

REPORT
On
EVS On-Arrival Training

Belgrade, December 3rd-4th, 2005

Participants

2 volunteers and 2 HO representatives:

- Marie Fournelle (France), volunteer in Educational Centre, Leskovac, Serbia and Montenegro
- Gwennaëlle Guimberteau (France), volunteer in PEL – Progress, Education and Lobbying, Skopje, Macedonia
- Darko Partalov, mentor from PEL – Progress, Education and Lobbying, Skopje, Macedonia
- Dalibor Mihajlovic, mentor from Educational Centre, Leskovac, Serbia and Montenegro



Venue

“Hajde da...” Group - Training Centre facilities, Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro

Training objectives

- To strengthen participants’ awareness about and support their commitment to the concept of the EVS;
- To evaluate and reflect on volunteers’ experience in their host organizations (practical arrangements, HO organizational culture, S-V-M, project tasks...) and mentors’ responsibilities within the EVS project;
- To raise awareness about intercultural learning processes during the EVS (my culture, host’s/volunteer’s culture, ICL, ICL competences);
- To explore (potential) conflict issues and improve basic conflict management skills (understanding conflict, conflict issues, prevention, intervention, practice, conflict theory);
- To support volunteers’ learning processes during the EVS (professional, personal and project related);

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- To strengthen relationship between EVS volunteers and their mentors.

Programme Outline

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Arrival	Introduction Expectations Team building Pre-departure experiences	EVS as an opportunity for Intercultural Learning Conflict transformation
	Sight seeing On-arrival period – impressions & experiences Volunteers’ place in host organization / project Daily evaluation	EVS philosophy EVS as a learning opportunity Setting learning objectives Rights and responsibilities (S – M – V triangle) Evaluation of the training session
Welcome evening - getting to know each other - practical information	Nightlife in Belgrade	Departure

Training Flow

The Training lasted for two working days.

The first part of the **first day** was devoted to *getting to know each other* (actually, this had most sense for the trainers, as the participants, more-less, have already known each other), *building the group* and *setting general framework* for the Training. Participants got general information on planned training program, schedule and methodology that is going to be used. Afterwards, they were asked about question they expect to be answered during the Training. Here are their *expectations*:

- to have more information about the EVS (because it differs from expected);
- to find some “tools” or ideas for self-motivation;
- to get to know more about the place of a volunteer in HO and their projects;
- to get to know more about rights and responsibilities of a mentor;
- to get more information about the EVS project, especially its on-arrival part;



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- to get information about other volunteers in Balkans;
- to find out about training opportunities;
- to get to know more about youth organizations in Balkans;
- to meet new people;
- to have nice time.

Afterwards, we continued to build group cohesion through the activities that included both team building aspect and finding out more information on the YOUTH Programme and especially its Action 2 – the EVS. Participants were asked to make the two presentations about the EVS: one for the local authorities, who could potentially financially or in some other way support the Programme, and the other one for the interested young people. While doing this, participants were allowed to use all available resources (Internet, Group's library, personal experience etc.) and equipment (video beam, laptop, flip charts etc.); there was only one difficulty: during this activity, participants were bounded, arm to arm (like a human chain). This was quite challenging both for trainers to handle (to make it challenging) and for participants to do (and not to have feeling of redundancy). Because, as mentioned above, they all knew each other from before (so, they practically didn't need any team building, as they said themselves) and, on the other hand, both of the volunteers have been seeking for the service for two years, so they already knew quite lot about the EVS.

After the coffee break, we were talking about their *pre-departure experiences*. There were four questions to answer. Both the questions and the answers can be seen below:

1. My most important source of information was...
 - Jean-Michelle (the guy from the sending organization);
 - my previous experience in YOUTH Programme;
 - my boss / coordinator in my organization;
 - Internet.
2. My greatest source of support was...
 - Jean-Michelle
 - my mentor / boss/ coordinator
3. My biggest fear was...
 - that I won't find the convenient HO;
 - that I won't go to the EVS;
 - how will it be to live in a foreign country;
 - I had no fears;
 - how will it be to be at somebody's service 24 hours a day;
4. My main motive was...
 - to live throughout that "experiment";
 - to travel;
 - to meet new people;
 - to meet new culture.

Next part of the day was meant for *Belgrade sight seeing* and included the lunch break. It lasted for three hours.

The afternoon session (consisted of the two workshops) dealt with the *on arrival period*. Volunteers were asked to draw and present their first impression about the culture of the host country and the *curve of intercultural adaptation* was introduced. They agreed that, at the moment, they are somewhere in between of cultural shock and initial adjustment phase.

