

EUROMED STUDIES AND RESEARCH

Volunteering and Euro-Mediterranean Voluntary Service are very important topics in the EuroMed area. In fact, volunteering and EVS are seen as a core aspect of civic participation and democracy putting values such as solidarity and non-discrimination into action and contributing to the development of societies. This study aims to present the perceptions and realities of Volunteering and EVS within EuroMed area and provide social workers, youth leaders, trainers and responsible of project elements for better understand the current situation in the different countries. This publication is available on Salto EuroMed website.

**Volunteering and Voluntary Service
in Euro-Mediterranean Context**
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Introduction

Context and Aims of the Study

Millions of people in the world and in both European and Mediterranean countries engage in activities such as distributing food at shelters, helping disabled people, organising workshops on human rights, renovating buildings in the aftermath of a natural disaster, cleaning sea coasts or raising awareness about gender-based violence in society. All of those activities are examples of volunteering, when they are done willingly by individuals or by groups of individuals to promote a cause or help others in society without any expectation of financial gain.¹

In general, volunteering is seen as a core aspect of civic participation and democracy, putting values such as solidarity and non-discrimination into action and contributing to the development of societies.² Within the context of youth work, volunteering

provides valuable opportunities for young people to participate actively and become responsible citizens in their societies, to avail of informal (i.e. spontaneous and individual) and non-formal (i.e. more planned and structured) educational opportunities, to be included in and integrated into society. When viewed from that angle, volunteering can be seen as “a means to enhance young people’s professional skills and competencies, employability, sense of solidarity and foster active citizenship”³.

From the angle of **youth organisations**, which usually have limited human and financial resources, volunteering and volunteers provide added-value by bringing new perspectives to the organisations and their activities, as well as representing an important human resource to help them carry out their youth work activities.

The Euro-Mediterranean Voluntary Service is a particular form of volunteering and international voluntary work. Part of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme since 1999, Euro-Mediterranean Voluntary Service has been a tool to improve the intercultural skills and competencies of young people and to promote active citizenship and active participation through volunteering in Europe and in the Mediterranean partner countries. A quick look at the numbers of voluntary service projects and volunteers shows, however, that voluntary service action within the context of Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation has had a lower degree of participation when compared with the other actions in the Programme and its implementation has been hampered by various problems.

¹ United Nations Volunteers (2010: 9-10) and International Labour Organisation (2008: 12-13). - ² Proposal for a Council Decision on the European Year of Volunteering 2011, quoted in European Commission (2010: 27). - ³ Council Recommendation of 20 November 2008 on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union C (2008)319, quoted in European Commission (2009: 18).



PART I - Volunteering and Voluntary Service



A particular form of Volunteering and voluntary service in general: The Euro-Mediterranean context

In today's world, volunteering takes "many forms, from spontaneous, ad-hoc neighbourhood initiatives to organised, formal, and even contract-based engagement on a regular and ongoing basis", which can be conducted by individuals or by groups of individuals, on their own initiative or within the framework of national or international programmes⁵.

The framework provided by United Nations Volunteers usually categorises volunteering activities into four types⁶, which can be carried out at local, national and/or international levels:

- **Mutual aid or self-help**, as a component of social and economic support systems in the provision of welfare to people, includes voluntary actions of people, ranging from small, informal kinship and clan groupings, to more formal, rotating credit associations.

- **Philanthropy or service to others** includes volunteering activities in fields such as health, social welfare, housing, literacy and sports, where people give service to the community as a whole.
- **Participation or civic engagement** refers to the involvement of people in the processes of governance, usually through participation in government or local consultative bodies, in local development projects or school associations.
- **Advocacy or campaigning** is a diverse category of activities such as environmental movements, arising from a desire to raise awareness about local and global issues for social change and social justice.

* Q: WHY WOULD YOU DECIDE TO VOLUNTEER?

All those types of volunteering can take two forms. As defined by International Labour Organisation (ILO)⁷, **informal volunteering** refers to the voluntary activities performed on an individual basis: for example, teaching children in an orphanage how to play a music instrument as an individual. **Formal volunteering** refers to volunteering activities formally structured by non-profit

or other types of organisations such as a local, national or international non-governmental organisation, a school or religious organisation, governmental programmes or the private sector (for example, providing similar help through an organisation working with the orphanage children).

Despite the existence of a general understanding of what volunteering is, there is actually no universal legal

definition of volunteering and a volunteer. Volunteering is often accepted as a concept, shaped by the historical, socio-economic, religious and cultural backgrounds in different contexts. It assumes a variety of forms across the world and reflects a diversity of approaches and traditions⁸. Accordingly, it is not surprising to see that volunteering is not the same phenomenon in all the European and Mediterranean countries. Whereas in Northern European countries such as Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Ireland, volunteerism is more or less based on well-established traditions and cultures regulated by policies that have removed obstacles to volunteerism, Mediterranean countries such as Italy, Spain, Portugal and France have instead had rich traditions of informal volunteering supported by laws and policies to support and further expand these existing traditions⁹. Eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania and Poland, which historically have had weaker traditions of both formal and informal volunteering, have recently

started to issue laws and policies to define and promote volunteerism¹⁰. The Arab countries in the Mediterranean, situated in North Africa and the Middle East region, have often been characterised by a high degree of informal volunteerism, with participation through civil society organisations being less common than getting involved in volunteerism as a result of family, clan and religious obligations¹¹. It is not yet possible to find a national law on volunteerism in any of those countries¹². However, countries such as Syria are considering adopting policies to promote voluntarism and it is still possible to find many initiatives aimed at promoting understanding of the nature and the goals of organisation-based volunteerism in other Arab countries¹³. In Israel, formal volunteering through volunteer organisations, government and local authorities, as well as personal volunteering, can be traced back to before and after the establishment of the state of Israel, with voluntary efforts recently being coordinated by a national council for voluntarism and by local volunteer councils¹⁴.

5 Hadzi-Miceva (2007: 41). - 6 United Nations Volunteers and United Nations Development Programme (2009: 12-13), Independent Sector and United Nations Volunteers (2001: 10), United Nations Volunteers (1999: 5-7), CIVIUS, IAVE and UNV (2008: 5). - 7 International Labour Organisation (2008: 13).

8 European Volunteer Centre (2006: 3). - 9 United Nations Volunteers (2010: 30-31). - 10 Ibid. 11 United Nations Volunteers (2010: 25). - 12 United Nations Volunteers (2010: 23). - 13 United Nations Volunteers (2010: 23, 25). - 14 Kotan (no date available) and Herlitz and Weill (no date available).



