmes.

 **Find more information on the Youth in Action programme here:**

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc247_en.htm

This exclusion may be the result of very different factors. For example, some young people living in isolated or economically deprived areas may be excluded due to lack of access to information. Others with physical or mentally disabilities may have specific mobility needs.

Some young people from immigrant cultures may not be familiar with this form of volunteering. Others, like early-school leavers or those with emotional or social problems, may not have the maturity or social skills necessary to cope with living on their own far from family and friends.

While individuals within this group each have their own specific needs, they share one characteristic in common: they are unlikely to take part in EVS projects on their own without additional forms of support.

THE DURATION OF THE PROJECTS

In the early phases of the EVS programme, it quickly became apparent that the length of the long term projects was a serious obstacle. For young people with no previous travel experience, who may never have left their own city or indeed their own neighbourhood, the thought of going abroad for an entire year is not only intimidating but is almost unimaginable.

With the introduction of "Inclusion" EVS, it was possible to allow for more flexibility in the length of the projects. "Inclusion" EVS projects can last from a minimum of 2 weeks to a maximum of 12 months. These shorter time periods are much more appealing for young people with fewer opportunities because they are long enough to be a real challenge yet are also short enough to be realistic. However, there is the opportunity for this target group to take part in more than one EVS Activity (with a maximum of 12 months in combined periods).

Myth – Three Weeks - OK! Six months - No Way!

"Youth workers can be sceptical about the idea of sending their young people abroad for periods longer than three weeks. I think this is often because they themselves have never been abroad for extended periods and so they cannot imagine the powerful process that takes place over a longer period of time. My organisation has very positive experiences with "Inclusion" EVS and I can say that while a three-week period is good, six months is better. A longer period gives an individual more time – time to make strong bonds with their host culture and real friendships with the people they meet. Naturally, this doesn't just happen. There are many steps involved in preparing a young person for 4, 5, or 6 months abroad but this length of time gives a young person a chance to really go deep into themselves and discover who they are. I would advise new organisations not to cut "Inclusion" EVS into too small pieces. It is important to set the right level of challenge for an individual and help them to build on that after they return home."

- Volker Geist, Sealand

FINANCING EXCEPTIONAL COSTS

Many young people have specific needs which require extra financial support. For example, disabled young people may not be able to carry out their voluntary activities without the help of special equipment. Some may need the support of a personal assistant. Others from low-income areas may not have the resources to pay for passports, winter clothing, prescription medicines, etc. EVS for young people with fewer opportunities helps them and their organisations overcome these difficulties by including extra funding for exceptional costs like those described above.

Myth - "Inclusion" EVS is a quick fix

Short Term projects are often (wrongly) seen as a way to convenience volunteers and/or their organisations. For instance, some young people may not be free to take part in a 12-month project abroad and would prefer to go for a shorter period of 2 - 3 weeks. Alternatively, hosting organisations that are not in a position to organise a 12-month activity plan for a volunteer may want to propose only a two-month project as an easier alternative.

"Inclusion" EVS is not a bandage-solution, nor should it be seen as easy remedy for technical difficulties. "Inclusion" EVS projects are meant to respond to the specific needs of young people facing exclusion in their daily lives. Participation in the short-term stream is limited to young people with fewer opportunities. Organisations who propose short-term projects need to be aware that this type of project is not "easier" just because of the short duration; in fact just the opposite is true. The nature of these projects requires organisations to have a high level of knowledge and experience to enable them to cope with the needs of the fewer-opportunity target group.

This section of the Youth in Action Programme Guide (2007) makes it really clear:

"Quality of specific elements foreseen in projects including young people with fewer opportunities:

Projects including young people with fewer opportunities should be embedded in a process before and after the actual project and not remain an isolated event, and they should involve project promoters with strong pedagogical competence and/or experience in inclusion.

When preparing and implementing these projects, particular emphasis needs to be put on the analysis of the profile and special needs of the young people and a corresponding tailor-made and supportive approach. These projects should consciously include young people with fewer opportunities as active participants.

Advance Planning Visits to the Host Organisation prior to the actual Service are encouraged since they facilitate the establishing of a solid partnership and the active involvement of young people with fewer opportunities.

Reinforced mentorship might be foreseen to increase personal support of volunteers with fewer opportunities on the sending and/or hosting side; it is shared between the Sending and Host Organisations according to their responsibilities. “

BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS OF “INCLUSION” EVS

“**Inclusion**” EVS projects offer a variety of benefits to young people as well as to their organisations. “Inclusion” EVS projects can be a dynamic and fun learning experience. It is a unique alternative to formal learning settings (e.g. schools or institutes) which may have little to offer young people in the fewer opportunity target group.

BENEFITS

Young people who take part in “Inclusion” EVS have an opportunity to travel, to learn about other cultures and learn new languages. They can gain a variety of new skills, both on personal and practical level. Perhaps most importantly, they have the possibility to help others and actively contribute to the local community. “Inclusion” EVS projects give young people the chance to do something they can take pride in. They can help others, feel needed, and discover that they too have something to contribute to society.

It is easy to imagine how young people can gain from “Inclusion” EVS projects, but organisations can also benefit from the experience. By taking part in EVS, organisations can offer their young people a new type of activity and a new level of challenge. The programme is a means to encourage young people to take responsibility for themselves and for their own communities. “Inclusion” EVS projects are an investment in individuals but the impact of the experience goes far beyond the young people themselves; local youngsters, staff workers, families, and friends will all be impacted by the EVS experience.

THE STRENGTH OF “INCLUSION” EVS PROJECTS – SOFT SKILLS

People who are unfamiliar with international voluntary work often confuse “Inclusion” EVS with a vocational training programme. Some young people do decide to professionalize the practical skills learned during the EVS experience, but the real strength of voluntary service is its ability to help young people develop their personal or “soft” skills.

Voluntary service is a form of non-formal education which focuses on an individual’s personal development. Voluntary service is an excellent way for young people to improve skills like communication and self-discipline. They can increase their self-confidence and gain a sense of independence. An EVS project also teaches young people to respect others and to take responsibility for their own lives. This development of soft skills is quite different from what is learned in more formal settings like vocational training. This form of personal development is especially useful for young people from the “fewer-opportunity” target group whose professional development may be blocked by their lack of social and inter-personal skills.

LIMITATIONS

With all the potential benefits to “Inclusion” EVS, it is important to bear in mind that the programme does have limitations.

As stated above, **the volunteer experience should not be confused with vocational training.** It is not possible for young people to gain official qualifications during their EVS experience. Instead, EVS is a context where young people can try out a variety of new skills, explore new fields and discover new talents.

“Inclusion” EVS can be used as a way for young people to “take a break” from their regular lives; a period abroad can help them step away from difficult situations at home. However, when a young person goes abroad, they take their emotional baggage with them. Problems in the home environment do not disappear just because the young person goes abroad. Therefore **“Inclusion” EVS should not be seen as a means to escape from serious issues.** At best, EVS can give young people some breathing room, but they still need help to deal with their personal issues, both during the project as well as when they return home.

“Inclusion” EVS is a method that can help young people gain life experience, but **it is a method that offers no guarantees.** It is impossible to predict how an individual will react when they go to live abroad. The learning that takes place in EVS comes from both positive and negative experiences. Volunteers will need help from their organisations to process this and to recognize

how negative experiences are just as important to their learning process as positive ones. For this reason, it is important to keep in mind that going abroad is not always an appropriate step for every young person. Sometimes going abroad can actually do more harm than good.

A SPECIFIC TARGET GROUP

Individual EVS for young people with fewer opportunities was created to stimulate the participation of young people with fewer opportunities within the larger EVS programme. The term “young people with fewer opportunities” is very broad; it includes many different profiles. A young person may be considered to have fewer opportunities because of where they live (an isolated village or in a poor urban area), because of a lack of opportunities (no social services, youth bureau, or government agencies), because of a disability (mental, physical, or both) or because of their background (for example young people who face prejudice due to their ethnic background and/or religion).



Each one of these profiles has their own specific needs and therefore requires their own different approach both inside and outside the EVS programme. The next sections of this booklet will focus on a specific sub-group of young people with fewer opportunities. This group is referred to as “young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds”.

YOUNG PEOPLE FROM SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS

This term is used to describe young people with a particular set of needs linked to their social and/or economic situation. Young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds include those who may:

- have left school early or who have only low-level qualifications
- come from economically poor areas
- come from areas of high unemployment with few future job prospects

As a result of their situation, these young people may be suffering not only from a lack of opportunities, but also from a serious lack of practical and social skills. Young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds may have emotional and/or behaviour problems. They often lack maturity, self-confidence, and basic social skills. They may be economically and emotionally dependent on their family.

The socio-economic target group also includes profiles that can be described as “youth at risk” or “young people in severe difficulty”. These young people face extreme situations in their lives.

For example, they may:

- have drug or alcohol problems
- have been involved in criminal activities
- come from broken families
- come from a background of violence or abuse
- have anger or aggression problems
- be diagnosed with depression or other mental illnesses
- be at risk of exposure to bad influences in their area (criminal behaviour, extremism, etc.)

 Find more about exploring opportunities and setting up youth projects with young ex-offenders and those at risk of offending in “No Offence “ (2007) on www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/NoOffence/

Clearly, young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds face personal obstacles which are quite different from others in the “fewer opportunity” group. These obstacles not only block the young people from taking part in EVS projects, they also block them from many other opportunities like living independently, successfully completing a course of study or finding and keeping a job.

What good can “Inclusion” EVS projects be to young people with such difficulties? What is the sense in going abroad when an individual has to cope with an addiction, or depression, or health problems? In fact, there is more sense behind the idea of going abroad than first meets the eye. Past experience has shown that voluntary activities can in fact be a dynamic method which can help young people overcome their obstacles. An educational approach has been developed which places “Inclusion” EVS projects inside a framework designed to respond to an individual young person’s most urgent learning objectives. This is often called the “pathway approach”. The next section will present this approach in more detail.

