

This magazine has been made during the Training Course “Empowering Youth Through EVS” held by Solidarity Tracks organization through Erasmus + program.



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editorial

Our training course “Empowering youth through EVS” took place in the Greek Island of Lefkas where we spent 10 days. We were 32 participants coming from different countries from Europe and Meda counties such as Spain, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Croatia, Poland, Tunisia, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey and Greece. During those days, we shared practices and experiences between all the participant’s organizations related with volunteering project management. Also, we had time to develop and learn new methods directed to improve the whole EVS process (selection and preparation of the volunteer, implementation of volunteer task, facilitate assistance measures and the evaluation of the project) As a result of our work together, we created an online tool that has the aim of being a support and help for the stakeholders of the European Voluntary Service. The final product is a platform in Internet with different parts including general information about what is EVS or tools for mentors, host & sending organizations. But also, it includes an interactive diary which allows volunteers to monitor their personal learning during their service.

Our days in Lefkas were a great opportunity for cultural exchange, as well. We had the chance to know better cultures and traditions from different countries of the Euro-Mediterranean area. In this magazine we want to show how we worked to achieve our objectives meanwhile we enjoyed an intercultural atmosphere.



Getting to know each other

As it is usual, our training started by knowing each other. Organizers prepared different games that help us to learn the names and to have a first contact between all of us. We drawn our portraits and had the opportunity to reflect about objectives and expectations. It was a good chance to be introduced about the logistics, rules and working methods for our seminar.

One of the objectives of this training was to develop cooperation between partners from Europe and Meda countries, especially about volunteering. In order to make possible this cooperation, it was important that everyone knew about other organizations and their projects. That's why we had the opportunity to share our best practices and our experiences in the field of EVS and voluntarism.

The intercultural evening was the moment to present our traditions and culture. We shared food, drinks and good mood in a night to remember. Some of us wore traditional clothes and we danced typical music from our countries. But this night was great and it was just the beginning of our relation friendship.

debates and group reflections

During the first days of seminar, we had to get as much information as possible about the topic. It was important that we could get the knowledge needed to develop the tool at the end. For this, we had several workshops, debates and group reflections that allowed us to share our experiences and learn from each others. Also, we had speeches and presentations from our trainers, Attila and Reka, who helped and guided us during our learning process.

working on the tool

After all the workshops and theory, we could start to work on the main objectives of our seminar. We came to develop an interactive tool that will support NGOs and EVS volunteers to monitor, implement and evaluate EVS projects. It was an important and difficult task but we were motivated to accomplish it. But before starting, we had to decide what kind of tool we wanted and how it could be useful and innovative. The common decision was to make an online platform that includes different parts: What is EVS?; Tools; Diary for EVS volunteers.

1. General information about what EVS is; 2. Tools for mentors and hosting and sending organization to assure a good support for the volunteers; 3. the interactive diary for the volunteer.

We were working in small groups to write and design this important outcome that we hope it will be very useful for future volunteers and for the NGOs that work by managing EVS projects.

Discovering Lefkas

The training course took place in Lefkas, an Island located in the Ionian Greek Sea. It is an Island full of beauty, history, nature, culture and other interests. During our days there, we had the opportunity to visit and get in touch with some of these things thanks to the excursions that were organized. We had a bus trip around the Island that took us to the breathtaking waterfalls of Nydri, the amazingly blue water of Agios Nikitas beach or the interesting Monastery of Faneromeni. Also, we could learn more about Lefkas village through a visit to the local archeological museum with our private local guide, Adonis, Lefkadian participant.

But, this was not all. We had the opportunity to see some EVS projects in action developed in Lefkas. We visited the office of our host organization Solidarity Tracks and we could meet with its EVS volunteers. Eloy, Viorika, Andrea, Kinga and Hafed explained us what their projects are about and what they are doing in Lefkas. Also, we could visit the eco-house project of Solidarity Tracks, a project based in volunteer work. The last visit we did was to the elderly care center of Lefkas, where Solidarity Tracks is coordinating EVS projects. We meet the volunteers who let us know how they help daily to elder community of Lefkas.