*** Q: HOW IS VOLUNTEERING PERCEIVED IN YOUR COUNTRY? DOES IT TEND TO BE MORE INFORMAL OR FORMAL VOLUNTEERING? WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS THE CASE?**

Within this variety of forms it is still possible to find some common elements to help us with a definition. The International Labour Organisation proposes to define “volunteer work” as “activities or work that some people willingly do without pay to promote a cause or help someone outside their household or immediate family.”¹⁵

Using this definition as a starting point, a number of volunteering characteristics can be highlighted¹⁶:

- Volunteerism is an activity or work involving in-kind contribution from volunteers in terms of time, skills or services. This means that any donation of goods, money or assets of value does not qualify as volunteering or as a voluntary activity.
- Volunteerism is done by people, either as individuals or as groups of individuals, through organisations, associations or other institutions.

- Volunteerism is done willingly, in a non-compulsory and non-obligatory fashion. Thus, volunteerism involves a significant element of free choice by the volunteer and is not the outcome of societal, legal or religious obligation. Consequently, court-mandated unpaid work, alternative service related to military obligations or unpaid internships required for graduation from educational institutions cannot be considered as voluntary work.

- Volunteerism is done without financial or in kind remuneration, compensation or financial gain, apart from living expenses or reimbursement of expenses in some cases (and generally symbolic).
- Volunteerism is done to promote a cause or help someone outside the volunteer’s household or immediate family, to benefit the larger community, an organisation representing community interests, a public body or the common interest.

For the participants of the Seminar on “Euro-Mediterranean Voluntary work as a tool for human development: The example of the Euro-Mediterranean voluntary service” (2-9 December 2009, Roubaix, France), volunteering means:

French «volontariat», «volonté»: to want to do something by your own free will.

Portuguese «voluntariado»: without obligation.

Jordanian, Egyptian, Lebanese «tatawo»: give some things without expecting anything in return.

Latvian «brīvprātīgais darbs »: work with a free mind.

Turkish «gönüllülük»: having and serving the heart.

Commitment - spirit, internal power - giving while expecting nothing in return - the desire to learn - involving, sharing experiences and know-how without profit - responsibility [volunteering ≠ not serious].

Unpaid work - open – helping others - fun - contribution - linking together - social engagement - change - giving experience - individual action for collective project(s).

Volunteering: to want to do and give something through your own free will without obligation and without expecting anything in return while serving your heart.

Volunteering: Social engagement from individuals or groups to contribute to and promote values and aspects in and of society in order to change/improve the existing situation.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...



The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2001 the International Year of Volunteers (IYV). The IYV 2001 had four primary goals: promotion, recognition, facilitation and networking of the volunteer service in order to demonstrate the need for voluntary service in social, economic and cultural areas.

2011 marks the tenth anniversary of the IYV and the goal is to inject new vitality and resources into ongoing efforts to support volunteering and its contribution to the development goals and challenges. The objectives of IYV+10 are “to celebrate volunteering as an expression of our common humanity” and as a means to:

- Build respect, understanding, trust, solidarity and reciprocity
- Benefit both society at large and the individual volunteer
- Contribute to human development and human rights
- Engage the will, positive energy and innovation of millions of people towards realizing the Millennium Development Goals
- Create an enabling environment for citizen commitment through the development of volunteering policies, supportive legislation and other infrastructure.

Source: IYV+10 Brochure, 18 August 2010.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...



The European Parliament has announced that 2011 will be the **European Year of Volunteering**. With a budget of six million euro, the proposed activities in the European Year of Volunteering focus on communication and awareness-raising measures,

such as conferences, seminars, exchange of experience and publications. The goals of the European Year of Volunteering 2011 are:

- To help create a more volunteer-friendly environment, with more people participating in civic activities throughout Europe
- To enable volunteer organisations to be a more effective force, make it easier for people to volunteer and to foster greater cooperation among volunteer organisations and other sectors throughout the EU
- To encourage the recognition and compensation of volunteering activities
- To increase awareness of the value of volunteering to the economy and to society – volunteering is not only enriching for the individual, it is also a valuable expression of civic commitment that makes a significant contribution to society.

For more information see www.eyvolunteering.eu and/or www.europa.eu/volunteering

Source: *European Commission (2010: 27)*

Voluntary service is a particular form of volunteering. As defined by the Association for Voluntary Organisations (AVSO), voluntary service refers to “specific, full-time project-based voluntary activities that are carried out on a continuous basis for a limited period of time.”¹⁷ Thus, voluntary service already bears all the characteristics of volunteering in general, while also being a more structured activity for a fixed period of time. This structure is based on agreement between

all the parties involved, providing a framework of rules, procedures, duties and tasks.¹⁸ Such a definition of voluntary service is different from “civil service”, managed by or on behalf of the state; “civilian service”, conducted in place of compulsory military service; or “volunteering as a part of a school curriculum”, all of which may refer to the replacement of formal obligations or to a compulsory activity that would be quite against the principles of volunteering.¹⁹

* Q: WHAT KIND OF NATIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMMES HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT?

The T-Kit on International Voluntary Service identifies some dimensions of voluntary service in general. In terms of duration, voluntary service projects can be categorised as short-, medium-, and long-term projects, ranging from a few days to several months (work camps, for example, usually provide short-term volunteering projects for a maximum of a few weeks). Geographically speaking, voluntary service can be performed at local, national and international levels and the volunteers can be specialised or non-specialised. Volunteers can be placed in voluntary

service projects individually or as part of a group. Finally, voluntary service is open to all age groups, although usually with a lower age limit of 18 years for legal reasons. There are many voluntary service programmes targeting young people of up to 25-30 years of age.²⁰

Volunteering and voluntary service play an important role in many diverse sectors such as education, youth, culture, sports, environment, health, social care, consumer protection, humanitarian aid, development, research and equal opportunities.²¹

An example of a Euro-Med Voluntary Service project...

The “Kfar Vradim Euro Med Desk”, located in Israel, hosted four volunteers from Germany and Austria to work with disabled and disadvantaged young people. One of the volunteers worked in the Druze village of Chofesh with children at risk and youngsters from very poor socio-economic backgrounds. The volunteer was involved in informal activities with these youngsters after school hours that involved arts and crafts, dance and help with homework. Two volunteers went to Maalot - Tarshicha, a multi cultural community, to work in the Cochav (Star) Center dealing with autistic people. Their activities included working in arts and crafts, the carpentry shop, the plant houses and the special paper factory. All these activities were organised not only to help occupy the participants and help them develop physically and mentally but also to provide them with a source of income, as a way of facilitating their acceptance by the community. The fourth volunteer worked in two places: in Kfar Vradim in the junior high school with young people with special educational needs and in Hadera with the minority Ethiopian community that suffers from alienation, unemployment and socially related problems. The volunteer worked with these young people after school hours helping them with their school work and developing and implementing other activities.

Dan Wollner, Director of the EuroMed Desk (Kfar Vradim)
Source: *EuroMed Magazine, July 2005, #5, p. 14.*

¹⁷ Quoted in the European Commission (2010: 50). - ¹⁸ T-Kit on International Voluntary Service (2002: 9). - ¹⁹ European Commission (2010: 50), European Youth Forum (2006: 20).