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: Myth – – “Inclusion” EVS projects are too big risks! :

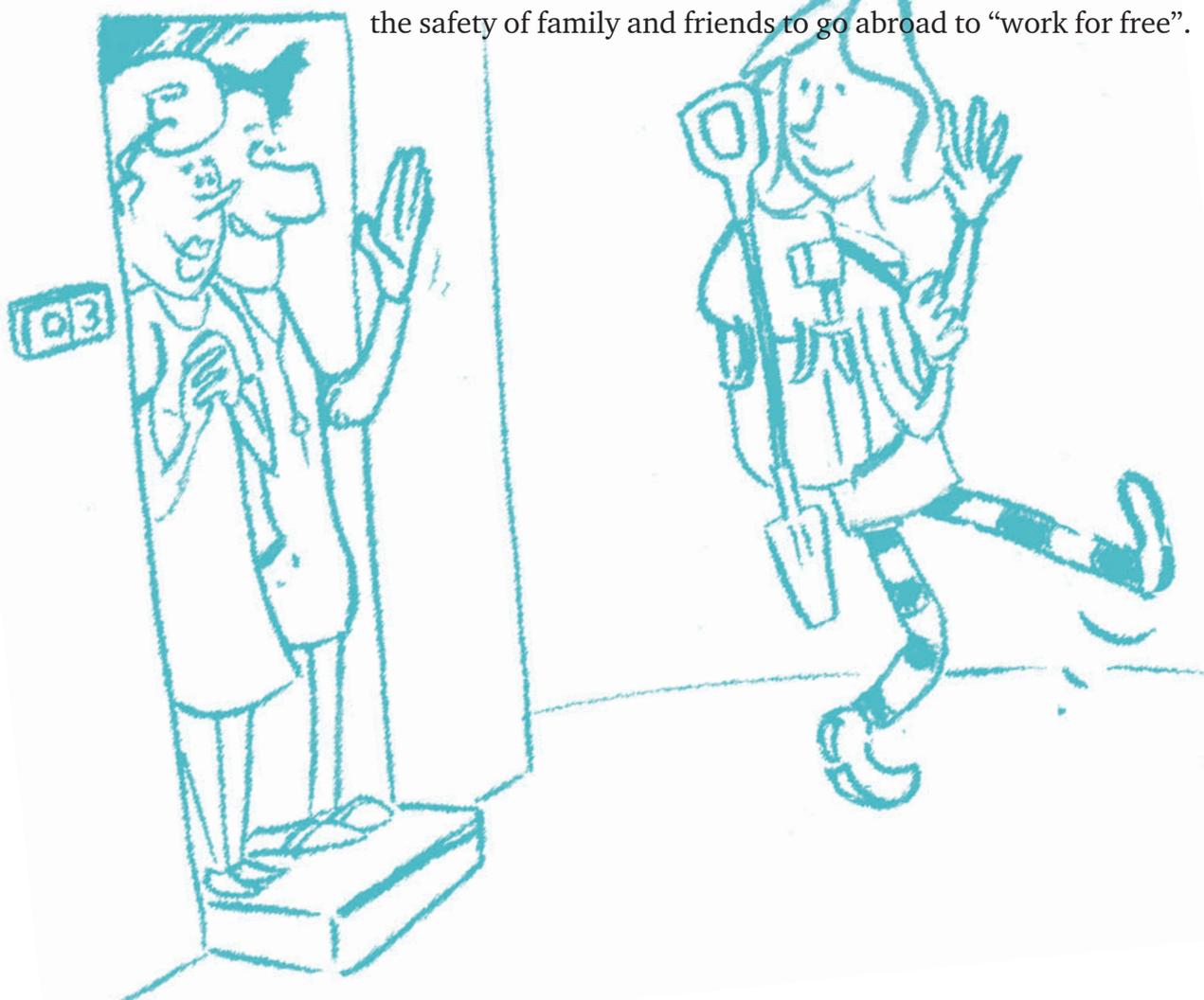
: *“In my experience, organisations are often reluctant to take part in “Inclusion” EVS projects because they fear the level of risk is too high for a young person from a socio-economically disadvantaged background. Going abroad is always risky for these young people, no matter how well prepared they are. But risk can be positive; it is what leads the young people to new challenges and opportunities. A large amount of the risk can be reduced or controlled by anticipating problems before they come up and by having a reliable partner organisation abroad that you know well, who you can trust and who you can count on. But in spite of this, there is always risk involved in “Inclusion” EVS projects. You have to accept that as part of the package. If an organisation and their young person can accept a controlled amount of risk, then a project can go forward. If not, then this type of activity is not the right choice.”* :

: - Trena Ratcliffe, Aftercare Worker, Northern Area Health Board, Ballymun, Ireland :
.....

A young student who is actively seeking out ways to travel abroad may think they have hit the jackpot when they discover European Voluntary Service. A chance to live in another country, to get to know a new culture and to learn a foreign language... all for free?!? What more could you ask?

AN APPROACH FOR THIS TARGET

This is usually not the case for young people from the socio-economic target group. These young people do not share the same motivation as “traditional” or “classic” volunteers (i.e. students). They are unlikely to actually go looking for a programme like EVS. For them, going abroad is not a fun new challenge but is rather a frightening proposition. Young people with fewer opportunities often have difficulty understanding the sense of spending a period abroad. They do not see the benefits of leaving the safety of family and friends to go abroad to “work for free”.





GROUP

In fact it is often the youth workers and youth leaders working with this target group who first recognize the potential benefits of “Inclusion” EVS projects. But while there may be many good reasons to encourage the young people to take part, it should be kept in mind that the benefits described earlier are not self-evident; they do not just occur on their own. The simple act of travelling abroad does not ensure that a young person will make contact with a new culture or learn a new language. A two-week period as a volunteer does not guarantee that an individual will feel that they have made an active contribution or that they will take steps to develop their soft skills.

For some young people, living abroad in a new culture can be a de-stabilizing and confusing experience. Sending a young person on an “Inclusion” EVS project as a substitute for a holiday or as a stop-gap solution can often do more harm than good. A young person can return home more de-stabilized than before they left. Such approaches are of little value to the individual volunteer or to their organisation.

If a young person cannot recognize how the “Inclusion” EVS project experience directly relates to their needs and their situation, then there is a danger that the Short Term project will take place in a vacuum with no link to the individual’s real life: past, present, or future. To avoid this, an approach has been developed to help young people and their organisations implement “Inclusion” EVS projects in such a way as to be able to gain the maximum benefits of the programme. This approach works on the basis of an individual’s “personal pathway”.

THE PATHWAY APPROACH

“Inclusion” EVS projects should not be seen as a goal in itself. “Inclusion” EVS is most effective when it compliments the work being done with young people on local level. The pathway approach takes “Inclusion” EVS projects out of the vacuum and links it directly with a young person’s long-term learning objectives. This approach takes into account an individual’s past development, assesses their current situation, and then gives the “Inclusion” EVS project a place which relates directly to a young person’s future aims and goals.

To better understand the pathway concept, imagine a young person walking along a path. This path symbolizes the road they are following through life. Behind them are their past experiences in the family, in school, in work and within their peer group. Right beside them are issues which they are

struggling to overcome (for example being long-term unemployed, trying to become independent of their family, beating an addiction, avoiding bad influences in their environment, etc) In front of them are their long-term goals (for instance finding work, finding a place to live, gaining a formal qualification, staying “clean”, etc.) Depending on their situation, the young person’s path may have many twists and turns. It may be full of dead ends. They may be facing a long uphill climb.

“Inclusion” EVS can be used as a tool to help them take steps forward along this path and bring them closer to their long term goals. In a sense, an “Inclusion” EVS project can take the form of a stepping stone along the pathway. It can be used to overcome specific obstacles in the path or it can be a means to jump-start a journey which has stalled.

In this context, it should be stressed that “Inclusion” EVS should not be seen as the ultimate goal. Rather it is the means to an end. If a young person can see how a period abroad directly responds to their needs and where it is taking them along their pathway, they are more likely to be motivated to try an “Inclusion” EVS project.

Myth – – “Inclusion” EVS is extra work

“This is a common reaction from youth workers who are unfamiliar with “Inclusion” EVS projects. Often their first impression of this programme is that it is a nice idea, but they feel they don’t have the time or resources for something so new and different. I see “Inclusion” EVS from a different perspective. I work with the socio-economic target group everyday. My job involves helping young people to overcome difficulties and to try to move forward. This is a long-term process. To do this, I use a variety of methods. Sometimes “Inclusion” EVS is the right method, and sometimes not. For me, EVS for this target group is a vehicle which can stimulate the youth work process. I won’t say that it’s easy; it does take time and effort. But I will spend that time and effort on my young people anyway. I think youth workers need to see “Inclusion” EVS as an extra weapon in their arsenal against exclusion and not as extra workload.”

- Sebastian Normand, formerly of Centre de Beaumotte, France

AN EXAMPLE OF THE PATHWAY

SOLIDARITÉS JEUNESSES, FRANCE

Solidarités Jeunesses (S.J.) is a peace organisation working in the field of non-formal education (“education populaire”). Non-formal education values an individual’s non-academic achievements. This form of education gives an individual the space and the responsibility to think, act,

and then evaluate what they have done. This process requires professionals to think together with their young people instead of for their young people.



Solidarités Jeunesses runs a network of five residential centres based in rural areas across France. The residential centres provide accommodation for local young people in difficulty (for example, young people who are in conflict with their family, who are trying to overcome substance abuse or addiction problems, etc.). The centres also welcome groups of international volunteers who take part in a variety of practical projects on local level (“chantiers”). SJ has several years of experience in with “Inclusion” EVS projects. They regularly apply the pathway approach when sending or receiving “Inclusion” EVS volunteers in projects.

Marie Laure Lacroix, project coordinator with Solidarités Jeunesses, talks about how Solidarités Jeunesses applies the pathway approach: “Youth workers should not get a false idea of the pathway. When we speak of defining “steps”, it does not mean we make a five-year plan. This would not be realistic with this target group. The pathway approach involves youth workers trying to get a whole picture of their young person in order to know which steps are now needed to help them move ahead. The pathway approach is all about taking the right steps at the right time.”

“Many youngsters find voluntary service at a time when they are already deep in difficulties. At this stage they have often lost faith in general social programmes. “Inclusion” EVS projects can be a potential alternative for these young people because it offers them a direction which is totally unlike anything they have done before. But in order to find a suitable hosting project, the Sending and Hosting Organisations require some information about the volunteer’s personal situation. We try to get to know our volunteer’s home environment, the family situation, and the kind of difficulties the volunteer is facing. It is useful to know what they have done in their life up to this point. At the same time we talk about the volunteer’s vision of the future – their hopes and dreams, their interests, and so on. Depending on the outcome, we then try to make a plan where the volunteer can take steps which are big enough to be a challenge but still small enough that they can be realistically achieved. “Inclusion” EVS can be one of those steps.

Collecting this information can take some time. It is not only up to the youth worker to find answers to all of these questions. Youth workers need to focus on the fact that a youngster preparing to take part in voluntary service is taking a big risk to change their life, therefore it is important to work together with the other professionals involved in an individual's general education process (like a doctor, a psychologist, a representative from the unemployment agency, etc.)

For young people with little or no travel experience, the idea of "Inclusion" EVS can be frightening. Sometimes a young person needs to take a series of steps before they are ready for an EVS activity. For instance, take the example of our volunteer "J".

J. is a young man from a poor urban area. He left school without any qualifications and as a result he had few opportunities in the employment market, except for minimum-wage jobs. J. was not a problem case, but he was extremely shy and lacked self-confidence. J. lived with his two parents who also had low-level education. J. was the eldest of the children, and as such he was often pushed to play the adult role and be the father-figure for the rest of the family.

J. was stuck. He could not get out of the minimum-wage cycle without some kind of formal qualification. At the same time, he was severely limited due to the pressures of his family situation. J. had some previous travel experience - he had been on a group music project in France and Wales. J's Sending Organisation felt that the time had come for him to take on a new challenge, something that involved a new level of risk and adventure. The organisation proposed that he go abroad to a three-week international workcamp with two other young people from his local area. The organisation felt that the international nature of the activity would allow J. to see something of the wider world. Going together with two other young people he knew was a very safe step into a new environment. The three-week project was in the province of Bretagne, France and also had a musical theme, so there was a clear link between the past project and J's new step.

After returning home, J. went back to his regular routine of minimum-wage work. He tried one or two adult education courses, but did not complete them. After a period of one year, J. was given the chance to come to Solidarités Jeunesses to take part in an "Inclusion" EVS project in the province of Auvergne. The level of challenge was increased by lengthening his stay from three weeks in the earlier project to a period of six weeks in the new project. This time J. travelled alone which was also a new level of challenge for him. J. was very nervous about this new step because he did not speak French.

He got lost during his travels and did not know how to ask the local people for directions. This was a bit traumatic for him and it took him quite some time to recover from the shock of the experience.

After the 6-week EVS project, J. returned home. He tried once again for his school diploma but quit before finishing the course. However, the 6 weeks in France had awakened an interest in the French language. After spending another year at home, J. decided he wanted to return to France, this time on an EVS long-term placement. He spent a total of 9 months in one of Solidarités Jeunesses' residential centres in the province of Poitou-Charentes. During his stay, he spent a lot of time and effort trying to learn French.