This was followed by a questionnaire; the volunteers' answers are:

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1. they esteem the welcome on the first day they arrived as ok to good (“Everybody was at the bus station, waiting for me!”, “It’s good to have you here!”, “I felt as I dropped in – ‘This is where you’re staying’ – they said...”);
2. they both are quite satisfied with the communication they have with the people they work with; they speak mostly in English, but: “We talk easily”, “Lots of people speak English and they are also very patient when I use Macedonian”, “I also speak Spanish – learnt it by the TV”. They have language courses: “...but, I learnt more by myself”, “We have a very good teacher – I think I can learn it”.
3. as for the tasks they have in their HOs, their own projects and possible changes to be made: “I’m satisfied; I made my own project, I read, go on the Internet, looking for projects to work



on...copy, coffee...”, “I have a specific project I work on, with kids.”. “I don’t know if I’d change something; I’m not completely satisfied, but it’s difficult to make something if you don’t know the language.”.

4. their working day is quite structured: they are engaged in the HO for 4-5 hours a day (approx. 11am to 3pm), attend language classes, have time for their hobbies and so on.

5. Macedonian volunteer has better accommodation (own room; lives with a flatmate). The girl who serves in Leskovac would like to have the room of her own (as she has a roommate now – a Dutch girl, also on EVS); she tried to find another place to live, but, in the meantime, she tries to accommodate (“We have some problems, i.e. with the electricity, but I think it’s common in Serbia, so – ok.”; “We live like a family, but I need my intimacy.”).

The mentors were also asked to give some comments considering this questionnaire. Both of them mainly agreed with their volunteers. Serbian mentor said that he’s aware of the problems Marie has and he would really like to be of some help; he’s doing his best, but, i.e., he cannot find her a job, because of a language barrier, so she does simple jobs, although she deserves more. Macedonian mentor claimed that they had to wait for month and a half to get a licence from Ministry of Education, in order that Gwen could start working with children in school. But, that’s done now, she had “excellent living conditions”, so he thinks that she’s doing fine.

The last part of that day included working on the *issues of the host organization, the place volunteers have in it and mapping the relationships within HOs* (they all were drawing organigrams marking particular persons they contact with, quality and intensity of the relationship they have with each of them, with special review of potential conflict zones). We found this very useful for both volunteers and mentors, as they had the opportunity to hear each other’s impression about organizational atmosphere; this was also the starting position for the next day’s session about conflicts.

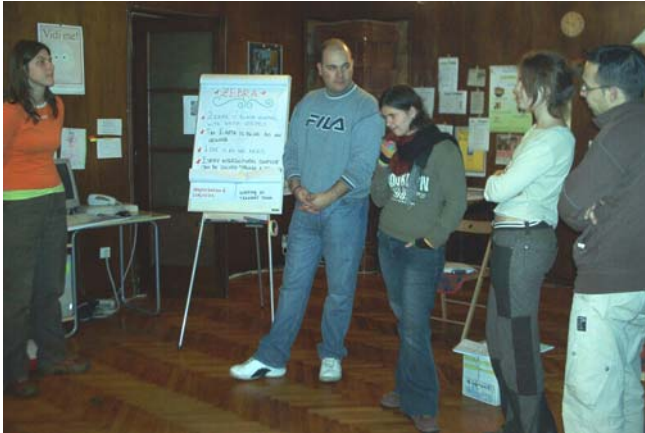
At the very end of the day, we had a *daily evaluation*, in a form of a telegram: each participant was asked to say only three words about the passed day, considering:

- general impression (good, productive, very good, good)

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- the most important thing (interesting – especially curve of intercultural adaptation, session on on-arrival period, my place in organization, visiting Belgrade, learning about EVS mentoring)
- how do I feel now (tired, don't know, not sure, sleepy)



The second day started with the session on the *intercultural learning*. Warming up activity was “zebra”, kind of modification of classical “where do you stand” exercise, with five statements (Zebra is black animal, with white stripes. / The Earth is blue like an orange. / Love is all we need. / Every intercultural conflict can be solved through training. / If you're abroad, you automatically learn intercultural.) and the possibility to choose only between the two positions: yes or no. This arose

very dynamic and interesting discussion and was quite good introduction to the topic. The main activity was the “Abigale” exercise (ICL T-kit, page 56), asking from the participants to make rank-lists on three levels: individual, group and from the perspective of the other culture. This also seemed to be provocative and inspiring for them and helped them to better understand the inputs about the Iceberg model of culture, collision of icebergs and ICL zone (as the base for ICL), steps in the process of ICL; they also were invited to make their own cultural glasses, on whose inner side they wrote all the things that influence their intercultural judgements. At the end of this session, we list some of main intercultural competences (open-mindedness, curiosity, patience, good will)