²⁰ T-Kit on International Voluntary Service (2002: 9-10). - ²¹ European Commission (2010: 27).

Non-formal education and intercultural learning are two important aspects of almost all volunteering and voluntary service activities in the area of youth work.

Non-formal learning can be defined as “a system outside formal education, which brings together resources, people, objectives, tools and methods to produce a structured learning process.”²² **Volunteering, and especially voluntary service, has a huge potential for providing such a structured learning process for the volunteers and contributing to young peoples’ lives in terms of personal development, employability and active citizenship.**²³

In terms of non-formal learning, it is also important to mention that the “learning-service” balance is a key issue in voluntary service projects. While the volunteer’s knowledge acquisition is very important, the organisations involved in voluntary service projects also learn from the volunteer’s involvement.

Another important aspect of voluntary service, namely **intercultural learning**, is defined by Claves as “a process of social education aimed at promoting a positive relationship between people and groups from different cultural backgrounds, based upon mutual recognition, equality and dignity, and giving a positive value to cultural difference.”²⁴ Since in any volunteering activity, whether local, national or international, “the exchange and encounter between people with different cultural backgrounds, living together and sharing everyday responsibilities”²⁵ is inevitable, volunteering has the potential to challenge the prejudices, stereotypes and perceptions of both the volunteer and those involved in or targeted by a volunteering activity. Through volunteering activities, young people not only become aware of cultural differences, they also develop further specific competences to deal with different situations. This is one of the basic components of volunteering, which makes volunteering and voluntary service such a valuable “learning experience”.

For the participants of “EVS Odysseys in EuroMed”, volunteering means...

Networking - informal learning - learning language - new skills - personal development - career - exploring yourself - identity and personality - breaking down prejudices - discovery of cultures - intercultural learning - understanding diversity - getting closer to the social life of a country - discovering oneself and others - changing minds - cooperation for political and social development - conflict resolution - new challenges, new opportunities, small global villages - equal opportunities - challenging our image of the world and foreign countries - learning about other countries - giving and taking - intercultural dialogue between Europe and Meda - communication - helping others - breaking down stereotypes - opportunity to learn more about the country and culture of the volunteer - exchanging ideas, good practices - rebuilding and critical analysis of our values and the ways of thinking between European and Meda countries - making peace (not politically but in our minds) between Euromed countries - reflection on new actions to local community - possibility to gain work experience - sharing - challenging - being active in society - discovering another world and culture - new dimension of the world - helping yourself and the world - breaking political stereotypes— showing solidarity - Christians, Muslims and Jews loving each other.

Source: Activity Reports of “EVS Odyssey in EuroMed” Greece 2006, Denmark 2007, Norway 2008 and France 2008.



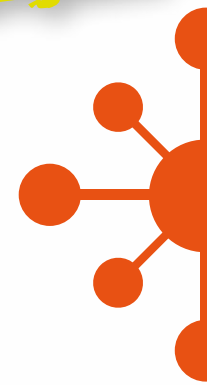
Challenges to volunteering and voluntary service

Everywhere in the world, volunteering and voluntary service face social, cultural, economic, legal and political challenges that represent intentional or unintentional obstacles for the young people and youth organisations pursuing volunteering activities. These factors are not mutually exclusive, since the level of volunteering depends on a combination of factors such as “the economic and political situation, the stage of development of the third sector and its image, the culture of volunteering, and the labour markets.”²⁶ Some of those challenges may become even more serious in formal international volunteering situations. As mentioned before, approaches to volunteering differ given the many

different contexts involved. Those approaches are often shaped by the cultural and social contexts in which the volunteering activities take place. One of the challenges to volunteering is the “absence of social awareness about the concept and value of (formal) volunteer work.”²⁷ For example, in Egypt, some families fear that “volunteer work could negatively affect the educational progress of their children”²⁸, since the higher education systems in many Mediterranean countries are not very flexible and do not always allow for interruptions in the education cycle. Such absences can therefore carry the risk of limited social appreciation for the volunteer and the volunteering

²² Taylor (2009: 8). - ²³ Taylor (2009: 9). - ²⁴ Claves (1992: 82), quoted in Cunha and Gomes (2009: 89). - ²⁵ T-Kit on International Voluntary Service (2002: 16).

²⁶ Hadzi-Miceva (2007: 37-38). - ²⁷ United Nations Volunteers (2010: 53). - ²⁸ Ibid.



activity. In addition, military service in many Mediterranean countries imposes constraints on young males who might otherwise be attracted by international volunteering activities. Young women in many countries also face cultural barriers set up by their families or spouses with regard to international mobility. In some countries, young people may need or are expected to start earning

money as soon as they have completed their education (sometimes even to terminate their studies early) for economic reasons. This may lead them to consider volunteering in general, and long-term volunteering in particular, as a "waste of time" rather than as a means of personal development. The approach to volunteering from civil society organisations can also be included in this challenge category.

I left a five-year job for a one-year voluntary service project in Europe, and people at home did not understand why. "Work" is more appreciated by people than a "voluntary" activity...

Sally Salem, Egypt Former EVS volunteer

The legal framework for volunteering is an issue that can be both an opportunity and a challenge. Volunteering activities and (especially long-term) volunteers are both directly and indirectly very much affected by a series of laws, ranging from labour to tax laws.²⁹ When laws and regulations define, recognise and promote volunteering, remove legal obstacles and support its practice, "facilitate the mobilisation of citizens", define the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and "devise specific measures" to accommodate volunteering projects, they have the potential to further the development of volunteering in a particular setting.³⁰ The legal framework becomes a challenge to volunteering, however, when there is "high degree of government supervision and centralisation over volunteerism and civil society generally"³¹,

which is the case in many Arab countries, or when "it creates obstacles and impedes volunteering" as can be the case in European countries³². In some Mediterranean countries, for example, it can be very difficult to set up a youth organisation and sometimes those organisations encounter difficulties when using the international funds they receive for sending or hosting volunteers.³³ Difficulty obtaining a visa, especially from European countries, is another example of the sort of legal obstacles to volunteering that exist. The misapplication of labour laws, taxation of volunteering, loss of unemployment benefits and being forced to implement a volunteer project under dangerous conditions are other problems that can arise.³⁴

* Q: WHAT KIND OF OBSTACLES TO VOLUNTEERING IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS CAN YOU THINK OF?

There is also a high dependency between the economy and volunteering. The economic contribution of volunteering to the national economy is huge in many countries and putting a figure on such an economic value is a key argument when justifying the

benefits of volunteering.³⁵ In addition, the provision of public or private funding for volunteering and volunteer organisations and their continuing sustainability is also an important aspect of the relation between the economy and volunteering.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

In the United Kingdom 23 million people volunteer each year; providing a workforce equivalent to 180,000 full-time workers. The economic value of formal volunteering in the UK has been estimated at more than EUR 65 billion per year or 7.9% of the Gross Domestic Product.