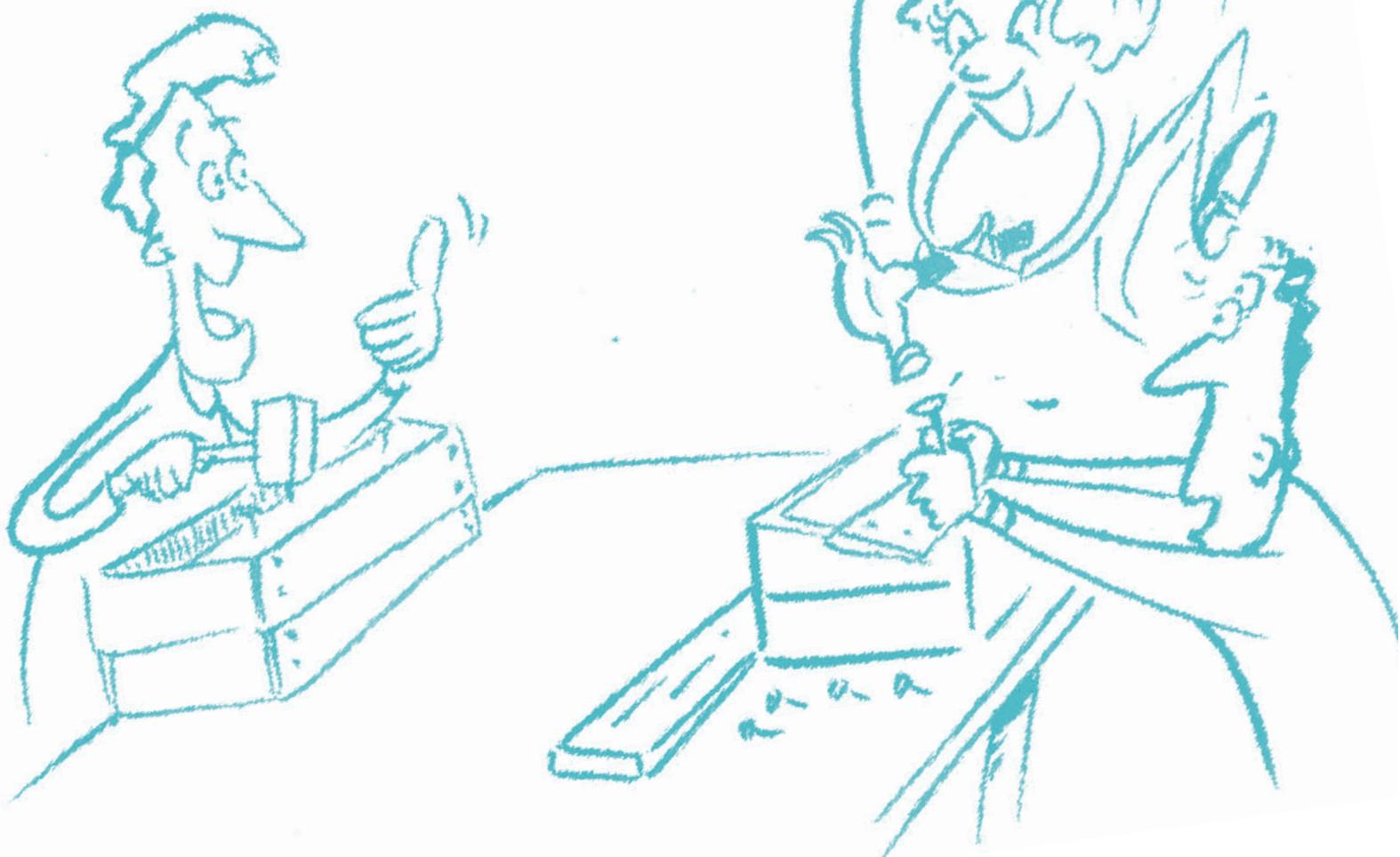
At the end of the 9-month long-term project, J. wanted to do more voluntary work abroad, but he had no resources of his own to travel. J. has now been home for over two years. He is still working at minimum-wage jobs, but he is also taking a French language course one night per week. He is still striving to gain an official qualification – his next step will be to submit his application for college where he wants to follow a course on media studies.

J's story shows that an "Inclusion" EVS project is just one of many steps along a young person's pathway. Without the earlier experiences of the group project and the three-week international workcamp, it is very unlikely that J would ever have taken the step into a 6-week Short Term project.

It is not easy to make a clear long-term plan with young people from the socio-economic target group and it is difficult to judge whether "Inclusion" EVS is the right option for each individual. However, as J's example shows, "Inclusion" EVS can be an important stepping stone on the pathway that can lead to all sorts of new future directions.

The "personal pathway" is an approach which helps place "Inclusion" EVS in a clear context designed to help a young person move forward in their life. The pathway approach is extremely effective because it uses "Inclusion" EVS to respond to a young person's most urgent learning objectives. But the pathway is only an educational approach. To be put into practice, an approach must be accompanied by a methodology. The next section describes a methodology which has proven extremely successful for young people from the socio-economic target group.

A METHODOLO FOR THIS TARGET



GY GROUP

An “Inclusion” EVS project involves a partnership between a volunteer, a Sending Organisation and a Hosting Organisation. The Hosting Organisation is responsible for putting together a programme for the volunteer. At the heart of this programme are the volunteer’s daily activities, which are also referred to as daily “tasks”.

A VOLUNTEER’S TASKS

In “Inclusion” EVS, a volunteer does not “work”; they carry out “tasks”. This subtle but important choice of words is meant to convey the message that an EVS volunteer is not “working” (i.e. competing with paid labour, receiving money for their efforts), but that they are taking part in a learning experience.

A volunteer’s tasks should be set up so as to achieve two global aims. First, the tasks should contribute to the development of the local community. Second, the tasks should offer the young person a chance to develop their skills. This should, of course, be linked with the young person’s pathway and their long-term personal goals.

HOW “CLASSIC” EVS PROJECTS EXCLUDE THE TARGET GROUP

Currently, the majority of EVS hosting projects are designed for “classic” volunteers, which is to say for volunteers who are typically from a student background and who plan to stay abroad for 6-12 months. Young people from classic student backgrounds have many practical skills that they can give to a project, so Hosting Organisations benefit not only from the intercultural experience but also from the volunteer’s contributions.

Many EVS hosting projects are linked to the social-cultural sector and involve working with children, the elderly, the disabled, etc. These types of projects can be loosely described as involving social tasks. In most cases, young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are excluded from such projects. There are several reasons for this.

Some young people from socio-economic backgrounds are not motivated to take on social tasks. This may be due to different factors including fear of the unknown (for instance, never having seen a severely disabled person before) or from lack of interest (for example, some young people have no interest in working with young children). There are also many specific situations within social-themed projects where it might be inappropriate to place a young person in difficulty (for

example, an individual who is an alcoholic may not be a good choice to run the bar in a youth centre; a frequent drug user may not be a good choice to work with children, etc.)

Another difficulty is the young people's lack of skills. The majority of hosting projects with a socio-cultural theme are looking for "do-ers" – that is to say for volunteers who are in a position to concretely contribute to their local-level projects. Many projects are not set up to accommodate young people who are at a much earlier stage of their professional and personal development. This situation is both ironic and realistic at the same time: ironic because European Voluntary Service was created to offer more opportunities for young people with few or no skills and realistic because very few host projects have the means to accept young people who can offer little support and who are, in fact, in need of support themselves.

The nature of "classic" hosting projects proposing social tasks therefore poses a serious obstacle for young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Young people from this target group lack many of the practical skills that their "classic" counterparts take for granted. In addition, their lack of social skills makes them unappealing for hosting projects that do not have the skills or know-how to cope with their needs. The result is a kind of multi-sided exclusion from the majority of hosting projects.

However, it is a mistake to think that young people from this target group have nothing to contribute, or that they are unable to learn the skills which they lack. Given the profile of the target group, it is necessary to adapt the "classic" EVS framework and implement a methodology which responds to their strengths rather than highlighting their weaknesses. One method which has proved extremely successful is the use of practical tasks in a volunteer's daily programme.

PRACTICAL TASKS

The term "practical tasks" takes a very specific meaning in the context of "Inclusion" EVS. In this framework, "practical" refers to **manual or hands-on activities**. Practical tasks can include physical activities like building, renovating, hauling, gardening, etc, but it also includes other forms of manual activities like sport, art, handicrafts, music and even dance.

Practical tasks can be more attractive to young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds than social tasks. This is largely because practical tasks (at least at first glance) require aptitude of the hands rather than of the head. This can be appealing for young people who have had bad experiences in school or who have gone through life being told they "are not smart enough".



Another advantage is that the young people can **easily visualize** what is involved with practical tasks. This helps make the idea of the project abroad more concrete. For instance, most young people know what is involved with building or gardening whereas they might not know what is involved in working in a youth centre. Even if they have no direct experience, they can imagine what the practical tasks would look like. This goes a long way to removing doubts and easing their fears.

Furthermore, practical tasks **do not require strong communication skills**. Simple activities like using a shovel, a hammer or a paintbrush are easily understood through signs and non-verbal communication. Social tasks, like working with teenagers or young children, usually require considerable language skills. Practical tasks are ideal for young people with no knowledge of foreign languages.

Most importantly, virtually every young person from the socio-economic target group has some kind of practical skill whether it be experience as a plumber, a talent for cooking or experience in making hand puppets. When the young people can find a hosting project that meets them on their own level, where they can put their own skills to use, they become “do-ers”. They feel that they are not just a burden but that they have something to give, that they can be useful and that they are needed. This is an extremely important shift in perception and vital to the individual’s development. The young people are taken out of the role of passive consumers and given a chance to make an active contribution to society.

THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF PRACTICAL TASKS

The secret strength of practical tasks is that they offer a two-sided learning experience. On one level, practical tasks give volunteers the opportunity to try different kinds of hands-on activities. Through these tasks they can learn many types of practical skills which can be used later in life (for example, painting, wallpapering, cleaning, cooking, using tools, etc.) On another level, the practical skills gained through these tasks are accompanied by a wide variety of soft skills. In this way, practical tasks do not just develop a young person’s manual skills but they serve to develop their social skills at the same time.

This two-sided learning is particularly beneficial to young people in the socio-economic target group. Improving their soft skills is often the first step in a larger process to help them reach long-term goals. The advantage of practical tasks as a method is that they are a powerful yet subtle teaching tool. Soft skills develop steadily in and around the practical tasks. A young person may not be conscious of the learning process itself, but they cannot help but notice the changes in their personality and their general outlook on life.

PRACTICAL TASKS IN PRACTICE – EXAMPLES

Listed below are three different examples of how Hosting Organisations put the methodology of practical tasks into action. Each example provides an overview of how the volunteer's daily activities lead to the development of practical as well as soft skills.

SEALAND - GERMANY

Description: Sealand is based in Lübeck, a town with a strong relationship to the sea. Sealand has been involved in “Inclusion” EVS projects since 2001. The short-term projects are linked to Lübeck's long sea-faring history and involve boat building and sailing.



Target group: Volunteers who take part in Sealand's short-term projects are often long-term unemployed young people with few future prospects. They have little or no idea how to improve their situation. Some of them may have been homeless for a time. Some individuals have started training courses, only to quit them before gaining any official qualification. This is a common pattern – starting something but not having the will, discipline, or capacity to finish it. These young people are often trying to escape from negative situations. In practice it seems they are eager to leave their situation behind, but at the same time they don't know where to go.