The aim of the next session was to *explore (potential) conflict issues and improve basic conflict management skills* (understanding conflict, conflict issues, prevention, intervention, practice, conflict theory). It started with a quick activity “the four papers on the four walls”: there were four questions, written down on four papers; each participant has spent 30 seconds per paper. The questions and some of the answers were:

- What the conflict is like? (hard, loud, bad, black, normal, frustrating, negative...)
- What/who can cause a conflict? (person, different opinion, difference, word, religion, people, money, ideas, misunderstanding, stupidity, dog...)
- What types of conflicts do you know? (wars, family conflicts, human conflicts, cross-gender, cross-cultural, roommate, neighbour, oral, physical, emotional...)
- How do we feel when we are in a conflict? (bad, angry, furious, nervous, anxious, out of my mind, sad...)

We made inputs on the nature and dynamics of a conflict, as well as on conflict transformation and the phases of constructive problem solving. We worked on the base of previous day's material – organigram and the relationships that were marked as potentially confliction, as well as on participants' personal experience. This was another nice opportunity to talk about some tensed situations and non-solved “problems”, on a safe – basic and not very deep level.



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One of the most important sessions was the one treating the *EVS as a learning opportunity*. The aims of the EVS itself were introduced to the participants and then, after the input on how to formulate an objective, they were asked to set their own learning objectives, regarding personal, professional and project aspect. Their feedback was that it was quite difficult for them to do in such short period and that they need some time to reflect upon this issue, so we did this activity on a superficial level, leaving it for them to think it over and directing them to use that table in the future, as a method of self-monitoring of their progress during the service.

It seemed important for the participants to identify possible sources of support and persons who could help them achieve set goals. Some of these were: colleagues in HO, mentor, other volunteers, "Hajde da..." Group; we reminded them not to forget the support they can give to each other.

The last session was devoted to some *more clarifications* (regarding rights and responsibilities of both volunteer and mentor within the EVS program and the relationship in a supervisor-mentor-volunteer (S-M-V) triangle).

There was also some time for *answering frequently asked questions* (collected on, so called, "parking lot", which was hung up on the wall from the very beginning of the training). These are the following:

- Why On Arrival Training after 3 months?
- Are there any other volunteers in Balkans' countries? Where are they?
- What about other trainings during the EVS?
- How volunteers have been selected?
- Is there any "discipline measures" toward a volunteer (e.g. ending the EVS service earlier or so)?

This was followed by final evaluation of the training and closing up.

Evaluation of the Training session

Participants' satisfaction regarding different aspects of the training session was estimated at the very end. There were *five* possible levels of satisfaction, in a form of a target:



- *Activities used*: All participants expressed the highest level of satisfaction with this aspect of the training course.
- *Trainers' team performance* also was evaluated as on the highest degree.
- *Organization & logistics*: Three participants were highly satisfied with and only one just one degree less.
- Only one participant was completely satisfied with his/her *own contribution*. The others were less satisfied - one level ahead.

Participants were also asked to rank the five main areas included by the course, regarding the importance they had for them. The lists looked like this:

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<i>Rank</i>	<i>Participant 1</i>	<i>Participant 2</i>	<i>Participant 3</i>	<i>Participant 4</i>
1	ICL	Conflicts	ICL	FAQ
2	EVS as a learning opportunity	ICL	Conflicts	ICL
3	Conflicts	EVS as a learning opportunity	EVS as a learning opportunity	Pre-departure and on arrival period
4	Pre-departure and on arrival period	Pre-departure and on arrival period	Pre-departure and on arrival period	EVS as a learning opportunity
5	FAQ	FAQ	FAQ	Conflicts

We can conclude that, generally, second day was more relevant for the participants; that shouldn't be surprising, considering the fact that all the topics we dealt with during the first day are something that they had the opportunity to work through during the two years, while searching for the service and/or previous three months, since their service has started.

Recommendations

- To organize mid-term evaluation meeting in March 2006. and provide volunteers with other possible training opportunities.
- The On Arrival Training should be delivered to the participants as soon as they arrive to the HO; if we wait for too long, we leave the volunteers to themselves, to face some issues and learn on harder and probably more frustrating way
- Having both volunteers and mentors (this was “pilot” attempt) on an on-arrival training can be useful for both sides in terms of getting to know each other better, building trust between them etc
- Whenever it is possible, enable networking of all the volunteers in the region, as well as maybe with ex-EVS volunteers, as they can see each other as an important source of support and information

Written by the trainers' team,
 Danijela Jovic & Jelena Rankovic,
 on behalf of “Hajde da...” Group

* All the materials used, as well as handouts are available to be seen on demand.