Belgians devote 5 hours per week to non-paid voluntary activities, which is equivalent to around 200,000 full time jobs.

In Poland, around 5.4 million citizens volunteered in 2004, representing 18.3% of the population. The estimated economic value of volunteering came to EUR 124 million.

Time spent volunteering within associations in France was equivalent to over 716,000 full time jobs in 2002.

Source: European Volunteer Centre (2006: 3).

²⁹ Hadzi-Miceva (2007: 40). - ³⁰ United Nations Volunteers (2010: 40). - ³¹ United Nations Volunteers (2010: 23). - ³² Hadzi-Miceva (2007: 38). - ³³ Participants of the Seminar in Roubaix/France on "EuroMediterranean Voluntary work as a tool for the human development: The example of the EuroMediterranean voluntary service", 2-6 December 2009, Roubaix, France. - ³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ European Commission (2010: 132).



PART II - An international institutional framework for volunteering and voluntary work in the Euro-Mediterranean context: Euro-Med Youth Programme and Youth in Action Programme

The European Union provides one of the best-structured international formal volunteering opportunities for young people both in Europe and in the Mediterranean partner countries. Together with youth exchanges and support measures, the European Voluntary Service (EVS) has long been a tool to increase the intercultural skills and competencies of young people and to promote active citizenship and active participation through volunteering in Europe. With the kick-off of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme in 1999, its coverage was enlarged to include the experiences of young people from and to the Mediterranean Partner countries of the Barcelona Process, with an intensified intercultural cultural dimension, through extended partnership between youth organisations and participation of young people from both sides of the Mediterranean.

Cutting across all the different actions of the Programme, a number of key areas are considered central to the development of the youth sector at the Euro-Mediterranean level. Respecting gender balance and the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in the projects have always been considered as horizontal issues to be promoted by the programme. These aims were further developed in the later stages of the Programme to include fostering intercultural dialogue among young people within the Euro-Mediterranean region and

contributing to the development of youth policy.

By 2010, the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the field of youth had entered a new phase with two complementary programmes: Phase IV (2010-2013) of Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme and Youth in Action Programme through its Action 3.1 (Cooperation with the Neighbouring Countries of the European Union).

The general objective of Phase IV is to support and strengthen the participation and contribution of youth organisations and youth from the Euro-Mediterranean region in the development of civil society and democracy. The specific objectives are:

- To stimulate and encourage mutual understanding between young people within the Euro-Mediterranean region and to fight against stereotypes and prejudices
- To promote active citizenship among young people and enhance their sense of solidarity
- To contribute to the development of youth policies in different partner countries.

The implementation of the Euro-Med Youth Programme has always depended on collaboration of different key actors at the national and international level. The following scheme visualises the main actors of this collaboration.

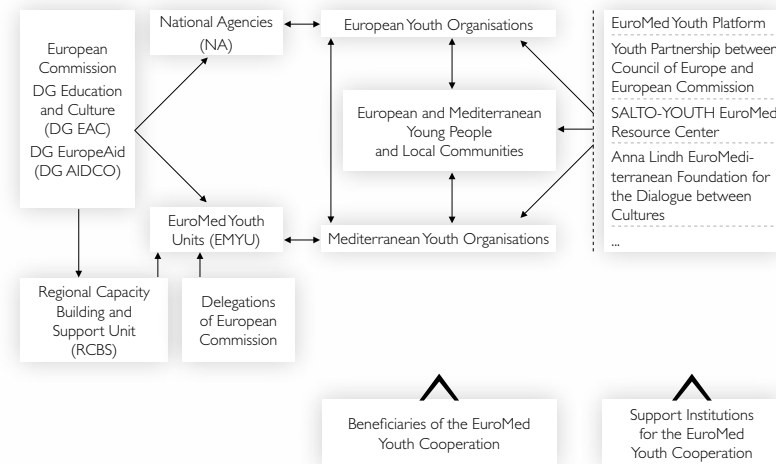


Figure: Actors of the EuroMed Youth Cooperation

Euro-Med youth cooperation has always covered two groups of countries, namely the EU member states and the Mediterranean Partner countries. Throughout the development of the Euro-Med Youth Programme, the composition of the beneficiary countries of the Programme has been changed and enlarged from one phase to another. For the period 2010-2013, nine Mediterranean Partner countries

(Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory and Tunisia) will benefit from Phase IV of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme and 27 European Union member states will participate in Euro-Med youth cooperation through Action 3.1 of the Youth in Action Programme.

PART III - European Voluntary Service in the Euro-Mediterranean Context



A particular form of volunteering in the Euro-Mediterranean context: European and Euro-Mediterranean Voluntary Service

European Voluntary Service (EVS) as a specific form of formal international volunteering and voluntary work is an individual mobility scheme for young people via international activities within a non-formal education setting.

It was initiated as a separate programme funded by the European Union in 1996 and since then has become an integral part of EU youth programmes.

... it's easy to present these 3 letters *EVS*: they mean "European Volunteers Service" - although some call it the "European Vacation Service" (and sometimes I feel the same way) and others call it "European volunteer survivor;" ... for me it's all these definitions ... it's the best experience that I have had in all my life and it will help me a lot in the future and the future is a result of the past..

*Houcem³⁶, Morocco
Former EVS Volunteer in Greece*

EVS places young people, as volunteers, at its centre. It is a "learning experience" and more precisely a "non-formal and "intercultural" learning experience for the young people involved in youth work activities as volunteers. It offers young people an opportunity to take part in a non-profit-making, unpaid, full-time activity for the benefit of the general public and community in a country other than their country of residence.³⁷

Through EVS, young people get a change to contribute to social cohesion and solidarity and to considerably enhance their personal, professional and intercultural skills and competencies³⁸. Being a volunteer in another country for a specific period provides young people with an informal and non-formal intercultural learning experience by encouraging their integration into society and their active participation by supporting the development of and their involvement in local communities.

Some Key Competences to help describe learning outcomes of an EVS experience

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn
- Social and intercultural competence
- Civic competence
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Cultural awareness and expression

Source: von Hebel (2009: 20).

The implementation of EVS builds on trans-national partnerships between youth organisations and the volunteer, promoting local projects that require everybody's commitment.³⁹ This means that it is not only the volunteer who benefits from the EVS projects, but also **youth and civil society organisations**. Through their involvement in EVS as sending and host organisations, they find chances to create new partnerships and opportunities to promote the exchange of experiences and good practices.⁴⁰

Last but not least, **local communities**, as the volunteering spaces and working environments of the volunteers, benefit from the involvement of the volunteer in ways that help them meet the needs of society in a wide range of fields. Voluntary service activities can take place in a variety of areas: culture; activities with children, young people or the elderly; sports and leisure; care; heritage; education; arts; civil protection; environment; development cooperation, etc.⁴¹

Why is Euro-Med cooperation important for my local community?