The volunteer's activities: The main goal of Sealand's “Inclusion” EVS hosting project is to challenge young people in their physical and psychological mobility. The volunteer's daily tasks involve a combination of boat building and learning to sail. One part of the project, boat building,

involves constructing a seaworthy jolly boat. The volunteers learn to use a variety of different tools and building techniques to complete their own boat. The process takes approximately six weeks. Once finished, the boats are entered in a competition where the volunteers steer and race their own boat. The second part of the project involves steering and operating an old-fashioned sailing ship. Volunteers are accommodated on this ship in close quarters and in rather basic conditions. As part of the ship's "crew", they share responsibility for carrying out all the duties involved on a sailing vessel. This includes the complete range of skills needed for sailing (for example, learning to tie knots, to haul sails, to make repairs, to read the weather, to steer the ship, etc.) but also includes the daily necessities like cleaning, cooking and washing up.

How practical tasks lead to soft skills: the chart below lists some typical examples of a volunteer's daily tasks in the Sealand projects. The chart then goes on to show how those practical tasks lead into the development of practical skills as well as soft skills.

Volunteer's Daily Practical Tasks	Learning Elements Resulting From Practical Tasks	
	Practical skills	Soft skills
<p>Boat Building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sawing, drilling, painting, fitting, joining, etc. • sailing on the completed jolly boats • racing the jolly boats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning a project • following a schedule • using tools • organising materials • building techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to complete a task from start to finish • self-discipline • team work • to take pride in their work and their achievements
<p>Sailing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of the ship (cleaning, painting, etc.) • Maintaining the sails (repairs, etc.) • Steering the ship • Reading and reacting to signs in the weather 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigating (e.g. planning and following a route) • tying knots • moving with the ship • following strict schedules (four-hour watch) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-discipline; to work without taking a break • team work • to take on high levels of responsibility • respect for the natural elements (sea, land, and wind).

In this context, how do practical tasks respond to a young person’s needs in real life? Volker Geist of Sealand believes that the discipline of life at sea can be a big help for young people from the socio-economic target group. “Working with ships provides many important life lessons for our volunteers. When you are on a ship, it is not possible to avoid your responsibilities. For example, if you choose not to obey the authority of the captain, then you endanger the ship and the crew. You have to learn to play your role, carry out your duties, and be part of the crew. When the volunteers are busy with their daily tasks, they have an opportunity to learn practical building skills, but the hidden learning is the most powerful aspect. The hidden learning is always present just under the surface. When the volunteers build boats what they are really doing is working to improve their own self-discipline. They are learning to stick with their project and finish what they start rather than coming up with excuses and escaping, which is what they often do. We believe that this is the most important learning goal for these volunteers to achieve.”

EVERYTHING’S POSSIBLE, UNITED KINGDOM

Description: As a part of their diverse programme, Everything’s Possible organises summer activity camps for young people. These camps provide mobility opportunities and are well suited to “Inclusion” EVS volunteers. One of these summer projects has a strong environmental theme.

Target Group: The camps put on by Everything’s Possible are open to all young people, but the organisation looks in particular to target young people from minority ethnic groups or those who have had less access to opportunities. This could include, for example, young people living in isolated villages or towns with few social services available. Young people who have had less exposure to foreign cultures and other ways of life tend to be afraid of anything that they see as “strange” or “different”. The activity camps aim to bring the young people into contact in a fun environment so they can learn to recognize their similarities and appreciate their differences, rather than be frightened of them.



The Volunteer’s Activities: the environmental camp involves many activities taking place outdoors. The volunteer can take part in several different hands-on activities where they get a chance to learn about nature and the environment.

How Practical Tasks lead to Soft Skills: the environmental camp is set up to provide the volunteer with the chance to “taste” different activities and different contexts. The practical skills are simple enough that the volunteer can grasp the basics within a few days. The camp provides an atmosphere where it is safe to try new things and to experiment. The chart below shows how Everything’s Possible links practical tasks to soft skills in an environmental context.

Volunteer’s Daily Practical Tasks	Learning Elements Resulting From Practical Tasks	
	Practical skills	Soft skills
<p>Examples of Taster Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tree planting • gardening • repairing railway • laying walking paths • cutting hay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardening skills including: planting, hoeing, raking, watering, fertilizing, digging, etc. • Selection of plants and seeds, care of seedling trees, care and maintenance of tools • Health and Safety • Some basic First-Aid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitivity to environmental issues • Responsibility • An understanding that hard work now will pay off later. • Compromise • Determination

How do the skills gained through “Inclusion” EVS relate to real life? Clair Brown of Everything’s Possible stresses that improving a volunteer’s social skills is key to achieving their goals. “Long-term volunteers, who are typically students, are often much more concerned about linking their EVS project to their long-term career goals. For short-term volunteers, this is much less important. Many of the young people who come to our activity camps have few opportunities to find work where they live. Often their parents have never worked, so this influences how they perceive the idea of finding a job. Our organisation uses an individualized approach inside and outside of EVS. We make an action plan together with the young person where we help them define their short-term and long-term goals. These often include targets on social level – for example, learning to get out of bed on time, learning to keep to a daily schedule, learning to share, learning to work in a team, and so on. In this sense, the “Inclusion” EVS experience is very valuable. It is a way for young people to learn vital social skills, without which they will never be able to reach higher goals like completing their school diploma or finding and keeping a job.”

VIA, BELGIUM

Description: VIA is a peace organisation that works for a pluralistic society through international voluntary work. Each year, VIA organises a programme of international workcamps which support local communities. The international workcamps are made up of groups of volunteers from around the world. Workcamps bring individuals from different cultures and backgrounds into contact with one another. By living and working together, volunteers can gain new insight into other cultures and other ways of life. VIA believes that this contact leads to mutual understanding and forms the basis for peaceful co-existence, solidarity and justice for all people.

Target Group: VIA's international workcamps are open to all people of any age or background. VIA has always found it important to make its programme more accessible to young people with fewer opportunities and from disadvantaged backgrounds. An international workcamp may include participants from Europe and from all over the world. This dynamic provides a good opportunity for young people who have not previously had the opportunities to travel or to meet people from other cultures.



The Volunteer's Activities: International workcamps often involve manual work designed to benefit the local community. This can take many different forms but one of the most common is renovation and restoration work (for example, renovating schools, orphanages, churches, cultural heritage monuments, etc.) The volunteers also share responsibility for the well-being of the group and are expected to take part in daily tasks such as the cleaning, cooking and washing up.

How Practical Tasks Lead to Soft Skills: The list below names some common renovation and restoration activities which may take place in a workcamp. The chart then shows how these practical tasks lead to the development of practical and soft skills

Volunteer's Daily Practical Tasks	Learning Elements Resulting From Practical Tasks	
	Practical skills	Soft skills
<p>Examples of renovation tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning and preparing buildings for repairs • Building stone walls • Painting • Decorating • Plastering • Simple masonry (brick laying) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the use of different tools • building techniques and, in some cases, traditional building methods • decorating techniques (mosaic, papering, plastering...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team work • Initiative • Responsibility • Active involvement • Solidarity with others • Tolerance

How do the skills gained through “Inclusion” EVS relate to real life? Jeroen Wils talks about the role of practical work in international workcamps. “In an international workcamp, the practical tasks launch different processes. One of these is the process of mobilising individuals and giving them an outlet where they can actively contribute to the local community. Another important process in a workcamp involves bringing people from very different backgrounds into contact with one another. The manual activities function as a way to bring people together, to establish common goals and, through that, some common ground. Young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds often have never had a chance to meet people from abroad, hear foreign languages, or even taste foreign food. It is therefore no surprise that they mistrust foreigners or anyone who is not like them. Although a volunteer can learn different practical tasks in a workcamp, this is absolutely not the main objective. It is far more important to start the process of building up mutual understanding and breaking down prejudices.”

THE FUNCTION OF PRACTICAL TASKS

The function of practical tasks in an “Inclusion” EVS project is often misunderstood. One prevalent stereotype is that the EVS programme aims to create a new generation of carpenters and plumbers through projects with manual tasks. Naturally, it can happen that a volunteer becomes very enthusiastic about the tasks in their project. They may discover that they have

hidden talents and a real aptitude for manual activities. Some volunteers do go on to try to earn their professional qualifications in vocational training programmes after “Inclusion” EVS. However, these cases are the exceptions rather than the rule.

Practical tasks provide a manageable step into the world of international voluntary activities. They give young people the opportunity to take part in activities where they can see a concrete outcome. Practical tasks help young people to recognize their own progress. Over time, they can see that they have skills and something to contribute. This gives the young people something to hold on to and helps build up their self-confidence.

The function of practical tasks within “Inclusion” EVS, however, is not to provide an immediate step into the job market. For many of the young people in the socio-economic target group, there are still many steps to be taken along the pathway before they reach that level.

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS A NON-PRACTICAL TASK FOR A VOLUNTEER?

A quick look at the EVS project database can be somewhat confusing in that each project, long- or short-term, can be said to involve some form of practical tasks (one would be hard pressed to find a project which proposed impractical tasks...) Because of this, it is important to make a distinction between different types of practical tasks.

The “practical tasks” referred to in this document are those with a hands-on manual or physical nature. These types of tasks respond effectively to the needs of young people in the socio-economic target group, whereas other tasks in social-themed projects do not.

To better understand this difference, compare Sea-land’s boat building project with a social-themed project, for example in a youth centre. Both projects involve hands-on activities. Both can accurately be said to involve practical tasks. However, each one of these projects is designed for a completely different profile of young person coming from a completely unique starting point.

Ansgar Bueter-Menke, a youth worker with Sea-land (Germany) explains:

“To understand the real function of practical tasks, it is important not to forget the characteristics of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. These are young people who lack direction and have almost no sense of identity. They don’t know who they are or what they can do. They have little or no self-confidence. They cannot easily get out of their situation because they have been unsuccessful at school and there are usually few employment options open to them. A lot of the time these young people are running from a bad situation, numbing themselves with an overdose of noise, action, violence or substances.

These young people need a project which gives them something concrete to do. This is why practical tasks are so effective. The young people need to see some immediate positive outcomes from their efforts; practical tasks provide this. When they are painting, the youngsters can clearly see their own progress. When they are building a boat, they see their creation taking shape day by day and hour by hour. This concrete feedback is important because it gives an individual self-confidence which can then lead them on to new steps. Doing practical tasks gives the young people a feeling of accomplishment. They are no longer “a nothing”; practical tasks teach them skills. They are no longer “just an alcoholic” or “a worthless criminal”; thanks to the practical tasks they know how to sail, they can make boats, they can tie knots, they can speak German, and so on.

Social-themed projects, like working in a youth centre, are not suited for this profile of young person. Although social projects can involve certain kinds of practical tasks, the nature of such projects is too abstract and vague for this target group. There is no concrete outcome for the young people to refer to. A youth centre environment is too open for these young people and that puts them under a lot of pressure. Consequently, it is too easy for the young people to keep running away in a project of this kind. In contrast, working on practical tasks is something they can do at their own pace. If they spend an entire day working quietly to fit one plank of wood, that’s fine because the volunteer can see what they are doing and they see the direct result of their efforts.

This section on practical vs. non-practical tasks does not mean to generalise. It is not true to say that all young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are incapable of taking part in social-themed projects. It is important to keep in mind that an individual’s level of ability is not determined by their background. If a volunteer has enough confidence, maturity and life experience, they may be well suited for social tasks in socio-cultural projects. However, this type of profile is several steps more advanced than the target group under discussion here.

ISSUES LINKED TO PRACTICAL TASKS

Although practical tasks can be an extremely beneficial methodology for this target group, youth workers may have to work to overcome a young person's stereotypes about this type of activity. When considering projects that propose practical tasks, youth workers should keep in mind that:

Practical tasks do not automatically mean heavy labour. Be careful that young people do not associate the wrong meanings with certain terms. Volunteering does not translate as slave labour, and a workcamp is not the gulag. Some practical tasks can be physically demanding and certain volunteers, particularly those who like to be active, respond well to this type of activity. There are other types of practical tasks which are less physically demanding, for example arts projects, cooking, furniture repair, decorating, and so on. Different levels of tasks may appeal to different individuals.

