

# European Voluntary Service

## Frequently asked questions

### What are the age limits for EVS?

EVS is open to young people between 18 and 30 years. In special circumstances, with the appropriate level of support, 16 and 17 year olds may partake in EVS for a period of between two weeks and twelve months. This means that volunteers have to be between 18 and 30 years old at the beginning of their voluntary activity. Flexibility can be applied to the upper age limit if the volunteer belongs to the priority target group of young people with fewer opportunities and if this is clearly demonstrated in the project application. For details please contact Léargas.

### Where can EVS projects take place?

EVS concerns all countries involved in the Youth in Action programme. But there are some rules and conventions as to who can go where. For more information, please contact a member of the Youth Work Service team in Léargas.

### Where do I get contact details of Hosting organisations?

Contact details of potential Hosting organisations are available in the two project databases:

- The European Commission database: [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm)
- Youthnetworks: [www.youthnetworks.eu](http://www.youthnetworks.eu)

But remember that you need to collaborate with a sending organisation to make contact with potential hosting organisations.

### Who can be my Sending organisation?

A sending organisation must be one of the following:

- a non profit/non governmental organisation
- a local, regional public body
- a body active at European level in the youth field
- an international governmental organisation
- a profit-making organisation -- only when it organises an event in the area of youth, sport or culture.

Regardless of the type of organisation it is, a sending organisation must be accredited by the national agency in its country.

### Do I need to know the language of my host country?

The selection of volunteers should not be made according to language skills, unless a basic knowledge is needed for a specific task. Language training can be provided during the EVS in order to ensure the volunteers' integration.

### Are the language courses compulsory?

The hosting organisation is responsible for the linguistic support of EVS volunteers, where it is necessary. Linguistic support should be appropriate to the volunteer's needs and level but the type of support provided can vary from formal language classes to more informal learning methods. This support is based on helping the volunteer attain a working knowledge of the language so that s/he can carry out EVS duties, rather than aiming for language fluency.

### When can I apply for my project and when can I start?

In most cases, once you have found a project that you would like to volunteer with and if they have agreed to host you, you will need to apply to Léargas for the funding. There are five deadlines each

year (1st of Feb, April, June, September and November) and, if approved, you can start to volunteer three months after each deadline.

For example, if you want to start your placement in December then you will have to apply by the 1st September deadline. This means that you should begin to plan your EVS project as early as possible so that you have the best chance of being accepted by an organisation that you are interested in. There is also the possibility of your host organisation applying for funding to their national agency. This is perfectly legitimate and you can check with your host and sending organisation as to what is their preferred method of application.

## **Am I insured during my EVS project?**

Every EVS volunteer must be enrolled in the Group Insurance Plan for EVS volunteers which is paid for by the Youth in Action Programme, which complements the coverage by national social security systems. This policy covers the volunteer for his/her necessary medical treatment and other events/incidents during and up to two months after the placement. The coordinating organisation, in cooperation with the sending and host organisations, is responsible for the enrolment of the volunteer(s). This enrolment must be done before the departure of the volunteer(s) and cover the duration of the service. An insurance guide including all the information on the coverage and support provided, as well as instructions on the online enrolment process, is available at [www.europeanbenefits.com](http://www.europeanbenefits.com).

## **Do I need to have specific skills to take part in a EVS project?**

The selection of volunteers should not be made according to the skills of the volunteers. EVS should be open to everybody. Nevertheless, a certain sensitivity or ability may sometimes be mentioned as being a plus for specific tasks.

## **Will I get any training during my EVS project?**

Sending and hosting organisations jointly assure the participation of their volunteers in a series of training events during an EVS project: pre-departure training, on-arrival training, mid-term evaluation and, if possible, a final evaluation session. Each type of training has several subjects that are useful or necessary to deal with before and during the service period. Typically the training includes such subjects as:

- Basics of social engagement and voluntary work
- intercultural learning
- conflict resolution
- group dynamics
- rights and responsibilities *etc.*

## **Will I or my parents lose any legal rights or national allowances due to my taking part in an EVS project?**

Taking part in an EVS project should not have any influence on legal rights. Certain allowances might not be cancelled, but rather suspended during the service period. National legislations differ from country to country. Talk to Léargas for more information.

## **Can I change project if anything goes wrong?**

Occasionally, things may go wrong during a voluntary service. Nobody is perfect. Misunderstandings or lack of communication may make a service period fail. Communication is often the key to solve a really difficult situation. Changing a project should be the last option if nothing else works, though it is not always possible to arrange.

## **Can I withdraw from a project?**

As with changing project, withdrawing from a project should be seen as a truly exceptional measure, if nothing else works. Consider carefully the alternatives before taking a final decision. Then bear in mind: this is not simply your personal decision. It involves all three partners of your EVS project: you as the volunteer, the sending organisation and the hosting organisation.

## **Is it possible to prolong a project?**

Unfortunately, it is not possible to prolong an EVS project. The only exception to this is in the case of a short-term EVS project (for a volunteer with fewer opportunities). Such a project may be prolonged up to a total of 12 months for the same volunteer. (Note: volunteers with fewer opportunities can also apply for more than one EVS project provided the total duration of their service is not longer than 12 months).

## **When can I be sure that I will go?**

Either your sending or hosting organisation will apply for the funding for your project to the national agency in their respective country. This will need to be approved before the project can take place. This decision will be made by a grants committee approximately six weeks after each deadline. Only then can you be sure that the project can take place.

## **Can my sending or hosting organisation ask me for a financial contribution for my participation in an EVS-project?**

Participation fees or a financial contribution by the volunteer cannot be a condition to take part in an EVS project. This also includes any kind of deposits to get back after a completed project. Also bills for electricity, gas and water, as well as any taxes are the responsibility of the Hosting organisation.

## **Who can help me with visa problems?**

Both the sending and hosting organisations have the responsibility to help you obtain a visa, if needed. Participating in EVS does not exempt you from following national visa regulations. It is important to know that there is a big difference in those regulations from country to country. Your visa request might be denied or you might only receive a short-term tourist visa. Léargas can issue a letter and an explanatory note in order to support individual visa applications. Ask your sending organisation to contact Léargas for further support.

## **Useful Links/Resources**

European Commission database of accredited organisations:

[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm)

The International Voluntary Service Training Kit

<http://www.TRAINING-YOUTH.NET>

Official home page of the Youth in Action Programme:

[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-actionprogramme/doc74\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-actionprogramme/doc74_en.htm)

Léargas Youth Work Service website

<http://www.leargas.ie/youth>

Volunteering Ireland website

<http://www.Volunteeringireland.com/>

Blogs of EVS Volunteers

<http://www.myevs.net>

Youth Networks

<http://www.youthnetworks.eu>