Local impact - citizenship - new inspiration - more information for my neighbourhood - cultural exchange - help from the volunteer(s) - to show another image of our country - better understanding between peoples and fewer conflicts - build up our own identity and develop human beings - break stereotypes...

Participants of the EVS Odyssey in EuroMed, Denmark 2007

...The needs of my local community

Intercultural awareness - meeting others in a different context - different working styles - learning from diversity - breaking stereotypes in the local community - giving a positive image of young people - active participation - the social benefit of the project - open mind - global - testing changing values - advertising the community - bringing a different culture into another country - learning a new culture - new language - new ideas, new perspectives - new opportunity for new partnership - getting a better understanding of the real situation in another country - getting experience from the volunteer - equal opportunity to develop local potential, someone to support it - supporting the work in the organisation

Participants of the EVS Odyssey in EuroMed, Norway 2008

* Q: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE EVS IN EUROMED TO SOMEONE WHO IS NOT INVOLVED IN YOUTH WORK?

What EVS is NOT:

- an occasional, unstructured, part-time volunteering activity
- an internship in an enterprise
- a paid job or a substitute for a paid job
- an exploitation of a cheap workforce
- a recreation or tourist activity
- a language course
- a period of study or vocational training abroad
- a substitute for military service or alternative service formulas.

The actors in EVS can be described as following ones.

The volunteer⁴²

Any young person who is legally resident in any Mediterranean partner country or any EU Member State and aged between 18 and 30 is eligible to become an EVS volunteer. Volunteers give their time and effort for a project benefiting the local community in

exchange for an opportunity to practice their skills and to acquire new cultural and social competencies that they will be able to use in the future. During their voluntary service, volunteers are responsible for the practical tasks assigned to them and have a general obligation to contribute something to

the hosting organisation and the local community where the voluntary service takes place.⁴³

Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities is an important priority for EVS to ensure access to all young people. Young people with fewer opportunities are defined as "young people who are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more of the situations and obstacles", which "in certain contexts, prevent young people from having effective access to formal and non-formal education, trans-national mobility and participation, active citizenship, empowerment and inclusion in society at large"⁴⁴.

Sending organisations⁴⁵

The sending organisation can be any type of non-governmental organisation, an association, a local authority or any other non-profit-making local initiative can be a sending organisation. Sending organisations play a major role in helping the volunteer throughout the every stage of the EVS project from the moment of joining the project, through assistance and guidance during the project, to providing help when the volunteer needs it during the project or when the volunteer returns home. The sending organisation's input is particularly important in terms of both preparing and following up the EVS project and the volunteer.⁴⁶

Why does my organisation want to do EVS in Euro-Med?

Networking; exchange of ideas and experiences; money; added value (no former contacts in Meda); complies with the mission of my organisation, which is to "promote peace through intercultural understanding"; need to become more international; expanding borders; different ideas and ways to combine cultures; to be better informed about Europe; to open minds...

Participants of the EVS Odyssey in EuroMed, Greece 2006 and Denmark 2007

Hosting organisations⁴⁷

An important element of the Voluntary Service projects is the existence of a variety of environments for the volunteers. The organisations that provide such environments for the volunteers are called host organisations. Voluntary Service projects bring together different organisations, projects, local authorities and other initiatives. By welcoming a volunteer,

host organisations bring new and fresh ideas and intercultural elements into their regular activities. Any type of non-governmental organisation, association, local authority or any other non-profit-making local initiative can act as a host organisation.

The Mentor⁴⁸

The mentor is a person who is responsible for giving personal support to the volunteer. The volunteer can also turn to his/her mentor when problems arise. The mentor is somebody different from the task-related supervisor of the volunteer or another person involved in the volunteer's project and s/he works to facilitate the volunteer's integration into the local community. The mentor also plays a crucial role with regard to risk prevention and crisis management throughout the volunteering activity.

An EVS project ideally goes through three phases⁴⁹, in which sending organisations and hosting organisations share the responsibility for ensuring a positive learning experience for the volunteers and for the local community. Non-formal learning principles are reflected horizontally in all those phases:

- planning and preparation
- implementation of the activity
- evaluation (including reflection on a possible follow up).

Are there specific characteristics for EVS in the Euro-Mediterranean context?

EVS gives young people an opportunity to live in a different country and experience an intercultural learning experience through non-formal education. EVS in the Euro-Mediterranean context is an intensive intercultural learning experience both for the young person and for the youth organisations involved in the projects. Given the deeply rooted prejudices and stereotypes between the north and south of the Mediterranean, Euro-Mediterranean EVS provides

a unique chance for young people to reflect on themselves, their values, different ways of working and also to learn from each other. Voluntary Service in the Euro-Mediterranean context has the potential to help eliminate the deeply-rooted and often biased perceptions that young people have about different cultures, based on historical and contemporary phenomena such as colonialism, orientalism, occidentalism, islamophobia, antisemitism or migration.

Some of the duties of the actors of EVS at the different phases of the projects are summarised in the figure

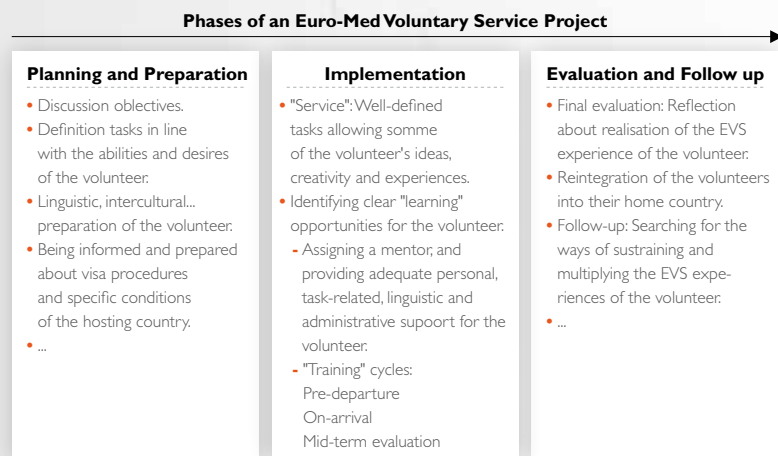


Figure: Phases of an EuroMed Voluntary Service Project

EVS in the context of EuroMed has some specific features...

...break down the fears people have about being involved in social projects and activities other than work, get to know different cultures and traditions and meet different kinds of people from different countries.

Former volunteer

When I started to think about my EVS, I thought first about the possibility of going to another European country (I had contacts in Italy or France), but I realised I was looking for "something else", something less "conventional" (pardon me for this expression!) than another EU country. I wanted a real change of scenery!