Practical tasks need to be linked to an individual's pathway. Young people may not recognize that practical tasks are the means and not the end. If this is the case, they may not be motivated to take part in manual activities. Therefore it is important for youth workers to make the link from manual activities to the longer-term learning plan and the individual's pathway. They must help each individual recognize the link between the tasks and the learning on practical as well as on social level.

Practical tasks are for women as well as for men. The programme of tasks proposed in a "Inclusion" EVS must be feasible for both men and women. Despite this, it is not uncommon for gender issues to arise in connection with practical tasks. For example, it can initially be difficult to motivate young women to become involved in activities like building and renovation. Similarly, it can be difficult to persuade young men to share responsibility for cooking and cleaning duties. Experience has shown that gender is usually an obstacle in the early phases of a project but over time traditional gender roles can be modified. Both men and women can benefit from the larger educational value of projects with practical tasks.

Myth – “Inclusion” EVS project is a fundraising opportunity

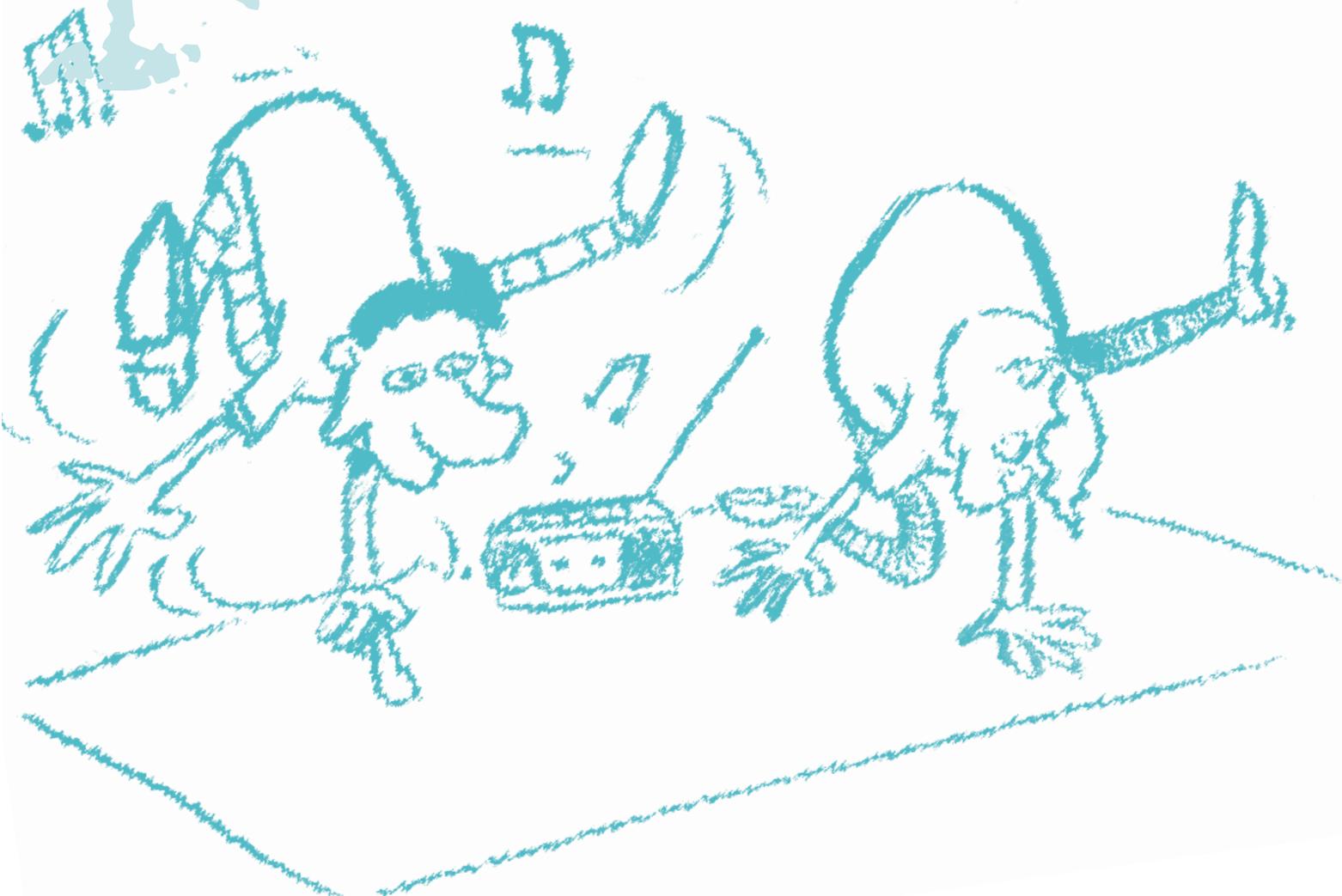
“Some organisations try to make money out of the EVS programme. While the situation may be somewhat different with long-term projects, this definitely doesn’t work with “Inclusion” EVS. An organisation is guaranteed to make a financial loss in “Inclusion” EVS. They will not actually lose money, but the amount of time required to prepare and support a young person with fewer opportunities is completely out of proportion to the amount paid per volunteer per month. The programme allocates, for example, six days of preparation time per volunteer. Just organising a passport for a young person takes three working days of our time, and that is only one small step in the process. Organisations who want to become involved in “Inclusion” EVS should do so only when they are convinced of the benefits for their young people. If this is the case, then the investment of time and effort will be worthwhile, even if the financial benefits are not.

- Clair Brown, Everything’s Possible, UK

The methodology of practical tasks can be an excellent teaching tool for the socio-economic target group. The learning that comes out of practical tasks involves more than simply developing vocational skills. But it should not be forgotten that within this target group are many different individuals, each with their own specific needs and level of ability. Not every young person is suited to every hosting project. Therefore it is important to consider what role the individual is expected to fulfil within their hosting project. The next section will examine three different roles for volunteers within “Inclusion” EVS projects.

The aims of the European Voluntary Service programme (“... to encourage active participation... to improve employability... to show solidarity... to support the development of local communities, etc.”) may seem very distant to youth workers trying to help young people cope with issues like poverty, addictions, homelessness, family violence, and behaviour problems. It can seem strange to think of these young people “supporting local communities” when many of them need support themselves. This leads some young people and their youth workers to conclude that “EVS is not for us!”

A ROLE FOR THIS TARGET



GROUP

It is a common misconception that an “Inclusion” EVS project is only viable for young people with a certain level of ability and maturity. This is not necessarily the case. There is a great deal of room for flexibility within “Inclusion” EVS projects. This is to allow Hosting Organisations to shape their projects so as to meet the specific learning needs of individual volunteers. Depending on the capacities of the individual, a hosting project can be structured so as to provide the volunteer with a distinct role.

DIFFERENT ROLES FOR A VOLUNTEER

Some hosting projects may be more suitable for a specific volunteer profile than others. Therefore it is useful to understand the different roles of a volunteer in different contexts. In general, there are three different roles for an “Inclusion” EVS volunteer:

- 1 **The role of “Do-er” – a “do-er”** (someone who can “do” something) is a young person who is in a position to actively contribute some kind of skills or knowledge to their host project. Do-ers have a certain amount of self-confidence and autonomy. A do-er may have the life experience and maturity to take on certain (limited) amounts of responsibility within a host project.
- 2 **The role of “User” – a “user”** is a young person who is in need of some support and structure. Their personal skills need further development. Users may have few practical skills to contribute to a project, but they may be well suited to take part in a Hosting Organisation’s regular programme of activities together with local young people.
- 3 **The role of “Observer”** – an “observer” is a young person who is at a very early stage of their personal development. Observers are first and foremost in need of exposure to new ideas and activities, although they may not be ready to actively take part.

As these very different roles show, a low level of practical and/or social skills is not automatically a reason for a young person to be excluded from taking part in an “Inclusion” EVS project. There is space for a variety of profiles and levels of ability. These different roles open up new possibilities which are designed to suit a volunteer’s real abilities and needs.

THE THREE ROLES IN PRACTICE – EXAMPLES

Listed below are three different examples of how Hosting Organisations have structured their “Inclusion” EVS project so as to accommodate a specific profile of volunteer.

BLUE HILL, SWEDEN

Description: Blue Hill is a youth centre located in an area with a large population of young people from immigrant backgrounds. Many of these young people are ex-convicts or have problems with the law. Blue Hill aims to prevent violence and crime by involving the young people in sports, dance and music. The centre offers a series of workshops (e.g. breakdance, street dance, hip-hop, rap, song-writing) and has facilities for music mixing and production. The centre also supports football and basketball teams. Blue Hill operates on the basis of peer education. This means that the older children are given responsibility for the younger ones. All of the regular activities are planned and carried out by the young people themselves.



Type of Role: Blue Hill is a good example of a host project which is suitable for a “do-er”. The peer education approach means that the success of the regular programme depends on the initiative and creativity of the older youngsters. There is a lot of room in a project such as this for a volunteer to bring in their own ideas and propose their own activities. Blue Hill would be an excellent project for a young person who had some skills in dance or music and who could then share them with their younger peers.

Joachim Theodoridis of Blue Hill: “ “Inclusion” EVS volunteers are a good influence and make a big impact on our local volunteers. It is extremely important for them to see someone from a similar background go abroad – it shows them that they can do something like this, too. It is not necessary for the volunteer to be an expert in street dance or rap music; in our experience, everyone has something valuable to give, no matter what their skill level. What is more important is that the young people have the right attitude and enough self-confidence to get along with the other young people in the project. If they have that, it is only a short period of time before they are ready to take some initiative and some responsibility.”

ADICE, FRANCE

Description: ADICE is a Hosting Organisation that takes “Inclusion” EVS volunteers for a period of 3-4 weeks. ADICE co-operates with local artists who run workshops in schools, hospitals, homes for the elderly, and other institutions. The “Inclusion” EVS volunteer takes part in the different workshops together with the local target group (children, teenagers, the elderly, etc.) Through the 3-6 week period, the volunteer receives a thorough introduction to different forms of art (sculpting, painting, drawing...) and is encouraged to put together their own “portfolio” of masterpieces. The activities take place within a regular weekly schedule, and are always overseen by a professional animator.

Type of Role: The activity programme developed by ADICE is custom-designed for “users”. The volunteer’s task is not to run the daily workshops. Rather, they are invited to take part in the workshops along with the local target groups in order to learn different techniques and to learn to express themselves artistically. In essence, the volunteer becomes a part of the local programme.

Julie Devès of ADICE: “A project like ours should be seen as a first step on the road to mobility. Three or four weeks in our project gives young people a basis to discover what it is like to live abroad. In some cases, a project like this one can give a young person enough self-confidence to go abroad alone at a later stage. So our project is a stepping stone that can lead to bigger things at a later stage.

The young people who take part in our “Inclusion” EVS projects come to us in a framework of using our programme, rather than directly contributing to it. We don’t see this form of “Inclusion” EVS project expanding to a period of 6 months. That would not suit a user profile. In our organisation, we are very realistic. A 3-week artistic project does not achieve the high abstract aims of the EVS programme like active citizenship. However, we are the step into active citizenship and as such we play a very important role.”