Trainers and Facilitators

We counted with a great team that help us to understand the topic and guided us to achieve all the objectives of our seminars. We had as trainer and expert, Attila, coming from Romania. President of NGO in Transylvania and ex-EVS, Attila facilitated the workshops and did the theoretical speeches and presentations. Also, he was our conductor in the difficult task of developing the tool. Next to him, we found Reka, ex-EVS and member of NGO. She was our facilitator for teambuilding activities and for funny energizers. She had always a game or activity to put our energy up. Besides them, we had the graphic facilitators' team. Coline and Noemi were following all the activities and putting the theory into a visual representation. Their draws were a great support to follow up our learning and to understand better the new knowledge. Last but not least, we counted with the support of Silvia and Viorika. They helped for logistical issues and tried to make our time in Lefkas as much comfortable as possible. Also, they were responsible for making audiovisual materials by taking pictures and videos, producing radio emissions and coordinating the magazine.



without words



Participants Journal

DAY 1 Written by: Kasia, Semih, Marilu, Mazen, Majed, Jehad and Sofianne

The first day of our training was quite difficult because we were exhausted after travelling. But, at the end of the day, we still found enough energy in ourselves to take part in the intercultural evening where we could get to know traditional food, drinks, music and costumes from different countries.

During our activities, we put focus on getting to know each others, the participating organizations and the main aims of the training course.

We also reviewed our knowledge about the EVS and started to share our experiences.

We went to sleep with big hopes and expectations from the training and we think every simple day will be full of good experiences.

DAY 2 Written by Maria and Yassin

As everyday, during the second day we did two energizers. Also we welcomed our new participants from Jordan and Egypt. They presented their organizations and shared their testimonials. Like everybody else, they painted their portraits.

In the morning, we discussed what are the difficulties for the hosting organization and the volunteer during a EVS project. We had some presentations about this topic and we stressed on the specific problems with EVS volunteers and how to deal with them.

After lunch, we had presentation about evs logbook. Also we had the chance to see the real copy of the diary. After that, we discussed how to use it in practice and how this can facilitate volunteer's own evaluation. It was useful day, full of new information and we are thankful to our trainer and supportive staff!

DAY 3 Written by Ana, Abdullah, Naceur and Musa

The third day of training was greeted with a beautiful sunny day and we took the most of it by doing energizer and some parts of the training outside. Today's plan was to get to know more about EVS and its parts and possibilities which we did by joining the open discussion leaded securely by our trainer. Since we also noted former day that the motivation of the volunteer can be a problem, so most of the morning we focused on that. We were divided into groups, with every group getting a different possible problematic situation that we needed to think of strategy on how to solve it. Our creativity and strategy solving came to express during our short performances depicting the situations and solutions.

In differently mixed groups we did reflection on impact of EVS on community, after that every group presented a poster and then, we all had an open discussion about that including sharing a many good ideas.

To activate us for the afternoon session we started with another energizer, followed by very mysterious game of secret mission. The EVS topic was then widened and deepened our knowledge in parts of ensuring the quality of partnership, selection of the volunteers and providing a good preparation for volunteers.

Participants Journal

Day 4 Written by Vasi and Meia

The first workshop was divided into several groups according to topics, such as:

1. Risk and crisis management
2. Support of the volunteers and follow up activities
3. Involvement and participation of volunteers
4. Volunteer engagement in illustrating evolution of learning competences
5. Impact in the host community

The workshop was run in the following way. Each group after discussion moved to another table leaving the coordinator of the given topic at table. The task of the coordinator was to represent the topic and previously discussed ideas to new group. The results of discussions were written down and at the end of the workshop represented in front of the whole group. Discussion results will be shared among the members of the group through social media.