...

*Bruno Neto⁵⁰, Portugal
 Former EVS Volunteer in Jordan*

EVS in the Euro-Mediterranean context becomes even more special when the philosophy of the programme regarding the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities is concerned. The Euro-Med Youth Programme gives young people,

who may seem to be privileged in their home country in terms of their level of education or economic conditions but not in terms of mobility, an opportunity to encounter other cultures and live in another country for a period of time.

⁴⁸ European Commission (2002b). - ⁴⁹ More information about the phases of an EVS project, and especially on the training cycle, can be found in European Commission, Youth in Action Programme Guide, and in European Commission (2004c).

⁵⁰ Bruno (2004).

What makes EVS in Euro-Med special?

- colours of cultures
- easily accessible and funded
- politically, culturally and geographically interesting
- Europe opening up – comes from a need
- helps to break stereotypes
- equality (young people with fewer opportunities)
- discovery of the origins of immigrants in European countries
- ...

Participants of EVS Odyssey in EuroMed - Denmark 2007

Last but not least, the Euro-Med Youth Programme provides a unique funding opportunity for mobility through the international voluntary service activities of both young people and youth

organisations, which is always useful given the economic constraints of many youth organisations in both Mediterranean and European countries.



Realities and perceptions of EVS in the Euro-Mediterranean context

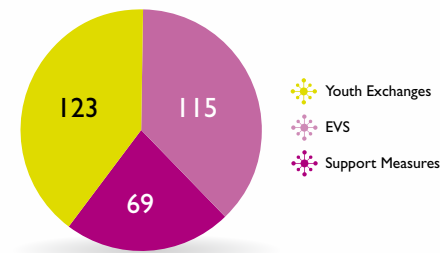
Ten years of experience with the Euro-Med Youth Programme is an indicator of successful participation of youth organisations and young people in different Actions of the Programme, especially Youth Exchanges and Support Measures. However, the numbers and findings of various evaluations show that EVS has had a lower degree of participation than the other actions of the Programme and its implemen-

tation has encountered various problems.⁵¹ This section explores the present situation of the EVS action within the Euro-Med Youth Programme (especially that of Phase III), by firstly looking at the data indicating the level of participation in the European Voluntary Service action of the Euro-Med Youth Programme and then at the perceptions of beneficiaries of the Programme in its Phase III stage.

A statistical look at EVS in the Euro-Mediterranean region

When we take a quick look at the total number of projects under the three different actions of the Programme, it becomes clear that the number of EVS projects is considerably lower than those of the youth

exchanges and support measures. In EuroMed Phase III, only 69 out of a total of 307 projects (in other words, only one-fifth of all projects) were Voluntary Service projects (Graph 1).



Graph 1: Number of Projects within the EuroMed cooperation

Nevertheless, it is a positive sign that the number of EVS projects and number of volunteers involved in those projects have increased since Phase I (Table 1) and a total number of 645 volunteers⁵² benefited from

a mobility and learning experience through an EVS action of the Euro-Med Youth Programme between the years 2000-2008.

	Euro-Med Phase I European Level Selections			Euro-Med Phase II European Level Selections		Euro-Med Phase III and Youth in Action Decentralised Selections	Grand Total
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2007-2008	
Projects	22	28	46	44	67	69	276
Volunteers	55	51	62	104	121	252	645

Table 1: Number of EVS projects and volunteers in the three phases of EuroMed cooperation.

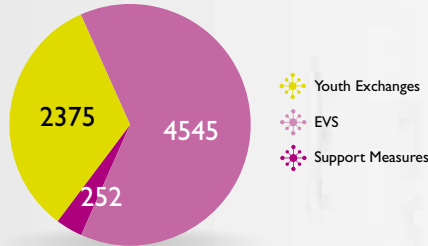
⁵¹ European Commission (2004a).

⁵² Lesser numbers (also see Table 1) due to the lack of exact numbers of volunteers in the Compendia.

*** Q: LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS, WHY DO YOU THINK EVS IS THE LEAST POPULAR ACTION OF THE EURO-MED YOUTH PROGRAMME?**

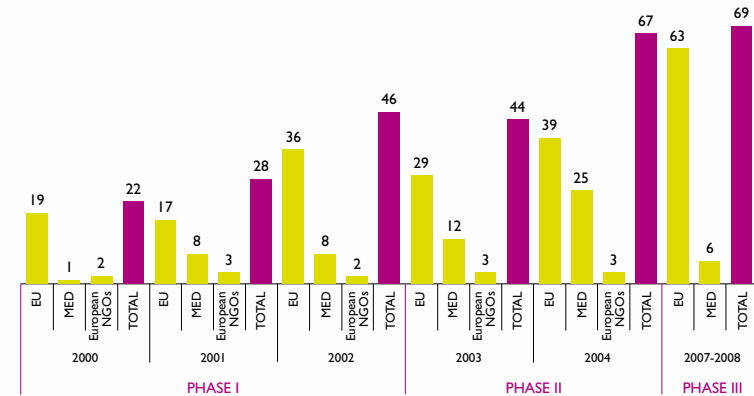
Out of a total 252 volunteers in Euro-Med Phase III and Youth in Action cooperation, only nine projects hosted within EuroMed Youth III, while hosted and sent within Youth in Action 243 volunteers. Although one of the reasons could be the

difficulties generated by decentralised procedures in Mediterranean countries, another explanation could be the limited number of hosting projects in those countries.



Graph 2: Number of participants in the Euro-Med Cooperation (2007-2008)

When we look at all the EVS projects in the context of the Euro-Med Youth Programme in all its phases, one striking feature (see Graph 3) is that more European organisations apply for EVS projects than do their Mediterranean counterparts.



Graph 3: EVS projects in the context of the Euro-Med Youth Programme (2000-2008)

A total of 226 organisations from 43 countries benefited from the financial support provided by EVS projects within the context of the Euro-Med Youth III and Youth in Action Programmes (2007-2008).

Perceptions and experience of EVS partners: A SWOT Analysis on Euro-Mediterranean Voluntary Service

The collection of positive and negative data from former beneficiaries and partners of the EVS action in the Euro-Med Youth Programme is of the utmost importance for many reasons. The perceptions of the beneficiaries, namely the volunteers and participating organisations, give insights into how the Programme has been implemented on the one hand and into the quality of completed EVS projects on the other. From this point of view, the experience of the beneficiaries is one of the most important tools to further develop EVS actions in the Euro-Med Youth Programme in its future phases.

Consequently, all the beneficiary organisations of the EVS action within the Phase III of the Euro-Med Youth Programme were invited to share their experience and perceptions in relation to the implementation of EVS in the context of Euro-Mediterranean youth cooperation through a SWOT analysis as part of this study. More than 200 questionnaires were sent to representatives of the European and Mediterranean organisations that were directly involved in an accepted and funded EVS project within the Euro-Med Youth Programme.⁵³ Table 2 shows how the SWOT analysis was adapted to the aims of the research on the Euro-Med Voluntary Service.