ØVEBAKKEN, DENMARK

Description: Øvebakken is the non-profit branch of the Schreiber Group, a social-minded commercial company. Øvebakken targets young people in extreme difficulty (for example, young people who have committed violent crimes) and tries to help them integrate into society. Øvebakken hosts “Inclusion” EVS volunteers and offers them a programme where they can observe the daily tasks and operations in different branches of the company. During the day, the volunteer accompanies a regular paid worker as they go about their tasks. The volunteer lives with the Schreiber family in their home, and can spend their evenings and free time there.



Target Group: Øvebakken is an example of a project which is appropriate for “observers.” Øvebakken’s target group is made up of young people who are vulnerable and in an extremely fragile state. Many of them have complicated histories involving abuse and violence. These young people lack basic social skills, and must learn many things from scratch. The Øvebakken project is set up so as to provide the volunteer with a strong daily structure and aims to show the young person what “regular” work and home situations can look like.

Torben Schreiber of Øvebakken: “From our point of view, the most important aspect of working with these young people in difficulty is to prepare them for a job. Being employed and being useful is so very important to a person’s well-being. If they can find work, other things lead out of that. But this they need to learn. They have no idea how to begin this process.

Before you can talk to young offenders about finding a job, you first need to teach them how to live and how to behave. This process takes a long time. Our project is designed to help young people get to know what a (so-called) normal life looks like. “Inclusion” EVS volunteers also fit in with our philosophy and methodology. They come from the same background as our young people; they need to learn the same skills. It is important to remember that in this context the word “skills” does not mean learning how to work in a shop or run heavy machinery. This is already too advanced for our young people. They need to learn the first steps: getting out of bed in the morning, taking a shower, eating breakfast, getting to work on time, saying hello to your colleagues ... these things are best learned through example and that is exactly what is happening when the young people observe how regular working people behave and interact. At the same time, “observing” doesn’t mean being inactive. It requires a lot of effort from these young people to watch, listen and finally try to imitate the positive behaviours that they see. It is all so strange and new for them ... it takes a lot of energy.”

GROWING FROM ONE ROLE TO ANOTHER

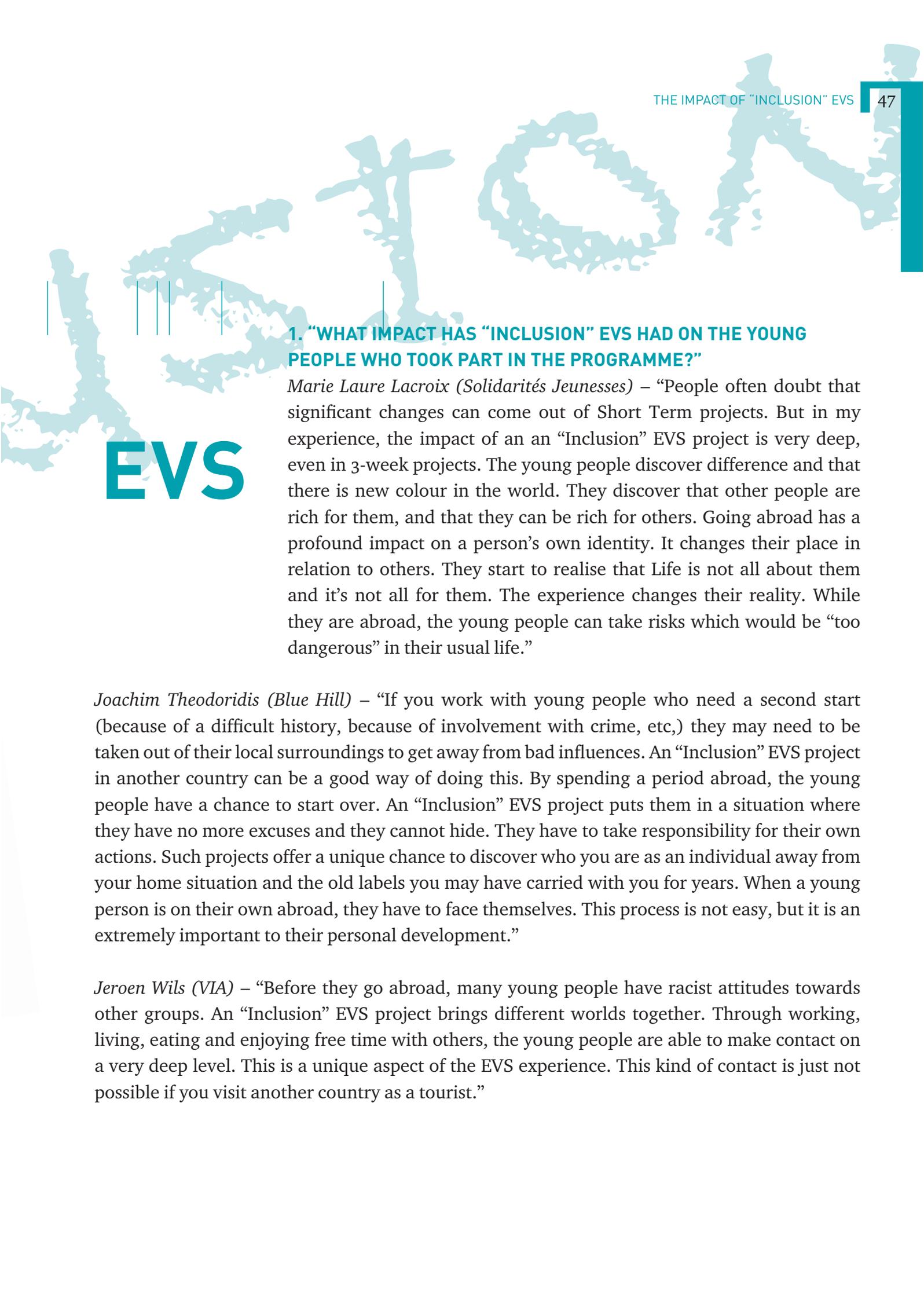
The terms “**do-er**”, “**user**” and “**observer**” provide a way of categorising a volunteer according to their general skill level. However, these roles are not fixed. The lines between them can often be blurred. Naturally, a volunteer will grow and change during their time abroad, so it quite normal for them to grow from one role into another over time.

For example, a volunteer who starts in ADICE as a user may gain enough confidence to help the workshop animators in planning and implementing the activities. In this way, they grow into the “do-er” role. Similarly, a “do-er” in Blue Hill who regularly teaches streetdance can also be a “user” if they join the youth centre’s football team. It is important that these terms not be used as labels or to limit a volunteer’s possibilities within a host project. They are meant only to provide a description of a general framework for the volunteer.

In this section, youth workers with extensive experience in “Inclusion” EVS projects talk about the impact the programme has had on their young people as well as on others in their organisation.

THE IMPACT OF “INCLUSION”





EVS

1. "WHAT IMPACT HAS "INCLUSION" EVS HAD ON THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO TOOK PART IN THE PROGRAMME?"

Marie Laure Lacroix (Solidarités Jeunesses) – "People often doubt that significant changes can come out of Short Term projects. But in my experience, the impact of an "Inclusion" EVS project is very deep, even in 3-week projects. The young people discover difference and that there is new colour in the world. They discover that other people are rich for them, and that they can be rich for others. Going abroad has a profound impact on a person's own identity. It changes their place in relation to others. They start to realise that Life is not all about them and it's not all for them. The experience changes their reality. While they are abroad, the young people can take risks which would be "too dangerous" in their usual life."

Joachim Theodoridis (Blue Hill) – "If you work with young people who need a second start (because of a difficult history, because of involvement with crime, etc,) they may need to be taken out of their local surroundings to get away from bad influences. An "Inclusion" EVS project in another country can be a good way of doing this. By spending a period abroad, the young people have a chance to start over. An "Inclusion" EVS project puts them in a situation where they have no more excuses and they cannot hide. They have to take responsibility for their own actions. Such projects offer a unique chance to discover who you are as an individual away from your home situation and the old labels you may have carried with you for years. When a young person is on their own abroad, they have to face themselves. This process is not easy, but it is an extremely important to their personal development."

Jeroen Wils (VIA) – "Before they go abroad, many young people have racist attitudes towards other groups. An "Inclusion" EVS project brings different worlds together. Through working, living, eating and enjoying free time with others, the young people are able to make contact on a very deep level. This is a unique aspect of the EVS experience. This kind of contact is just not possible if you visit another country as a tourist."

2. “WHAT IMPACT HAS “INCLUSION” EVS HAD ON YOUR ORGANISATION AS A WHOLE (FOR INSTANCE ON THE LOCAL YOUNG PEOPLE, THE STAFF, ETC.)?”

Joachim Theodoridis (Blue Hill) - “Hosting a volunteer has had a big impact on the youngsters in our area. They could see that an EVS project really works. Seeing that another young person from their peer group can manage to go abroad gives them confidence. We hope that some of our young people will be ready to make the step to “Inclusion” EVS themselves in future.”

Torben Schreiber (Øvebakken) - “The young people who come to our project may not have many concrete skills, but the fact that they are here is already very important for our own youngsters. Our young people lead a form of existence that is limited and sometimes totally closed. When they meet people from abroad, they realize that there is a whole other world out there. This is very stimulating for them.”

3. “WHAT IMPACT HAS “INCLUSION” EVS PROJECTS HAD ON YOU PERSONALLY?”

Volker Geist (Sea-land) - “I’m going on with this work because I wish I had had the chance to go abroad when I was 18! I may be too old to be an EVS volunteer, but I learn a lot each time I host a volunteer. The young people have a lot to teach me about their culture, their country and their way of seeing things. I think social-pedagogues need this kind of direct day to day contact so that they can gain a better understanding of the real problems facing young people.

Joachim Theodoridis (Blue Hill) - “When you see the result of your work with the young people, it gives you a great satisfaction. It was a challenge to learn to work with this specific target group. It feels great to be able to give such an experience to the youngsters who need it most. This experience opened new doors and interesting contacts.”

4. “WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD YOU MAKE TO ORGANISATIONS THAT ARE NEW TO “INCLUSION” EVS PROJECTS?”

Clair Brown (Everything’s Possible) - “When you are new to the programme, “Inclusion” EVS projects seem complicated. But once you are inside, it is very inspiring. Short-term EVS requires a lot of work, but the outcome is definitely worth it. There are important political and philosophical aspects to this kind of work. “Inclusion” EVS will never be successful in an organisation with a 9 to 5 mentality. However, if an organisation believes in inclusion and believes that everyone deserves equal opportunities, then “Inclusion” EVS is the right place for them.”

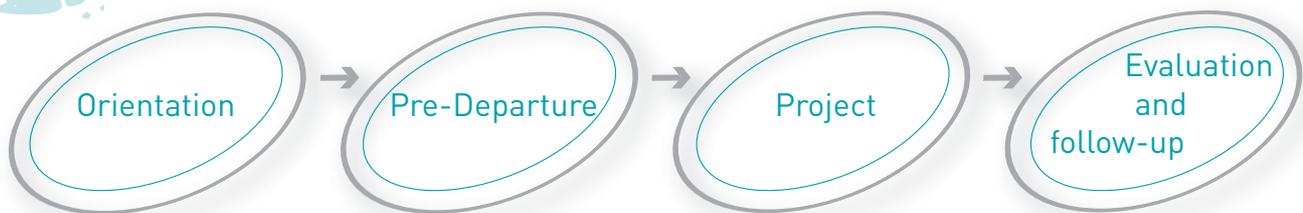
Joachim Theodoridis (Blue Hill) - "An "Inclusion" EVS project is indeed a lot of work, but organisations should remember that it is just the beginning of a longer story. The real work comes when the young person returns home from their project. Unfortunately there are very few structures in place to help the young people in this next stage of their development. Organisations that send volunteers abroad need to be aware of this and need to budget time and resources to help the young people in the difficult return phase."