The afternoon block we started with the debate about the role of social media in improving the quality of EVS projects. Participants were divided into two groups. Each group was brainstorming about advantages and disadvantages of social media in project implementation. The results were written on boards and summarized. The trainer explained each point in detail and counted the arguments for advantages and counter arguments for disadvantages of social media. The winner group enjoyed the cookies.

The last session of the day included visit to the main office of „Solidarity Tracks“ and getting to know closer the volunteers working in the organization and their activities. The volunteers represented their work in an interactive way – through role play in performance.

Each group did the daily evaluation by traditional method. Participants sat in „family“ groups evaluating the day reflecting on the questions.

Day 5 Written by Rahmeh, Ghada, Aliaa, Besma, Ayman and Rachid

we woke up at 9:00 am and the organizers make for us a trip to discover lefkada we went to:

- nidri waterfall
- see side
- the town _ agiosnikitas _ the beach
- the church _ lefkada monastery

in the after noon at 4 PM we had an energizer we played musical chairs and Mousa and Maria wins after the energizer we made the middle evaluation of the project which the trainer asked the participants to evaluate the program through accommodation, food, the trainer, the organizers, the graphic facilitators and the activities.

then we made a role plays ; we were divided into three groups, we talked about three subjects ;

- visibility
- dissemination
- multiply effect

Participants Journal

1st Visibility

1. promoting EVS and Erasmus plus
2. having a good marketing plan
3. good communication materials
4. using social media and local and national media
5. gadgets
6. having a good web site and to upgrade it through google and to be easy and fast to reach

2nd Dissemination

1. digital ; flayers, posters, web site
2. culture nights for the volunteers to deliver they culture to the community
3. short video that shows how did the volunteer worked and the result of the project

3rd Multiply Effect

1. create a similar project in the sending organization
2. use social media to spread the experience
3. design presentation to deliver what was in the program
4. deliver positive action and activities to the community

then we made the final evaluation of the day ; all the families gathered to evaluate the day and talk about what they had learned, liked, disliked, how to implement what we learned in our community and organization

DAY 6 Written by Kerime

"What a great day!" if we should summarize our 6th day in this training..

It was amazing to see how volunteers working proudly, untiredly and happy in elderly house of Lefkada. Seeing them like a family there, makes me feel exactly should volunteer and be a part of the community. They shared their experiences with us and answered our questions patiently.

Today one of the most important workshops that we made was the 'hot chair' workshop based on making feedback and reacting. In a small group we made feedbacks to each other about how we are in this training. It was very useful to understand how we should use our body language, to choose right words and use the feedback for future steps.

Today we started to shaping and planning creating new EVS tools in general information that what is EVS about, who is it for, why we do it and how we can apply, sending/hosting/coordinator organizations and volunteers' roles, responsibilities etc. It was good to work on it with a group include an EVS ex-volunteer, an experienced EVS mentor from Europe and Meda Countries and also unexperienced but interested people. That balanced group allowed us to create ideas in different visions and let us get new informations, experiences.

The last thing that I want to share, I really liked the way how Mohamed, Atilla, Reka, Noemi, Coline, Silvia, Viorika and EVS volunteers (who worked for eco house, Elderly Care Center and other projects) work together as family and also professional. The methods they used during the training will help me to improve my methods that I am using in my organization. Thanks them for smiling faces, great energizers (even so much running) , amazing graphics and all information they serve us.

My boat will be in happy and thankful islands.

Organization partners

Spain	Grupo de Desarrollo Rural Valle del Guadalhorce
Romania	Asociatia de Tineri din Ardeal
Bulgaria	Institute for Creative Civil Strategies
Italy	Work in Progress
Croatia	Udruga Zmergo
Poland	Fundacja Wiatrak
Tunisia	CLUB CULTUREL ALI BELHOUANE TUNIS
Palestine	Loesje Palestine
Tunisia	AJMEC
Egypt	Development NO Borders
Jordan	J.C.S.S Madaba
Jordan	Land and Human to Advocate Progress
Turkey	Teknik Egitim Grubu
Greece	Solidarity Tracks

Empowering
Youth through



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SOLIDARITY TRACKS



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