⁵³ The details of the applicant organisations were taken from the SALTO-Youth EuroMed Resource Centre's publication "EuroMed Youth Projects: Two Years of Euro-Mediterranean Youth Cooperation 2007-2008", which lists all Phase III projects in the Programme.

What did the “SWOT” analysis mean in and for Euro-Med EVS?

STRENGTHS
 of Euro-Med EVS

Internal origin-attributes of the Youth Programmes and helpful to achieving the objectives of Euro-Med EVS action. What is Euro-Med EVS doing well?

WEAKNESSES
 of Euro-Med EVS

Internal origin-attributes of the Youth Programmes and harmful to achieving the objectives of Euro-Med EVS action. What is not working successfully in the Euro-Med EVS?

OPPORTUNITIES
 for Euro-Med EVS

External origin-attributes of the environment and helpful to achieving the objectives of Euro-Med EVS action. What potential is there to increase the chances of attaining the objectives of EVS in the Euro-Med context? What favourable external factors exist?

THREATS
 for Euro-Med EVS

External origin-attributes of the environment & harmful to achieving the objectives of Euro-Med EVS action. What external factors could reduce the number and quality of Euro-Med EVS projects?

Table 2: Adaptation of SWOT analysis for the aims of the research on the Euro-Med Voluntary Service.

In terms of the “strengths” of the Euro-Med Voluntary Service, the input from the beneficiary organisations can be categorised in five groups: Contribution of EVS to intercultural learning; contribution of EVS to the personal development of young people; local impact; contribution of EVS to the organisations; and technical aspects.

STRENGTHS of Euro-Med EVS - Contribution to intercultural understanding

- It can contribute to intercultural understanding through the young person’s experiences in each country visited; mutual cultural understanding.
- It fosters intercultural dialogue and provides an opportunity to create real images of cultural and socio-political realities in participating countries.
- It contributes to highlighting and enhancing the richness of cultures in the EuroMed region.
- It contributes to changing the negative image of Islam and of “occidental cultures”.
- It provides an opportunity for real cultural encounters over a longer period.
- It provides great learning opportunities for all the learning partners mainly about different cultural perspectives, working styles, living styles, time perception, family relations.
- It is a good tool for de-stigmatising Islam.
- It helps break down stereotypes within European cultures.
- It helps bridge the Mediterranean sea.

STRENGTHS of Euro-Med EVS - Contribution to the personal development of young people

- EVS can help young people build their personalities during their stay in the host country. It is also instrumental in consolidating self-sufficiency in young people...etc
- It teaches young people to be more tolerant, open and self-confident.
- It gives an opportunity for young people to easily learn another language.
- It helps the personal and professional development of young people.
- It provides young people (who otherwise would never or hardly ever travel) it with an opportunity to travel (especially young people from Meda countries).

STRENGTHS of Euro-Med EVS - Local impact

- Volunteering is important for our youngsters, they can learn more about other cultures, volunteer work, how to commit to a social cause etc.
- The practical activities are quite useful in this kind of context and are a tool for learning more about local communities
- It gives youngsters (from deprived backgrounds) an opportunity to meet volunteers from their fatherland, to learn about cultures, social involvement etc.
- It provides different activities for local communities.

STRENGTHS of Euro-Med EVS - Contribution to organisations

- EVS helps establish networks of youth organisations and make links.
- It helps build networks of organisations and volunteers.
- It shows new ways of working.
- The volunteer also helps broaden the mindset of our organisation, forces us to look beyond our own daily preoccupations and problems and see things differently as a result.

STRENGTHS of Euro-Med EVS - Technical aspects

- It necessitates event planning.
- It provides on-line forms.
- It provides publications on web sites.
- Principle of decentralisation and cooperation between Mediterranean partner countries and the EU.

Regarding the “**weaknesses**” of the Euro-Med Voluntary Services, beneficiaries pointed out four categories of weaknesses that can be broken down into: preparation and implementation; target groups; technical aspects and political aspects.

WEAKNESSES of Euro-Med EVS - Preparation and implementation

- Not enough preparation on intercultural issues and how to deal with them.
- No possibility of preparatory meetings for all volunteers, not only those with fewer opportunities.
- Without proper preparation and monitoring the project can be a fiasco: volunteers can misunderstand the culture.
- Before receiving a volunteer, the host organisation should prepare a well-structured and goals-oriented programme for the volunteer, so that the volunteer can benefit as much as possible from her/his stay in the host country.
- The volunteer, once in the host country, is not always well-accompanied and informed about the host country at the beginning of his/her stay to ensure he/she feels comfortable later.
- Lack of socio-cultural sensitivity; limited adjustment to cultural and socio-economics differences.

WEAKNESSES of Euro-Med EVS - Current target groups

- In practice EVS is open only to a certain target group and does not really offer opportunities to all kinds of young people.
- Local NGOs and municipalities are not always well-informed about EVS.
- Some projects in Meda countries are essentially “manufactured projects” which means that volunteers do not really have a chance to do a “real” EVS.

WEAKNESSES of Euro-Med EVS - Technical aspects

- Not enough calls in the EuroMed Programme.
- There is no useful database for volunteering candidates' research on hosting organisations.
- Lack of flexibility and adaptability.
- Lack of funds for projects.
- Programme priorities don't correspond to the needs and strategies of the Mediterranean area.
- Lack of training strategy at a national level.
- Length of time to get EVS volunteers approved.
- Most of the process takes a long time to complete.
- Out of date databases for organisations.
- Shortage of most of the required materials.

WEAKNESSES of Euro-Med EVS - Political aspects

- A number of sending organisations don't want to send volunteers to Palestine.
- Volunteers often have difficulties getting a visa for the project, meaning that the European objectives are not really accepted by the host country since they see the project as a kind of migration of young people who are not European.

In terms of the “**opportunities**” for the Euro-Med Voluntary Service, the outcome of the analysis can be broken down into three categories: political and cultural opportunities; cooperation and networking; and technical opportunities.



OPPORTUNITIES for Euro-Med EVS - Political

- A more peaceful world context would increase the chance of realising EVS objectives in the EuroMed context.
- Immigration in Europe fosters in many young people the curiosity to live and know Meda countries and to learn Arabic.
- EVS projects are European projects, so they provide an opportunity to be recognised by Europe, (although national governments and administrations do not always accept EuroMed EVS projects (e.g. visa



OPPORTUNITIES for Euro-Med EVS - Cultural

- Discovering that Mediterranean countries have similar cultural backgrounds.
- Friendly and supportive social context, where the volunteer feels protected.
- Possibility of developing a family dimension to host volunteers.
- Idea of discovering the richness of cultural and educational differences.
- Appeal for volunteers of learning and contributing, leading to a real balance between service and learning.
- Opportunities for intercultural learning.