Marie Laure Lacroix (Solidarités Jeunesses) - "If an organisation is thinking about getting involved with Short Term projects, I would recommend that they take time to get to know the profile of the young people before saying yes or no. It is difficult to get a real feeling for EVS by reading documents. Go to see a real-life project in the field. Direct experience is the best way to get to know "Inclusion" EVS."

“Use Your Hands to Move Ahead” provides a brief introduction to “Inclusion” EVS projects and to a way of working with a specific target group. The next steps in the process can be described according to the “Inclusion” EVS project cycle.

TAKING THE NEXT

THE PROJECT CYCLE



While organisations are getting to know “Inclusion” EVS, its strengths and its limitations, they are in **the orientation phase**. Because of the complexity of the needs of the socio-economic target group, it is a good idea for organisations to collect as much information as possible to help them decide whether “Inclusion” EVS is the right method for them and for their young people. An important next step for new organisations is contacting the National Agency who can provide them with further resources. The National Agency can also help new organisations learn more through national-level network meetings, job-shadowing opportunities, and European-level training events.

The pre-departure phase begins when an organisation decides to get involved in “Inclusion” EVS and starts taking concrete steps to organise their project. The pre-departure phase involves a lot of work for both Sending and Hosting Organisations. In this phase, the Sending Organisation needs to recruit a volunteer and prepare them for departure while the Hosting Organisation needs to design a programme of activities which match the young person’s needs and the direction of their pathway.

The project phase starts when the volunteer leaves home to go abroad and finishes only when they return home. The bulk of the work in this phase lies with the Hosting Organisation which is responsible for monitoring the volunteer’s learning process. The Sending Organisation also has a role to play in this stage by keeping contact with the volunteer, monitoring the home situation, and supporting the host.

STEPS

Evaluation and follow-up is the phase that begins once the volunteer returns home. A period abroad as a volunteer can often be an intense experience. Volunteers need support to evaluate their experiences and to recognize the learning that has taken place. In this phase, the volunteer has to find a way to integrate the “Inclusion” EVS experience back into their “regular” life and start taking further steps along their pathway

TOOLS

To help organisations go deeper into the orientation process, a list of useful documents is included at the end of this document in the section titled “**Hungry for more**”. Organisations that are ready to start developing concrete projects will find some useful suggestions for the pre-departure and evaluation phases in Annex II and III.

“Use Your Hands to Move Ahead” has presented a methodology and an approach which can improve access to “Inclusion” EVS.

CONCLUSION



The methodology of practical tasks in “Inclusion” EVS projects can have a powerful positive impact. Practical tasks offer a two-sided learning process. By doing practical tasks, a volunteer has an opportunity to improve both their practical skills as well as their soft skills. The educational value of practical tasks is often underestimated, but it deserves a much higher level of recognition from youth workers as well as from European institutions and other funding bodies. Practical tasks not only provide an accessible step into “Inclusion” EVS. They respond directly to the specific needs of young people from this target group. Practical tasks, in many ways, help these young people overcome obstacles and move forward in their lives. Most importantly, practical tasks take young people out of the role of passive consumers by giving them a chance to feel useful and an opportunity to make their own form of active contribution to society.

A methodology must always be accompanied by an approach. The pathway is a useful tool which can help youth workers avoid the trap of launching “Inclusion” EVS projects in a vacuum which does not relate to the needs or learning objectives of young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.



“Inclusion” EVS is a valuable learning experience. By applying the methodology of practical tasks and by implementing the pathway approach, organisations and institutions can open the doors to more opportunities for this target group.

ANNEX



ANNEX I - INFORMATION ON PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

“Use Your Hands to Move Ahead” was compiled with the help of a select group of organisations who attended a **Round Table meeting in Deinze, Belgium (September 2004)**. The examples presented in this document are based on their real experiences inside the “Inclusion” EVS programme. Specific examples were chosen to highlight different aspects of the practical task methodology. However, these examples provide only one small glimpse of each organisation’s wider programme of activities and their target groups. If you would like more information, you can contact the participating organisations at the addresses listed below:



ADICE ADICE is a non-profit association operating in Roubaix, a town in the north of France with a large immigrant population and a very high rate of unemployment. Our aim in this context is mainly to fight discrimination and to favour the social promotion of the most vulnerable public (young people, women, unemployed, immigrants, etc.) by supporting their participation in European mobility programmes.

ADICE, 2 Avenue Jean Baptiste Lebas, 59100 Roubaix, France
association.adice@wanadoo.fr or www.adice.asso.fr

Blue Hill Youth Centre



Blue Hill Youth Centre is a meeting place for about 150 young people from foreign backgrounds. Our philosophy is to make youngsters responsible for their own lives by giving them responsibility for the Centre and for the younger children and teenagers. To do this, Blue Hill uses peer education: the young people run and participate in sport sessions and activities like hip-hop culture, break-dancing, rap, etc. The individual is strengthened by the group; on a step-by-step basis, the young people learn to control their attitudes, fears and unwanted behaviour.

Blue Hill, Hagalundsgatan 21 NB, 171 51 Solna, Sweden
www.bluehill.se or amal.bluehill@gmail.com

Everything's Possible

Everything's Possible is an NGO which specialises in offering mobility opportunities across Europe. Our main areas of activity are within the European YOUTH programme which allows us to support young people in various European activities including youth exchanges and European Voluntary Service. We also provide opportunities for youth workers to attend international seminars and training events.

**Everything's Possible, 1 Sandhill Villas, Thorner, Leeds,
LS14 3DJ, United Kingdom
www.everythingspossible.org**

Øvebakken

Øvebakken is a part of the Schreiber Group which today consists of an enterprise, a retail shop, and a travel agency. The enterprise "Schreibers" was founded in 1957 by Morten Erik Schreiber. In 1983 the son, Torben Schreiber, entered the leadership and introduced a new management style focused on social understanding. Øvebakken was established as an NGO branch out of the enterprise in 1995. This meant that young people with social problems could come and live at the institution in a context of job training.

**Øvebakken, Torvegade 97, 7160 Tørring, Denmark
www.schreibers.dk**

Sea-land e.V.

Sea-land is a registered non-profit association for non-formal education, youth- and social work. We develop and implement projects for the youth- and social work sector. Our fields of activities include boat building projects, international exchange programmes and European Voluntary Service, organizing active sailing tours on jolly boats and traditional sailing ships, offering qualifications for multipliers (in areas like intercultural learning, outdoor pedagogy and sailing) and providing assistance for maritime vocational training activities.

**Sea-land, Mecklenburger Strasse 225b, 23568 Lübeck, Germany
www.sea-land.de**

Solidarités Jeunesses / Youth Action for Peace



Solidarités Jeunesses is an association of Youth and Popular Education. We organise international workcamps, short- and long term volunteer placements, insertion activities, trainings, and international solidarity actions. We also run a network of small hosting and animation structures in rural areas of France. Solidarités Jeunesses is the French branch of Youth Action for Peace (YAP), an international movement which aims for societies of justice, peace and human solidarity.

Solidarités Jeunesses, 10 Rue du 8 mai 1945, 75010 Paris, France
www.solidaritesjeunesses.org

VIA / Service Civil International



VIA organises youth exchanges with a focus on intercultural learning through voluntary work. To realise our aim of promoting peace and intercultural learning, we organise short-term exchanges (international workcamps) and long-term exchanges (individual voluntary work). VIA is the Flemish branch of Service Civil International (SCI), a worldwide voluntary service organisation and peace movement and of International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE), a worldwide intercultural movement that organises long-term exchanges.

VIA vzw, Langstraat 102, 2140 Antwerpen-Borgerhout, Belgium
www.viavzw.be

ANNEX II - METHODS FOR PRE-DEPARTURE PREPARATION

“Pre-departure” is the name given to the second phase in an “Inclusion” EVS project. This phase begins when an organisation decides to get involved in “Inclusion” EVS and starts taking concrete steps to organise their project. In this phase, a volunteer works together with their Sending Organisation to prepare for their project abroad. The Hosting Organisation also plays a role in pre-departure. They can help the volunteer prepare themselves by passing along information about the project, the host country and local traditions. They can tell the volunteer what they need to bring with them and also teach them their first words in the host language.

The volunteer is expected to play an active role in all stages of their project. This includes the pre-departure phase. The volunteer is expected to attend regular meetings with their Sending Organisation before they travel abroad. The Sending Organisation is there to assist, but the volunteer should be given an appropriate amount of responsibility in the preparation process.

Organisations that are new to “Inclusion” EVS projects can find some simple methods which can be used in the pre-departure phase here below:

COLLECTING INFORMATION

- 1 Encourage the volunteer to collect information on their host project and about their host country in order to have a better idea of where they are going. The Internet is a good tool; other options include the local library or travel books. There may be students or other locals from the host country in your area who would be happy to meet and talk about their country with the volunteer before they travel.
- 2 The Hosting Organisation may have promotional materials like videos, brochures, photographs, etc, which can be useful for giving a first impression of the project. Volunteers also appreciate information about the local situation – for example, a description of the local young people in and around the project, information about the free time possibilities, and so on.
- 3 The volunteer might need help in drawing conclusions from the information they receive. For example, if they discover that winter temperatures in Finland are below zero, they should conclude that they need to take warm winter clothing with them. The Sending Organisation and the volunteer should discuss the implications of the information collected.

DECIDING WHAT TO PACK

- 4 Make a list of clothing to be taken along. Think of working clothes as well as free time clothes. Take the time of year and the weather into account. The Hosting Organisation should advise the volunteer on what they should bring with them and what will be provided by the project.
- 5 People in the host project will likely be very curious to learn more about the volunteer and where they come from. Help the volunteer prepare information about their own country (for example, how many people live there, what are the main cities, what are the main tourist attractions, etc.) They can also take some typical food to share (cookies, chocolate, typical drink, etc.). Many projects ask the volunteers to cook, so it is useful to learn how to make one simple typical national or regional dish. It is also handy to take along some photographs from home (for example, of family, of friends, of their local neighbourhood, etc.) both to share with people in the host project and also just as an extra comfort.
- 6 Remind the volunteer to collect post and e-mail addresses of family and friends so they can stay in touch while abroad.

GETTING READY FOR A NEW CULTURE

- 7 Intercultural learning is not only related to national cultures. Look at differences within your own country or even within your own city. Are there different ways of doing or behaving in different situations? Help the volunteer make a list of do's and don'ts for those situations. If possible, try to do this on national level (for example, how do you greet someone in our country? How do we eat? How do we spend our free time? Etc.

SIMPLE LANGUAGE LEARNING

- 8 You can jump-start the language learning process by helping the volunteer some new words in their host language before they leave home. The Hosting Organisation can help out by sending a short list of words (for example, hello, good bye, thank you and the numbers 1-10). Volunteers should also be ready to communicate without language – practice non-verbal communication by using only sign language and mimic.

COPING WITH THE UNKNOWN

- 9 To help a new volunteer overcome their fears of things unknown, experiment with things that are new - for example let the young person hear a foreign language. Let them try food in a foreign restaurant. Make a visit to a part of the city or region where they have never been before. Encourage the volunteer to talk about what it feels like to try something strange and new. Remember - the volunteer doesn't have to like the new things – what is important is the act of trying.

GETTING MOBILE

- 10 If the volunteer has never been away from home before, it is a good idea to do some mobility training before they go abroad. This does not have to cost a lot of money. For example, take a group of young people to visit another city or on an excursion to the countryside. Organise a camping trip over a weekend to help them get used to being away from home and their family.
- 11 You can help the volunteer prepare for their big trip abroad by doing “dry runs”- i.e. make a simulation trip to the airport or to the train station so that the volunteer can get used to how the systems work. An even better method is to plan a short trip (by train) and have the volunteer do the planning, read the timetable, buy the tickets, etc. This can even be done within a large city using the public transport system.