OPPORTUNITIES for Euro-Med EVS - Cooperation and networking

- Develop common sending and hosting projects.
- Support for quality (expertise, training, networking).
- Common understanding of the meaning of voluntary work.
- Multiplicity of the sent and hosted youth in one country.
- Existence of strong host programmes.
- Projects where volunteers are really needed.



OPPORTUNITIES for Euro-Med EVS - Technical

- MEDA partners can apply directly, giving them ownership of the project.
- Improving the funding process for major events.

In terms of the “**threats**” for the Euro-Med Voluntary Service, beneficiaries’ input can be categorised in three groups: Political, cultural and technical threats.



THREATS for Euro-Med EVS - Political

- An unstable world context could disrupt the furthering of EVS objectives.
- Political factors such as relations between countries.
- Political situations - political instability.
- Visa issues sometimes prevent projects from completion because Consulates only issue visas for a shorter period that that required to complete the project.
- Visas - limit to mobility and restriction on participation.
- Difficulty for volunteers to renew visas.
- Possibility of illegal immigration.



THREATS for Euro-Med EVS - Cultural

- Spread of stereotypes and extremism of all types in the world.
- Different social systems, juridical frameworks, cultural dimensions, necessitating longer preparation times.
- Different perceptions of time so strongly motivated volunteers can have problems.
- Different understanding of the “project” by Euro and Meda partners, also different understanding of volunteering.
- Lack of recognition of non-formal education.
- Lack of communication.



THREATS for Euro-Med EVS - Technical

- Slow payments from National Agencies.
- Not enough visibility for EVS.
- Lack of collaboration with young people.
- Abandoned projects.
- Unmotivated volunteers.



The SWOT analysis and perceptions of former volunteers differ slightly from those of beneficiary organisations and partners of EuroMed Voluntary Service projects.

Outcomes of the SWOT Analysis by Former EuroMed Voluntary Service Volunteers



STRENGTHS of Euro-Med EVS

- Breaks down borders and stereotypes.
- Gives more self confidence.
- Group building.
- Good interaction between volunteers and the local community.
- A chance to learn a new language and a new culture.
- Connecting people (I met many people that otherwise I would never have met).
- Being part of a social activity (it is a good feeling for me).
- Different youth programmes and activities.
- Euro-Med EVS sends volunteers from different countries with useful experience.
- YouthPass Certificates.
- Euro-Med EVS helps those who want to create new projects and volunteers can improve their personal experience in this way.



WEAKNESSES of Euro-Med EVS

- EVS needs to be publicised more so that the whole world knows more about it.
- Although everything has gone well so far, everything takes a lot of time to organise
- Volunteers are not allowed to work in another job and the money is not good enough.
- Sometimes too little information (about everything).
- Some national agencies are not well organised (some even forget to invite volunteers when they arrange a seminar (e.g. on-arrival training) for them.
- Some of the people working in national agencies don't work seriously so unfortunate events occur, which can make volunteers unhappy.



OPPORTUNITIES for Euro-Med EVS

- Every country has its own behaviour.
- Check on volunteers from time to time
- Try to make EVS something that everybody wants to do by making the certificate desirable to external companies or other organisations
- Try to help volunteers with their studies or to find some kind of work after they finish their projects.
- Everybody can take part in this kind of project and nobody needs to pay any money.
- If you want to go abroad to improve yourself, your personal experience or your foreign language skills, you expect to spend money but if you participate in an EVS project, it doesn't cost you anything because all the costs are taken care of by the European Union.
- Hosting organisations should establish a flat rate and pay volunteers per month.
- Everybody between 18-30 years of age can take advantage of this programme.



THREATS for Euro-Med EVS

- A little more pocket money or more facilities for travelling, visiting museums etc.
- When a volunteer does not have the same pocket money as other volunteers, the quality of his/her experience abroad is negatively affected.
- Euro 26 card is not recognised and accepted everywhere (I have never had a chance to use it).
- Bad conditions in the hosting house.
- Giving volunteers too much work.
- Bad treatment from hosting organisation.
- When volunteers have problems or they don't get on with their roommate, it can negatively affect the quality of their aims during their projects.

Conclusions and Recommendations

How can the positive impact of the volunteering experience through EVS be improved for all those involved?

As highlighted earlier in this study, through various findings such as: the input on volunteering and voluntary work in general; the activity reports from EVS training courses; the outcomes of the SWOT analysis from volunteers, sending and hosting organisations; the needs of grassroots youth organisations and the results of previous internal evaluations of the Euro-Med Youth Programme, there are a number of issues and challenges that need further attention in order to develop volunteering, voluntary work and voluntary service in the context of Euro-Mediterranean youth work. With this in mind, identification of those needs and challenges and the setting out of some recommendations may be helpful to improve the quality and quantity of volunteering and EVS projects in the Euro-Mediterranean context and ensure better implementation in the future.

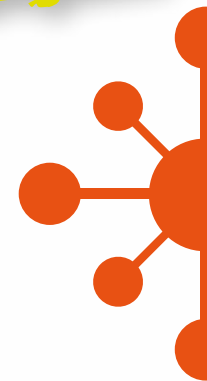
With regard to the quantity of EVS projects in the Euro-Mediterranean context, one of the biggest challenges is the social and cultural approach to volunteering in general and EVS in particular. The philosophy behind volunteering and voluntary service needs to be further promoted in the partner countries. This study can be considered as a first step to promoting such an aim.

Another challenge to the quantity of the EVS projects seems to be the lack of a proper database listing all the EuroMed Voluntary Service projects, along with all the sending and hosting organisations, volunteers, contact details for all the above, etc. The only reference at the moment is the EuroMed Youth Platform. Most of the information and data is very scattered and cannot be cross-referenced.

(for example, the previous compendia of EVS projects selected at European level does not always mention the number of volunteers in a project). The lower number of project submitted by organisations from the Mediterranean partner countries during the centralised and even more markedly during the decentralised phases of the Euro-Med Youth Programme reflects those organisations' difficulties in completing procedures and meeting requirements for approval of their projects. With regard to the quality of volunteering and EVS projects in Euro-Mediterranean partner countries, there is a need to provide continued support for the beneficiaries. Recent efforts to develop support material for youth organisations by institutions such as the SALTO-Youth EuroMed's practical guide on how to develop a EVS project in the EuroMed region is an example of

Studies and research

the type of effort we recommend. In addition, the preparation, training and evaluation process for volunteers is an important tool to improve the quality of voluntary service projects and ensure a healthy and sustainable learning process for volunteers. In Mediterranean countries, there are no sustained support activities for volunteers, especially incoming volunteers. It is therefore recommended that a sustainable system of pre-departure and on-arrival training sessions, as well as mid-term and final evaluations, be established.



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