ADDITIONAL PREPARATION

- 12 The “Inclusion” EVS programme has some additional funding for Advanced Planning Visits. These visits are meant to help the Sending Organisation and a new volunteer get to know their Hosting Organisation over 2 or 3 days. The main advantage to such a visit is that the volunteer can see first-hand where they will go and meet the people who will be in charge. Advanced Planning Visits can sometimes have an adverse effect – sometimes volunteers can be frightened by what they see and decide not to take part in the project, so youth workers need to approach these visits with care.
- 13 All EVS volunteers are invited to take part in national-level preparation events organised by the National Agency. The first is a pre-departure preparation which takes place before the volunteer leaves for their project. This event takes place in the home country with other volunteers who are also preparing to go abroad. The second is the on-arrival preparation. This event is for all the volunteers in their new host country (an international

group). Although all volunteers are entitled to participate, it is important to note that the majority of volunteers are from classic student backgrounds. This can sometimes be problematic for young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, so youth workers should consider carefully whether this is an appropriate setting for their young person.

TIPS FOR THE SENDING ORGANISATION

- 14 Sending Organisations should bear in mind that the EVS funding for preparation time is largely symbolic. Pre-departure preparation usually requires a great deal of time, so the Sending Organisation needs to plan their schedule accordingly.
- 15 One week before departure, the Sending Organisation should do a final check together with the volunteer to make sure that everything is prepared (passport, tickets, insurance, packing, etc.)

ANNEX III- METHODS FOR EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The evaluation and follow-up phase begins once the volunteer returns home from abroad. This phase can be the most difficult of the entire “Inclusion” EVS experience, because it is in this phase that a volunteer has to process their learning and make their next steps along their personal pathway.

Although the act of evaluating is actually quite short, the larger process of digesting and processing the EVS experience can take some time. This is especially the case for young people from socio-economically disadvantaged background. Volunteers often need support from their Sending Organisation to recognize the learning that has taken place and to guide their next steps.

Listed below are some simple methods which can be used at different stages of the evaluation and follow-up phase:

CLOSURE

- 1 Spending a period abroad as a volunteer can be a very intense experience. A good first step in the evaluation/follow-up phase is to round-off or close the EVS experience. This can be done in the Host Organisation by organising a final party (similarly, the Sending Organisation can organise a welcome party or welcome event when the volunteer returns home).
- 2 During the final party, or during a small ceremony, present the volunteer with a certificate to mark their achievement in the project. All EVS volunteers should receive an official certificate from the European Commission, but this may take up to a year to arrive. To avoid delays, organisations can develop their own certificate on the computer.

EVALUATION

Evaluation is a process that needs to start at the very beginning of a project. Here are some tips and methods to set the process in motion:

- 3 If the volunteer is fond of writing, have them keep a daily diary. At the end of the project, ask them to review what they have written to see if they can identify any changes in their behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, skills, etc. If the volunteer has difficulties with writing, they can also draw a daily picture, or make a weekly collage out of images in magazines to represent events and emotions.

- 4 A diary can be personal but it can also be public. The volunteer can keep an on-line diary to help keep people at home informed about their activities. This can also be reviewed at the end of the project.
- 5 Encourage the volunteer to think about their future at all stages of the “Inclusion” EVS project. The future is not something to be kept until the very end. This can be done informally by asking the volunteer what they are thinking, which direction their thoughts are going. In the evaluation stage the volunteer should look back on the plans they had at the beginning and consider to what extent those plans have/have not changed. The effect of this is stronger in longer projects, but even after only three weeks it can be very insightful for the volunteer.
- 6 The practical aspects of the EVS experience (daily tasks, accommodation, skills learned, etc) are easier to evaluate than others (for example, the intercultural experience). But a picture can speak a thousand words... To evaluate the intercultural experience, give the volunteer a disposable camera. Have them take photos of people, places, and things in their host project which are important to them or which made a strong impression on them. Use the photos to start a discussion about differences and similarities between countries and between cultures.
- 7 At the conclusion of the project, help the volunteer make an inventory (list) of the skills they learned. Help them identify how that learning can help them take their next steps along the pathway (in finding a job, gaining a qualification, within their family situation, etc.)
- 8 If there are several volunteers returning at once, it can often be very useful to organise a group evaluation. It is very helpful for volunteers to be supported by peers who have had similar experiences. Be aware that the group situation can have a negative as well as a positive impact.
- 9 A questionnaire can be a good tool for evaluating, but if a volunteer is not strong in reading or writing, they may need some assistance. The youth worker or contact person can work through the questions together with their volunteer.

SHARING THE EXPERIENCE

- I0 Invite the local newspaper to interview the volunteer when they return home. This can also be done in the Hosting Organisation before the volunteer leaves. (The volunteer may need to be prepared ahead of time.) Or, if the volunteer is fond of writing, they can write their own article for the newspaper, for the organisation's newsletter, website, etc.
- I1 When appropriate, give the returned volunteer the chance to talk about their "Inclusion" EVS experience (for example in schools, in the youth club, etc.) This is a good way to motivate new young people to become involved in the programme.

PEER SUPPORT

- I2 Returned volunteers are an excellent resource to be used in future "Inclusion" EVS projects. They can help future volunteers prepare to go abroad, or they can help out with volunteers coming to their project (for example, pick up a new volunteer at the train station, take them for a night out, introduce them to local young people, etc.)

INTEGRATION

Like evaluation, integration is a process that starts on the very first day of the project.

- I3 Before the volunteer travels abroad, the Sending Organisation should spend time with them considering their pathway and making a follow-up plan for the post-EVS phase. This should include ideas as to what should happen, when, which steps have to be taken, how long, etc. Some steps can already be set in motion before the volunteer departs. Bear in mind, however, that the volunteer is likely to come up with new ideas while they are abroad, so it doesn't hurt to have a back-up plan (or two) in mind.
- I4 When the volunteer returns home, arrange a partnership with a social and/or professional worker in the Sending Organisation (this can be the same contact person who monitored the "Inclusion" EVS project)
- I5 Arrange opportunities for the young person to volunteer in their own community
- I6 If possible, give the volunteer the chance to implement the skills they learned during "Inclusion" EVS in their Sending Organisation (for example, if they took part in a dance project, encourage them to give a short performance or organise a dance workshop).

TIPS FOR THE HOSTING ORGANISATION

- 17 The Hosting Organisation can play a role in the evaluation/follow-up phase by keeping in contact with the volunteer. This can take the form of short letters, e-mails, sending photos, birthday cards, a copy of the organisation's newsletter, etc. The Host Organisation can also be supportive of the volunteer's next steps forward. They should stay in touch with the Sending Organisation so as to keep informed of the volunteer's progress and plans.

HUNGRY FOR MORE?

FURTHER READING & ONLINE RESOURCES

Some more SALTO 'Inclusion for All' publications:

- **Going International - Inclusion for All (2004)** – practical inclusion methods and advice for preparing, implementing and following-up on international projects for young people with fewer opportunities
- **Use your Hands to Move Ahead (2004)** – using practical tasks to increase participation by young people with fewer opportunities on short term European Voluntary Service projects
- **Fit for Life (2005)** – using sport as an educational tool for the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in youth work and international youth projects.
- **No Offence (2007)** – exploring opportunities and setting up youth projects with young ex-offenders and those at risk of offending
- **Village International (2007)** – a practical booklet for youth workers on setting up international projects in rural and geographically isolated areas
- **No Barriers, No Borders (2008)** – practical guidelines and tips for setting up international, mixed ability youth projects (including people with and without a disability)
- **Over the Rainbow (2008)** – creating sensitive international projects with young lesbians, gays, bisexuals and young people questioning their sexual orientation
- **Youth and the City (2008)** – developing meaningful international projects with young people in disadvantaged (sub)urban areas
- **Inclusion & Diversity (2008)** – how to make your youth work and youth projects more inclusive and reach more diverse target groups (co-operation SALTO Inclusion & SALTO Cultural Diversity)
- **E.M.power (2008)** – how to empower young ethnic minority women
- **Making Waves (2007)** – Creating a greater impact with your youth projects, a booklet about visibility, dissemination and exploitation of your project results
- **Coaching Guide (2006)** – a guide that explores the concept of Coaching, including practical tools, methods, advice and information (by SALTO Participation)

👉 Find them all at www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/InclusionForALL/

Looking for youth work and training methods on Inclusion and other topics?

Browse through the SALTO Toolbox for Training at www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Toolbox/



YouthPartnership

T-Kit Series: *The training kits are thematic publications written by experienced youth trainers. They are easy-to-use handbooks for use in training and study sessions, published by the Youth-Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission.*

- Social Inclusion
- Project Management
- Organisational Management
- Methodology in Language Learning
- Intercultural Learning
- International Voluntary Service
- Under Construction...Citizenship, Youth and Europe
- Training Essentials
- Funding and Financial Management
- Educational Evaluation in Youth Work
- Euromed Cooperation

👉 Downloadable from www.youth-partnership.net or www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Toolbox/

ONLINE TOOLS AND RESOURCES

In the SALTO Toolbox for Training (www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Toolbox/) you can find a wide range of interesting tools:

- **“Including All with the YOUTH Programme”**, *an inspirational booklet of the European Commission*
www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/find-a-tool/362.html
- **“Get involved, Discover the benefits of the Short term EVS short term programme for YOUR young people”**,
www.salto-youth.net/find-a-tool/1017.html/
- **“Stepping Stone, impact of Short Term EVS”**. *In May 2006, professionals all over Europe gathered in Finland to evaluate the impact of short term EVS projects.*
www.salto-youth.net/find-a-tool/640.html/
- **“Puzzeld 2003, training course on short term EVS”**, *Report on how to use the concept of short term EVS as a regular method in the own organisation and as a step in a larger personal pathway with the youngster*, Training course organised by the national agencies of Slovenia, Poland and Latvia
www.salto-youth.net/find-a-tool/263.html
- **“Short term Volunteering – Evaluation April 2002 – September 2003”** *Evaluation report on the results of a pilot action carried out by 13 organisations in order to develop quality criteria for short term EVS projects for disadvantaged youngsters* Publication by the National Agency of France in co-operation with EIP (European Inclusion Programme), 7 French organisations with their European partners
www.salto-youth.net/find-a-tool/364.html/

NOTES

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EDITORIAL INFO

Published in December 2004, first reprint in June 2009 by

SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion Resource Centre

www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Inclusion/

(Support & Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within
the Youth in Action Programme)

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Printing; Sint-Joris, Merendree

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“Use Your Hands To Move Ahead” is an educational document aimed at youth workers, youth leaders, European institutions and all others who are involved with young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

This booklet describes how Individual European Voluntary Service (EVS) projects can be used to benefit these young people and demonstrates how projects with practical tasks (building, renovation, gardening, art, music, dance, etc.) directly respond to this target group’s specific learning needs. Providing an in-depth look at the educational value of practical tasks, the booklet shows how these tasks serve to develop an individual’s social AND practical skills.

“Use Your Hands to Move Ahead” was compiled with the help of individuals and organisations who have several years of experience in carrying out EVS projects. Each one has found the methodology of practical tasks to be a positive tool for change. Their real-life examples demonstrate how the theory behind practical tasks is implemented in different organisations.

By sharing their experiences, these representatives hope to inspire other organisations to develop their own EVS hosting projects. The creation of new projects with practical tasks will allow more young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to benefit from the EVS experience.

“Use Your Hands To Move Ahead” is part of the SALTO “Inclusion for All” series. Each booklet in the series can be downloaded for free at www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Inclusion/.

